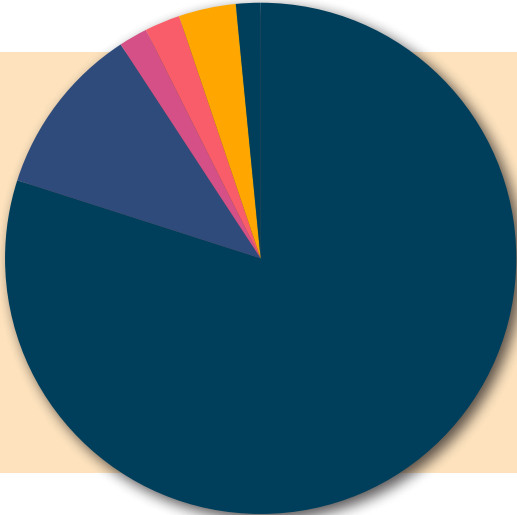


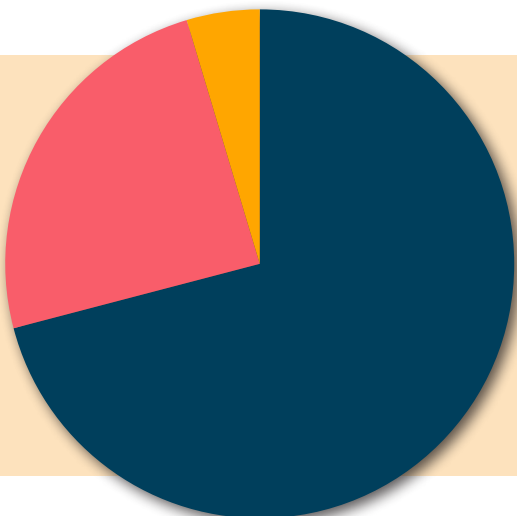
Financial Highlights

Revenue FY2020



Government grants	790,511
Other contributions, gifts, grants	107,180
Member dues	17,965
Conference registrations	22,131
Training programs	35,794
Other	15,346

Expenses FY2020



Program services	633,495
Management & general	218,279
Fundraising	41,413

FY2020 Annual Report  
American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association  
October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020



**AIANTA**  
American Indian Alaska Native  
Tourism Association



**AIANTA Board of Directors:**

**Emerson R. Vallo** (Pueblo of Acoma),  
*President*

**Travis Owens** (Cherokee Nation),  
*Vice President*

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

**Lora Ann Chaisson** (United Houma  
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**Mario Fulmer** (Tlingit)

**Rachel Moreno** (Tlingit)

**Eastern Region**

**Darrell Waldron** (Wampanoag Tribe)

**Midwest Region**

**Crystal L. Holtz** (Oneida  
Nation)

**Kirby Metoxen**  
(Oneida Nation)

**Pacific Region**

**Jamie M. SiJohn**  
(Spokane Tribe)

**Hi'ilani Shibata**  
(Kānaka Maoli,  
Native Hawaiian)

**Plains Region**

**Jason Morsette**  
(Mandan, Hidatsa and  
Arikara Nation)

**Justin F Wood** (Sac and Fox Nation)

**At-large**

**Camille Ferguson** (Tlingit)

**AIANTA Staff**

**Sherry L. Rupert** (Paiute/Washoe),  
*CEO*

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

**Hannah Peterson**,  
*Program Development Director*

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

**Glenda Toledo** (Navajo Nation),  
*Education Manager* (partial term)

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

**Monica Poling**, *Marketing & PR  
Manager*

**Gail E. Chehak** (Klamath Tribes),  
*Outreach Coordinator*

**Bruce Rettig**,  
*Tribal Content Developer*

**Lorraine Lewis** (Laguna/Hopi/Taos),  
*Research & Outreach Coordinator*

**Amy Meak** (Dine), *Research Clerk*



# A Year of Change

## Dear Members, Partners and Friends

I am pleased to present the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) FY2020 Annual Report.

