

# **Native American Tourism Development & Management Plan South Dakota 2020-2025**

## **SUMMARY DOCUMENT**



PREPARED BY:

**International Institute  
of Tourism Studies**

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY





Courtesy of South Dakota Department of Tourism





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of Earth and Sky



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Tribal Nations in South Dakota are stewards of a diverse array of natural and cultural resources that offer untapped possibilities for tourism. However, they remain hidden gems despite the many recreational opportunities available, such as nature and outdoor activities including hunting and fishing; rich cultural and sporting events such as wacipis (also known as powwows), rodeos, fairs and sporting tournaments; and casinos and gaming.

While South Dakota welcomed 14.5 million visitors, who contributed \$2.75 billion to GDP in 2019, there is no meaningful connectivity of tourism flows occurring between the millions of tourists who visit the major attractions in and around the Black Hills region, Badlands National Park and Sioux Falls, and the Tribal Nations in South Dakota.<sup>1</sup> There is no data available on visitor arrivals except for the Pine Ridge Reservation, where several tourism attractions and site managers monitor arrivals. Pine Ridge receives an estimated 12,750 visitors per year.

In 2019, representatives from all nine federally recognized Tribal Nations in South Dakota, along with local, state and federal partners, came together as an ad hoc network—the South Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (SDNTA)—to assess the potential for Native American tourism. While there is a general lack of community awareness of tourism and its potential in Tribal Nations—as well as readiness and understanding of the market—SDNTA members believe that Native American tourism can be a catalyst for economic growth in Tribal Nations. SDNTA members believe that tourism can grow over time with concerted attention and effort, ultimately supporting community development and the protection of natural and cultural resources.

The Native American Tourism Development and Management Plan, South Dakota 2020–2025 (NATDMP) is the output of SDNTA's assessment of the potential for Native American tourism. It was developed over a 12-month period and involved more than 65 SDNTA local stakeholders through a participatory planning process facilitated by the George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies as part of a technical assistance project funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development.

The NATDMP presents a medium-term strategic blueprint. The NATDMP provides direction and guidance to tribal governments, state-level strategic partners, community leaders and the private sector for working together to enhance the preparedness of Tribal Nations to develop and manage tourism. The plan's purpose is to support the development of a sustainable Native American tourism industry that will inspire more people to visit, stay over, and spend more money in Tribal Nations, thereby contributing to the local economies and well-being of Native American communities in South Dakota.

This NATDMP Summary Document is an abbreviated, companion guide of the full strategic tourism plan that is presented separately. The Summary Document outlines the following key elements of the comprehensive strategic blueprint:

- An overview of the current situation;
- A shared vision and guiding principles;
- Main goals and accompanying strategies;
- Case study of the potential economic impacts of tourism on the Pine Ridge Reservation;
- Priority initiatives recommended for implementation in the short term; and
- Recommendations for implementation.

Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism provided a promising approach to sustainable development—a way for Native American communities to generate income, alleviate poverty, increase access to health care and education, and conserve their cultural and natural resources. While tourism is not currently a viable option for many communities given the impact of COVID-19, the NATDMP provides Tribal Nations the opportunity to plan for the future so that tourism—along with other development approaches—can eventually support the economic and social well-being of Native American communities in South Dakota. The NATDMP articulates ways in which tourism can drive economic recovery and development.

<sup>1</sup> Tourism Economics. (2019). Economic Impact of Tourism in South Dakota, 2019. Retrieved from [https://sdvisit.com/sites/default/files/2020-01/19Ecolmp\\_Tourism\\_Economics.pdf](https://sdvisit.com/sites/default/files/2020-01/19Ecolmp_Tourism_Economics.pdf).





## Where are we now?

A comprehensive analysis of the current situation identified key strengths, challenges and opportunities associated with development of Native American tourism in Tribal Nations located in South Dakota.

### A. Key Strengths

**1. Tourism assets:** A rich mix of tourism product assets, including 145 existing natural, cultural and heritage attractions and events as well as potential agritourism and culture assets.

**2. Proximity to mainstream tourism hubs:** Some Tribal reservations are located near existing major tourism and business hubs in South Dakota, connected by major highways and tourism routes.

- Black Hills & Rapid City Area (Western Hub): Pine Ridge & Rosebud Reservations
- Pierre/Fort Pierre Area (Central Hub): Crow Creek, Cheyenne River, and Lower Brule Reservations

**3. Resilience:** Widespread entrepreneurship, albeit mostly informal and small-scale, occurring in Native American communities throughout South Dakota demonstrates resilience.

**4. Emerging destinations:** Increasing tourism arrivals on the Pine Ridge Reservation (though they are still low); the Oglala Sioux Tribe, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe are currently exploring establishment of tourism offices.

**5. Partnership support:** Extensive network of non- Tribal organizations, educational institutions, business development entities and state entities support Native American tourism development. These include but are not limited to:

- SD Department of Tourism
- SD Department of Tribal Relations
- SD Arts Council
- U.S. Small Business Administration
- USDA Rural Development
- Small Business Development Center
- South Dakota Missouri River Tourism

A range of Tribal colleges and tertiary education institutions offer degrees in areas relevant to tourism that can help support workforce development.

**6. Unity:** Consensus among community leaders and other key stakeholders to work together through the SDNTA— the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ “Seven Council Fires” network to develop tourism as a catalyst for economic growth.



Photos courtesy of South Dakota Department of Tourism



## B. Key Challenges and Opportunities

MAIN CHALLENGES	KEY OPPORTUNITIES
<p>Most existing and potential attractions for tourism require further development.</p> <p>There are few existing Native American tourism experiences and tours offered in South Dakota.</p> <p>Due to COVID-19, many Tribal Nations are not receiving visitors. It is unknown when this will change.</p>	<p>Create and deliver iconic Native American experiences.</p>
<p>Most existing and potential tourism attractions on reservations are not market ready and need further development.</p> <p>Signs and directions are inadequate, and there is little sense of arrival in main towns.</p> <p>Public restroom facilities are inadequate.</p> <p>There are insufficient accommodation options on or near reservations.</p>	<p>Improve infrastructure and placemaking.</p>
<p>There are very few tourism businesses, and most are not market ready.</p> <p>Service and quality online ratings for accommodations and restaurants are moderate and limited.</p> <p>Entrepreneurs do not have access to viable financing and technical support.</p>	<p>Enable tourism business success and viability.</p>
<p>Community and Tribal leadership readiness and understanding of the market and potential opportunities of tourism is low.</p> <p>There is a need for hospitality and skills training in the Tribal Nation workforce.</p>	<p>Prepare community and skilled workforce in tourism.</p>
<p>Online trip planning information is limited.</p> <p>There is limited flow of visitors occurring between the major tourism hubs in South Dakota and Tribal Nations</p> <p>Complex and sensitive relationship between Native American and non-Native American communities and organizations, including at a tourism level.</p> <p>Tourism businesses are not organized to promote tourism in the nine Tribal Nations.</p>	<p>Increase awareness of Native American tourism offerings in South Dakota among key market segments.</p>
<p>There is limited collaboration among Tribal Nations and tourism stakeholders on tourism development.</p> <p>There are no Tribal government tourism offices or positions directed to manage and promote tourism in the Tribal Nations.</p>	<p>Manage tourism collaboratively.</p>



## Where will we be in 2025?

There is consensus among Native American leaders and other key stakeholders to work together to develop tourism as a catalyst for economic growth. The NATDMP sets forth a vision and strategy for the short and medium term that aims to increase tourism opportunities in Tribal Nations.

### A. Guiding Principles and Vision

The guiding principles of the shared vision are:

1. **UNITY:** reunification of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Oyate through shared history, commonalities, and collaboration on developing regional tourism
2. **PRESERVATION:** promotion of art and culture in order to enhance self-identity and pride as well as preserve the culture, including language and traditional knowledge
3. **WOKSAPE:** recognizing Elders as the driving force of traditional knowledge and wisdom in the development of regional tourism and educating the youth to be stewards of the language and culture

4. **EDUCATION:** creating cross-cultural bridges and educating the World about Native American communities
5. **SELF-SUFFICIENCY:** providing opportunities for Tribal Nations to become self-sufficient and create pathways to enhance livelihood

#### VISION

By 2025, Tribal Nations are actively working with industry and state and federal partners to develop Native American tourism experiences that are attracting visitors, encouraging them to stay and experience more in Tribal Nations, ultimately bolstering local economies and the well-being of Native American communities.





## B. Goals and Strategies

The overarching five-year aim will be to develop Native American tourism opportunities in South Dakota. The main goals and corresponding strategies are outlined below:

SDNTA members believe firmly that tourism can help to promote and maintain the Lakota values of Respect, Compassion, Honesty, Generosity, Humility, and Wisdom. Furthermore, achieving this overarching goal will help to re-engage the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Oyate as well as reinforce community pride and culture.

