

Explore



Big Apple Fest
Oneida, Wisconsin

AGRITOURISM CASE STUDY



exploreoneida.com



Big Apple Fest is a family event in Oneida, Wisconsin sponsored by the Oneida Tourism Department, Oneida Cultural Heritage Department, Oneida Nation Apple Orchard, and Tsyunhehkwā Retail store.

The Big Apple Fest highlights Oneida Culture and History in a fun and inviting fall festival where most of the activities are free. Folks tour Oneida's five fully-restored historic log homes, play games, see live animals, ride horse-drawn wagons and are entertained by Rhea the Trick Horse. Food is available through vendors and the farmer's market. Big Apple Fest visitors hop on a shuttle from Cultural Heritage to the orchard to pick their own apples.

The focus of this case study is on the development and growth of Big Apple Fest. Big Apple Fest occurs the third Saturday in September and is planned and operated by the Oneida Tourism Department. The Big Apple Fest is going into its 8th year and each year it grows in attendance.

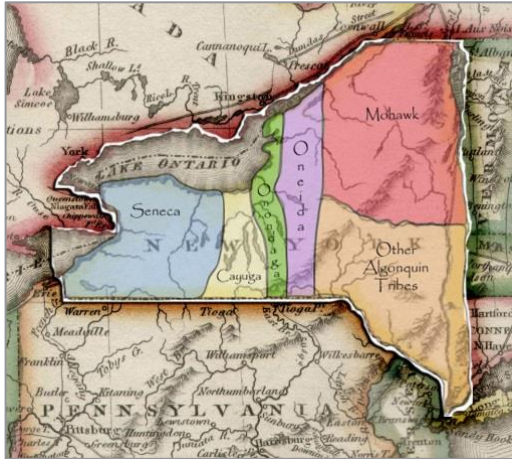
Michelle Danforth

Oneida Nation Marketing & Tourism Director



A Brief History of the Oneida Nation

The Oneida Nation reservation is located in Northeast Wisconsin just west of Green Bay. There are 17,147 enrolled citizens with approximately 3,100 living on or near the reservation. Because it is a “checkerboard” reservation, Oneida is a mix of urban, suburban and rural lands. Oneida has developed land for economic and housing needs, and has also taken steps to preserve and restore wetlands and forests.



Originally part of the Iroquois Confederacy, the Oneyote?a-ka – People of the Standing Stone (Oneida) lived in what is now central New York State. Oneida historically was a matriarchal society with three clans: turtle, bear and wolf. Clans and kinship were passed down through the mother’s side of the family, and the women were in charge of agriculture and choosing chiefs. Our traditional crops were the Three Sisters: Corn, Beans and Squash. The Oneida supported the colonists against the British during the American Revolutionary War. However, in 1823, after the war, Oneidas were pressured by land speculators to move to what was known as the Michigan Territory.

Many of the Oneida carried on their livelihood of farming on the 65,400-acre reservation. The Dawes Act of 1887 divided the reservation into individual allotments for Oneida citizens. Eventually, a majority of the acreage was sold or lost to unpaid taxes.

In 1934, the federal government reversed the allotment policy under the Indian Reorganization Act. The Oneida wrote a new constitution and reorganized their tribal government in 1936, and purchased 1270 acres of land the following year.

In 1976, Oneida citizens, Sandra Ninham and Alma Webster, started holding bingo games to help pay for the utilities at the new Oneida Civic Center. Eventually, as Indian gaming expanded, Oneida was able to use gaming funds to purchase more lands within the borders of its 65,400-acre reservation including an apple orchard and the Cultural Heritage grounds.

Today, the Oneida people work to preserve their language and culture through the Oneida Nation School System, Oneida Language House, and by using cultural iconography in Reservation signs and media. The Oneida Nation is comprised of 2,800+ employees and has over 200 funded business units. Accomplishments include two large gaming facilities, hotels, bingo, and a golf course. The Oneida have also established a health center, nursing home, elder center, police department, judicial court, two libraries, and Big Bear Media Center to name a few more.



Thinking Big Works

In 2009, the Cultural Heritage Department aimed to create several annual historical events to promote culture and history. We were looking to create an experience to remind folks that 1) the Oneida people came from the New York territory, “The Big Apple”; and 2) that Oneida apple orchards were burned down after the Revolutionary War in retribution for standing with the colonists. The event would also nurture relationships between Oneida and Non-Oneidas. Big Apple Fest emerged to meet these needs.



Overcoming Obstacles

One of the barriers the Cultural Heritage Department faced was funding. The Oneida General Manager reviewed the event proposal and supported the effort with \$5,000—enough money to pilot the event. During the planning process, we realized location was also a barrier. Cultural Heritage, located on Highway 54 at the edge of Green Bay is 1.5 miles away from the Apple Orchard. Shuttle buses would eventually carry attendees back and forth.