In truth, I'd hoped to be writing a very different letter to summarize AIANTA's accomplishments for FY2020, but as we all learned, you never know when life will take a sharp, unexpected turn. That was certainly the case in 2020.

You've all already heard the dramatic numbers--lost jobs, lost revenues, lost friends and nearly a total decimation of the global travel market. Rather than focus on the challenges of last year, I'd like to take this opportunity to

celebrate the creativity and the resilience of all our hospitality industry partners.

Our Native culture and heritage will continue to draw visitors despite the challenges we face. This knowledge has kept hope alive.

While we may not have been able to see each other in person, sharing hugs and face-to-face camaraderie, virtual conference calls helped us stay in touch, feeding encouragement and bringing us all closer together as we planned ahead.

As always, we are grateful for the tribal elders, leaders and to the dedicated people who continue to advocate for tourism as a means for cultural perpetuation and economic development. A mere pandemic will not silence our voices as we share the cultural stories of our ancestors and pave the way for a better future for our children.

I am pleased to share the accomplishments of the AIANTA team for FY2020. While they may not follow the plan we set for ourselves at the beginning of the year, they are mighty nevertheless. We thank you all for sharing this bumpy road with us and we look forward to continuing our journey into a brighter future.

*Boneedwa (See you later, Northern Paiute)*  
Sherry L. Rupert, Chief Executive Officer  
American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association

## Top Level Highlights:

- AIANTA releases *Case Studies in Tribal Agritourism*
- AIANTA begins partnership with Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail
- AIANTA welcomes more than 800 attendees at its first-ever virtual American Indian Tourism Conference

## Speaking Engagements

AIANTA Board and staff provide outreach and education through speaking engagements at conferences and tradeshow around the country . FY2020's appearances include:

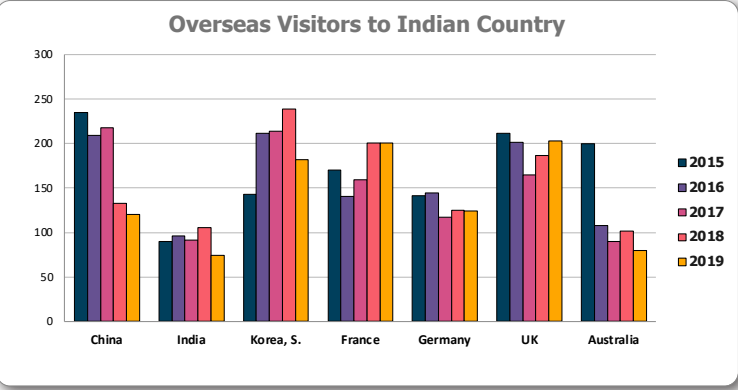
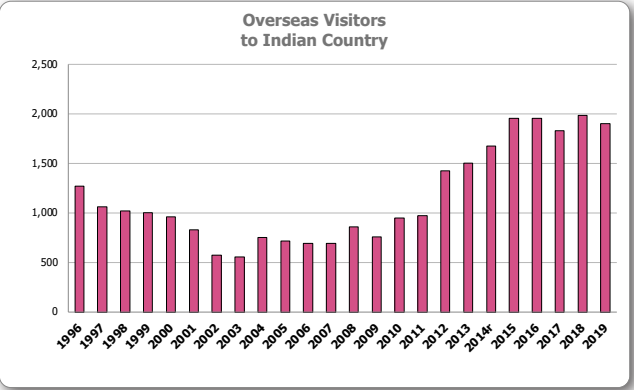
- Indigenous Peoples Day (Southwest); October
- Governors' Interstate Indian Council Annual Meeting (Southwest); October
- National Congress of American Indians (Southwest); October
- American Chamber of Commerce Luncheon (Australia); October
- Western Governors Association (Southwest); November
- Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada Conference (Canada); November
- REDW Conference (Southwest); November
- National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition Conference (Pacific); November
- Intertribal Association of Arizona (Southwest); November
- National Park Service (Online); June

# Expanding Our Global Reach

During the early onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, few people realized just how devastating the crisis would be to the travel industry. By the end of 2020, the U.S. Travel Association estimated the travel industry suffered \$500 billion in lost spending, \$1.1 trillion in lost economic activity and 6 million lost travel-supported jobs. Despite the decline, interest in Native tourism destinations remains strong.