GOAL	STRATEGY
1. Create and deliver iconic Native American experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.1 Develop authentic and differentiated Native American products and experiences that connect Tribal Nations along existing tourism routes.</li><li>1.2 Develop Native American tourism experiences that meet current (COVID-19) realities and future market demands.</li></ul>
2. Improve infrastructure and placemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2.1 Develop new attractions and enhance existing attractions needed for themed products, experiences and events.</li><li>2.2 Develop a range of lodging and facilities that appeal to South Dakota's main travel market segments.</li><li>2.3 Enhance the welcoming feel of main towns and priority attractions.</li><li>2.4 Develop public-private partnerships to fund development and/or enhancements at priority attractions.</li></ul>
3. Enable tourism business success and viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>3.1 Support market readiness of Micro and Small Tourism Enterprises (MSTEs).</li><li>3.2 Provide affordable financing to help start and grow MSTEs.</li></ul>
4. Prepare both community and a skilled workforce for tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4.1 Build tribal leadership and community support and buy-in for tourism.</li><li>4.2 Improve the quality of product and service delivery.</li></ul>
5. Increase awareness of Native American tourism offerings in South Dakota among key market segments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5.1 Develop the region as a destination.</li><li>5.2 Develop strategic partnerships to foster a greater understanding of Native American communities and promotion of Native American tourism.</li><li>5.3 Reach diversified market segments.</li></ul>
6. Manage tourism collaboratively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>6.1 Establish tourism management and plan implementation mechanisms.</li><li>6.2 Attract investors and plan implementation partners.</li></ul>



Courtesy of South Dakota Department of Tourism

# CASE STUDY OF ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON TOURISM

The overarching five-year aim will be to develop Native American tourism opportunities in South Dakota. When fully implemented, the NATDMP will provide tangible benefits to Tribal Nations, including economic, infrastructure, and investment benefits.

Data collection on visitor flows is very limited. Published data and reporting on the economic impact of tourism does not exist for the Tribal Nations in South Dakota.

Since the Pine Ridge Reservation has the most comprehensive data set available, a case study is presented in the NATDMP illustrating how a limited data set can be used to gain insights about the actual and forecasted economic impact of tourism at a Tribal Nation level.

Key findings of this case study are outlined below:

## Pine Ridge Reservation Case Study: Overview of Main Findings

Types of visitors	Pine Ridge receives leisure visitors, gaming visitors, and Tribal members whose main purpose is to visit friends and relatives.
Visitor arrivals	In 2019, it is estimated that the number of leisure visitors was between 12,750 and 29,130. Leisure visitors may return to pre-crisis levels by the end of 2023 based on the assumption that Pine Ridge will be open to visitors by early 2021. Arrivals are projected to be between 18,000 and 38,000 leisure visitors by 2027.
Visitor expenditures	In 2019, it is estimated that visitor expenditures in Pine Ridge were between \$1.3 million and \$3.1 million. Visitor expenditures are projected to be between \$1.9 million and \$4.1 million by 2027.
Tourism tax revenue	This Tribal Nation has a tourism tax agreement as part of their Special Jurisdiction status in South Dakota, receiving 96% of a 1.5% tourism tax. <sup>2</sup> In 2019, tax revenue retained by Pine Ridge could have been between \$19,844 and \$45,429 provided that the tax was applied consistently. Tourism tax revenue retained by Pine Ridge is projected to be between \$28,071 and \$59,262 by 2027.

Sources: PRACC, RCIS-HC. Calculations by GW International Institute of Tourism Studies

<sup>2</sup> South Dakota Department of Revenue. (2020). South Dakota Sales and Use Tax. Tourism Tax by County. Retrieved from <https://dor.sd.gov/media/jvgnrya0/fy20county-tourism.pdf>







## How will we get there?

The NATDMP presents a total of 43 priority initiatives that include a wide range of infrastructural projects, tourism attractions and product development investment projects along with community and entrepreneurship preparedness initiatives. The Table below outlines the priority initiatives, recommended implementation time horizon and implementation partners. Implementation of these initiatives will require public and private investment and partnerships. When fully implemented, this plan will provide tangible benefits to Tribal Nations, including economic, infrastructure, and investment benefits.

Goals	Strategies	Priority Initiatives	Implementation Time Horizon	Partners
1. Create and deliver iconic Native American tourism experiences	1.1 Develop authentic and differentiated Native American products and experiences that connect Tribal Nations along existing tourism routes	1. Develop themed tourism experiences in and around Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, Crow Creek, Lower Brule, and Yankton Reservations that are located along the Native American Scenic Byway	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–4	Bureau of Indian Affairs, SD Tourism, Tribal Governments, SD Missouri River Tourism, Tourism businesses
		2. Revitalize the Oyate Trail by developing themed tourism experiences across Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Yankton Reservations	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–4	Bureau of Indian Affairs, SD Tourism, Tribal Governments, SD Missouri River Tourism, Tourism businesses
		3. Revitalize the Yellowstone Trail by developing themed tourism experiences across the Lake Traverse, Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Reservations	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–4	Bureau of Indian Affairs, SD Tourism, Tribal Governments, SD Missouri River Tourism, Tourism businesses
		4. Develop themed tourism experiences across the Flandreau and Lake Traverse Reservations that are located along I-29	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–4	Bureau of Indian Affairs, SD Tourism, Tribal Governments, SD Missouri River Tourism, Tourism businesses
		5. Develop a summer Native American Events tourism circuit across all nine Tribal Nations	Short to Medium Term: Years 2–4	Bureau of Indian Affairs, SD Tourism, Tribal Governments, SD Missouri River Tourism, Tourism businesses
	1.2 Develop Native American tourism experiences that meet current (COVID-19) and future market demands	6. Train Native American entrepreneurs to develop experience ideas into virtual and in-destination tours	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–3	SD Tourism, Chambers of Commerce, U.S. Small Business Administration, Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation, Lakota Youth Development, First Peoples Fund, Four Bands Community Fund, Dakota Indian Foundation, Small Business Development Center, Tribal Colleges
		7. Develop and implement community and visitor COVID-19 safety and security preparation program	Short Term: Years 1–2	Tribal Governments, Tribal Game, Fish & Parks/Recreation, Tribal Dept of Wildlife Resources & Management, Chambers of Commerce, Tribal Colleges
		8. Create a network of certified Native American tour guides across all nine Tribal Nations	Medium Term: Years 3–5	Alliance of Tribal Tourism Advocates, SD Missouri River Tourism, Chambers of Commerce, Tribal Colleges



Goals	Strategies	Priority Initiatives	Implementation Time Horizon	Partners
2. Improve infrastructure and placemaking	2.1 Develop new attractions and enhance existing attractions needed for themed products, experiences and events	9. Develop new and support enhancement of existing nature & outdoor recreation anchor attractions along tourism routes	Short Term: Years 1–2	SD Tourism, SD Game Fish & Parks, SD Governor’s Office of Economic Development, Tribal Game, Fish & Parks/Recreation, Tribal Dept of Wildlife Resources & Management, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Chambers of Commerce, U.S. Small Business Administration, USDA Rural Development
		10. Develop new and support enhancement of existing agritourism anchor attractions along tourism routes	Short t Term: Years 1–2	SD Tourism, SD Game Fish & Parks, SD Governor’s Office of Economic Development, Tribal Dept of Wildlife Resources & Management, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Chambers of Commerce, U.S. Small Business Administration, USDA Rural Development, Ag businesses
		11. Develop new and support enhancement of existing cultural heritage anchor attractions along tourism routes	Medium Term: Years 3–4	SD Tourism, SD Governor’s Office of Economic Development, SD Arts Council, Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Chambers of Commerce, U.S. Small Business Administration, First Peoples Fund
		12. Develop new and support enhancement of existing living culture anchor attractions along tourism routes	Medium Term: Years 3–4	SD Tourism, SD Governor’s Office of Economic Development, SD Arts Council, Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Chambers of Commerce, U.S. Small Business Administration, First Peoples Fund
		13. Develop new and support enhancement of existing events throughout the Tribal Nations	Medium Term: Years 3–4	SD Tourism, SD Arts Council, Tribal Event Planning Committees, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Chambers of Commerce, U.S. Small Business Administration, First Peoples Fund
		14. Establish a wayfinding system	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–5	Tribal Governments, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, SD Tourism

