



## AIANTA Town Hall Series

Travelers to Indian Country  
and [NativeAmerica.travel](#)

June 30, 2021

## AIANTA Town Hall Series Introduction

On June 30, 2021, AIANTA held the second session in its interactive [AIANTA Town Hall Series](#).

AIANTA Board President Emerson Vallo (Pueblo of Acoma) and CEO Sherry L. Rupert (Paiute/Washoe) led the discussion about AIANTA's [consumer inspiration website, NativeAmerica.travel](#). The site, celebrating its 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2021, provides travel ideas and inspiration to visitors interested in exploring indigenous experiences throughout the country. The site offers free listings for all federally recognized and state-recognized tribes as well as all native-owned hospitality businesses.

The AIANTA Town Hall Session was attended by 28 participants (30% of the 92 people who registered for the event.)

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

## **NativeAmerica.travel Overview**

NativeAmerica.travel is the only destination website representing American Indian Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian visitor destinations and experiences. There are free listings available for tribes and Native-owned businesses.

Pages and listings are also available to all Native Hawaiian, Alaska Native and indigenous-owned hospitality businesses. Every tribe has a page on the site that is pre-populated with general information. The information can be update by the tribe.

The site offers a great (and free) opportunity to market to visitors.

As AIANTA looks to refresh NativeAmerica.travel in FY 2022, we are seeking community feedback on how the site can best reflect the engaging, dynamic indigenous experiences available to domestic and international visitors.

### **Poll Question**

Have you ever used a website to plan a vacation?

78% responded that they plan their vacations utilizing a website; 22%don't use a website. That's a pretty good indication that websites are very helpful in planning future vacations.

### **Comments**

- I typically use more than one website for planning.
- We might be able to send more traffic your way if we were asked to add links to NativeAmerica.travel our own pages.

## NativeAmerica.travel Overview

**Home Page Menu:** At the top of the home page, the menu includes experiences, destinations, itineraries and maps.

**Home Page Featured Experiences:** The section called Featured Experiences is essentially the NativeAmerica.travel blog.

**Home Page Destination Section:** When you scroll down on the homepage, the destination section is essentially a large menu made up of different destinations: Alaska, California, the Great Basin, Great Plains, Hawaii and Midwest.

**Individual Tribal Pages:** Every federally recognized and state-recognized tribe has a listing on the site. Some are “blank” pages, but others have been updated by the participating tribes.



Each tribal page also includes a list of (and links to) all tribally owned businesses listed on the site. As you can see with the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, for example, the page includes links to the Choctaw Casino and Resort, the Choctaw Travel Plaza, the Choctaw Hunting Lodge, the Choctaw Welcome Center, the Choctaw Farms, and the Choctaw Country Market

### Featured Accommodations & Attractions

Listing	City	Phone	Web
Choctaw Casino & Resort-Durant	Durant, Oklahoma	888-852-8828	<a href="http://choctawcasino.com">choctawcasino.com</a>
Choctaw Travel Plaza	Durant, Oklahoma	580-934-6260	<a href="http://choctawtravelplaza.com">choctawtravelplaza.com</a>
Choctaw Hunting Lodge	Pittsburg, Oklahoma	580-740-6940	<a href="http://choctawhuntinglodge.com">choctawhuntinglodge.com</a>
Choctaw Welcome Center	Coalburg, Oklahoma	580-296-2872	<a href="http://choctawwelcome.com">choctawwelcome.com</a>
Choctaw Farms	Durant, Oklahoma	904-925-6173	<a href="http://choctawfarms.com">choctawfarms.com</a>
Actikema Pecan Oil	Cowardin, Oklahoma	1-800-937-4309	<a href="http://actikema.com">actikema.com</a>
Choctaw Country Market	Clayton, Oklahoma	918-969-7377	<a href="http://choctawcountrymarket.com">choctawcountrymarket.com</a>

**Itineraries:** AIANTA works with tribes across the nation to gather information to help build itineraries of Native-owned lands and/or itineraries that incorporate Native-owned businesses/

**Native-Owned Business Listings:** Listings include (to name a few) accommodations; museums and cultural sites; historic parks, sites and byways; events and powwows; and artists, galleries and performers.

**Native American Tribal Map.** AIANTA’s U.S map includes all tribes, experiences, attractions and listings posted on the site. The map also reflects AIANTA’s internal regions, which are currently divided into 12 segments.

## Notes

- The listings are important as they allow tribes to tell their stories to travelers who are interested in the tribes and who want to know more about Native culture.
- Tribes and businesses can add or update content at their convenience, but AIANTA also has a staff member that can help draft the listings and post them.
- AIANTA understands that some tribes might not be ready to have people visit them. These tribes can still use their tribal page to provide the information they are ready to share as a tribe. Tribes can add or update content at their convenience.
- Site content is developed with a primary focus on what travelers might want to see and do.
- One area where we'd really like to see growth is in the number of artists and performers submitting business listings.