## International Marketing

Since AIANTA attended its first international trade show--ITB Berlin--in 2009, the international travel market has shown an increased year-over-year appetite for Indian Country tourism experiences. While international tourism numbers were expected to—and did—crash in 2020, Indian Country destinations offer singular experiences that will continue to draw visitors from around the globe, even through and after global crises.



## Trade Show Presence

AIANTA maintained a small presence in the international marketplace throughout FY2020. Although ITB Berlin, the world's largest tourism trade show was cancelled, AIANTA attended Showcase USA Italy, a long-standing favorite trade show, as Indian Country tourism experiences particularly resonate with Italian travelers.

## NativeAmerica.travel

Even as travel to Native American, Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native destinations declined, tourism marketers continued to refresh their marketing materials on AIANTA's consumer travel website, NativeAmerica.travel. This effort was reflected in the growth in site visitation. In FY2020, NativeAmerica.travel attracted more than 120,000 pageviews and 217 total site listings.

## AIANTA.org

AIANTA's flagship website, AIANTA.org provides detailed information on the organization's outreach efforts. For FY2020, the site attracted more than 100,000 pageviews.

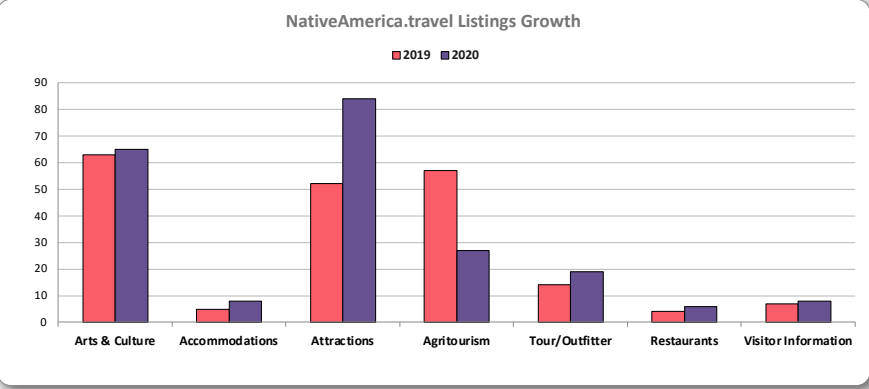
## Media Relations/Articles

Key media placements for FY2020 include:

- Indigenous Stories; Good Tourism Blog; January 25, 2020
- Comeback Trail; Travel Weekly; May 28, 2020; Native Business Magazine, January 28, 2020
- Eating Up Easter; New Mexico PBS; Discussion with Sherry Rupert & Emerson Vallo; June 17, 2020
- Service workers risk health and livelihood; Native America Calling; July 16, 2020
- AIANTA Announces All-Star Lineup of Native Women to Address Virtual Conference; Native News Online; August 13, 2020
- AIANTA's Tourism Industry Leaders Power Forward; Native Business, September 30, 2020
- Reimagining the Rural West: Cultural Heritage and Tourism; Western Governors' Association; November 4, 2019
- The budding agritourism business; Native America Calling; November 8, 2019

*Indian Country destinations offer singular experiences that will continue to draw visitors from around the globe, even through and after global crisis*

*Our Native culture and heritage will continue to draw visitors despite the challenges we face*