Cultural Heritage aimed to attract 500 attendees. The 2009 event included farm animals, a horse-drawn wagon, a log restoration project, old-time fishing, a couple of games for kids, and an apple pie contest. Heritage Hill, a local living history attraction, donated time period clothing from the late 1800s to early 1900s.



Funds were used for signage—to purchase plywood and cut out big wooden apples, golf carts, portable toilets, and pay other outside vendors. Donations of soda and water came from Coca-Cola. Departments collaborated to share resources: tents were borrowed from the Housing Department; trash and recycling bins and picnic tables were loaned from the Conservation Department; tables and chairs were also borrowed from the Department of Public Works; the Library pitched in to create games and crafts for kids.



Paid and unpaid promotions of the event included ads in the tribal newspaper, posters to tribal departments and a press release to local media. Flyers were sent to a few elementary schools in the area to invite students to Education Days, scheduled the Friday before Big Apple Fest. Kids came out in five school buses. Over 1,000 people showed up for the first annual event—exceeding expectations. Average product sales for a weekend at the apple orchard were approximately \$2,300. Big Apple Fest earned the same amount in a single day!

Building Annual Momentum

In its 2nd year, Big Apple Fest expenses grew by \$1,000 due to the purchase of reusable signage. Promotional materials increased to 3,600 flyers to local Green Bay and Oneida schools and 400 printed event cards. As a promotional tactic, caramel apples were sent to the news stations a week prior to the event. A portion of funding was used to purchase t-shirts for volunteers and workers during the event. Because the need for security grew, we added 3 security guards to support traffic control and included first responder preparations. This would be the last year of Education Days due to time constraints of staff. However, other areas of the event were gaining momentum bringing our total attendance for the second year to over 1,500 people.



In 2011, the Big Apple Fest was brought under the Oneida Tourism Department and an infusion of funding was provided to take the event to the next level. The Oneida Tourism Department received room tax dollars as a base for their overall departmental funding. The total budget was now \$10,000. Rhea the Trick Horse became the new main attraction and the logistics of the event doubled with a professional tent company, 2 horse-drawn wagons, the Oneida Farmer's Market addition, and increased horse and wagon demonstrations. The signage was bigger and better. More security and workers for traffic control and demonstrations were required. Shuttles were added with service to the apple orchard from the Cultural Heritage grounds. Promotional materials included 5,000 school flyers to elementary schools. In the third year of the event the attendance was close to 3,000 people. Over 50 pies were entered in the pie contest. Noteworthy challenges: we were running out of parking at both locations, cars parking on the highway, long lines at 7 food vendors, and the Apple Orchard ran out of bags. The pie contest judges almost passed out from tasting 50 pies!



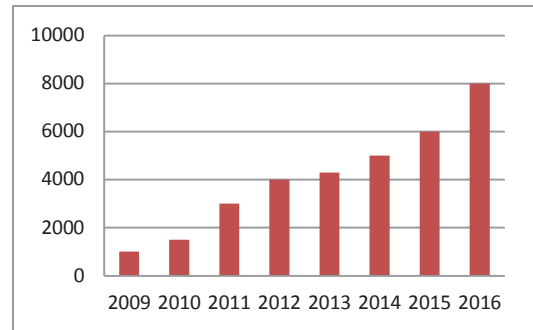
In 2012 attendance increased to over 4,000 people. A second parking area was created on the Cultural Heritage grounds. Entertainment for families brought Rhea the Trick Horse and Koko the One Trick Mule back. Promotional materials included 6,100 flyers to schools. Oneida apples were featured on Living with Amy, the Fox 11 website. Eight-second pump ads were played at two of the most popular One Stop gas stations and ads were placed in the Green Bay Press Gazette and on WFRV (CBS) channel.

In 2014, Koko the One Trick Mule was popular with kids attending the event. The addition of the Jazmine and Lexus King, who offered barrel racing demonstrations and rope tricks brought a new level of showmanship to the event. Apple sales at the orchard set a new record of \$7,700 for one day!

Attendance grew in 2015, surpassing 6,000 attendees. Big Apple Fest continued to grow with over 8,000 attendees in 2016. The average \$3,000 per weekend in Apple Orchard sales jumped to over \$15,000, a 36% increase since 2014. This does not include the overall gross sales generated at the Apple Orchard over the entire apple-picking season.

Moving Forward as a Community

Over the past eight years, Big Apple Fest has averaged an 87% annual increase in attendance and collected \$50,000 in sales. Families of all sizes commonly travel to the event from within a 45-mile radius. An all ages crowd includes grandparents, parents, and children. Attendees are Native and non-Native. With ever increasing attendance at Big Apple Fest, increased funds are required. We credit our success to working together and staying true to our vision.



The “Big Apple Fest” Brand

Our brand is as bold as the red apple. We are family-friendly with our bright red and shades of green. The Iroquois sky domes add an Oneida touch to the design. Icons display key characteristics of our event. Maps help the audience explore the grounds.

