

Tribal and State Relations Committee
Wednesday January 18, 2012
Harvest Room - State Capitol
Chairman: Senator David O'Connell

Good Morning Chairman O'Connell and members of the Tribal and State Relations Committee. I am Sara Otte Coleman, the Director of the Tourism Division in the North Dakota Department of Commerce, and I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to highlight how we work to increase opportunities for travelers to experience our state's rich Native American culture.

The Legendary brand is celebrating its 10th anniversary and was founded on research that identified the stories of our historic legends as our unique offering. Theodore Roosevelt, Sakakawea, Lewis and Clark and Sitting Bull are among the cast in showcasing our rich history and culture. We have worked closely over the past 10 years with our partners in tribal tourism to tell this story, build and expand offerings and market these experiences to visitors across the world.

We have partnered with tribal tourism representatives, Indian Affairs Commission staff and UTTC on a number of projects and initiatives, including:

Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Initiative:

- Worked together in writing copy and designing content for promotional pieces like the travel guide, our website and the Lewis and Clark Trail Guide.
- Partnering with Standing Rock and Three Affiliated Tribes in developing our Lewis & Clark marketing plans. Both had a seat on the Governor's advisory board.
- Worked with the Indian Affairs Commission to produce an updated "North Dakota American Indian" brochure.
- Worked with tribal officials to develop our Lewis and Clark hospitality training pieces and video.
- Developed a funding mechanism to assist in funding for the two signature events held in New Town, "*The Reunion at the Home of Sakakawea*" (2006) and in Bismarck, "*Circle of Cultures: Time of Renewal and Exchange*" (2004) during the bicentennial and assisted with planning and hosting. We also successfully nominated both Signature events for the American Bus Association's "Top 100 Events in North America" and marketed the events accordingly.

International Marketing

- Brought numerous media officials and group tour planners on familiarization tours to sites rich in American Indian history and culture, both on and off the reservations:
 - Media FAMS - hosted media on all of our reservations in the past four years:
 - Norway - MHA Earthlodge Village
 - Germany and Australia - United Tribes International Powwow
 - Germany - Turtle Mountain Tourism FAM
 - Germany - Fort Totten Historical FAM
 - Denmark - Standing Rock FAM
- Success Stories:
 - New Town Earthlodge Village - 4-6 page story printed in four languages: Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Danish in the Discover America Magazine
 - UTTC Powwow - 4 page story on the Powwow in: Australian Associated Press, America Journal (Germany), Münchner Abendzeitung (Munich), Turism & Resor Hit & Dit (Sweden) and Standby (Denmark).
 - Statewide and Fort Totten - 3 page story in America Journal
 - Standing Rock: 2 stories three years apart on the Bison Herd – Politiken mag (Denmark)
 - All Tribal areas – Escape magazine (Australia) and America Journal (Germany)
- Partnered with Iceland Air and the Fort Abraham Lincoln Foundation to bring four North Dakotans over to Scandinavia to tell of their native culture and share their talents with potential visitors to North Dakota.
- Continue to showcase and sell the many Native American experiences available to visitors from Germany, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, Denmark, Australia and New Zealand through paid advertising, attending staff trainings, exhibiting at shows, hosting them in North Dakota and paid placements in product sales catalogs.
- Work with the American Indian and Alaska Native Tourism Association in having a broader overseas presence.
- The North Dakota Travel Industry awarded the *2008 International Award – Governor's Awards for Travel and Tourism* to the United Tribes Powwow.

Product Development

- Attended numerous planning meetings to develop a statewide Native American tourism association to work together in developing consistent visitor experience opportunities and cooperative marketing plans.
- We have funded eight projects through our grants programs. Four of these grants were awarded to marketing a Native American experience and four grants were awarded to help develop attractions to attract more visitors, including:
 - \$15,750 to Sitting Bull College to build a Tipi Village for the “Pageant of the Plains” outdoor production
 - \$24,000 to the Three Affiliated Tribes for renovation of the Tribal Tourism Visitor Center in New Town
 - \$20,660 to the Fort Totten State Historic Site Foundation for restoration and interpretation of three of the fort buildings
- Participated in many meetings to help the local communities understand the potential for tourism growth and assist them in using the many tools we have available to them, such as our free listings, itineraries and package creation, and assistance with digital marketing like web sites and social media.
- Together with the United Tribes Technical College and Standing Rock Tribal Tourism, we are currently participating in a Multi-state Regional Tourism Entrepreneurship Project with the states of South Dakota, Wyoming and Montana to cross-promote heritage tourism and develop entrepreneurship opportunities in the region.
- Working with our sister divisions and the Indian Affairs Commission to create an Indian Business Alliance to work in concert with the Indian Business Development Office in helping drive and grow more business on the reservations.

General Marketing:

- Continue to feature the powwows, attractions, events and tours both on and off the reservations that allow visitors to learn more about this rich culture. These are included on our web sites, in our printed materials, in advertisements, on display booth banners, in digital marketing efforts and media releases to name a few.
- Media familiarization trips and pitches have resulted in a number of stories printed in US publications, including:
 - AAA Living – Missouri River Color - highlights Native American sites along Missouri River
 - Western Group Tour Magazine, fall 2011- United Tribes International Powwow

- Canadian Traveler--America, July 2011 - Earth Lodge Village
- Wild West Magazine, June 2011 - On-A-Slant Indian Village and Knife River Indian Villages

- Continue to sell the experiences to group tours by doing sales trips, calls and attending marketplaces.

- We have nominated the United Tribes Powwow to the American Bus Association's "Top 100 Events in North America" numerous times, resulting in them getting this distinction seven times.

As you can see, we have worked very closely with our partners to create and sell these rich experiences. Expansion of these efforts is only limited by our budget (which does not allow us to dedicate funding to specific areas) and the creativity needed to develop ideas on how to interpret, package and sell a consistent visitor experience that will have our visitors coming back for more.

I would be happy to answer any questions.