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September 19, 2013 – CherokeePhoenix.org - [Native Tourism conference to have Native fashion panel](#)

BY STAFF REPORTS

CATOOSA, Okla. – During the 15th annual American Indian Tourism Conference at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Catoosa, set for Sept. 22-26, the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association will present a fashion session called Tourism Trends: Indigenous Fashion.

The panel consists of three Native designers work with traditional, historic and contemporary fashion. They will describe their journeys in clothing design and how their works are used in living history re-enactments, cultural demonstrations and mainstream fashion events.

The panel includes Cherokee Nation citizens Tonia Hogner-Weavel and Lisa Rutherford and Chickasaw Nation costume designer Margaret Roach Wheeler.

“My culture has influenced my work so much and has given me more of a voice in the fashion industry,” Wheeler said. “There is an excitement among people over fashion and designs that relate to cultural history. I’m able to design pieces that reflect tribal traditions, yet make them edgy and modern for today.”

Wheeler, a Chickasaw textile artist, teaches fashion design to high school students at the Chickasaw Arts Academy. Each year, the academy provides two students with scholarships to the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. She is a descendant of the Chickasaw and Choctaw tribes.

Hogner-Weavel, a Cherokee National Treasure for her historic research, designed the period clothing for Diligwa, a 1710 Cherokee Village, and the Cherokee tear dresses for the Cherokee Nation Youth Choir.

Rutherford is an award-winning artist who recreates southeast appliqué Cherokee beadwork and clothing, using materials as authentic as possible from the late 1700s to early 1800s. She collaborated with Navajo designer Orlando Dugi who took her traditional southeast feather cape and made it haute couture on the runway.

Other sessions at the conference include tour packaging, attracting tour operators, creating itineraries, positioning tribes for the international tour market, protecting intellectual and cultural property and working with state and federal agencies.