Poster

Event Fan

Event Card

Website Slider

Social Media Ad



Event Logo

Tips for Starting a Grassroots Event

1. Pick the Right Date

Start planning 9 months to a year in advance. Search the web for all the events happening in your area on the possible dates so you are not competing with an established event.

2. Develop a Unique Concept

Big Apple Fest was selected based on its association with Oneida's history in New York. Bring together different aspects of your community to create something intriguing.

3. Set Realistic Volunteer & Attendance Goals

Recruit volunteers in your family and friends. Volunteers can help you promote by word-of-mouth and decrease the time it takes to set up and take down.

4. Brainstorm to Borrow

Big Apple Fest sourced tents, a generator, bingo, hay bales, straw, corn stalks, goats, horses, garbage bins and picnic tables. Many of the resources came from internal Oneida tribal departments and Non-profits.

5. Develop a Budget

List all the costs associated with your event. Costs may include on-site restrooms, trash and recycling, tables & chairs, sound & music, golf carts for transport, location fee & permits, entertainment, supplies. Consider a small contingency fund. You might offset costs by charging a parking fee.

6. Outreach is Key

Promotional materials can range from posters and postcards to social media, radio and TV ads. For Big Apple Fest, school fliers were the most effective way to bring in families from our surrounding community.

7. Secure Sponsorships

Tribal sponsors and enterprises can help pay for your event. Contact local companies who align with your concept and check out your local Convention and Visitors Bureau. Search for local tourism grants or other tribal grants.

8. Develop a Traffic Plan

Visualize the type of experience you want your guests to have from the moment they arrive at your event. How will they know where to go?

9. Prioritize Safety & Security

Make sure you have enough trained staff or volunteers standing by for a health emergency. Include first aid kits and supplies for emergencies.

10. Develop a Brand

Create a cohesive look and feel for your event. Good design will generate excitement and communicate to people what they can expect.



Oneida Apple Orchard Site

Sat. 10 am - 4 pm

PYO
\$1.00/lb.
Honey Crisp
75¢/lb.
other varieties

Big Apple Schedule
Saturday, September 16
Oneida Cultural Heritage Grounds
10 am - 4:00 pm

Under the Big Top Tent

11:30 - 12:15	Old Time Bingo
1:00	Apple Pie Check-in Closes
2:45	Apple Pie Finalists Announced & Final Judging Begins
3:00 - 4:30	Live Entertainment by: Dewey, Rockem' & Howe

Demonstrations

11:00 - 11:20	The King Girls Barrel Racing Demonstration
11:30 - 12:15	Competition Horse & Carriage Demonstration
12:30 - 1:00	Miller & Mike Comedy Show
1:15 - 2:00	Rope Tricks by Chewy
2:15 - 2:45	Miller & Mike Comedy Show
Special Appearance By: Koko - The One Trick Mule	

Entrance / Exit
(limited parking at orchard)

Shuttle Stop

Apple Cashier

Food Vendor

Horse Farm 50/50 Raffle

Apple Varieties: Freedom Liberty, Red Pine, Green Rain, Liberty

Convenient Shuttle to both Locations

\$250 Best Apple Pie Contest

Kids Area & Petting Zoo

Fun Horse Shows

DOOR PRIZE: \$200 Gas Card

Miller & Mike Comedy Show

200 Gas Card

Cultural Heritage Site

Sat. 10 am - 4 pm

Big Apple Schedule
Saturday, September 16
Oneida Cultural Heritage Grounds
10 am - 4:00 pm

Under the Big Top Tent

11:30 - 12:15	Old Time Bingo
1:00	Apple Pie Check-in Closes
2:45	Apple Pie Finalists Announced & Final Judging Begins
3:00 - 4:30	Live Entertainment by: Dewey, Rockem' & Howe

Demonstrations

11:00 - 11:20	The King Girls Barrel Racing Demonstration
11:30 - 12:15	Competition Horse & Carriage Demonstration
12:30 - 1:00	Miller & Mike Comedy Show
1:15 - 2:00	Rope Tricks by Chewy
2:15 - 2:45	Miller & Mike Comedy Show
Special Appearance By: Koko - The One Trick Mule	

Entrance

Exit

Shuttle Stop

Apple Cashier

Food Vendor

Horse Farm 50/50 Raffle

Apple Varieties: Freedom Liberty, Red Pine, Green Rain, Liberty

Convenient Shuttle to both Locations

\$250 Best Apple Pie Contest

Kids Area & Petting Zoo

Fun Horse Shows

DOOR PRIZE: \$200 Gas Card

Miller & Mike Comedy Show

200 Gas Card

Bus & Transit Route

Lot 1 (Longhouse)

- 3 Lamers Trolley
- 1 Handicap Trolley
- 1 Reg. Transit

Lot 2 (Vets Wall)

- 1 Lamers Trolley
- 1 Discovery Coaches Trolley

Hwy. 172