



**AIANTA**  
American Indian Alaska Native  
Tourism Association

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## **AIANTA Takes Indian Country Tourism to the U.S. House of Representatives**

*Sherry L. Rupert speaks on benefits of tribal tourism at Legislative Hearing on H.R. 3477*

**Washington, DC (February 24, 2016)** - Sherry L. Rupert, American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) Board President testified today before the House Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs during the hearing on H.R. 3477, the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act (the "NATIVE ACT"). Ms. Rupert spoke in support of the NATIVE Act, emphasizing the economic and social benefits of tourism in Indian Country and the U.S.

The NATIVE Act was introduced by Representative Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma in the House and Senator Brian Schatz in the Senate to enhance and integrate Native American tourism, empower Native American communities, increase coordination and collaboration between Federal tourism assets, and expand heritage and cultural tourism opportunities in the United States.

As tourism in the United States and in Indian Country is one of the largest and fastest growing sectors of economic development and job creation, Rupert's testimony focused on the current and potential economic impact in both the United States and in Indian Country.

"The NATIVE Act will empower Native American communities through increased coordination and collaboration between tribes and federal tourism assets," said Rupert. "This will, in turn, expand heritage and cultural tourism opportunities and expand the U.S. tourism industry and its market share of global tourism."

AIANTA also submitted written testimony focusing on the potential of Indian Country tourism and all that the association is doing to embrace and enhance those opportunities for tribes across the country.

Rupert is the Executive Director of the State of Nevada Indian Commission, Chairwoman of Nevada's Indian Territory (a marketing arm of Travel Nevada), and has served on the U.S. Department of Commerce Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (US TTAB).

The hearing included testimony from the following witnesses: Ann Marie Bledsoe Downes, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs for Policy and Economic Development, Department of the Interior; the Honorable Penny Pritzker (invited), Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce; the Honorable Bill Anoatubby, Governor, the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma; the Honorable Patrick Lambert, Principal Chief, Eastern



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Band of Cherokee Indians; Sherry L. Rupert, Board President, AIANTA; and William D. Johnson (invited), President and CEO, Tennessee Valley Authority.

Wednesday's hearing also included testimony on H.R. 3599, the Eastern Band Cherokee Historic Lands Reacquisition Act. This Bill is being presented to take certain Federal lands in Tennessee into trust for the benefit of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and for other purposes.

The entire written testimony is available at [www.naturalresources.house.gov](http://www.naturalresources.house.gov), along with testimony from other witnesses.

### **About AIANTA:**

The American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) is a 501(c)(3) national nonprofit association of American Indian tribes, tribal tourism, cultural and private sector representatives, representatives from the tourism industry, Federal, State and local governments, colleges and universities, and friends that was incorporated in 2002 to advance Indian Country tourism. The association is made up of representatives from six regions: Alaska, Eastern, Midwest, Pacific, Plains and the Southwest. AIANTA's mission is to define, introduce, grow and sustain American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian tourism that honors traditions and values.

The purpose of the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association is to provide our constituents with the voice and tools needed to advance tourism while helping tribes, tribal organizations and tribal members create infrastructure and capacity through technical assistance, training and educational resources. AIANTA serves as the liaison among Indian Country, governmental, educational and private entities for the development, growth, and sustenance of Indian Country tourism. By developing and implementing programs and facilitating economic development opportunities, the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association helps tribes build for their future while sustaining and strengthening their cultural legacy.

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