



State of Indian Country Tourism

Spring 2020

Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 Travel Restrictions and Shelter in Place Orders are having a significant impact for Indian Country/Cultural Heritage Tourism.

Highlights

According to a recent survey conducted by AIANTA, “Impact of COVID-19 on Indian Country Tourism,” Indian Country enterprises are very concerned about how COVID-19 will affect them. Initial responses include representation from all six of AIANTA’s region and although at the early stages of the unfolding health and economic crisis, tribes and tribal business are seeing significant cancellations for domestic and international bookings, reduced revenue and job lay-offs.

In a 2019 State of Indian Country Tourism survey, which queried AIANTA’s database of Native- and tribally-owned hospitality businesses, 75% of respondents believed tourism would increase greatly or somewhat in the coming year.

Contrary to the 2019 survey, this survey found that some sixty percent of respondents are predicting losses of greater than 50% of their current revenue. An earlier survey had nearly half of respondents reporting anticipated growth in regional (49%), domestic (46%) and international (45%) visitation. Further, when narrowing the scope to just those respondents who indicated they expected growth in tourism, some 89% said they believed domestic tourism would increase and 69% said they believed international tourism would increase. COVID-19 travel interruptions have significantly altered travel projections.

“In the weeks and months to come, we will need to focus on the recovery and rebuilding of Indian Country’s cultural tourism businesses, destinations and attractions to ensure tourism continues to be a tool for cultural perpetuation, economic development and community building.”

Sherry L. Rupert
AIANTA Chief Executive Officer

Survey Results as of April 1, 2020

- Of our respondents, 49% were individually-owned tribal business/tourism product and 37% were tribally-owned destination/tourism product.
- As of April 1, 2020, 91.84% of respondents had received over 17,000 cancellations for 2020 because of COVID-19.
- Decreases in domestic bookings for 2020 were reported by 93.75% of respondents.
- Losses in 2020 revenue are predicted by 98% of respondents , with 60% predicting losses greater than 50% of revenue.
- For the top ten international markets, respondents all showed decreased bookings in 2020; none reporting new or increased bookings.

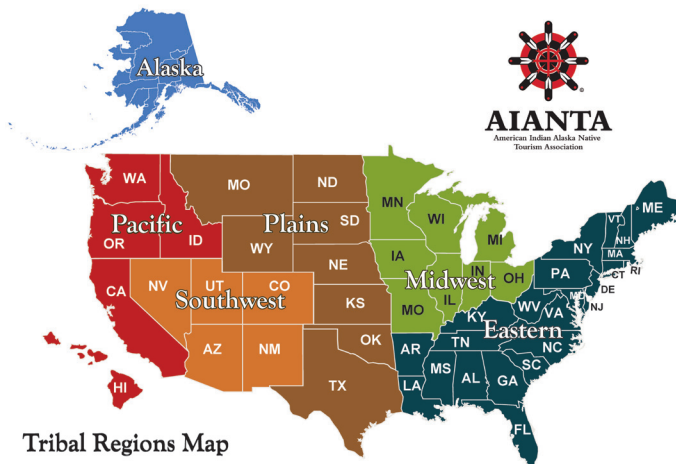
Priorities for Support

As we work towards recovery, 59% of respondents indicated funding support was their first priority for response and 18% of respondents felt marketing/advertising support was their first priority.

Quotes from Respondents

“The impact of COVID-19 has been eye-opening and requires everyone to think about preparation in a crisis situation. I hope and pray for our native people and people in general, especially the youth and elders.”

“We will survive as we have for time immemorial, it is just going to be tough, and we pray or little island paradise is safe from the virus that harm our most precious treasures – our elders (our teachers) and our young (our future).”



Methodology

The Impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) on Indian Country Tourism Survey was conducted using a list of tribal hospitality enterprises, a subset of Aianta’s proprietary tourism database. This survey includes responses from 51 anonymous industry leaders, who were asked to describe their sentiment on the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry for the coming year, through a series of 11 close-ended questions.

About Aianta

For more than two decades, Aianta has served as the national center for providing tourism and recreational travel technical assistance, training and capacity building to American Indian nations. Aianta is a 501(c)(3) national nonprofit association of Native American tribes and tribal businesses and was incorporated in 2002 to advance Indian Country tourism. Aianta’s mission is to define, introduce, grow and sustain American Indian and Alaska Native tourism that honors traditions and values.

www.aianta.org.



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