



AIANTA
American Indian Alaska Native
Tourism Association

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Best Tribal Destinations Awarded at American Indian Tourism Conference

Acoma Pueblo, Alaskan Dream Cruises and Grand Canyon West recognized as the best in Indian Country Tourism

Albuquerque, New Mexico (September 23, 2015) - Last week, the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) hosted the Enough Good People Awards Banquet and Silent Auction at the 17th annual American Indian Tourism Conference (AITC) in Ignacio, Colorado, honoring the best tribal destinations in the tourism industry.

The proceeds raised from this annual silent auction are used to award scholarships to Native American students interested in pursuing careers in the hospitality and tourism industry and culinary arts.

Each year, AIANTA, as the national organization representing the tribal hospitality and tourism industry, recognizes the best of Indian Country travel and tourism. The 2015 awards went to Grand Canyon Sky Walk's staff for Excellence in Customer Service; Alaskan Dream Cruises for Best Cultural Heritage Experience; and Acoma Sky City Cultural Center and Haak'u Museum took home Tribal Destination of the Year.

Winners of these prestigious awards are selected by a panel of judges including AIANTA representatives, as well as Roger Saterstrom with Tauck Tours, an expert in the tourism industry who also announced the this year's winners. Nominees must meet a host of standards for each award category, while also working to advance AIANTA's mission to define, introduce, grow and sustain American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian tourism that honors traditions and values.

Grand Canyon West/Grand Canyon Sky Walk, which received the Excellence in Customer Service Award, is fully owned and operated by the Hualapai Nation and has been awarded TripAdvisor's Travelers Award 2015 Certificate of Excellence, exemplifying their excellence in hospitality and customer service. Grand Canyon West's nomination for this award came from a personal account from a traveler, who experienced outstanding customer service from all staff she interacted with from the beginning of her visit to the end.

Taking home the Best Cultural Heritage Experience Award was Alaskan Dream Cruises, which calls upon the expertise of local Alaskan cultural hosts to offer a true cultural heritage experience. Alaskan Dream Cruises excelled in this award category, as they offer a unique Alaskan experience with on board cultural interpretation of the local history, traditions, culture, landscapes, flora/fauna and the natural surroundings of Southeast Alaska.



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"It means a great deal to the Allen family and all of us at Alaskan Dream Cruises to be acknowledged by AIANTA considering how central Alaska Native culture is to us," Alaskan Dream Cruises CEO Russell Dick said. "This is a family-owned company. It's Alaska Native owned. A lot of attention goes into sharing a vivid and deep cultural perspective of Alaska with our guests and we are extremely proud that it sets us apart."

The Best Tribal Destination of the Year Award went to Acoma Sky City Cultural Center and Haak'u Museum in New Mexico, which strives to preserve Acoma traditions while providing insight into the unique history of the Acoma Pueblo. Open year-round, the cultural center offers guided tours, Acoma pottery and Native American crafts for sale by local artisans and cultural exhibits. Excelling in this award category, the cultural center offers tours led by tribal members who explain the history and the life of the pueblo, both past and present, providing guests with a memorable experience.

AIANTA members are encouraged to nominate tribal destinations, tribally owned businesses and enterprises, employees of tribally owned enterprises and businesses, and tribal members who best exemplify the hospitality and tourism industry.

In addition, AIANTA recognized individuals who have been instrumental to the organization and the success of Indian Country tourism, with *Enough Good People* Awards.

2015 *Enough Good People* Awardees include David Uberuaga, Superintendent at the Grand Canyon National Park; Dick Basch, Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Tribal Liaison; Joe Garcia, Former Governor of Ohkay Owingeh; Kristen Lamoureux, PhD, New York University; and Ron Erdmann, Deputy Director of Research, Office of Travel and Tourism Industries at the U.S. Department of Commerce.

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 and preserves tribal 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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