



HAUDENOSAUNEE

MOHAWK - ONEIDA - ONONDAGA - CAYUGA - SENECA - TUSCARORA

HAUDENOSAUNEE DOCUMENTATION COMMITTEE

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News Release

Onondaga Nation Territory - July 17, 2008

IDLA Border Crossing Celebration

For nearly 3 years, the Haudenosaunee Documentation Committee (HDC) has been working to defend our border crossing rights. During that time, the Indian Defense League of America (IDLA) has assisted the HDC in dealing with border crossing problems. The HDC will be announcing several important updates at the IDLA's "81st Annual Free Border Crossing Celebration" at 1 pm on July 19, 2008.

WHTI Land Border Rules

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued its final rule on land border crossing documentation on Thursday, April 3, 2008. The final rule adopts many of our proposals, including the proposal that Indian Nation identification be accepted by US Customs at all border crossings without any limitations based on geography or the purpose of the travel. However, the final rule limits acceptance of Indian Nation IDs to tribes and Nations that enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with DHS to share information and develop ID cards with enhanced security features and that are considered "federally recognized" by the US. The final rule will go into effect June 1, 2009 at the earliest. Until then, Red Cards will be accepted for land border crossing into the US.

MOA with US

As we have reported, on April 3, DHS sent letters to tribes and Nations it considers "federally recognized" explaining the new land border crossing rule and asking whether each Nation is interested in continuing to use its own documentation for border crossing and willing to work toward an MOA with the US. Such an MOA would be a government to government agreement between the Haudenosaunee and the US that would include only provisions acceptable to both. On May 28, the HDC, on behalf of the Haudenosaunee and its member nations, sent a letter responding to the DHS letter. Our response indicates our intent to continue using our own documentation and our interest in exploring the possibility of an MOA with the US, as well as our concerns about the rule. The US has acknowledged receipt of our response and we are working with US Customs to arrange a meeting in Washington to begin discussing an MOA. For Nations that sign MOAs with DHS, acceptance of current IDs will continue until the new, enhanced IDs are completed.

Card Manufacturers

Earlier this week, the HDC completed the initial phase of contract negotiations with an international ID card manufacturer. We are pleased to announce that pursuant to a mandate from Grand Council, the HDC has entered into an agreement with Siemens Enterprise Communications Inc. to begin to develop our new cards. In the upcoming weeks, Siemens and the HDC will assess the specific needs that our new card production system requires, with card production slated to begin later this year. Siemens is also well-equipped to produce updated Haudenosaunee Passports. The HDC will continue to discuss passport issues with Canadian and US officials, as well. If you have any questions or comments please contact the HDC at the numbers above, or contact your respective nation's Council of Chiefs, Clanmothers, and Faithkeepers.