Goals	Strategies	Priority Initiatives	Implementation Time Horizon	Implementation Partners
2. Improve infrastructure and placemaking	2.2 Develop a range of lodging and facilities that appeal to South Dakota's main travel market segments	15. Establish network of campgrounds & RV parks, tipi glamping sites, and homestays along the Native American Scenic Byway	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–3	SD Tourism, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Tribal Casinos, Lodging businesses
		16. Establish network of campgrounds & RV parks, tipi glamping sites, and homestays along the Oyate Trail	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–3	SD Tourism, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Tribal Casinos, Lodging businesses
		17. Establish network of campgrounds & RV parks, tipi glamping sites, and homestays along the I-29 & Yellowstone Trail routes	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–3	SD Tourism, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Tribal Casinos, Lodging businesses
		18. Establish artisan cooperatives and open-air markets along tourism routes	Short to Medium Term: Years 2–4	SD Tourism, SD Governor's Office of Economic Development, SD Arts Council, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Chambers of Commerce, U.S. Small Business Administration, First Peoples Fund
	2.3 Enhance the welcoming feel of main towns and priority attractions	19. Build iconic entry points in main towns	Medium Term: Years 3–5	Tribal Governments, Bureau of Indian Affairs, SD Tourism, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Chambers of Commerce
		20. Develop community beautification projects that create spaces that the community can be proud of	Medium Term: Years 3–5	Tribal Governments, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Chambers of Commerce, First Peoples Fund, SD Arts Council
	2.4 Develop public-private partnerships to fund development and/or enhancements at priority attractions	21. With Tribal governments, develop feasibility plans for priority attractions, lodging options, vendor facilities, placemaking and accessibility projects	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–5	Bureau of Indian Affairs, Tribal Game, Fish & Parks/Recreation, Tribal Dept of Wildlife Resources & Management, Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Tribal Department of Revenue, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Tribal Casinos
3. Enable tourism business success and viability	3.1 Support market readiness of Micro and Small Tourism Enterprises (MSTEs)	22. Create a Native American tourism business development and market readiness program including training in financial literacy	Short Term: Years 1–2	Tribal Colleges, Chambers of Commerce, Community Development Financial Institutions, U.S. Small Business Administration, USDA Regional Rural Development, Thunder Valley Community, Development Corporation, Lakota Youth Development, Small Business Development Center



Goals	Strategies	Priority Initiatives	Implementation Time Horizon	Implementation Partners
3. Enable tourism business success and viability	3.2 Provide affordable financing to help start and grow MSTEs	23. Advocate for and promote programs that offer affordable financing to MSTEs	Short to Medium Term: Years 2–4	Community Development Financial Institutions, Four Bands Community Fund, Lakota Funds, First Peoples Fund, U.S. Small Business Administration, USDA Rural Development, SD Governor’s Office of Economic Development
4. Prepare community and skilled workforce in tourism	4.1 Build Tribal leadership and community support and buy-in for tourism	24. Develop an engagement action plan and accompanying regional level activities and events for Tribal Leaders	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–4	Great Plains Tribal Chairmen’s Association
		25. Launch a tourism community awareness campaign and program in Tribal Nations	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–3	Tribal governments, Chambers of Commerce, Tribal Colleges
	4.2 Improve the quality of product and service delivery	26. Conduct a quality assurance needs assessment for accommodation and service providers	Short Term: Years 1–2	Tribal Colleges, SD Universities, Alliance of Tribal Tourism Advocates, Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance/Office
		27. Develop a strategic certification program for the existing and emerging tourism workforce, including on-the-job training opportunities through internships	Short to Medium Term: Years 2–4	Alliance of Tribal Tourism Advocates, SD Tourism, Tribal Colleges, SD Universities, Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance/Office
		28. Provide training in digital technologies and online marketing needed to address business operation requirements in post-COVID-19 reality	Short Term: Years 1–2	SD Tourism, U.S. Small Business Administration, Chambers of Commerce, Community Development Financial Institutions, Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation, Lakota Youth Development, Small Business Development Center
5. Increase awareness of Native American tourism offerings in South Dakota among key market segments	5.1 Develop the region as a destination	29. Develop a brand architecture and strategy for Native American tourism in South Dakota	Short Term: Years 1–2	SD Tourism, SD Missouri River Tourism
		30. Establish a regional network (SDNTA) for shared responsibility of tourism management and marketing	Medium Term: Years 3–4	Tribal Governments, SD Tourism, SDNTA
		31. Train tourism businesses to promote themselves online	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–4	SD Tourism
		32. Create a Native American tourism information website, under the management of the SDNTA	Short Term: Years 1–2	Web developer
	5.2 Develop strategic partnerships to foster a greater understanding of Native American communities and promotion of Native American tourism	33. Create Familiarization Tours for tour operators, tourism service providers, gas stations, and visitor center personnel	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–4	SD Tourism, Alliance of Tribal Tourism Advocates, Convention and visitor bureaus, SD Missouri River Tourism, visitor centers, tour operators

Goals	Strategies	Priority Initiatives	Implementation Time Horizon	Implementation Partners
5. Increase awareness of Native American tourism offerings in South Dakota among key market segments	5.2 Develop strategic partnerships to foster a greater understanding of Native American communities and promotion of Native American tourism	34. Prepare Native American tourism business and attraction managers to attend trade shows and establish industry networks	Medium Term: Years 3–5	SD Tourism, SD Missouri River Tourism, Pine Ridge Area Chamber of Commerce, Red Cloud Indian School Heritage Center
		35. Create cultural awareness and Native American tourism education programs for non-Native American tour operators and gateway community tourism services providers	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–4	SD Tourism, SD Missouri River Tourism
		36. Develop a central place, such as Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Center, as a regional information center and venue for events and trainings	Short to Medium Term: Years 1-5	SD Tourism, SD Governor’s Office of Economic Development, Foundations, Treaty Council, Bureau of Indian Affairs
		37. Develop a regional visitor etiquette guide for visitors and tour operators	Short Term: Years 1–2	Tribal governments, Tribal Events Planning Committees, SD Missouri River Tourism, SD Tourism
	5.3 Reach diversified market segments	38. Develop a strategic action plan with SD Tourism that helps to promote Native American tourism	Short Term: Years 1–2	SD Tourism
		39. Develop and implement a marketing strategy	Medium Term: Years 3–4	SD Tourism, SDNTA
6. Manage tourism collaboratively	6.1 Establish tourism management and plan implementation mechanisms	40. Establish a functioning and sustainable regional network (the SDNTA) to share responsibility for management of tourism management and marketing	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–3	SDNTA
		41. Guide and support establishment of tourism offices in Tribal Nations	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–5	Tribal governments, Chambers of Commerce
	6.2 Attract investors and plan implementation partners	42. Promote opportunities to prospective funders, and secure buy-in of partners	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–3	U.S. Small Business Administration, USDA Regional Rural Development, SD Governor’s Office of Economic Development, First Peoples Fund, Lakota Funds, Bush Foundation, Four Bands Community Fund, Native American Bank, John T. Vucurevich Foundation, Aroha Philanthropies, Northwest Area Foundation, South Dakota Municipal League, Dakota Indian Foundation, Tribal banks/credit unions
		43. Support Tribal Nations in assessing opportunities to generate and manage tourism tax revenue	Short to Medium Term: Years 1–5	Chambers of Commerce, Tribal Departments of Economic Development and Planning, Tribal Departments of Revenue, SD Tourism, SD Department of Tribal Relations







This section of this NATDMP Summary Document provides an overview of main strategies and a corresponding subset of priority projects for implementation in the short term. These are organized under the following themes:

- A. Developing Tourism Experiences
- B. Planning for Reopening
- C. Supporting Enterprise Readiness
- D. Engaging Tribal Leaders
- E. Promoting the Region as a Destination

## A. Developing Tourism Experiences

A central goal for the development of the nine Tribal Nations as destinations involves creating and delivering authentic experiences and attractions. The aim is to create unique experiences that will attract visitors to safely explore the nine Tribal Nations and experience its diverse nature, cultural heritage sites, and cultural activities, and to have genuine interactions with local Native American communities.

