



AIANTA
American Indian Alaska Native
Tourism Association

For Immediate Release

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**AIANTA SELECTS ALASKA NATIVE TOURISM LEADER
TO BE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Move signals accelerating international visitation for tribes in tourism

(Albuquerque, NM) The American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) has selected Camille L. Ferguson as their Executive Director in a Board of Directors' meeting held in Las Vegas, Nevada. Ms. Ferguson was Director of Economic Development for the Sitka Tribe of Alaska for sixteen years and has significant experience marketing to international visitors and working with the hotel, cruise, airline and gaming industries to develop Sitka tourism. She was the 2011 recipient of the Alaska Travel Industry Association's Denali Award for Professionalism & Leadership, was most recently a hotel general manager in Sitka and served as Interim Executive Director for AIANTA in 2011.

Senator Mark Begich (AK), Co-Chair of the U.S. Senate Tourism Caucus, praised AIANTA's decision to hire Ms. Ferguson as "good for U.S. tourism, for U.S. tribes in tourism and a credit to the leadership of Alaska Natives in international tourism development." Among several on-going tribal tourism education and training projects, AIANTA devotes resources to introducing tribes to international forums such as ITB-Berlin, the largest travel tradeshow in the world, and International Pow-Wow, the American travel industry's premier international marketplace. Surveys of inbound international visitors and other indicators continue to show foreign tourists' strong interest in Indian Country. Golf resorts, gaming and natural and cultural attractions are also attracting more domestic visitors to Indian Country.

"We represent those tribes who want tourism but also want to make sure their cultures are emphasized and reinforced in the equation," said Ms. Ferguson. "The beauty of this balanced approach is that visitors want the authenticity that a cultural approach to tribal tourism represents. I think that my experience developing tribal businesses within a very strong cultural context will help AIANTA become stronger in its assistance to tribes developing tourism enterprises that sustain their own traditions and values."

On her first day, Ms. Ferguson said that she was "eager to lead the organization in creating more opportunities for tribes, including development of tourism and hospitality enterprises; collaboration with the travel industry and federal agencies like the National Park Service and

other national associations like Brand USA; international marketing and promotion of the Indian Country; and tribal tourism education and training.

President of the AIANTA Board Mary Jane Ferguson of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians said that the Board is "delighted to have an Executive Director of Camille Ferguson's caliber." She added "with our new Board members, new officers and new Executive Director, the organization gains a tremendous boost of energy and enthusiasm for the work of promoting tribal tourism in the Nation and around the world."

New AIANTA Board members:

- Stacey Kiehn of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) was elected by the AIANTA membership as an At-Large Board member. She is the Executive Director of Marketing and Sales for S & K Gaming, LLC, a limited liability corporation owned by CSKT. Stacey is a graduate of the University of Montana, School of Law with an emphasis in Indian law, transaction law, and energy development. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Management.
- Jason Lambert of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians was elected to represent the Eastern Region of the United States. He is Director of Commerce for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina.

New AIANTA Board of Directors Officers:

- Sherry Rupert of Paiute and Washoe heritage has been elected by the Board of Directors to be their Vice President and represents the Southwest Region of the U.S. She is the Executive Director of the State of Nevada Indian Commission, appointed by Nevada Governor Kenny Guinn in 2005, and is Chairwoman of the Indian Territory marketing arm of the Nevada Commission on Tourism. She was formerly the Treasurer of the AIANTA Board and has more than 20 years of tribal, public and private business experience.
- Jackie Yellowtail of the Apsáalooke Nation has been elected Treasurer of the Board of Directors and represents the Plains Region on the Board. Ms. Yellowtail is a member of the Montana Tourism Advisory Council and was formerly Director of Apsáalooke Nation Tourism (Crow Tribe).

Other AIANTA board members and their respective region(s) include:

- Mary Jane Ferguson (Board President), Eastern Region
- Janeé Doxtater of Oneida Nation, At-Large
- Kirby Metoxen of the Oneida Nation, Midwest Region
- Michelle Crank of the Navajo Nation, Southwest Region
- Rachel Moreno (Board Secretary) of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Alaska Region
- Teresa Meece of the Tulalip Tribes, Pacific Northwest Region
- Tony Azure of the Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska and a Ketchikan, Alaska resident, Alaska Region
- Will Lowe of the Muskogee (Creek) Nation, Plains Region

Additional information on Ms. Ferguson and all Board members can be found at

<http://www.ainta.org/Staff.aspx> and <http://www.ainta.org/Board.aspx>

For more information on AIANTA, please visit www.ainta.org

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