## Why Redesign NativeAmerica.travel?

### Poll Question

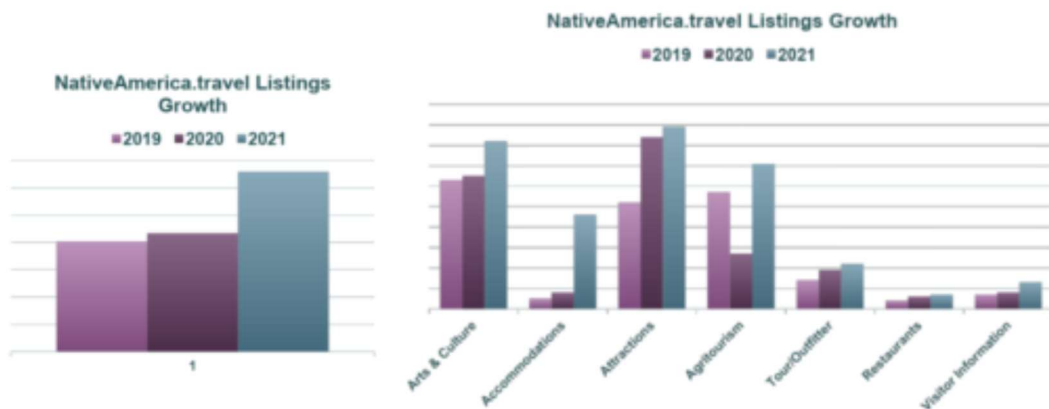
Did you know AIANTA features a new NativeAmerica.travel listing in its monthly newsletter?

14% yes, 86% no

### Goals for Redesign

- More Content
- More Visitor Traffic
- Better User Experience
- More Awareness (of site and Indian Country Experiences)

## Why Redesign: More Content



**More Content:** Content on Native America.travel has increased by 60% in the last three years, but there's still a long way to go. We are particularly interested in seeing an increase in the restaurant and culinary category, but all categories are important.

**More Traffic:** We are midway through June 2021 and NativeAmerica.travel has welcomed nearly the same amount of website traffic as all of last year.

**More Awareness:** When traveling somewhere, visitors who really want to know the true essence and the true culture of that area, should learn from a person who comes from that place. Small Native-owned businesses are especially key to the entire experience when visiting Indian country. AIANTA would like the site to offer this same experience to create a better visitor experience. As content on the site grows, we will also see an increased awareness for the thousands of Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian cultural experiences around the country.

## NativeAmerica.travel Home Page (2022 and Beyond)

### Poll Question

What content do you expect to see on a travel homepage?

- Blog and/or travel suggestions
- High-quality photography
- Social media content
- Hotel recommendations
- Event calendar
- Maps and guides
- Advertising

85% of respondents look for a blog with travel suggestions; high-quality photography was next most popular response.

### Open Discussion

- What do you think is a top item missing from the NativeAmerica.travel home page?

### Participant Comments & Questions

- I would like to see a section targeting outdoor travel, including RV camping, hiking, biking, backpacking and water activities.
- Going along with the outdoor recommendations could be an opportunity to talk about what responsible recreation looks like for visitors.
- For non-Native visitors, an introductory paragraph that defines Native American, American Indian and Alaska Native communities would be good, including the number of different tribes.
- I would also like to see a listing of Native art shows.
  - A listing of native art shows and even a highlight of the native artisans from respective tribes would be a good feature. It's always good to promote local Native artists, especially since for many of them, art is their primary income. – AIANTA
- Showcase the diversity of tribes, with 574 federally recognized tribes, visitors (especially those from other countries) could see the diversity of Native American tribes.
- How to be respectful when visiting a village (like don't look in people's windows).
  - Another good comment is to add guidelines on how to be respectful when you visit a Native nation. One idea is to add a one-page document of do's and don'ts. – AIANTA
  - We're a small village on top of a rock, so everybody is curious about the inside of people's homes. But they're private homes so addressing that with visitors is a good idea.
  - Some tribes get upset when people go on their lands but don't stay on trails, and it just tears up the whole landscape. You don't want visitors to go out there and tear up terra firma and destroy the beautiful landscapes.
  - Maybe tour guides or your docents can explain the do's and don'ts when visiting your native nation. That would also make it a better experience for the visitors.
  - It would be good to establish a regenerative tourism section designed to support respectful tourism as previous comment. Funds can support preserving and restoring outdoor areas.