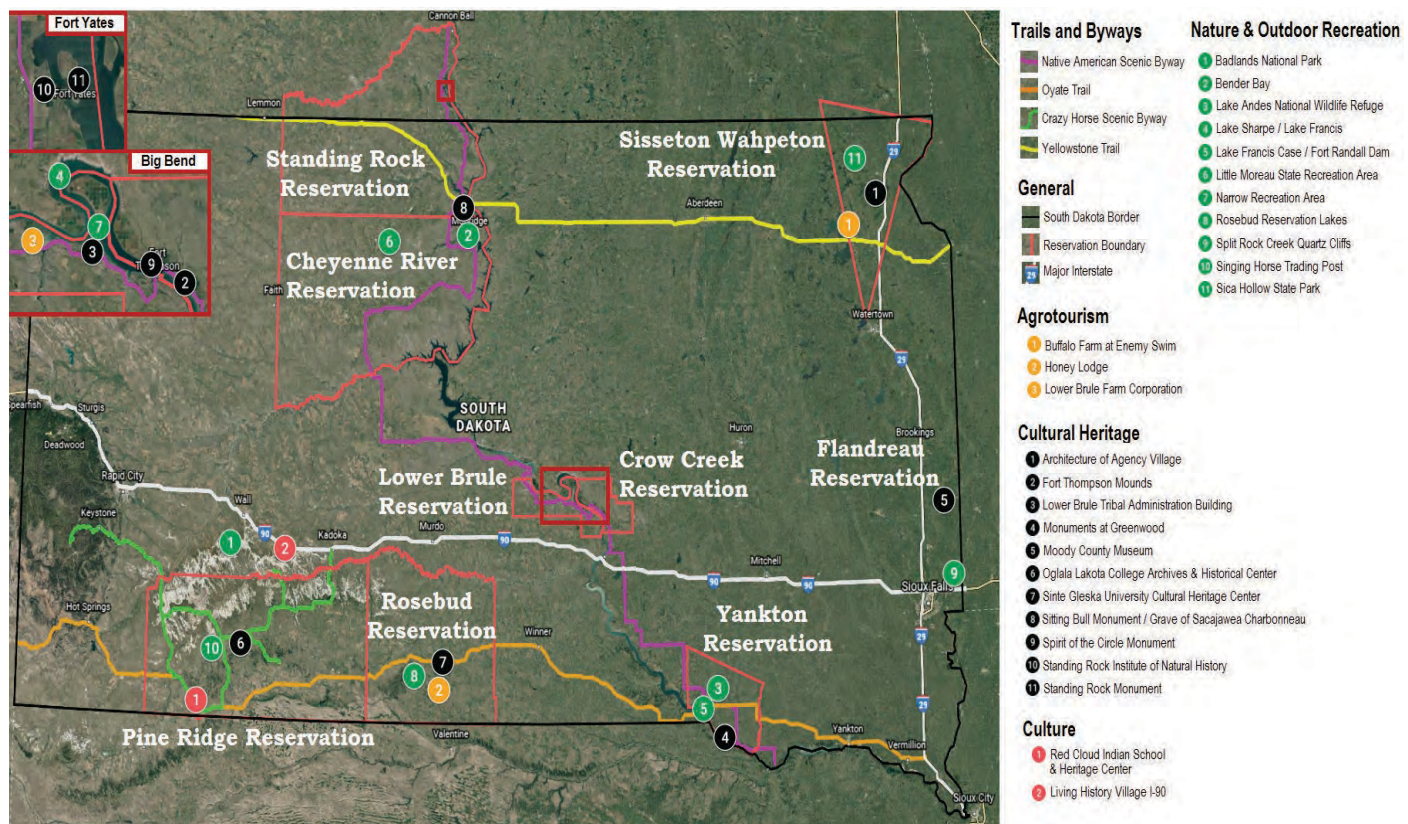
There are four existing tourism routes that are best-positioned to guide visitors from major tourism hubs to multiple Tribal Nation destinations: one is well established (the Native

American Scenic Byway), two are dormant (the Oyate and Yellowstone Trails), and one is a commonly used interstate (I-29). These routes have been identified as the main areas around which to enhance existing and develop new Native American tourism anchor attractions. The map below illustrates these tourism routes. With a range of nature- and culture-based attractions, each tourism route will offer distinct yet complementary experiences that will cater to priority markets. Creating a wide range of tourism experiences along these existing routes that appeal to different market segments will ensure a healthy mix of visitors.

Additionally, a Native American Events summer circuit will be developed to promote annual wacpiss, fairs, rodeos and other appropriate events across all nine Tribal Nations. This approach also ensures that tourism benefits are distributed equitably throughout the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ.

Differentiated core tourism experiences will need to be developed along each route. The core experiences will combine attractions with well-structured activities in creative ways in order to attract specific target markets. Over time, the goal should be to create and incorporate additional, complementary offerings around the core tourism experiences. This approach will expand the economic impact of tourism to more communities on the reservations. The core experiences should be COVID-19 compliant, ensuring both visitor and resident safety, while providing an authentic and interesting experience.

Map of Priority Attractions in Tribal Nations along Tourism Routes



Source: GW International Institute of Tourism Studies





Courtesy of South Dakota Department of Tourism

Identifying the unique selling proposition (USP) for each tourism route is an important first step for creating differentiated core experiences. The Table below presents the unique elements of each proposed route.

**Tourism Routes and Their Unique Selling Propositions**

**ROUTE 1: Native American Scenic Byway**

Route 1 is currently the most developed of the four routes. This route also travels through the most Tribal Nations—Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, Lower Brule, Crow Creek and Yankton Reservations—making it ideal for multi-day road-trippers to South Dakota. Route 1 offers a range of outdoor and nature-based activities, bound to be popular in the coming months and years because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each of the Tribal Nations along Route 1 provides a location for outdoor recreation activities for visitors, including swimming, fishing, wildlife viewing, boating and kayaking, as well as short hikes, so there’s no lack of activity for the whole family. These outdoor recreation areas include Little Moreau State Recreation Area, Lake Sharpe, Lake Francis Case, Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge, and the Narrows Recreation Area.

Route 1 also provides an array of cultural heritage activities, offering visitors a taste of the rich culture and history of these Tribal Nations. At Standing Rock Reservation, visitors can experience the Institute of Natural History to learn about the Tribe’s fossil resources, while in Cheyenne River, the Timber Lake & Area Museum interprets history of the local area and displays several impressive fossils and a complete set of traditional Lakota clothing. When visiting the Crow Creek and Lower Brule Reservations, visitors will have a chance to explore the Narrows Recreation Area and visit the Arikara earthlodge. Historically significant monuments also abound on this route, with monuments included as priority attractions in Standing Rock, Crow Creek and Yankton Reservations. Finally, Lower Brule Reservation offers one of the few existing agritourism experiences with a visit to the Lower Brule Farm Corporation, one of the world’s largest growers of popcorn.

**ROUTE 2: Oyate Trail**

Route 2, the Oyate Trail, traverses the southernmost area of the state. This route passes through the Pine Ridge, Rosebud and Yankton Reservations. The Oyate Trail offers a unique blend of outdoor activities that provide cultural experiences for visitors; this is a great way of offering cultural learning experiences to a COVID-19-aware market. A few of these outdoor and cultural activities include the Oglala Lakota Living History Village and horseback riding near Pine Ridge Reservation. These activities are held mostly outside, but incorporate cultural lessons into the experience, immersing visitors into the historic and present cultures of the lands they’re visiting. The Lakota Youth Development Tipi Stays on the Rosebud Reservation provide this same combination, with the added benefit of cultural events including star knowledge talks, cultural performances, storytelling and cultural art demonstrations. Route 2 also offers unique outdoor experiences, with hiking trails through Badlands National Park, hikes around a number of small lakes on Rosebud Reservation, and the Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge at Yankton Reservation. Cultural heritage sites are also abundant, with a variety of heritage centers to visit, including Oglala Lakota College Historical Center, Red Cloud Indian School Heritage Center and Sinte Gelska University Cultural Heritage Center; as well as a number of historically significant monuments at both Pine Ridge and Yankton Reservations. Finally, the Honey Lodge at Rosebud Reservation provides a unique hands-on experience making honey using traditional methods.

### ROUTE 3: Yellowstone Trail

The Yellowstone Trail follows Highway 12 across northern South Dakota, passing through Lake Traverse and Standing Rock Reservations. The trail also takes visitors close to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, which is also included as part of this route. SWO offers visitors of this route a unique opportunity to visit the Buffalo Farm at Enemy Swim, one of only seven herds in the United States with 100% pure buffalo genes; tours are available on request and provide insight into the cultural significance of these animals.

Visitors of the Yellowstone Trail can also hike through Sica Hollow State Park, known for its enchanting autumn colors. The outdoor activities continue on the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Reservations, with outdoor recreation areas at Little Moreau State Recreation Area, Bender Bay and The Bay at Grand River Casino. Finally, this route provides a cultural heritage program through the opportunity to view unique architecture at Agency Village, Timber Lake & Area Museum, Standing Rock Institute of Natural History, and the Standing Rock, Sitting Bull and Sacagawea Monuments.

### ROUTE 4: Interstate 29 (Eastern South Dakota)

The I-29 is a major north-south highway in eastern South Dakota. This route provides an opportunity for tourists to visit both Flandreau and Lake Traverse Reservations. By venturing slightly off the route, **visitors can get a quick taste of the natural and cultural heritage assets of these Tribal Nations, making this route ideal for day-trippers.** Coming from the south, visitors first reach Flandreau Reservation, with an opportunity to stop at the Moody County Museum and visit the First Presbyterian Church, the oldest continuously operating church in South Dakota, established by the Santee Sioux in 1871 for cultural heritage experiences. At Palisades State Park, visitors can stretch their legs and view the ancient quartz cliff formations around Split Rock Creek from the hiking trails.

On the way to Lake Traverse Reservation, there's an opportunity to detour to the Pipestone National Monument in Minnesota, an active, culturally- and spiritually-significant site where Native Americans quarry red pipestone. On reaching the reservation, tourists have a unique chance to visit one of only seven buffalo herds in the United States with 100% pure buffalo genes. SWO also offers hiking in Sica Hollow State Park, known for its beautiful autumn colors, and unique architecture in Agency Village.

