

Lorraine Eiler

International Sonoran Desert Alliance

“Well my name is Lorraine Marquez Eiler. I was born and raised here in Ajo. Well I was born in Ajo, raised out in a community called Darby Wells, which is about seven miles west of here. It was a community where all the relatives lived - it was a major village. Growing up, I was assuming that that was where I would live for the rest of my life and go out and do things and then come back and live there out my life there. But that isn't so, so and that's the last community of a group of people called Hia C'ed O'odham.

There's the Hia C'ed O'odham or sand people, or the Pinacateños, Arreneños, as known by people on the other side of the border, south of the border. There's the Akimel O'odham who are the Pimas or the river people. They are located in reservations around the Phoenix area. East and south of Phoenix and then there's the Tohono O'odham Nation who are the desert people and they live between Ajo and Tucson on the second largest reservation in the United States. And we as Hia C'ed O'odham are not federally recognized, have not ever been Federally recognized.

A long time ago when people wrote about the Hia C'ed O'odham back before the 1900's they identified Hia C'ed O'odham as living here and there and in fact, identified Hia C'ed O'odham as living all the way from the Gila River to the Sea of Cortez and below. But because of so many different people moving in and various reasons as to why people get a group of people get moved out or lose their homeland, well, that's what happened to the Hia C'ed O'odham. And, unfortunately also, that when writers came through, people that wrote stories about the [00:03:00] the Sonoran Desert, writing about Hia C'ed O'odham a couple of times it was mentioned that the last Hia C'ed O'odham lived in this place or that place. If you were to do a study, any research on the Hia C'ed O'odham you'll find that some of the writers have said that we we're extinct, which is not true. So one of the things that I've been trying to do in the last 30 years is speak out and say Hey, no, we're here. We're still here.”