

NATOM — Native American Tourism of Minnesota, a Minnesota-based 501(c) 3

The mission of Explore Minnesota is to inspire consumers and facilitate their travel to and within Minnesota. At present, Minnesota has no corollary for Native American tourism. Specifically, there is no means of marketing Native American tourism, including destinations, lodging, sacred sites, attractions, restaurants, events and outdoor recreation. NATOM aims to change this.

NATOM’S MISSION

Native American Tourism of Minnesota’s (NATOM) mission is to honor and dignify the history, traditions and values of its eleven Indian Nations by creating a robust, relevant, and sustainable native tourism industry.

NATOM achieves its mission, in part, by inviting the world to come to Minnesota (Mni- sota) and its tribal lands, and participate in one-of-a-kind journeys of Native American heritage, culture, and understanding, starting with the very basics — the name of our state. “Minnesota” derives from the Dakota phrase *Mni Sota Makoce*, which roughly translates to “Land Where the Waters Reflect the Clouds,” a Dakota observation that the river’s opaque water was perhaps due to the limestone.

NATOM-facilitated tours leave the museum behind, and guide its patrons into the sacred sites and sacred spaces of Native peoples. NATOM tours offer an opportunity to experience an authentic point of view, and endow the tribes with the power of telling their own stories on their own terms. With NATOM, we expand the boundaries of tourism, and encourage participation in the rich native traditions which include canoeing, ricing, fishing, hunting, garment-making and sugar bush maple syrup production and much more.

WHO IS NATOM?

NATOM has been incorporated as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit corporation under both the laws of the State of Minnesota and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. The Organization has appointed an Organizational Board of Directors. The IOB has appointed Officers, authorized the Organization to engage in fundraising and authorized the 501 (c) 3

application to the IRS. The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council has unanimously endorsed NATOM.

NATOM'S REQUEST

NATOM is Minnesota's future of cultural and heritage tourism. It is inspired by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund's ("ACHF") stated 25-Year Vision, Framework, and Guiding Principles. Appropriately, NATOM is looking to the ACHF for funding so that its cultural heritage program can, in the words of ACHF "lead to new Minnesota-grown businesses that thrive in a state that invests in the creativity of its entire people." NATOM appreciates ACHF's stated goal that "Every Minnesotan [has] a voice and [is] able to see the expression of his or her personal heritage in Minnesota's arts, history and cultural heritage works."

Funding from the ACHF will help NATOM reach a worldwide market who are eager to travel great distances to learn about Mni-sota's Indian culture and history.

Through consumer advertising, public relations, publications, websites, social media, international marketing and other efforts, NATOM will reach millions of potential travelers each year. NATOM's work to promote tourism in Minnesota will contribute to the economy and encourage business growth and employment opportunities.

THE MARKET

There is substantial, untapped business potential for a well-developed Native American heritage-and-culture tourism industry. Native tourism is a compelling springboard for each of Minnesota's eleven tribes to diversify their economies and enhance their economic self-sufficiency.

Tourism is a \$12.5 billion industry in Minnesota, and a key sector of the state's economy. The leisure and hospitality industry – a major provider of tourism services – employs more than 245,000 workers, representing 11 percent of Minnesota's private sector employment. Leisure and hospitality also generates 17 percent of the state's sales tax revenues. Every \$1 invested in state tourism marketing returns an estimated

\$8 in state and local taxes, and \$84 in consumer spending by travelers who visit Minnesota.

“Every dollar we invest in promoting Minnesota tourism brings another \$84 of consumer spending into our state’s economy – supporting Minnesota’s vitally important hospitality industry,” said Governor Dayton. “That is why I worked with the Legislature last year to increase Explore Minnesota Tourism’s budget by over 65 percent.”

Tribal properties are not included in this calculus. Tribal properties are not currently promoted or mentioned in any Explore MN advertising or media campaigns.

