

# FY2019 Annual Report

## American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association

October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019



**AIANTA**  
American Indian Alaska Native  
Tourism Association



# “To define, introduce, grow and sustain American Indian and Alaska Native tourism that honors traditions and values.”



## Dear Members, Partners and Friends

We are pleased to share with you our FY2019 Annual Report. As you can see, 2019 was a strong year for the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (Aianta) and for Indian Country tourism in general.

Although we live in times of great change, at Aianta we are constantly energized by our common goal of creating a brighter economic future for indigenous communities and Native-owned hospitality businesses around the country by building authentic tourism programs that showcase traditional culture and heritage.

At Aianta we see time and time again that tourism, when done correctly, can and does make a difference. Dollars generated from tribal tourism programming help support small businesses, decrease unemployment rates, perpetuate traditional culture and language and also open new dialogs with local and federal representatives, tribal members and members of the general public.

We'd especially like to thank our staff, our volunteer Board of Directors, our consultants, our partners, and our members, as well as all the hospitality industry professionals who have given their time and knowledge, to help Aianta advance its mission.

Your support of Aianta is deeply appreciated.

*Pesha u (Thank you—Northern Paiute)*  
Sherry L. Rupert, (Paiute/Washoe)  
Chief Executive Officer, Aianta

*Dáwáá'é (Thank you—Keres)*  
Emerson Vallo (Pueblo of Acoma)  
President, Aianta Board of Directors



## Aianta's Accomplishments

### Tribal Advocacy

Aianta submitted written testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate in support of implementation of the NATIVE Act. Aianta also presented a work plan with proposed metrics to fulfill requirements of the NATIVE Act.

### Regional Outreach

#### Tribal Tourism Information Gathering Session

More than 50 attendees addressed sustainability, tribal collaboration, infrastructure, marketing, tourism grants, leadership, education and mentorship as priorities.

### Visitor Outreach

#### Midwest Familiarization Tour

Aianta hosted its third annual Indian Country familiarization tour, in partnership with Native American Tourism of Wisconsin (NATOW). Eight media and tour operators from Italy were invited to explore Aianta's Midwest region.

#### Tribal Row at IPW Anaheim

More than 100 members of the travel trade, media and other hospitality representatives visited Aianta's first ever "Tribal Row" at IPW Anaheim, the leading travel trade show hosted in the United States.

#### Discover Native America at IPW

Aianta advanced awareness of all tribal and Native American participants at IPW by developing the #DiscoverNativeAmerica at IPW list, which featured all Native participants at IPW, to stimulate awareness of Indian Country itineraries and programs with international buyers.

#### NativeAmerica.travel

NativeAmerica.travel attracted more than 125,000 page views in FY2019. The only consumer-facing destination website, NativeAmerica.travel provides ideas and inspiration for visiting Indian Country.



### Technical Assistance & Training

#### Go International

Aianta produced its third-annual Go International training in January 2019. More than 35 tourism industry professionals participated in the two-day program, which was designed to help businesses learn how to market cultural heritage tourism in the international visitor market.

#### Professional Certificate Program in Cultural Heritage Tourism

The third annual Professional Certificate Program in Cultural Heritage Tourism, hosted in partnership with the George Washington University, drew 23 registrants.

#### Aianta Webinar Series

Aianta produced a training webinar "Resources for the Recreation Economy" in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development and U.S. Forest Service.

### Marketing, Content Development & Public Relations

#### Aianta.org

Aianta's flagship website, Aianta.org provided detailed information on the organization's outreach efforts. For FY2019, the site attracted more than 100,000 pageviews.

#### Key Media Placements

- European search for "real Americans" a boon for tribal tourism; KCAW.org; July 2019
- Everyone wants to Instagram the world's most beautiful canyon. Should they?; Vox; July 2019
- A Route 66 Road Trip Through Indigenous Homelands; Yes! Magazine; May 2019
- Native Americans Shift Stereotypes, Economies Through Tourism; Voice of America; March 2019
- Tribal Tourism Growth in U.S. and Canada Prompts Destinations to Dig Deeper Into the Past; Skift.com; November 2018
- In the Game; Meetings Today; October 2018

#### Member/Partner/Peer-to-Peer Communications

- Member News: Sent to 61,547 members/partners (over 12 months); monthly highlights of Aianta's ongoing activities.
- Opportunities: Sent to 57,429 members/partners; funding opportunities available to non-profits.
- Other Peer-to-Peer Communications: 194,840 sent to members/partners (over 12 months).

#### Membership Participation

Aianta is grateful to our members who are working to advance tribal tourism. Aianta membership base—consisting of tribes, tourism industry professionals, national and regional non-profit organizations, colleges and universities, and federal, state and local governments—is a significant resource network that shares information and experiences to support the tribal tourism industry in its entirety.

For nearly two decades, the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (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.

