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American Indian Alaska Native
Tourism Association

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Press Release

American Indian Tourism Conference Celebrates Alaska Native Culture and Heritage

The annual conference hosted by AIANTA welcomes Inupiaq celebrity influencer Patuk Glenn and Alaska Travel Industry Association CEO Sarah Leonard.

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO (October 25, 2021) —The Alaska travel industry is celebrating Native culture and heritage in full force at the annual American Indian Tourism Conference (AITC), which unfolds in Fort McDowell, Arizona, Oct. 25-28, 2021. Headlining the conference closing “The Heart Speaks” session is Patuk Glenn, the executive director of the Article Slope Foundation who will speak about *Authentically Sharing Your Culture*. The celebrity Inupiaq influencer gained international fame after she shared a series of TikTok videos celebrating her Alaska Native culture.

Also joining AITC is Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) President & CEO Sarah Leonard, who will be a co-panelist during the *How to Work with Your State Tourism Office* breakout session. ATIA incorporates Alaska Native tourism in its programming and digital marketing, including an Alaska Native Cultural Host Seminar training program designed with assistance from the Cook Inlet Tribal Council to provide a greater understanding and appreciation of Alaska Native culture for workers within Alaska’s hospitality and tourism industry.

AITC’s other educational sessions include the *Cultural Tourism and Youth Programming at the Alaska Native Heritage Center* breakout session, featuring Tara Bourdukofsky (Ahtna Athabasca), Cultural Heritage and Education Director and Jamieann Bell (Ahtna Athabaskan), Facility Sales and Cultural Tourism Manager of the Alaska Native Heritage Center; and *Pricing Your Product for the Travel Trade* featuring AIANTA Board Member Camille Ferguson (Tlingit), the Economic Development Director for the Sitka Tribe of Alaska.

“We are very pleased to welcome such a large cohort of Alaska Native family to AITC,” said AIANTA CEO Sherry L. Rupert. “With more than 230 federally recognized tribes in Alaska, we look forward to sharing culture and heritage with representatives from around the state. It is a true testament to the importance of Alaska Native culture that we welcome Sarah Leonard, the president and CEO of the Alaska Travel Industry Association to this year’s conference.” In total, seven percent of conference delegates are from Alaska.

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Conference attendees will also enjoy a viewing of the film, *Into America's Wild*, courtesy of Brand USA. The film explores America's Wild Places and stars, among others, Alaska Native bush pilot Ariel Tweto (Inupiat).

During the conference, AIANTA will also announce a shifting of its regional representation, which has boosted AIANTA's regional map from six regions to 15. The new map means expanded representation on AIANTA's Board of Directors, including two director positions in Alaska, one for Northern Alaska and one for Southeast Alaska.

The American Indian Tourism Conference takes place Oct. 25-28, 2021, at the We-Ko-Pa Casino Resort in Fort McDowell, Arizona. For more information, visit www.ainta.org/aitc.

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About AIANTA

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. AIANTA's mission is to define, introduce, grow and sustain American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian tourism that honors traditions and values. www.ainta.org

About the Alaska Travel Industry Association

The Alaska Travel Industry Association, Alaska's leading statewide nonprofit membership association for the travel industry, promotes Alaska's tourism industry as an economic contributor while providing statewide marketing resources, education opportunities and advocacy to members. ATIA has long managed Alaska's destination marketing program: Travel Alaska. The ATIA Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)3 that supports programs that educate and enhance the quality of Alaska's visitor industry and educates the general public regarding tourism. For more information, visit www.alaskatia.org.

For more information and images, contact:

Monica Poling

Marketing & PR Manager

AIANTA

mpoling@ainta.org