NATOM & EXPLORE MINNESOTA

NATOM complements Explore Minnesota’s role as a Convention and Visitor’s Bureau (“CVB”). NATOM will be the Convention and Visitor’s Bureau — the tourism arm — for the 11 Tribes in Minnesota. To that end, NATOM will be the “one stop” shop and will assist and market Tribal Facilities and Tribal Tourism-related Industries, incorporating Minnesota’s casinos, resorts and their related conference centers. Accordingly, NATOM’s primary function will be to attract and promote the existing conference center facilities currently owned by the tribes, increase the hotel room occupancy and to increase leisure/ family visitors by marketing aggressively to the greater tourism market.

At present, there is little to no coordination between Explore Minnesota and Minnesota Indian Tribes. NATOM changes that. John Erdman, the Director of Explore Minnesota, was appointed to Brand USA, an entity whose mission is to promote the United States, particularly the Midwest, overseas. Minnesota Indian Tribes, with its rich history and cultures, should be a partner with the Director of Explore Minnesota in fulfilling this vital mission.

At the Explore Minnesota Tourism Council’s full-day strategic planning retreat, its members conducted a 10 year forecast, envisioning Minnesota to be “a globally known destination, that through environmental preservation and expanding marketing efforts has established itself as a premier outdoor and recreational tourist destination that

leverages its cultural heritage and diversity to create accessible, authentic and signature experiences for all visitors.”

At this same event, the Minnesota Tourism Council felt that future decisions must:

- Support and benefit the economy of Minnesota
- Be authentic and on brand to the state of Minnesota
- Be regionally equitable and promote all parts of Minnesota
- Be bold, innovative, progressive and responsive
- Be evidence-based and non-partisan

NATOM’s mission and that of the Minnesota Tourism Council are complementary to each other. A strong NATOM makes Minnesota stronger.

NATIVE ACT (Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act)
Synopsis

On September 23, 2016, President Obama signed the NATIVE Act into law, which requires the Department of Commerce, the Department of the Interior, and federal agencies with recreational travel or tourism functions to update their management plans and tourism initiatives to include Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations. NATOM will coordinate with Senator Amy Klobuchar (former Chair of the bi-partisan Senate Tourism Caucus) and Senator Tina Smith to explore any opportunities that might exist for NATOM regarding the NATIVE Act.

NATOM'S INITIATIVE

Near term goals:

- Refine, further develop and expand NATOM's offering of one-of-a-kind journeys of Native American heritage, culture, and understanding. NATOM-crafted tours guide its patrons into the sacred sites and sacred spaces of Native people, and engage them in the rich native traditions such as canoeing, ricing, fishing, hunting, garment-making and sugar bush maple syrup production and many others..
- Interface with each of Minnesota's 11 Tribal nations to identify particular tourism opportunities on their tribal lands and at their tribally-owned facilities.
- NATOM-AS-CONVENTION-AND-VISITORS BUREAU for Minnesota's Tribal nations. NATOM can be Minnesota's tourism & marketing organization, specializing in developing convention business, meetings, conferences and visitations to its 11 Tribal nations. NATOM can work with planners and give them access to expert local service providers.

Long term goals:

- Inspire and influence visitation and associated spend from new & existing domestic and global markets
- To inspire consumers and facilitate their travel to and within the state of Minnesota's Tribal Nations
- Reinforce the relationships between tribes and tourism groups
- Reach a worldwide demographic who is highly attracted to Native American Culture and History, who would be compelled to visit Minnesota beyond the appeal of its casino gaming resort industry.

- Build the small business opportunities for Tribal Members through their participation in NATOM activities
- Reach millions of potential travelers each year through consumer advertising, public relations, publications, websites, social media, international marketing and other efforts.
- Promote tourism in Minnesota and contribute to a thriving economy that encourages business growth and employment opportunities.

NATOM'S VALUES

Diversity of all types. As a tourism destination, Minnesota offers a diverse array of destinations, activities and events. As a workplace and springboard of opportunity, we wish to honor the wide array of backgrounds, opinions and work styles various employees may bring to the table.