## 2019 American Indian Tourism Conference

### Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tulsa Catoosa, Oklahoma

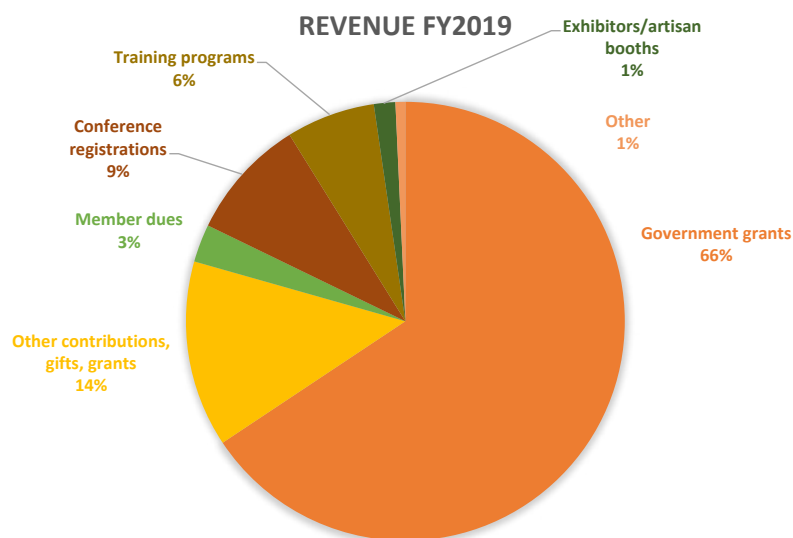
- 267 registrants
- 5 plenary sessions
- 27 breakout sessions
- 7 keynote speakers
- 54 presenters/panelists

### AITC Sponsors

- Cherokee Nation
- Mandan Hidatsa Arikara Nation
- We-Ko-Pa Casino Resort
- Navajo Nation Parks & Recreation
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- Arizona Office of Tourism
- Choctaw Country
- The Chickasaw Nation
- Paragon Casino Resort
- Cherokee North Carolina
- Explore Oneida
- IBS Software
- Citizen Potawatomi Nation
- Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort Hotel
- Downstream Casino Resort
- Port Madison Enterprises

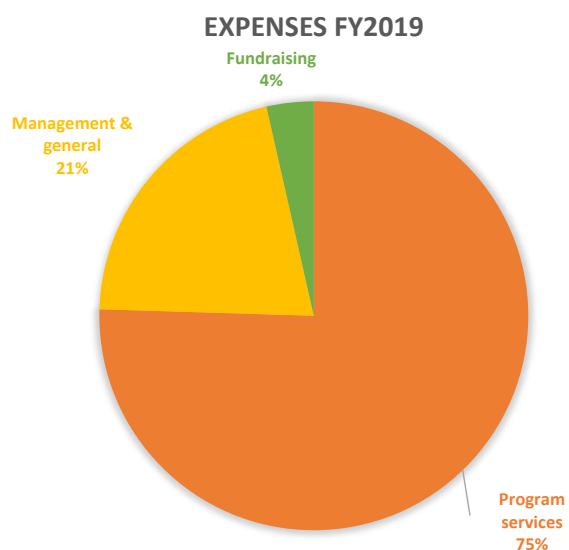


## Financial Highlights



### Revenue

Government grants	614,274
Other contributions, gifts, grants	128,514
Member dues	26,114
Conference registrations	83,841
Training programs	61,242
Exhibitors/artisan booths	14,763
Other	6,789



### Expenses

Program services	846,849
Management & general	235,275
Fundraising	39,775

## AIANTA STAFF

Sherry L. Rupert (Paiute/Washoe), *Chief Executive Officer*

Hannah Peterson, *Program Development Director*

Bianca Mitchell (Pueblo of Acoma), *Education Manager*

Sherrie L. Bowman (Pueblo of Laguna), *Education Support Specialist*

Monica Poling, *Marketing & Public Relations Manager*

Gail E. Chehak (Klamath), *Membership & Outreach Coordinator*

Bruce Rettig, *AIANTA Consultant & Travel Writer*

Lorraine Lewis (Laguna/Taos/Hopi), *Research & Data Specialist*

Amy Meak (Navajo), *Research Clerk*

Ariel Richardson (Walker River Paiute Tribe), *Office Manager*

## AIANTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### • Officers

Emerson Vallo (Pueblo of Acoma), *Board President*

Rachel Moreno (Tlingit), *Vice President*

James Surveyor, (Hopi/Cheyenne-Arapaho), *Secretary*

Lora Ann Chaisson (United Houma Nation), *Treasurer*

### • Alaska Region

Mario Fulmer (Tlingit)

Rachel Moreno (Tlingit)

### • Eastern Region

Lora Ann Chaisson (United Houma Nation)

Darrell Waldron (Seaconke Wampanoag/Narragansett)

### • Midwest Region

Crystal Holtz (Oneida Nation of Wisconsin)

Kirby Metoxen (Oneida Nation of Wisconsin)

### • Pacific Region

Jamie SiJohn (Spokane Tribe of Indians)

Hi'ilani Shibata (Native Hawaiian)

### • Plains Region

Jason Morsette (Mandan Hidatsa Arikara Nation)

Justin F. Woods (Sac and Fox Nation)

### • Southwest Region

Emerson Vallo (Pueblo of Acoma)

James Surveyor (Hopi/Cheyenne-Arapaho)

### • At-Large Directors

Camille Ferguson (Sitka Tribe of Alaska)

Travis Owens (Cherokee Nation)