## NativeAmerica.travel Featured Experiences

### Poll Question

What type of “featured experiences” stories would you like to see in this section?

- Festivals and events
- Unique things to see and do
- Meet the locals
- Types of tours
- Culinary Experiences

93% of people said when traveling their favorite activity is trying new/local food

### Participant Comments & Questions

- Listing dates and times on events would be helpful to remind visitors when they travel.
  - Keeping up with a calendar can be tough
- Adventure & Ecotourism
- I would prefer something like Festivals & Events
- Images are the most important content type to use
- Add featured tribes and members to tell their stories.
- You don't have to have a tourism enterprise to be on the site, but if the surrounding reservation has things to see that are at least partially open to visitors, they can be listed.
  - These outdoor activities may eventually turn into a tourism enterprise so tribes should feel free to try things out. —AIANTA

### Idea Exchange

List the name of one Native American, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian destination that is on your bucket list.

- Acoma Sky City Pueblo
- Crow Fair and Yurok Redwood Canoe Tours
- Cahokia Mound
- Little Diomedes, Alaska
- DX Ranch and Cahokia Mound
- No specific destination, but I like to go to places that have an immersive backpacking/camping experience.
- Cami, music and dance festival in Bethel, Alaska
- Lummi canoe races
- Cherokee Art Market

## NativeAmerica.travel Listings

### Poll Question

Have you ever created a listing at NativeAmerica.travel?

70% have not created a listing on the site.

### Participant Comments & Questions

- I did try to create one but I could not find my listing page.
- I'm a travel writer and I've had the opportunity several times to write stories that reflect Native American and American Indian experiences, but the majority of folks in the tourism realm have very little knowledge of this site or may not even know that this site exists.
- I realize the primary focus today is about the website. However, does AIANTA also reach out to non-Native tourism professionals?
  - Response: We just have an hour for this session and that time is mostly allocated for a discussion on the site content. But we do outreach to various tourism organizations and will continue to do so as the site grows and will fine-tune content needs based on that outreach. We'd also like to see the site be at more of an advanced stage before we have conversations specific to DMO needs. We are also looking at increasing inbound and outbound links on the site. —AIANTA
- Could we participate in a 30-minute workshop one on how to use website or how to get a listing on the site.
  - We'll also provide as much information and training so tribes can easily get listed.
  - Audience feedback is really helpful in this area.—AIANTA
- How does AIANTA verify if a person or tribe posting a listing is actually indigenous?
  - We go through the tribes to verify businesses to ensure they can be added to the site. —AIANTA
- Will AIANTA charge us for the listings?
  - No, it's all free for the tribe so you won't be charged. It's a good deal for tribes and hopefully they will take advantage of that. —AIANTA
- Do you buy google tags to drive traffic to the site? Like "Native American" "Tribal Tourism" etc.
- Do you tag with multi-language search terms?
  - We do not currently do any advertising, but we plan to start after we've completed the redesign. We'll also possibly look at providing content in different languages for our international visitors.
- Can we put our websites on our listings?
  - Yes, you can add external links to your business listings.



### **Poll Question**

When writing my listing, I ...

- Don't know how to start.
- Would like AIANTA to help me write my listing.
- Need to get approval from tribal council before my listing goes live.
- Would like to attend a webinar or watch a video to help me get started.
- Am worried I will be charged by AIANTA once I post my listing

57 percent would like to attend a training webinar

### **Updating Listings**

There are three ways you can update your listings:

- Online through [nativeamerica.travel/admin](http://nativeamerica.travel/admin)
- Submit information through Cognito Forms
  - [www.cognitoforms.com/AIANTA1/userandattractionlisting](http://www.cognitoforms.com/AIANTA1/userandattractionlisting)
- Or contact us at [gchehak@aianta.org](mailto:gchehak@aianta.org), [jrobledo@aianta.org](mailto:jrobledo@aianta.org) or [mpoling@aianta.org](mailto:mpoling@aianta.org)

### **Poll Question**

When traveling my favorite activities are

- Trying new/local food
- Enjoying the great outdoors
- Seeing a show or visiting a museum
- Attending a cultural event or festival
- Shopping
- Learning something new
- Meeting local people

93% said trying new or local foods are a favorite travel activity.

## 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 one additional Town Hall session this year.
  - AIANTA Town Hall Series: Tourism Marketing Initiatives for 2022 and Beyond  
September 29, 2021; 1 p.m. (MDT)
  - For more information or to register, visit [www.ainta.org/ainta-town-hall-series](http://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 authentically and sustainably grow tourism for maximum economic impact.
- Subscribe to AIANTA's newsletters at [www.ainta.org/newsletter](http://www.ainta.org/newsletter) to stay informed about our activities.



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