



State of Indian Country Tourism



**AIANTA Town Hall Series
April 28, 2021**

Introduction

On April 28, 2021, AIANTA held the first session in its interactive new [AIANTA Town Hall Series](#).

AIANTA Board President Emerson Vallo and CEO Sherry L. Rupert led the conversation as they shared the results of [AIANTA's State of Tourism Industry Survey for 2021](#). Later, they also introduced two possible concepts for redistribution of AIANTA's designated national tourism regions. This redistribution is critical to AIANTA members, as it will ultimately affect how AIANTA populates its Board of Directors.

The first AIANTA Town Hall Session was attended by 77 participants (54% of the 142 people who registered for the event).

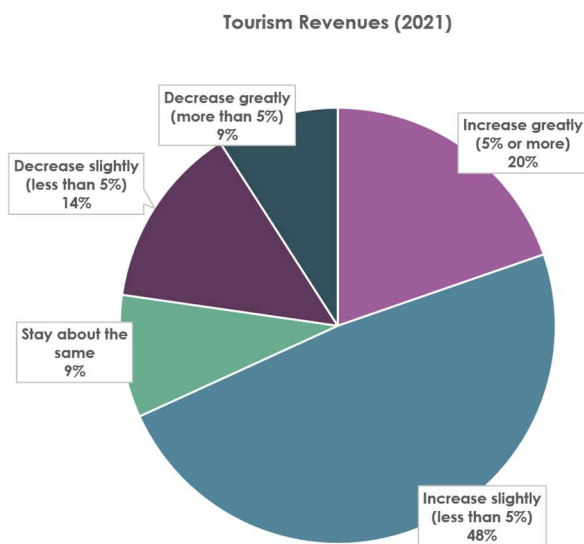
The video of the entire Town Hall Session can be viewed online on the [AIANTA Town Hall Series](#) page or on [AIANTA's YouTube page](#).

State of Indian Country Tourism Survey

During the first half of the Town Hall Session, Emerson Vallo and Sherry L. Rupert introduced the results of AIANTA's annual State of Indian Country Tourism Survey.

The survey queried AIANTA's database of Native and tribally owned hospitality businesses and includes responses from anonymous industry leaders and business owners, who were asked to describe their sentiment on the tourism industry for the coming year through a series of open and close-ended questions.

Tourism Revenues



In general, survey respondents are optimistic about the future of the tourism industry for 2021, with nearly 70% of respondents indicating that they expect tourism revenue to increase greatly (20%) or somewhat (48%) in the coming year.

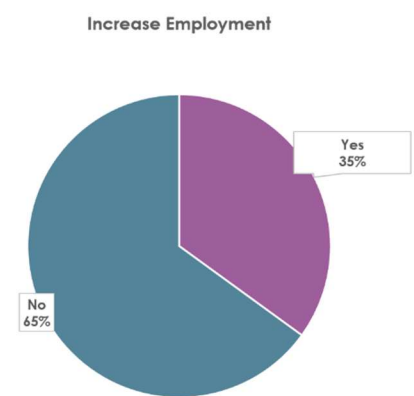
The survey further backs up this data as 48% of respondents anticipate a growth in regional tourism this year. The outlook for domestic and international travel was not quite as optimistic, with just 24% of respondents expecting an increase in domestic tourism and only 17% of

respondents expecting an increase in international visitations.

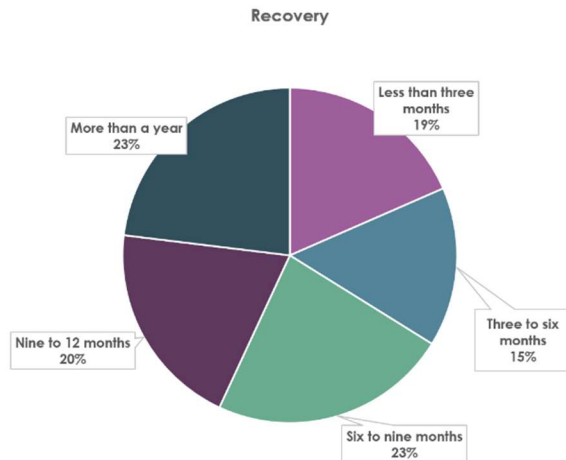
Tourism Employment

Respondents overwhelmingly (65%) indicated they did not anticipate an increase in tourism employment this year.

Additionally, respondents were cautious with respect to tourism marketing budgets, with just 20% expecting an increase in tourism marketing monies.



Tourism Recovery



Respondents are divided on when they believe the tourism economy will begin to recover.

Nearly 19% believe it will take less than three months, while 23% believe it will take more than a year for the economy to recover.

