Homeland Security

Department of Homeland Security and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe Announce a Historic Enhanced Tribal Card

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Office of the Press Secretary
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Washington, D.C - The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Pascua Yaqui Tribe today announced the production of the first ever Enhanced Tribal Card (ETC)—designed as a Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI)-compliant document that formally recognizes tribal membership and U.S. citizenship for the purpose of entering the United States through a land or sea port of entry. The Pascua Yaqui are the first tribe in the country to issue an ETC.

"Our collaboration with the Pascua Yaqui Tribe has resulted in the historic development of the first-ever Enhanced Tribal Card —bolstering security while facilitating travel," said Secretary Napolitano. "We look forward to continuing to build close partnerships with tribal nations across the country as we work together to make the border crossing process more secure and efficient."

"This program strengthens an already great relationship with DHS keeping our Nation's security at mind. The Pascua Yaqui Tribe hopes that such a program will enhance the facilitation of ceremonial, family and business travel for our Yaqui members," said Chairman Peter Yucupicio.

The Pascua Yaqui Tribe became the first tribe in Arizona to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for the development of an ETC on May 27, 2009. Following more than a year of close coordination with CBP, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe Enrollment Office began issuing ETCs to its membership on Monday, July 26.

The Pascua Yaqui ETC has document security features and radio frequency identification technology to meet the requirements of WHTI. The ETC will be available to qualifying Pascua Yaqui Tribe members on a voluntary basis, and will include technology enabling the electronic verification of the member's identity, tribal membership, and U.S. citizenship.

Designation of the ETC as a WHTI-compliant document for entry into the United States by land or sea will be published by CBP through a notice in the Federal Register in the coming months.

The Pascua Yaqui Tribe—located approximately sixty miles from the U.S.-Mexico border—has more than 17,000 members, many of whom have relatives residing on both sides of the border. Both the Pascua Yaqui Tribe and its Yaqui cousins in Mexico regularly visit each other for religious, cultural, and tribal purposes.

WHTI is a joint initiative between DHS and the Department of State that implements a key 9/11 Commission recommendation and Congressional mandate to establish document requirements for travelers entering the United States who were previously exempt, including citizens of the United States and Canada. WHTI requires all U.S. and Canadian citizens, ages 16 and older to present a valid, acceptable travel document that denotes both identity and citizenship when entering the United States by land or sea.

Since 2009, CBP has also signed Memorandums of Agreement with the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, the Seneca of New York, the Tohono O'odham of Arizona, and the Coquille of Oregon to develop WHTI-compliant ETCs. CBP is currently working with approximately 15 additional tribes across the country on the ETC initiative.

For more information, please visit www.GetYouHome.gov or www.cbp.gov.

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