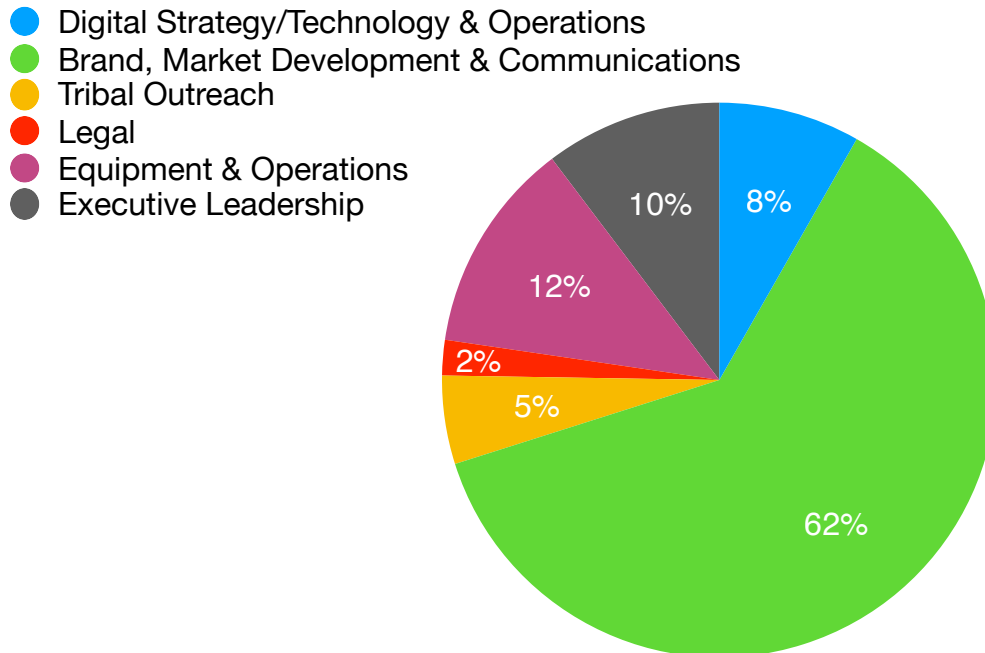
Creativity in product and problem solving. Developing creative ways to market Minnesota as an attractive destination is in everyone's job description.

Teamwork. Every team member, as well as our peers in the Minnesota tourism industry, strive to work together toward the same goal of promoting Minnesota as a great place to visit.

Integrity. Whether it's a promise to travelers, our industry peers or each other, we accomplish what we set out to do and strive to exceed expectations with every project, while remaining honest and ethical no matter what.

Exceptional customer service. Our extensive library of travel information and resources is second to none, accessible to all, and always delivered with a smile.

BUDGET CATEGORIES - ANNUAL APPROPRIATION \$1.5 Million USD



DIGITAL STRATEGY/TECHNOLOGY AND OPERATIONS — NATOM will need to develop an overall web experience, including updating communications and e-commerce capabilities. There will have to be a strategic platform for the NATOM online experience, one that NATOM leadership can easily manage and update.

BRAND, CONTENT AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNICATIONS— NATOM will want to hone its brand, and reach the domestic and international markets through compelling online content. NATOM will work with each of the representatives of the tribes and with the Minnesota Historical Society to further refine the scope and reach of its tours.

TRIBAL OUTREACH - Outreach must be made to all 11 Tribal Governments in Minnesota welcoming and facilitating their active participation. There is substantial work to be done as NATOM transitions from the Interim Organizational Board to the

Permanent Governing Board (as those terms are defined in the current NATOM bylaws). Specifically, this will include visits to the Reservations to meet with the individual Tribal Councils, drafting of resolutions and other legal documents necessary for the Tribal Governments to join and contribute to NATOM. Individual Tribal Government may seek amendments to the existing by-laws of NATOM.

LEGAL — In addition to 501 (c) 3 maintenance, NATOM will make application to the U.S. Patent and Trade Office for protection of its intellectual property.