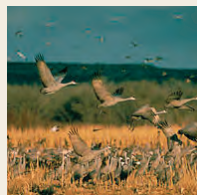




The Table below presents the main themes for the development of differentiated tourism experiences that are based on the USP of each proposed route. The themes are organized in order of priority for development. Due to COVID-19, nature and outdoor recreation and agritourism experiences should be developed first, followed by cultural heritage and culture experiences, and finally events.

## Main Themes for Development of Differentiated Tourism Experiences

### NATURE & OUTDOOR RECREATION



#### ROUTE 1: Native American Scenic Byway

**Outdoor recreation:** Route 1 offers an array of family-friendly outdoor recreation areas with water activities such as fishing, swimming, boating and kayaking as well as short hikes and picnicking spots.

**Nature walk at Standing Rock:** On a tour of the Standing Rock Reservation organized by the North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance, visitors have the opportunity to go on a nature walk with a knowledgeable guide to explore the cultural importance and Native American medicinal uses of plants and animals of the Great Plains.

**Wildlife viewing:** Tourists can visit Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge to view grebes, pelicans, herons, gulls, white-tailed deer and ring-necked pheasants in the lake and its surrounding grasslands.



#### ROUTE 2: Oyate Trail

**Hiking:** Route 2 includes Badlands National Park, with a number of trails starting at Ben Reifel Visitor Center and winding through the dramatic landscape. Additionally, visitors can hike around the small lakes at Rosebud Reservation.

**Outdoor cultural experiences:** Route 2 offers a number of unique cultural learning opportunities as part of outdoor experiences, including the Oglala Lakota Living History Village, horseback riding, and the Lakota Youth Development Tipi Stays.

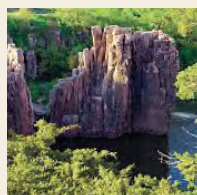
**Wildlife viewing:** Tourists can visit Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge to view grebes, pelicans, herons, gulls, white-tailed deer and ring-necked pheasants in the lake and its surrounding grasslands.



#### ROUTE 3: Yellowstone Trail

**Outdoor recreation:** Route 3 offers an array of family-friendly outdoor recreation areas with water activities such as fishing, swimming, boating and kayaking as well as short hikes and picnicking spots.

**Hiking:** Route 3 takes visitors through Lake Traverse Reservation, where they can spend time hiking in Sica Hollow State Park—known for expansive trails and beautiful autumn colors.



#### ROUTE 4: Interstate 29

**Hiking:** Route 4 takes visitors through Lake Traverse Reservation, where they can spend time hiking in Sica Hollow State Park—known for expansive trails and beautiful autumn colors. Travelers can also visit the Split Rock Creek Quartz Cliffs at Palisades State Park to view ancient quartzite formations from the hiking trails.

## AGRITOURISM



### ROUTE 1: Native American Scenic Byway

**Lower Brule Farm Corporation:** One of the world's largest growers of popcorn, this farm also grows beans, soybeans, corn and other farm products. All crops are grown on tribal lands and the manufacturing is performed by Tribal members.



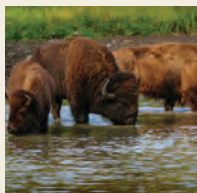
### ROUTE 2: Oyate Trail

**Lakota Youth Development Honey Lodge:** This organization uses traditional methods of harvesting honey. Tours provide visitors with a hands-on experience making honey during their visit.



### ROUTE 3: Yellowstone Trail

**Buffalo Farm at Enemy Swim:** Since 2009, the SWO manages one of only seven herds in the United States with 100% pure buffalo genes. Tours are available on request and provide an insight of the cultural and historical significance of these animals to the Tribes in the area.



### ROUTE 4: Interstate 29

**SWO Buffalo Farm:** Since 2009, the SWO manages one of only seven herds in the United States with 100% pure buffalo genes. Tours are available on request and provide insight into the cultural and historical significance of these animals to the Tribal Nations.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE



### ROUTE 1: Native American Scenic Byway

**Museums:** Route 1 offers two unique and interesting museums for visitors—Standing Rock Institute of Natural History, providing education on the fossil resources of the Standing Rock Reservation and the relationship between Native Americans and fossils; and Timber Lake & Area Museum, which features an art exhibit telling the history of the prairie, and a complete set of traditional Lakota clothing.

**Historic Monuments:** Visitors can see a number of monuments established to honor significant characters or moments in history, including the Standing Rock Monument, Sitting Bull Monument, Sacagawea Monument, Spirit of the Circle Monument, Fort Thompson Mounds, Yankton Sioux Treaty Monument and the burial site of Phadáni Aphápi (Struck by the Ree).



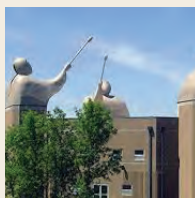
### ROUTE 2: Oyate Trail

**Heritage Centers:** The Oyate Trail offers two unique heritage centers to give visitors an understanding of the culture and history of the local Tribal Nations: the Oglala Lakota College Historical Center and Sinte Gleska University Cultural Heritage Center.

**Monuments:** Visitors have a chance to visit two monuments at Yankton Reservation, established to honor the Yankton Sioux Treaty and Yankton Chief Phadáni Aphápi (Struck by the Ree).



## CULTURAL HERITAGE



### ROUTE 3: Yellowstone Trail

**Architecture:** Route 3 travels through Agency Village, home to a number of unique buildings, including the Sisseton Wahpeton Administrative Building which is tipi-inspired; the Tiospa Zina Tribal School building, shaped like an eagle; and Sisseton Wahpeton College, with a building in the shape of four drummers.

**Historic Monuments:** Visitors can see a number of monuments established to honor significant characters or moments in history, including the Standing Rock Monument, Sitting Bull Monument, Sacagawea Monument, Spirit of the Circle Monument, and the Fort Thompson Mounds.



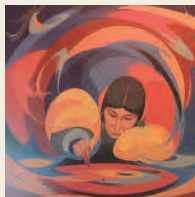
### ROUTE 4: Interstate 29

**Architecture:** Route 4 travels through Agency Village, home to a number of unique buildings, including the Sisseton Wahpeton Administrative building which is tipi-inspired; the Tiospa Zina Tribal School building shaped like an eagle; and Sisseton Wahpeton College, with a building in the shape of four drummers.

**Museum:** The Moody County Museum at Flandreau promotes a greater understanding of the history and heritage of the region, including Native American culture and influence.

**Historic building:** Visitors can view the oldest continuously operating church in the state: First Presbyterian Church, also known as the resting place of Chief Taoyateduta/Little Crow, leader of the Mdewakanton Dakota in the 1850s and U.S.-Dakota War of 1862.

## CULTURE



### ROUTE 1: Native American Scenic Byway

**Native Culinary Experience:** Ubetcha Wateca is a Native American-owned restaurant specializing in Native American food products. Much of the food is locally grown and prepared, providing a great immersion into the local food culture.

**Art Murals:** Travelers through Route 1 can view the life-size murals by Native American artist Oscar Howe, housed at the Mobridge City Auditorium.



### ROUTE 2: Oyate Trail

**Art Museum:** The Red Cloud Indian School Heritage Center houses a fine arts gallery with Lakota and other Native American art exhibits, as well as goods made by Native American artisans for purchase.

**Cultural Immersion:** The Oglala Lakota Living History Village at Pine Ridge Reservation offers an immersive experience of Oglala Lakota culture, as well as sharing Indigenous knowledge of Lakota country, while taking in beautiful landscapes.

**Tipi Stay:** The Lakota Youth Development Tipi Stay provides an outdoor experiential stay with cultural events including star knowledge talks, cultural performances, ancient storytelling and cultural art demonstrations.



### ROUTE 4: Interstate 29

**Language Classes:** For visitors interested in diving deeper into the local culture, the Wakpa Ipaksan Dakota Language Program at the Wicoicaga Otipi Community Center on Flandreau Reservation offers language classes.

## SUMMER EVENTS



### ROUTE 1: Native American Scenic Byway

Annual wacipis (powwows) celebrating each Tribal Nation including: Rock Creek Powwow (Standing Rock), Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Fair, Rodeo & Powwow, Crow Creek Dakota Nation Wacipi, Kul-Wicasa Oyate Fair & Rodeo (Lower Brule) and the Yankton Powwow.

Cheyenne River also hosts the E.B. Hometown Days with Arts in the Park, an annual event with community activities, art exhibits, competitions, and a range of family-friendly events.

Pro Indian Relay: Championship races are held every year with teams from Tribes throughout the Great Plains. Indian Relay goes back hundreds of years and the Plains Tribes have their own version.

Annual American Indian Days Powwow held in Fort Randall, SD (near Yankton Reservation).



### ROUTE 2: Oyate Trail

Annual wacipis (powwows) celebrating each Tribal Nation, including the Oglala Lakota Nation Wacipi Rodeo Fair, Pine Ridge Generation Indigenous Days, Rosebud Annual Fair & Wacipi, and Fort Randall Casino Powwow in Yankton.