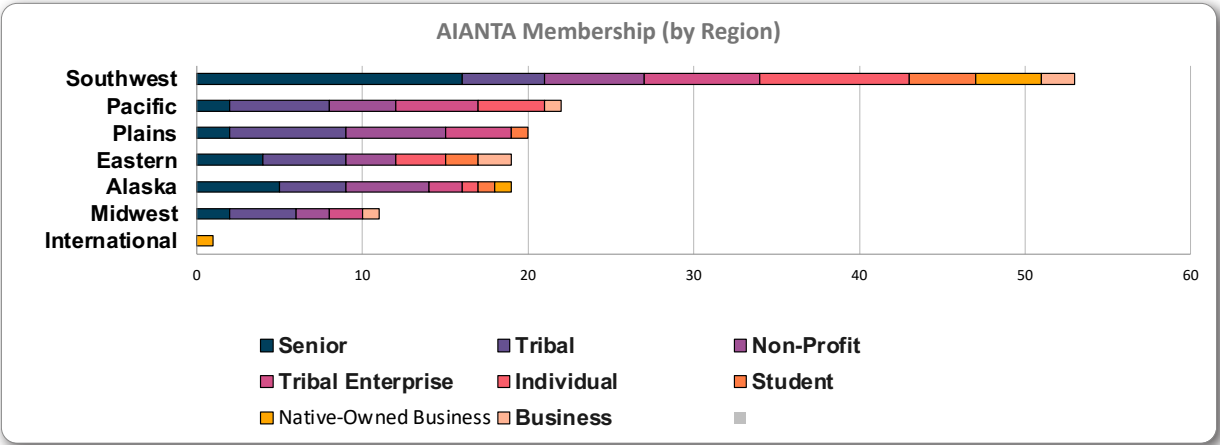
# Better Together

AIANTA has built a powerhouse network of tribal tourism professionals, hospitality industry employees and federal and congressional leaders which jointly offer an unrivaled collective of tribal tourism intelligence.

## Membership

AIANTA members—tribes, businesses and individuals—uniquely promote and honor tribal culture, while providing economic opportunities through tourism. This extensive resource network allows members to share and acquire knowledge with one another with a common goal of creating culturally authentic tourism.

The economic downturn was reflected in AIANTA’s membership outreach efforts, with total member revenue dipping by approximately 30% over the previous year.



## COVID-19 Outreach

As the hospitality industry looked for strategies and tools to aid them as they charted a new course, AIANTA released a weekly series of COVID-19 updates. AIANTA also released a survey querying the industry’s top priorities which were funding support/loans and marketing support.

## Partner/Peer-to-Peer Communications

- Member News: Sent to 75,399 recipients (over 10 months)
- COVID-19 Weekly Updates: Sent to 9,048 recipients (over 10 weeks)
- Opportunities: Sent to 39,995 recipients (over 12 months)
- Other Peer-to-Peer Communications: 414,526 recipients (over 12 months)

## Social Media Outreach

- AIANTA Facebook: Reach 27,854; likes 5.5k
- NativeAmerica.travel Facebook: Reach 1,184; likes 776

## Bureau of Indian Affairs (Agreement/NATIVE Act)

In accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding entered into with the United States Department of the Interior (Interior), the Department of Commerce (Commerce) and the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA), AIANTA was designated as the facilitator of Section 4(d)(3) of the NATIVE Act.

Per the MOU, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is working with AIANTA to fulfill the mission of the Act to “strengthen collaboration and coordination related to Travel and Tourism on Federal and Tribal lands.”

## Federal Interagency Tribal Tourism Group Meetings

Coordinated by AIANTA, monthly Federal Interagency Tribal Tourism Group Meetings facilitated communications among federal agencies invested in economic development through cultural tourism. Invited agencies include the Department of Commerce (Commerce), Department of the Interior (Interior), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Economic Development Agency (EDA), National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Smithsonian Institute, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Topics include AIANTA program updates as well as federal agencies cultural tourism initiatives and activities.

## Native American Agriculture Fund

A partnership with the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) resulted in a significant expansion of agritourism content on NativeAmerica.travel as well as a new resource guidebook, Case Studies in Tribal Agritourism.

