

## Alaska and the Native American Tourism Association

By *Thomas Steinmetz*  
Created Oct 23 2013 - 9:19pm



The Native American Tourism Association is a nonprofit association of Native American tribes and tribal businesses organized in 1999 to advance Indian Country tourism. The Association is made up of member tribes from six regions: Eastern, Plains, Midwest, Southwest, Pacific, and Alaska. The purpose of the Association is to serve as the voice and resource for its constituents in advancing tourism, assist tribes in creating infrastructure and capacity, provide technical assistance, training and educational resources to tribes, tribal organizations and tribal members.

Tourism representatives from across Alaska flocked to Sitka for the 2013 Alaska Travel Industry Association's (ATIA) Annual Convention and Tradeshow, where American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) Executive Director Camille Ferguson co-presented "Government Relations and Public Policy" with Patti Mackey, President and CEO of the Ketchikan Visitors Bureau.

"It's imperative for tourism professionals to understand how government relations and public policy play a role in all facets of a tour product – from start to finish," Ferguson said.

Ferguson educated attendees on AIANTA's integration into the Obama Administration's National Tourism and Travel Strategy, which includes international tradeshows ITB Berlin and IPW (formerly known as International Pow Wow). Attendees were also exposed to AIANTA's public lands outreach program, which includes collaborative efforts with the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and more. Ferguson introduced AIANTA's new venture on the development of training tools for cultural heritage tourism development across Indian Country.

"AIANTA's work with federal public land partners, international outreach and the development of tourism development training tools across Indian Country are just a few of the opportunities and collaborative efforts we hope will inspire ATIA attendees."

This year's ATIA convention, "The Fine Art of Tourism," was held at the Sitka Fine Arts Camp - Sheldon Jackson College Campus in Ferguson's home of Sitka October 8 – 10. The annual event attracts delegates from tour operators, Alaska vendors, destination marketing organizations and elected officials.

In attendance were Alaska Governor Sean Parnell and Susan K. Bell, Commissioner of the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.