Annual American Indian Days PowWow held in Fort Randall SD (Near Yankton Reservation)

**Art Shows:** Native POP is a juried Native American art show and cultural celebration held annually in downtown Rapid City. Features original artwork for sale by established and emerging Great Plains Native American artists and a full day of cultural performances.

Red Cloud Indian School Heritage Center Annual Art Show on Pine Ridge Reservation. A ten-week long annual summer art show and cultural event. All artwork is for sale, with the proceeds supporting the artists and The Heritage Center.



### ROUTE 3 & 4: Yellowstone Trail & Interstate 29

Annual Wacipis celebrating each Tribal Nation, including the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe Wacipi, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Wacipi, and the Rock Creek (Standing Rock) Powwow



The following initiatives are the shortlist of core tourism experiences, attractions, and site development that are recommended for the implementation in the short term.

## 1. Development of Tourism Attractions

Development plans should be created for priority attractions, taking into consideration visitor flow, visitor experience, and better access to attractions. Key elements of the development plans will include structured pathways and signage, maps,

educational interpretive materials, and visitor etiquette guidelines. Attractions should also have public restrooms. The attractions will need consistent management over time.

1. PRIORITY INITIATIVE	TIMELINE Short Term: Years 1–2
<p data-bbox="224 478 951 537"><b>Develop new and support enhancement of existing Nature &amp; Outdoor Recreation anchor attractions</b></p> <p data-bbox="224 556 337 579"><b>PARTNERS</b></p> <p data-bbox="251 583 1382 703">SD Tourism, SD Game Fish &amp; Parks, SD Governor’s Office of Economic Development, Tribal Game, Fish &amp; Parks/Recreation Departments, Tribal Dept of Wildlife Resources &amp; Management, Tribal Departments of Economic Development &amp; Planning, Chambers of Commerce, U.S. Small Business Administration, USDA Regional Rural Development</p> <p data-bbox="224 718 373 741"><b>DESCRIPTION</b></p> <p data-bbox="251 745 1425 865">Great nature and outdoor recreation attractions are abundant across all nine Tribal Nations in South Dakota. As demand for these types of attractions increases in the coming months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s important the Tribal Nations place a high priority on their development. The following nature and outdoor recreation attractions are considered high priority, and need further development as recommended:</p> <p data-bbox="251 882 1390 938">Little Moreau State Recreation Area: The key area for development is access, signage and public restroom facilities.</p> <ul data-bbox="272 955 1451 1659" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lake Sharpe and Lake Francis Case:</b> This attraction has two key areas for development. Access by walking and bicycle is extremely difficult; and there are many challenges in terms of environmental fragility.</li> <li>• <b>Narrow Recreation Area:</b> Two key areas for concern here are the environmental fragility of the attraction, and relatively limited community interest in and capacity for improving readiness.</li> <li>• <b>Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge:</b> The readiness score of this attraction is relatively high, however access could use improvement—the operating hours make access difficult, and there’s very limited access via bicycle, walking, or bus.</li> <li>• <b>Hiking &amp; Riding Trails on Pine Ridge:</b> Access to the trails is difficult by all methods, and the trails are underdeveloped. Additionally, there is limited community interest in and capacity for improving readiness.</li> <li>• <b>Hiking through Rosebud Lakes:</b> The greatest concerns for these hikes are the environmental fragility and product development needs. To improve readiness, environmental protection plans should be implemented and hiking trails clearly posted.</li> <li>• <b>Split Rock Creek Quartz Cliffs:</b> Access to this attraction is limited on foot and bicycle, and operating hours are limited. Additionally, environmental fragility should be considered before this attraction can improve its readiness score.</li> <li>• <b>Good Earth State Park at Blood Run:</b> Good Earth State Park currently faces limiting issues, including environmental fragility and socio-cultural concerns. Better coordination between Tribal and non-Tribal management should be implemented to address these concerns.</li> <li>• <b>Pipestone National Monument:</b> Environmental fragility is a great concern for this attraction, along with socio-cultural issues and limited community participation.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="224 1677 1026 1703"><b>PRIORITY ATTRACTIONS ALREADY DISPLAYING HIGH READINESS SCORES</b></p> <ul data-bbox="272 1717 799 1827" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lake Francis Case and Fort Randall Dam – 84%</li> <li>• Badlands National Park – 80%</li> <li>• Sica Hollow State Park – 86%</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="224 1845 587 1871"><b>GENERAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS</b></p> <p data-bbox="251 1877 1088 1906">Wayfinding &amp; signage, interpretive signs, public facilities (including restrooms)</p>	

## 2. PRIORITY INITIATIVE

### TIMELINE

Short Term: Years 1–2

### Develop new and support enhancement of existing Agritourism anchor attractions

#### PARTNERS

SD Tourism, SD Game Fish & Parks, SD Governor's Office of Economic Development, Tribal Dept of Wildlife Resources & Management, Tribal Departments of Economic Development & Planning, Chambers of Commerce, U.S. Small Business Administration, USDA Rural Development, Agriculture businesses

#### DESCRIPTION

Agritourism products remain a priority during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many of these attractions are largely outdoors and allow for social distancing practices. Currently, there are few agritourism attractions operating across the routes, but the existing attractions offer great experiences for visitors. The enhancement of these attractions, as well as the development of new ones, will be important in the coming months and years to provide a greater variety of experiences during COVID-19. The following agritourism attractions are considered high priority and further development is needed as recommended below:

- **Lower Brule Farm Corporation:** This attraction has a relatively high readiness score of 73%; the biggest area for improvement is in the recreational uses at this location and its scenic value. This could be improved by providing a day-use picnic area with seating on a well-kept grass area for visitors.
- **Nature Walk with Tribal plants expert at Standing Rock:** This experience is currently being developed as a part of a multiday tour experience at the Standing Rock Reservation. Specifics for trained guides, itinerary coordination, and logistics for "where and how" need to be finalized.
- **Lakota Youth Development Honey Lodge:** The Honey Lodge faces issues in terms of community participation, environmental fragility and product development needs.
- **SWO Buffalo Farm at Enemy Swim:** The greatest concerns for this attraction are its environmental fragility, product development needs, and community interest in and capacity for improving readiness.

#### POTENTIAL ATTRACTIONS

- **International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros:** This attraction at the Cheyenne River Reservation has since closed. It provided not only an agritourism experience but also outdoor recreation, and it's worth considering rebuilding this attraction.

#### GENERAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Wayfinding & signage, interpretive signs, public facilities (including restrooms)



Photos courtesy of South Dakota Department of Tourism



## 2. Development of Experiences

Community participation is essential to the creation of authentic tourism experiences and appropriate management of tourism to benefit Tribal Nations. Communities should be encouraged to tell their stories and create interactive community-based experiences that allow community members to engage and educate visitors about their place, people, and history.

Additionally, individuals with exceptional local knowledge and stories should be encouraged to serve as tourism ambassadors, tour guides, and even trainers of tour guides. Similar recommendations should be made for artisans, musicians, singers, performers, and storytellers. These individuals can create independent tourism activities and experiences to offer to visitors.

Tourism Experience Studios can be used to assist interested communities and entrepreneurs (such as tour guides, artisans, and storytellers) in designing and promoting unique tourism experiences that help visitors better understand and appreciate Native American history and culture in South Dakota.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual experiences should be developed in addition to in-destination activities. Tourism entrepreneurs can utilize online virtual tourism platforms such as Airbnb Virtual Experiences to provide guided tours or cultural demonstrations. These and other virtual tourism opportunities will be explored as part of the Tourism Experience Development Studios.

## 3. PRIORITY INITIATIVE

### Experience Development Studios

**TIMELINE**  
Short to Medium Term:  
Years 1–3

#### PARTNERS

SD Tourism, Chambers of Commerce, U.S. Small Business Administration, Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation, Lakota Youth Development, First Peoples Fund, Four Bands Community Fund, Dakota Indian Foundation, Small Business Development Center, Tribal Colleges

#### DESCRIPTION

Organize a series of Experience Development Studios to help communities and entrepreneurs develop sustainable, immersive and COVID-19-safe experiences and/or virtual tourism experiences. The studios will support detailed product development with local groups of stakeholders, and provide a foundational set of experiences to market across the nine Tribal Nations.

The studios will be designed as a series of online workshops covering key topics.

In-destination experiences:

- Market trends relevant to the specific types of tourism products being encouraged, keeping in mind COVID-19 traveler expectations (e.g., natural and outdoor recreation)
- An overview of practical financial planning tools
- Ideas for crafting a compelling story and online presence for marketing
- Opportunities for collaboration among the communities to build a more robust visitor market
- Development of sales sheets for each experience as a final product of the studios

Virtual experiences:

- Guidance for converting in-person experiences to online fee-based experiences—for example, live conversations with guests and hosts, demonstrations in real time, or a walk through a particular cultural experience
- Overview of storytelling and online engagement techniques to gauge visitor interest and draw attendance to virtual experiences
- Advice on matching online experience platforms to particular needs of each entrepreneur, as well as best practices and technical tips for each platform
- Training on pricing virtual experiences and business considerations for these unique tourism products

## B. Planning for Reopening

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased health and safety concerns for domestic and international travelers. To be considered as a destination in the coming months, and possibly years, it will be essential for Tribal Nations to have health and safety procedures in place and to communicate these procedures clearly and consistently to both visitors and residents.