EQUIPMENT & OPERATIONS— NATOM will be looking to utilize environmentally friendly purchases (or leases) for its tour vehicles, including electric models.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Director and a support team.

NATIVE ACT: Public Law No: 114-221 (09/23/2016)

Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act or the NATIVE Act

(Sec. 4) This bill requires the Department of Commerce, the Department of the Interior, and federal agencies with recreational travel or tourism functions to update their management plans and tourism initiatives to include Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations.

The plans must outline proposals to:

- improve travel and tourism data collection and analysis,
- increase the usability of public information and federal websites,
- support national tourism goals,
- identify programs that could support tourism infrastructure in Native American communities,
- develop visitor portals and assets that showcase and respect the diversity of Native Americans,
- share local Native American heritage through the development of bilingual signage, and
- improve access to transportation programs for building capacity for Native American community tourism and trade.

Interior and Commerce must: (1) work with a facilitator to provide technical assistance to Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations regarding participation in the tourism industry, and (2) report on departmental efforts supporting such participation.

(Sec. 5) Federal agencies must: (1) support Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations in showcasing their history, culture, and continuing vitality, enhancing or maintaining their distinctive cultural features,

and providing authentic and respectful visitor experiences; (2) assist in interpreting the connections between Native Americans and the national identity of the United States; (3) enhance efforts to promote understanding and respect for diverse cultures in the United States and the relevance of those cultures; and (4) ensure that travelers at airports and ports of entry are welcomed in a manner that both showcases and respects the diversity of Native American communities. Grants relating to travel, recreation, or tourism for which Indian tribes, tribal organizations, or Native Hawaiian organizations are eligible may be used to: (1) support their efforts to present their story and culture, (2) revitalize Native American communities using the arts and humanities, and (3) carry out this Act. The Smithsonian Institution must work with Indian tribes, tribal organizations, Native Hawaiian organizations, and nonprofits to share collections and conduct joint research and projects with museums, educational organizations, and cultural organizations.

BIOGRAPHIES

Melanie Benjamin

Chief Executive As Chief Executive of the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Melanie Benjamin leads the Executive Branch of tribal government, which implements Band laws and programs. As Chief Executive, Benjamin is statutorily responsible for conducting external relations on behalf of the Band with all other governments and political subdivisions. Benjamin was first elected Chief Executive in 2000, and was re-elected in 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016.

Sonja Upton is known by many in Minnesota's Indian Country as the former Owner/CEO of T & T Travel and Native Tours. Sonja built this business from scratch to a thriving concern serving 135 Tribes and Fortune 500 businesses, creating jobs for 8 additional people and generating \$10 million in sales revenue a year. Her business was designated as the Official Travel Agency for NCAI, NIGA and NABA. Sonja has served on the Boards of the Minnesota American Indian Chamber of Commerce, MN Minority Supplier Development Council and was an appointee to the Governor's Commission on Tourism. Sonja holds a B.S. in Business Administration from Bemidji State and is an enrolled member of the White Earth Nation.

Doug Twait has been of great assistance in doing the initial legal and strategy work necessary to found the organization. He has been doing quality legal work with Minnesota Indians since 1988 and was an active participant in the original negotiations of our Tribal-State gaming compacts. More recently, he was legal counsel to the Northern Minnesota Tribal Economic Development Commission, an organization designed to advance the interests of multiple Indian Tribes, much like NATOM.

Denise Gardner is a licensed attorney, and owns a commercial & video production facility in Northeast Minneapolis, where she has run her production company F-Stop Productions for the last 15 years. She and her partner own River East Development, a commercial property development firm. Denise has worked as a series associate producer for HGTV, the Do-It-Yourself Network, and the History Channel. She has been professionally involved in the development, production and marketing of numerous independently-financed films, commercials and documentaries, including *Hiding Victoria*, *Pride of Lions*, and *Titanic Syndrome*. Her latest project is a global television series on ocean exploration titled *Expedition Earth*.