

**May 10, 2013 – Nevada Appeal (online) - [Nevada Indian Commission's Rupert appointed to national tourism board](#)**

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Shannon Litz / Nevada Appeal Sherry Rupert is shown at Stewart Indian School on Thursday.

Growing up as an American Indian of Pauite and Washoe descent, learning to make baskets and cradleboards and the joy of gardening from her elders, Sherry Rupert took her heritage for granted.

“As Native people, this is our life,” she said. “It’s just how we live. Sometimes, we think others won’t be interested.”

When Rupert took over as the executive director of the Nevada Indian Commission in 2005, she saw an opportunity.

“I’m a tribal person, yes, but I did not know a lot about other tribes in Nevada,” she said. “It was very interesting for me to not just work with them, but to learn about my people and to be an advocate for them.”

She is taking that advocacy to the national level. Rupert was appointed this week as one of six new members to the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board by U.S. Deputy Secretary of Commerce Rebecca

Blank. She was nominated through the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association, of which she is the vice president.

“The travel and tourism industry is so important to our nation’s economy and important to many of our tribal communities,” Rupert said. “This opportunity is a huge step forward for Indian Country. Indian Country now has a seat at the table. I am honored the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association would look to me to be their representative.”

The tourism board was established in 2003 to serve as the advisory body to the secretary of commerce on matters relating to the travel and tourism industry in the United States. Its members represent a cross-section of the industry, including transportation services, financial services, and hotels and restaurants, as well as a mix of small and large firms.

Rupert said she is particularly interested in data collection.

“I want to know who is traveling to the Native communities and what they are doing,” she said. “I think with that information, it will help our tribal communities know what domestic and international travelers are looking for so they can better match their attractions and destinations.”

She said the American Indian culture, although diverse from tribe to tribe throughout the nation, holds an area of interest to American and foreign travelers alike.

“There’s a segment of the market that’s really interested in a cultural experience,” she said. “That’s something we, as Native Americans, can offer. There’s nothing like it in the world. Our culture is in tact, and our traditions are alive.”

Rupert also serves as president of the Governors’ Interstate Indian Council. Her husband, Ben, and son John are active in American Indian fancy dance and Native handicrafts, making presentations at local schools and organizations.

“I love being busy,” she said. “I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

In a news release issued by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Deputy Secretary Blank said, “The travel and tourism industry is an important driver of our export success, and a strong source of U.S. jobs. These new members of the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, who come from different regions and industry sub-sectors, will play a valuable role as we work to help maintain the momentum that’s currently underway.”

As the lone American Indian representative on the board, Rupert said she will emphasize not only the economic boon tourism brings to tribes, but the platform it provides to tell their own story in their own way.

“We’re still here. We’re still thriving. We’re not just a history story.”