View complete results of the [State of Indian Country Tourism Survey](#).

Comments, Questions and Answers

How many people/organizations responded to the survey? Were representatives from each region represented? How many of the 574 tribes responded to the surveyed?

A: We kept the survey anonymous because we wanted to get as many people to respond as possible. But the survey had about a one percent response rate with respect to the entire AIANTA database. – AIANTA

Not only was there a loss of revenue but we had to furlough and/or not hire employees in 2020 and 2021. So, loss of employment to tribal citizens was an effect of COVID 19.

Well said, loss of visitor expenditures impacts communities and has a real impact, ripple effect on the local economy.

We are still closed for visitation and we have not determined as to when we may re-open. It's a decision that is to be made from our own tribal entity and involves business management, tribal and spiritual leaderships, when we feel it is safe to do so in order to allow visitors.

I lived and worked in Germany for over a decade. Looking ahead Post-Covid, there is a huge untapped market among German tourists. BTW: The average German worker has 5-6 weeks of paid vacation time. Many even receive an automatic yearly vacation expense bonus payment from their employers!

Re-Distribution of AIANTA Regions

For some time, AIANTA has been discussing how the organization’s board representatives can best represent all regions (and tribes within those regions) across the United States.

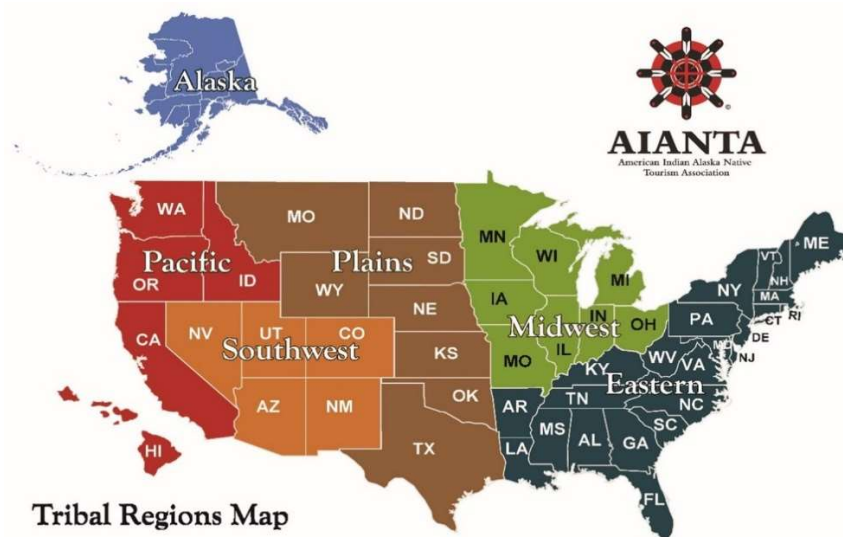
AIANTA currently has six regions—Alaska, Eastern, Midwest, Pacific, Plains and Southwest—with each region having two representatives. Additionally, two At-large representatives who have a national focus. These regions are quite large and tribal representation within those regions is not necessarily evenly weighted.

Current Regional Distribution

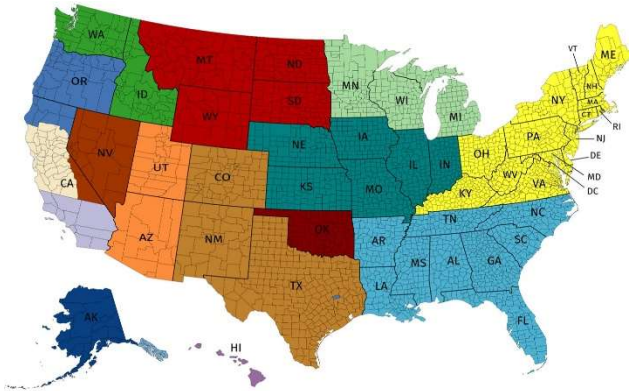
Current AIANTA Regions			
Regions	Tribes	States	Reps
Alaska Region	230	1	2
Eastern Region	28	23	2
Midwest Region	33	8	2
Pacific Region	147	5	2
Plains Region	57	8	2
Southwest Region	80	5	2
At-Large			2
Total			16

AIANTA is proposing redistributing its current regions as well as increasing the number of regions, to distribute representation more evenly across the country. Redistribution is especially important, as these representatives bring their knowledge of tourism, hospitality and cultural knowledge specific to their region, and bring new programs, needs and the concerns of their regions to AIANTA. This feedback helps strategically steer the

direction of AIANTA, while striving to give an equitable voice to all tribes’ needs and challenges.



