



South Dakota Native Tourism Alliance to Unveil New Tourism Economic Development Plan at Tourism Forum, August 26, 2021

(Rapid City, SD) August, 17, 2021 — Efforts are on the way to ensure the inclusion of Native American communities in South Dakota tourism through the launch of the **Native American Tourism Development and Management Plan, 2020-2025, South Dakota**, which is one of the first initiatives of its kind under the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience (NATIVE) Act. Under the new plan, the first alliance of its kind in the United States brings together nine federally recognized tribal nations in South Dakota to form the **South Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (SDNTA)** a network of more than 60 organizations, and local, state, and federal partners, working together to develop Native American tourism as a catalyst for economic growth.

This tourism development initiative has been steered by the George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies in partnership with its South Dakota and federal agency partners including the Office of Indian Economic Development, U.S. Department of the Interior, and will be unveiled at a launch event at the **Journey Museum in Rapid City, South Dakota, on August 26, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. MT.**

Tribal Nations in South Dakota are stewards of a diverse array of natural and cultural resources that offer untapped possibilities for tourism. However, these communities remain hidden gems despite the many recreational opportunities available—outdoor activities including hunting and fishing, rich cultural and sporting events such as wacipis, rodeos and fairs, and gaming opportunities.

“A focus on native tourism is a priority for the South Dakota Department of Tourism. SDNTA is committed to being a resource and laying the groundwork for development and promotion of tourism on tribal lands. We look forward to our work with the SDNTA to create more tourism opportunities for our tribes and we are proud to be a partner in this alliance,” said **James Hagen, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Tourism.**

“The SDNTA is now working to implement priority initiative projects with support from Tribal Nation leaders, the George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies, the South Dakota Department of Tourism, and industry partners. Through this alliance, we hope to boost Oceti Sakowin’s (Seven Council Fires) Oyate economic development through responsible tourism that promotes and maintains Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota values,” said **David Flute, Secretary of South Dakota Department of Tribal Relations.**

“The vision for Native American tourism in South Dakota is to provide long-lasting economic sustainability and empower communities to define the scope of tourism activities on tribal lands and tell their stories,” said **Seleni Matus, Executive Director at the George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies.** “With the right support and effort, tourism can become a force for good, providing jobs and economic vitality, as well as providing opportunities to protect and preserve natural resources and cultural history for generations to come.”

“The Office of Indian Economic Development proudly funds the George Washington University tourism technical assistance efforts as part of the NATIVE Act implementation. As one of our technical assistance partners, the George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies is developing a tourism approach and toolkit that Native American communities can use in South Dakota and beyond. This work enables development of tourism efforts that effectively implement economic development strategies guided by tribally designed tourism approaches intended to support their communities.” said **Denise Edwards, Acting Director of the Office of Indian Economic Development.** “This demonstration initiative will strengthen self-determination and self-governance capabilities in South Dakota Native American communities promoting greater self-sufficiency.”



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While South Dakota welcomed 14.5 million visitors who contributed \$2.75 billion to GDP in 2019, there is no meaningful connection occurring between those tourists and the Tribal Nations in South Dakota. The SDNTA aims to change this trajectory by developing tourism products that will attract domestic and international visitors from main tourism hubs throughout South Dakota to lesser-known tribal lands, indigenous homelands, and Native communities.

The event will showcase the current work of the SDNTA, host a panel of Native American tourism entrepreneurs and leaders, and showcase Native American cultural activities. The schedule will include:

- Opening prayer and ceremony with Gerald Yellow Hawk and the Moreno Family Drum Group
- Dynamic speakers including Tribal Chairmen and Presidents, Secretary Flute from Department of Tribal Relations and Secretary Hagen from Department of Tourism, representatives of South Dakota Congressional leaders that supported the NATIVE Act, and tribal tourism ambassadors and leaders
- Presentations by SDNTA members about tourism development in Native American communities and project successes so far - including an educational campaign video and the new SDNTA website
- A local Native lunch and presentation by Lisa and Arlo Iron Cloud and Linda and Luke Black Elk
- Presentation by Lauren McNabb, Miss HeSapa Win of the Black Hills pow wow

Attendees can register for the event in person or virtually at the following link: <https://form.jotform.com/211866680965166>. Media is invited.

Details for the live streaming of the event are at the SDNTA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/South-Dakota-Native-Tourism-Alliance>

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The George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies

As a global leader in tourism education and research, [George Washington University's International Institute of Tourism Studies](#) has been guiding businesses, communities, governments, and nonprofits toward sustainability for more than thirty years. They advance critical industry issues through thought leadership and research, provide professional-level certificate programs, courses, and workshops in destination management and cultural heritage tourism.

The International Institute of Tourism Studies works with tribal communities to develop their tourism potential, helping them to take stock of and develop their assets, plan and build their capacity, and promote their offerings. Areas of focus include tribal tourism governance, capacity building and product development. They serve as the technical assistance partner of the Office of Indian Economic Development, U.S. Department of the Interior to develop regional tourism initiatives in South Dakota and North Dakota.

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