The first guide of its kind, it was created to serve as an inspiration for indigenous farmers, ranchers and other food producers interested in expanding their agricultural operations to include visitor components. Divided into six, two-part chapters, the handbook features six case studies from successful Native-owned agritourism enterprises across the United States. Each case study is followed by an educational module that provides additional inspiration for food producers looking to create, develop or expand their own agritourism programming.

“The original articles showcase experienced tribal producers who graciously share their years of wisdom in order to help those who are new to the field,” said AIANTA CEO Sherry L. Rupert in a press release. “I’d like to extend a warm thank you to everyone who gave their time and knowledge to make this handbook happen.”

Participating enterprises include:

- Choctaw Nation (Chahta Yakni) of Oklahoma
- Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation (California)
- Icy Strait Point (Huna Tlingit, Alaska)
- Pueblo of Santa Ana (New Mexico)
- Big Apple Fest (Oneida Nation of Wisconsin)
- Iroquois White Corn Project (Seneca Nation of Indians, New York)

## Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail

In FY2020, AIANTA signed a partnership with the National Park Service to work with tribes adjacent to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. This geotourism project calls for the development of new cultural heritage content and itineraries to be featured on the Trail’s travel website LewisandClark.travel as well as NativeAmerica.travel.

## Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail

FY2020 also welcomed the signing of a second NPS agreement, in partnership with the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. The three-year partnership will result in educational webinars for tribes, a print/online guidebook reflecting past and present-day tribal attractions at key spots along the trail, and a first-of-its kind map that will highlight key locations along the trail in original native languages.



*The original articles showcase experienced tribal producers who graciously share their years of wisdom in order to help those who are new to the field*

*AIANTA members uniquely promote and honor tribal culture while providing economic opportunities*



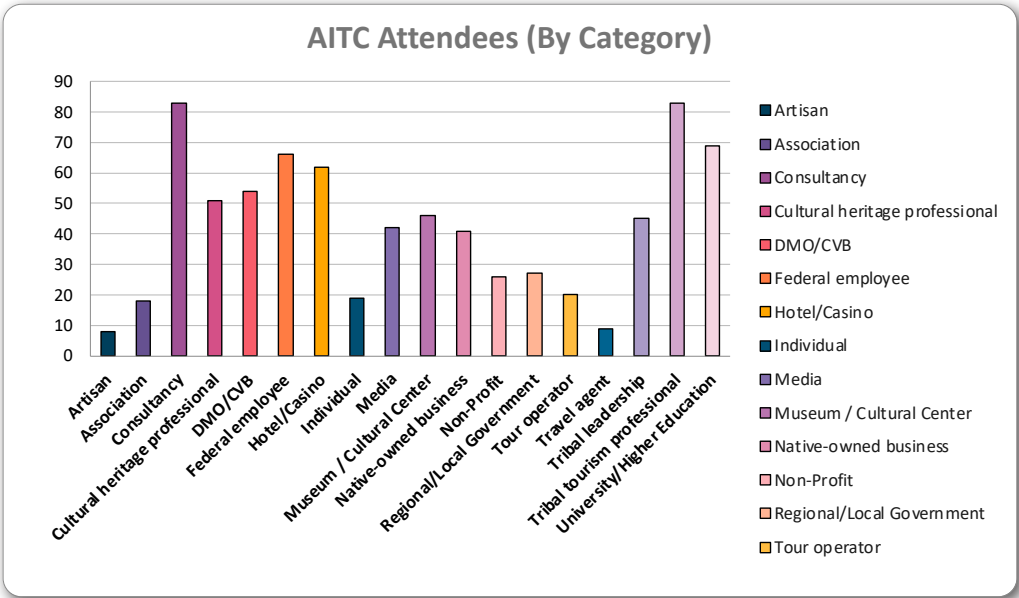
# Collective Intelligence

As AIANTA works diligently to provide technical assistance and training to Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian tourism enterprises, the organization has seen a dramatic increase in online engagement, including a record-breaking attendance at its first-ever virtual conference.