Proposed Regional Redistribution, Option One

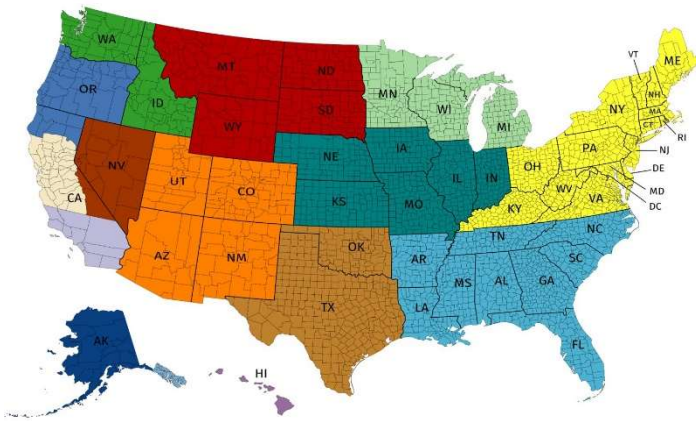


The first option proposes 16 regions with one representative for each region.

The breakout is as follows:

Proposed Aianta Regional Redistribution, Option One			
Regions	Tribes	States	Reps
Northeast Region CT, DE, DC, VT, OH, ME, NY, NJ, NH, OH, PA, RI, VT, VA, WV	48/11	17	1
Southeast Region AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN	18/29	9	1
Midwest Region MI, MN, WI	34	3	1
Central Plains Region IA, IL, IN, KS, NE, MO	12	6	1
Oklahoma Region	39	1	1
Great Basin Region Nevada, Eastern slope of California	41	2	1
Southwest Central Region CO, NM, TX	31	3	1
Southwest Region AZ, UT	32	2	1
Rocky Mountain Region MT, WY, ND, SD	22	4	1
Northwest Region ID, WA	33	2	1
Pacific Northwest Region OR, Northern California	33	2	1
Central California Region	38	1	1
Southern California Region	36	1	1
Hawaii Region	12	1	1
Northern Alaska Region	212	1	1
Southeast Alaska Region	19	1	1
		Total	16

Proposed Regional Redistribution, Option Two



The second option proposes 15 regions with one representative for each region.

The breakout is as follows:

Proposed AIANTA Regional Redistribution, Option Two			
Regions	Tribes	States	Reps
Northeast Region CT, DE, DC, VT, OH, ME, NY, NJ, NH, OH, PA, RI, VT, VA, WV	48/11	17	1
Southeast Region AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN	18/29	9	1
Midwest Region MI, MN, WI	34	3	1
Central Plains Region IA, IL, IN, KS, NE, MO	12	6	1
Great Basin Region Nevada, Eastern slope of California	41	2	1
Southwest Region AZ, CO, NM, UT	60	4	1
Southern Plains Region OK, TX	42	2	1
Rocky Mountain Region MT, WY, ND, SD	22	4	1
Northwest Region ID, WA	33	2	1
Pacific Northwest Region OR, Northern California	33	2	1
Central California Region	38	1	1
Southern California Region	36	1	1
Hawaii Region	0	1	1
Northern Alaska Region	212	1	1
Southeast Alaska Region	19	1	1
		Total	16

Comments, Questions & Answers

Is the number of tribes based on membership or actual tribes?

A: The number of tribes is based on the number of federally recognized tribes and the number of state tribes within each state. --AIANTA

And is the goal to have representation equity within the regions?

A: Yes, that's exactly what we were trying to do initially. We originally had just the six regions and now we're proposing more than doubling that to try to get that representation. -- AIANTA

Was the division by land or population?

A: As far as representation goes for these regions, with the increase and the way it's broken out, we'll have more representation. Also, hopefully, we'll get more of the tribes to sign up and be part of membership and bring more ideas for us to look at what we can to push forward to the federal level. --AIANTA

Maybe there could be an advisory board advising our representatives in Alaska - but who would fund that?

A: I think this is a good opportunity to have an advisory board for those tribes in Alaska that aren't close to a metropolitan area, so they can send input back to their representatives in some way. So, they're being represented in their areas. -- AIANTA

Comments, Questions and Answers (cont.)

Alaska is also challenged with transportation for outreach. It makes sense to divide it out. Hopefully as tourism grows in Alaska, I could see 5 regional reps.

Alaska activity cannot grow without more reps to contact them. Catch 22.

When Alaska is represented by an outside organization it oftentimes only has few representatives. Alaska has 5 regions. It is so difficult for one or two representatives to represent the whole state.

