

NEWS RELEASE

Fort Sill Apache Tribe Receives U.S. Reservation Proclamation Following a 125 Year Wait

*U.S. Department of the Interior Recognizes Tribe's Legal Homeland
in Southwestern New Mexico*

Akela, New Mexico (November 22, 2011)— The [Fort Sill Chiricahua Warm Springs Apache Tribe](#) (Fort Sill Apache Tribe) today applauded the decision of U.S. Department of Interior Assistant Secretary Larry Echo Hawk to grant the Tribe a Reservation Proclamation for its legally-defined homeland in Luna County, New Mexico, 125 years after its predecessors were forcibly removed from their homeland and imprisoned.

A Reservation Proclamation was formally approved by the Department on November 16, 2011.

When the renowned Apache leader Geronimo surrendered to the United States in 1886, it was on the condition that he and his people would return to their homeland in two years. Instead, the Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apache Tribes were held as prisoners of war for 27 years, far from their aboriginal homeland in New Mexico and Arizona. Long seeking to return, the Tribe had land placed into trust in 2002, and now nine years later, it has an official reservation designation, signifying an official recognition of its return to its aboriginal territory.

“This has been a very long time coming,” said Fort Sill Apache Chairman Jeff Haozous. “After decades of continued effort to return to our legal and ancestral homeland, we are elated that the U.S. Government has officially granted us this Reservation Proclamation,” Haozous said.

“Our ancestors would be proud of the work the Tribe has done to see this Reservation Proclamation through to completion. Our people have never given up on our dream of returning to the land we once occupied before forced evictions, first to Florida, then to Alabama and finally to Oklahoma,” Haozous said.

The federal government has long recognized that southwestern New Mexico and parts of southeastern Arizona are the legally defined homeland of the Fort Sill Apache Tribe, the legal successor in interest to the Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apache Tribes.

“Our many years of patience, persistence and dedication to returning to our homeland are evident in receipt of this Reservation Proclamation,” Haozous said. “This further confirms our status as an official Tribe in the state of New Mexico. We look forward to the day when our tribal sovereignty here is also fully recognized and we are equal to our fellow New Mexico sovereign tribes and pueblos.”

The Fort Sill Apache Tribe is descended from those former prisoners of war who remained as independent Chiricahua & Warm Springs Apaches in Oklahoma following their forced removal and imprisonment by the U.S. Army. While they always maintained their status as a Tribe, their government-to-government relationship with the United States, which was severed during the imprisonment, was restored in 1976 when they organized with a constitution as the federally recognized Fort Sill Apache. In 1968, the federal government and the U.S. Court of Claims recognized portions of southwestern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona as the ancestral land of the Chiricahua Warm Springs Apache Tribe. In 2002 the Tribe purchased and the Government approved Indian trust land within its legally-defined homeland at Akela, New Mexico.

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