Additionally, visitor behavior was identified by members of the SDNTA as one of the greatest concerns of Native American communities on reservations, particularly in regards

to attendance at events, cultural ceremonies, and sites and monuments. Over the years various visitor etiquette guides have been created and shared to educate visitors about the correct protocol and guidelines while visiting a reservation. The Table below outlines an initiative to create a single comprehensive Visitor Etiquette Guide that is used across all nine Tribal Nations in South Dakota.

The following initiatives are the shortlist for reopening tourism in Tribal Nations.

### 4. PRIORITY INITIATIVE

#### Develop and implement a community and visitor COVID-19 safety preparation program

**TIMELINE**  
Short Term: Years 1–2

##### PARTNERS

Tribal governments, Tribal Game, Fish & Parks/Recreation departments, Tribal departments of Wildlife Resources & Management, Chambers of Commerce, Tribal Colleges

##### DESCRIPTION

Develop a set of safety standards for visitors across the Tribal Nations in South Dakota. The standards should be general enough for use across the nine Tribal Nations, and should be based on tourism industry best practices.

The standards should cover the following key topics:

- Reasons for and goals of the standards, including who is expected to implement them
- **Social distancing:** Ways to maintain physical distance between tourists, and between tourists and staff, to reduce the spread of the virus, including regulations for indoor activities, and guidelines for leading tours, handling face-to-face interactions, and taking payments
- **Sanitation:** Regulations to enhance sanitation of all tours and venues to ensure visitor safety, including guidelines for personal hygiene and handwashing, sanitation of frequently touched surfaces, and rigorous cleaning and sanitation methods for any locations tourists will visit
- **Screening:** Methods of preventative screening, including screening of staff before coming to work, and guidelines to minimize possible exposure and spread in any visitor destinations
- **Local health:** Ways to protect communities during this time, which will involve restricting group sizes, educating visitors on the importance of protecting locals by abiding by health regulations, and educating community members in high-traffic areas about possible risks to vulnerable groups

Develop and implement a training program for businesses, entrepreneurs, and community members of Tribal Nations to prepare community members and provide information on what's being done to improve safety measures, with particular focus on COVID-19 regulations. The training program should provide information on the following:

- Management of public spaces as tourists return to the reservations and what is being done in these spaces to ensure the safety of locals and visitors
- Health and safety protocols for tour operators and visitors, and how local residents can contribute to the safety of the area
- Responses to resident concerns about increasing tourism numbers in the vicinity and methods for voicing fears or complaints



## 5. PRIORITY INITIATIVE

### Provide COVID-19 compliance training in digital technologies and online marketing

**TIMELINE**  
Short Term: Years 1–2

#### PARTNERS

SD Tourism, Small Business Administration

#### DESCRIPTION

Organize a series of online Digital Technology Studios to help local tourism businesses understand and implement digital technologies into their operations, and develop online marketing tools. The studios will support tourism businesses in the Tribal Nations, and will cover the following key topics:

- Use of contactless solutions during the COVID-19 pandemic to comply with health and safety standards. This will include the use of contactless payment systems across all business types, as well as the use of QR codes to allow for contactless reading of menus or information, contactless ordering, and contactless check-ins.
- E-commerce systems and processes most useful to Native American tourism businesses, as well as training on implementation and use of these technologies and integration into current systems or websites.
- Online marketing workshops, as the use of digital marketing continues to grow throughout this period.

Greater detail on online marketing workshops is included in Table 88 (Priority Initiative 31).

## 6. PRIORITY INITIATIVE

### Develop a visitor etiquette guide for visitors and tour operators

**TIMELINE**  
Short Term: Years 1–2

#### PARTNERS

Tribal governments, Tribal Event Planning Committees, SD Missouri River Tourism, Alliance of Tribal Tourism Advocates

#### DESCRIPTION

Collect and assess existing visitor etiquette guidelines from the Tribal Nations. Based on these guidelines and industry standards, design and promote a statewide visitor etiquette guide for visitor behavior while on reservations. The guide should include enough information to ensure visitors are aware of local customs, but be general enough to provide conduct guidance across all nine Tribal Nations.

The visitor etiquette guide should cover the topics of:

- Access to tribal lands and areas that are off-limits to visitors
- Visitor behavior related to photography restrictions, appropriate attire while on the reservation, treatment of natural resources, and specific gestures that may be perceived as disrespectful
- The need to observe Tribal laws around prohibited items, Tribal permits for hunting and fishing, and laws around removing artifacts from tribal lands
- Visitor etiquette and expected behavior at cultural events and wacipis

C. Support Enterprise Readiness

In Tribal Nations, existing and emerging Micro and Small Tourism Enterprises (MSTEs) need a range of support services to become viable, market-ready businesses that can sustainably grow and succeed in the tourism industry in South Dakota. The aim is to create a collaborative tourism business development

program that includes foundational training in financial literacy, personal development, basics in starting a business, strategic partnerships, and important consideration for the tourism marketplace. This program will be developed based on the existing services and resources offered by local and regional organizations.

7. PRIORITY INITIATIVE	TIMELINE
<div><b>Create a Native American tourism business development and market readiness program</b></div> <div><b>PARTNERS</b> Tribal colleges, Chambers of Commerce, Community Development Financial Institutions, U.S. Small Business Administration, USDA Regional Rural Development, Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation, Lakota Youth Development, Small Business Development Center</div> <div><b>DESCRIPTION</b> In partnership with workforce development support organizations, create a business development and market readiness program for existing and emerging tourism entrepreneurs that includes essential foundations of financial literacy, personal development, and strategic tourism business development concepts. <b>Phase 1 elements:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foundations in financial literacy terminology and concepts, including checking and savings accounts, tracking income and expenses, budgeting</li><li>• Understanding challenges associated with accessing capital, and determining feasible paths for raising capital</li><li>• Understanding the important synergies of personal development, community well-being and professional success</li></ul><b>Phase 2 elements:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Basics of setting up and running a tourism enterprise</li><li>• Business models and suggested models for various types of MSTEs, including strategic business partnerships that will improve business survival rates</li><li>• Range of tourism opportunities in the tourism value chain such as tour guides, tour companies, culinary businesses, recreation, entertainment, crafts, and linkages with other key sectors such as agriculture</li><li>• Licensing requirements and the importance of compliance for maintaining tourism standards and marketability</li><li>• Packaging, marketing and sales of tourism products and experiences through the local and international tourism distribution systems</li><li>• Opportunities for real-world application of concepts such as entrepreneurship challenges, internships, and incubator experiences</li></ul></div>	<div>Short Term: Years 1–2</div>



D. Tribal Leadership Engagement

Educating Tribal Leaders and residents about tourism and its potential impacts (positive and negative) is an important step in preparing the community and Tribal government to

support and participate in tourism. Research indicates that as entrepreneurial endeavors and public awareness increase, residents will be in a better position to participate in tourism development. The following priority initiative outlines actions to help engage Tribal Leaders as champions for tourism.

8. PRIORITY INITIATIVE	
<p><b>Develop and implement an engagement action plan for Tribal Leaders</b></p> <p><b>PARTNERS</b> Great Plains Tribal Chairmen’s Association</p> <p><b>DESCRIPTION</b> In collaboration with the Great Plain Tribal Chairmen’s Association and key partners within each Tribal Nation, develop and implement an action plan to educate and engage Tribal Leaders (Chairmen/ Presidents and Tribal Council members) on Native American tourism development and management. Tribal governments and community leaders are essential to the sustainable development and successful management of tourism businesses, attractions, and visitor facilities on reservations. The engagement action plan should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Educational webinars and strategic workshops tailored to educate leaders about the challenges, opportunities, and government roles inherent to tourism development</li><li>• Strategic activities to engage Tribal Leaders in the process of assessing infrastructure development, workforce capacity building, and social and environmental needs associated with tourism development on reservations</li><li>• Specific opportunities for Tribal government action, including the identification of funding opportunities and the alignment of tourism infrastructure and workforce development plans with government priorities and existing projects.</li></ul>	<p><b>TIMELINE</b> Short to Medium Term: Years 1–4</p>



Photos courtesy of South Dakota Department of Tourism

## E. Promoting the Region as a Destination

Although South Dakota hosted over 14.5 million visitors each year before the pandemic, very few tourists included a visit to a reservation or Native American attraction in their itinerary. Pine Ridge Reservation, with its proximity to the Black Hills and the Badlands, has the highest visitation out of the nine Tribal Nations, but it is only roughly estimated at a maximum of 15,000 visitors per year, based on an economic analysis presented earlier in this plan. Surveys conducted by SD Tourism indicate interest in participating in Native American tourism among South Dakota visitors. In addition to improving existing attractions and developing compelling experiences, there are a number of important tasks in order to increase the awareness of Native American tourism offerings in South Dakota among key market segments.