A: That's kind of what we were looking at with respect to Alaska, where we saw activity and participation by the tribes out there. And really, most of it was in Southeast Alaska, and then we had a few up in the northern part of Alaska. So, as tourism grows in Alaska, that we could see the increase of the regional reps up there. – AIANTA

A. The thought behind Alaska is by city population. And the fact that our capital is in the Southeast, so we considered it important to have one representative in Southeast. If our members have other suggestions, please let us know. Our challenges are logistics for getting out to such a huge land area. -- AIANTA

Have you been in touch with someone from the Interior of Alaska? I am representing Explore Fairbanks in Europe and could possibly be of help in reaching out.

Will tribes that stretch into multiple states have two reps? Considering Navajo Nation, Proposal 1 shows the southwest as two separate regions.

A: That's something we'll be discussing as we go through this process. It is a challenge on how to get full representation that are in these states. How do we go about it? Do we add more personnel? We appreciate the feedback as that helps us determine the route we go.

Speaking to the SW change, I am happy to see UT, CO continuing to stay connected to AZ and NM. Many tribes in AZ and NM have historical ties to those states. Mesa Verde and Bears Ears are two great examples of this.

A: Yes, we wanted to take that into consideration when we were looking at those tribes that have relational ties and work with each other as well.

Comments, Questions and Answers (cont.)

Does AIANTA have the people capacity within the organization to split into many regions ?

A: This doesn't really affect the capacity of the organization, but this is for the Board members. We hope when we have these new regions, there will be people in each region who will be interested in participating. -- AIANTA

It would be good to have two reps in the southwest region, because there are 60 tribes.

We are in the Southwest Region and Proposal One has 31 tribes and Proposal Two has 60. Is Proposal Two manageable with 60?

A: I believe so. Some of those tribes are kind of isolated in some cases. But the more we do the outreach, I believe we can still manage the number of tribes in the southwest. Having that outreach person in place will really be helpful. -- AIANTA

Would there still be at-large directors? I missed that, maybe, and how many at-large?

A: There aren't at large included right now, but that's not to say we couldn't include those, for now we were mainly looking at the regions.

Have you thought about attaching NE to SD; KS & MO to OK / TX; IN & IA to MN, WI, WI??? Then, break SW into two regions possibly?

A: Yes, this is similar to what we now have as version two. -- AIANTA

Pilamaya for considering various options! This is really great. Thanks!

Additional Comments

Will we include the art show at the conference?

A: We are working on a session for our artisans at the conference. --AIANTA

A: We would also like to mention to any artisans who would like to donate to our silent auction that we do at the conference every year. The silent auction raises funds for scholarships for Native students who are in the hospitality field or any tourism programs that are offered at the colleges they are going to. -- AIANTA

Thank you both for the valuable information. More so, thank you AIANTA for your support. Hope to see you all in October at Fort McDowell for the AIANTA Conference. (Knock on wood).

On behalf of the Sky City Cultural Center & Haak'u Museum, a traditional handmade pottery will be donated for the conference Silent Auction.

A: Thank you! --AIANTA

Alaska is conducting a first of its kind Economic Impact Study for Alaska Native Tribes. We hope that will be beneficial for AIANTA research.

A: Yes, definitely. --AIANTA

Final Thoughts

The regional redistribution is a big deal for AIANTA, as this is the first time, we've done this.

I wasn't here when our regions were set up, but from my understanding they were built to coincide with the way BIA's regions are set up, but they also don't quite mirror the BIA's regions.

For our purposes, we are really looking at making the regions smaller and more manageable so that our Board representatives can do more outreach and get your input on AIANTA initiatives and the industry in general.

Next Steps

AIANTA does its best work when it is supported by its members, partners and other constituents. Be sure to get involved, join us in our programming, or just communicate your successes and challenges with us.

- AIANTA is planning two additional Town Hall Series sessions this year.
 - AIANTA Town Hall Series: Travelers to Indian Country & NativeAmerica.travel
June 30, 2021; 1 p.m. (MDT)
 - AIANTA Town Hall Series: Tourism Marketing Initiatives for 2022 and Beyond
September 29, 2021, 1 p.m. (MDT)
 - AIANTA Town Hall Series: The State of Indian Country Tourism 2022
 - October 26, 2021, 1 p.m. (MST)
 - For more information or to register, visit www.ainta.org/ainta-town-hall-series
- Join us at the [23rd Annual American Indian Tourism Conference](#) (October 25-28, 2021) at Fort McDowell, Arizona, the nation's largest gathering of tribal tourism professionals. Share your expertise, learn from others and be part of the national conversation on how to grow tourism for maximum economic impact.
- Subscribe to AIANTA's newsletters at www.ainta.org/newsletter to stay informed about our activities.



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