## 22nd Annual American Indian Tourism Conference (AITC)

AIANTA hosted its first-ever virtual American Indian Tourism Conference (AITC) from September 14-18, 2020. The conference welcomed a record-breaking attendance of 801 registrants over the period of five days, with a total of 781 active participants. This attendance reflected a dramatic 186% increase in registrations over 2019.

The only national conference dedicated to travel and tourism in Indian Country, AITC connects tribal leaders and tourism enterprises with tourism and hospitality professionals to help grow tourism in tribal communities throughout the United States. AITC programs are designed to encourage conversations and the cultivation of personal and professional networks with like-minded tourism and global industry experts.



## AITC Regional Meetings

During AITC, AIANTA hosted regional breakout sessions for attendees located in AIANTA's six U.S. regions. The focus of this year's gatherings included the impact of COVID-19 on cultural tourism and tourism priorities as the industry emerges from the pandemic.

Participation by region:

- Alaska – 21 Participants
- Eastern Region – 22 Participants
- Midwest Region – 15 Participant
- Pacific Region – 39 Participants
- Plains Region – 34 Participants
- Southwest Region – 47 Participants

## Excellence in Tourism Industry Awards

Every year, AIANTA recognizes tribal tourism entities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to showcasing authentic culture, history, heritage and/or the arts in its Excellence in Tourism Industry Awards program. FY2020 winners include:

- Cherokee Nation, Tribal Destination of the Year
- Arizona Indian Festival, Best Cultural Heritage Experience
- Linda Taylor (Cherokee Nation), Excellence in Customer Service
- Bonnie Sprague (Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe), General Manager; Industry Professional of the Year Award

## Tourism & Hospitality Scholarship

Every year, AIANTA awards three individuals who have met all scholarship application criteria with a Tourism & Hospitality Scholarship. 2020 recipients include:

- Charles Suazo (Santa Clara Pueblo), Graduated from Central New Mexico Community College with Associates Degree in Culinary Arts, and two certificate programs in Baking and Culinary Fundamentals
- Mckenzie Lazore (Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe), Niagara University, Hotel/Luxury Hospitality Operations
- Jaymie Killsfirst (Apache Tribe of Oklahoma), Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, Business Administration/Culinary Arts

*I would like to thank you and AIANTA for the monetary assistance during my time at CNM in Albuquerque. I have completed my Associates Degree in Culinary Arts and received two Certificates, one in Baking and the other in Culinary Fundamentals. I am grateful for the support you all have given. "Kunda woha" —Charles Suazo*

## Go International

AIANTA's annual Go International, held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is a two-day workshop featuring expert speakers and in-depth training to help tribes, tribal communities, Native-owned tourism businesses and other tourism professionals in conceptualizing and developing their tourism product(s) and promoting them to international audiences. In 2020, the program welcomed 19 participants, with a majority originating from the Southwest region

## Professional Certificate Program in Cultural Tourism

The Professional Certificate Program in Cultural Tourism offered by AIANTA in partnership with the George Washington University (GW), International Institute of Tourism Studies, is a self-managed online program comprised of six courses, with one course scheduled per week. Each course typically requires 6-8 hours of study, including readings, instructor presentations and guest lectures. In the fall of 2019, GW and AIANTA offered the third annual program from September 30 to November 17, 2019.

Based on the course evaluations, 95% of survey respondents for the fall 2019 online program indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they now have a better understanding of the course topics. Of the 34 students enrolled at the start of the program, 21 learners completed the course successfully and received certificates.

## Webinar Series

AIANTA teamed up with industry and federal partners to provide a series of webinars on resource development opportunities and other tourism-related topics. Most webinars are designed to equip organizations with the information needed to find and apply for funding opportunities that support cultural heritage tourism development. Others provide needed information on challenges and obstacles facing the tourism industry. All webinars are provided without charge.

- 17 webinars
- Registrants: 1,448
- Live participants: 799