In time, when visitation increases and regulations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are established for visitors, Tribal Nations will need to develop and implement marketing strategies that include public relations, earned media, and free media. Marketing efforts will need to be monitored and adjusted to reach priority market segments, including road-trippers, outdoor enthusiasts, and culture tourists. As the pandemic is contained, marketing and promotion strategies will need to adjust to the needs of target markets. The following priority initiatives represent the first steps in preparing to promote the region as a tourism destination.

### 9. PRIORITY INITIATIVE

#### **Develop a strategic action plan with SD Tourism to promote Native American tourism**

##### **PARTNERS**

SD Tourism

##### **DESCRIPTION**

SD Tourism is an important partner for the marketing and promotion of Native American tourism throughout South Dakota. In collaboration with SD Tourism, create a strategic action plan that will result in attracting diversified target market segments to anchor attractions and events in the Tribal Nations, and encourage visitors to book unique experiences along tourism routes connecting multiple reservations.

The strategic action plan should include an assessment of attractions and facilities to promote; confirmation of brand, messaging, and promotion established by the SDNTA; and a timeline for implementation and monitoring.

##### **TIMELINE**

Short Term: Years 1–2

### 10. PRIORITY INITIATIVE

#### **Create a Native American tourism information website, under the management of the SDNTA**

##### **PARTNERS**

Web Developer

##### **DESCRIPTION**

Develop a consumer-facing interface as part of the SDNTA website that will provide visitors with overall information about the Tribal Nations. The website will include cultural information, transportation, tours, hotels, restaurants, and information on tourist sites for each of the Nations. There's an opportunity to include links to various businesses, and to build the website to serve as a booking platform—particularly for tours developed by the Tribal Nations.

##### **TIMELINE**

Short Term: Years 1–2





Courtesy of South Dakota Department of Tourism

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

### *How will we get there?*

Identifying leaders who can adequately inspire and facilitate coordination and collaboration among Tribal governments and partners at the local, state and federal levels will be critical for implementation of the NATDMP. It is envisioned that SDNTA will serve as the unified, multisectorial network of stakeholders that will be the main steward of the plan—guiding and managing its implementation. SDNTA will:

- Socialize the plan and secure buy-in from Tribal governments and communities; and
- Bring together the private sector, public sector, community leaders and NGOs to actively participate in the implementation of the plan.

The short-term aim of SDNTA should be to initiate and deliver on 3–5 quick-win priority initiatives outlined in this plan. This effort will help to demonstrate tangible and measurable results within the first three years. The quick-win projects can be instrumental in garnering support for the more complex medium-term initiatives.

### A. SDNTA - Stewards of Plan Implementation

The successful implementation of the plan will require diligent oversight by SDNTA. For there to be sustainable Native American tourism with a collaborative approach that unifies the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, it is essential to establish a functioning regional network to share responsibilities for the development, management and marketing of tourism. Tribal Leaders and community and tourism leaders of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ will need to work together to effectively enhance Tribal Nations as good places to live and work, and to promote the Tribal Nations as attractive travel destinations. A Destination Management Organization (DMO) can help to organize stakeholders into a unified network with a shared vision and objectives for the development, management, and promotion of destinations. Ongoing communication and collaboration among stakeholder groups is critical for Tribal Nations where tourism is just beginning.

The SDNTA can serve as an effective DMO for the Tribal Nations of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ. Though the official establishment of SDNTA as a DMO will take time, the alliance can begin some immediate efforts to prepare Tribal communities and tourism stakeholders to receive and manage visitors in the years to come. SDNTA can oversee the branding and promotional process, identify priority projects, and apply for grants and secure funds. The DMO should include a cross-section of local individuals, including business owners, government representatives, educators, and other tourism professionals.

Additionally, Tribal governments currently do not have official tourism offices or positions overseeing tourism. As each Tribal Nation has unique tourism challenges and opportunities, it is important for there to be a position or office to address the needs of each Tribal Nation. The following priority initiatives will help to strengthen the SDNTA, and to support the integration of tourism as a pillar of Tribal Nations' economic development efforts.

## 11. PRIORITY INITIATIVE

**Establish a functioning and sustainable regional network (the SDNTA) to share responsibility for management of tourism development and promotion**

**TIMELINE**  
Short to Medium Term:  
Years 1–3

### **PARTNERS**

SDNTA

### **DESCRIPTION**

According to the UNWTO, destination management is “the coordinated management of all the elements that make up a tourism destination (attractions, amenities, access, marketing and pricing).”<sup>3</sup> A DMO’s responsibilities should include a process that effectively and harmoniously addresses the interactions between visitors, the tourism industry, the community that hosts them, and the environment.

As a regional DMO for the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, SDNTA would be the steward of:

- Native American tourism development and management
- Brand creation, marketing and promotion
- Advocacy of tourism needs and opportunities at the Tribal Nation, South Dakota state, and U.S. federal levels
- Coordination of all industry stakeholders including public, private, education and nonprofit institutions

To establish SDNTA as an official DMO, SDNTA members need to determine an organization structure, governance, funding streams, and a coordination framework with Tribal and non-Tribal partners

## 12. PRIORITY INITIATIVE

**Action plan to support establishment of tourism offices in Tribal Nations**

**TIMELINE**  
Short to Medium Term:  
Years 1–5

### **PARTNERS**

Tribal governments, Chambers of Commerce

### **DESCRIPTION**

For the successful development and management of tourism for each Tribal Nation, it is important that there be an established, official office or position solely dedicated to tourism for that Nation. At times many of the nine Tribal Nations have had an office or official position focused on tourism, but currently there are no official tourism offices in the various Tribal governments.

SDNTA, with support from GW IITS, will create a practical guide for Tribal Governments that will outline the many considerations and pathways for establishing local tourism offices. The practical guide can be used by Tribal Nations to create their action plan and identify resources. The guide will address considerations such as:

- **Governance:** goals, mission, vision, and alignment with Tribal government priorities
- **Structure:** staffing, roles & responsibilities, department linkages
- **Funding:** funding opportunities, private- and public-sector partnerships
- **Projects:** community and leadership education & engagement, tourism infrastructure development, workforce capacity building, marketing, and visitor management

Tribal Nation tourism offices will hold leadership roles in the SDNTA.

<sup>3</sup> UNWTO (2019). UNWTO Guidelines for Institutional Strengthening of Destination Management Organizations. Retrieved from <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284420841>



## B. KPIs for Plan Implementation

Progress and challenges should be tracked, and strategies and priority actions adapted over time to meet ever-changing local level realities and needs. The key performance indicators (KPIs)

outlined below can assist the SDNTA to monitor the impacts of the plan over time. The Table below outlines key performance indicators for NATDMP implementation.

GOAL	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
1. Create and deliver iconic Native American tourism experiences	1.1 Public and private investment in priority experiences 1.2 Number of new experiences (virtual and on the ground) 1.3 Number of staff trained under service, hospitality, and COVID-19 compliance programs 1.4 Increase in visitor satisfaction
2. Improve infrastructure and placemaking	2.1 Increase in signage to key Native American attractions on reservations 2.2 Public and private investment in priority attractions, accommodations, and public facilities 2.3 Number of new attractions, accommodations, and public facilities in Tribal Nations
3. Enable tourism business success and viability	3.1 Number of business development education and awareness programs 3.2 Increase in new tourism enterprises 3.3 Increase in tourism enterprises receiving affordable financing 3.4 Increase in number of tourism enterprises that are operating formally and complying with existing standards
4. Prepare community and skilled workforce in tourism	4.1 Number of tourism awareness campaigns and programs 4.2 Number and levels of training programs in tourism and hospitality and range of topics 4.3 Investment from Tribal governments and NGOs for workforce development programs 4.4 Increase in number of people who participate in training programs in tourism and hospitality
5. Increase awareness of Native American tourism offerings in South Dakota among key market segments	5.1 Increase in number of regional marketing and promotion campaigns led by the SDNTA 5.2 Increase in number of tourism enterprises promoting online 5.3 Number of cultural understanding trainings and educational campaigns for tour operators and gateway communities 5.4 Creation and distribution of a regional Visitor Etiquette Guide 5.5 Number of day visitors to and expenditures in Tribal Nations
6. Increase awareness of Native American tourism offerings in South Dakota among key market segments	6.1 Establishment of a functional regional tourism management network/ organization 6.2 Number of tourism offices/positions in Tribal governments 6.3 Number of funding and implementation partners committed to delivering the NATDMP 6.4 Increase in tourism tax revenues for Tribal Nations



*Photos courtesy of South Dakota Department of Tourism*





*Courtesy of South Dakota Department of Tourism*