

**2025 HOUSE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**HB 1581**

# 2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Government and Veterans Affairs Committee Pioneer Room, State Capitol

HB 1581  
2/13/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants.
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8:30 a.m. Chairman Schauer opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Schauer, Vice Chairman Satrom, Representatives Brown, Grindberg, Karls, Rohr, Schneider, Steiner, VanWinkle, Vetter, Wolff

Members absent: Representatives Bahl, Christy, McLeod

### Discussion Topics:

- Local economies
- Promotion of culture
- Dedicated funding streams

8:31 a.m. Representative Finley-DeVille, District 4a, introduced the bill and submitted testimony, #37546.

8:36 a.m. Kiera Fox, MHA Tourism Acting Director/NDNTA Board Member MHA Representative, testified in favor and submitted testimony, #37380.

8:41 a.m. Danielle Wilke, Director of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Heritage Center, testified in favor.

8:47 a.m. Jason Morsette, President of the Chamber of Newtown, testified in favor.

8:52 a.m. John Joyce, Buffalo Grounding Foundation, testified in favor.

8:59 a.m. Les Thomas, President of North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance and member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa, testified in favor.

9:10 a.m. Stacey Lecompte, Executive Director, North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance, testified in favor and submitted testimony, #37529.

9:15 a.m. Nathan Davis, Former Indian Affairs Commissioner, testified in favor.

### Additional written testimony:

Jennifer Martel, Sitting Bull College, submitted testimony in favor, #36813.

Erika Red-Tomahawk, Tribal-State Policy Coordinator of the North Dakota Native Vote, submitted testimony in favor, #37280.

Representative Davis, District 9, submitted testimony in favor, #37291.

Tamara St. John, Tribal Archives and Collections of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, submitted testimony in favor, #37481.

Kenneth Graywater, Spirit Lake Tribe / North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance, submitted testimony in favor, #37497.

9:21 a.m. Chairman Schauer closed the hearing.

*Jackson Toman, Committee Clerk*

Testimony in Support of House Bill No. 1581  
Before the House Government and Veterans Affairs Public Hearing  
February 10, 2025

Members of the Committee:

I am honored to provide testimony in strong support of House Bill No. 1581, which appropriates \$500,000 from the state's general fund to the Department of Commerce for tribal tourism grants during the biennium from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2027.

This bill represents an important investment in tribal economic development, cultural preservation, and statewide tourism growth. Tribal tourism is a rapidly expanding sector that brings unique experiences to visitors while creating economic opportunities for tribal communities. The \$500,000 allocation will help strengthen and expand tourism initiatives in key ways:

**Economic Growth & Job Creation:** By supporting tribal tourism initiatives, this funding will stimulate local businesses, create jobs, and generate revenue for tribal and surrounding communities.

**Cultural Preservation & Education:** Tourism provides a platform to share and protect Indigenous traditions, languages, and heritage, ensuring that these invaluable cultural assets continue to thrive.

**Statewide Tourism Expansion:** Investing in tribal tourism enhances North Dakota's broader tourism industry by attracting visitors interested in authentic cultural experiences, outdoor recreation, and historical sites.

**Strengthened Tribal-State Partnerships:** Providing direct funding to tribal tourism efforts reinforces the state's commitment to working collaboratively with tribal nations, respecting their sovereignty, and fostering mutual economic success.

With this \$500,000 appropriation, House Bill No. 1581 represents not just a financial commitment, but a strategic initiative that will yield long-term benefits for both tribal communities and the state as a whole. I respectfully urge the committee to support this bill and ensure that North Dakota continues to invest in the growth of tribal tourism.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Martel

NDNTA Board Member  
Visitor Center Coordinator  
Sitting Bull Visitor Center  
Sitting Bull College

Email: [jennifer.martel@sittingbull.edu](mailto:jennifer.martel@sittingbull.edu)  
Phone: 701.854.8125



North Dakota Native Vote  
919 S 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Suite 603  
Bismarck, ND 58504

February 11, 2025

Testimony of Erika Red Tomahawk,  
Tribal-State Policy Coordinator, North Dakota Native Vote  
In Support for HB 1581

**Dear Chairman Schauer, Vice-Chairman Satrom, and members of the Government and Veterans Affairs Committee,**

My name is Erika Red Tomahawk, and I represent North Dakota Native Vote, an organization dedicated to empowering Native American communities, addressing systemic disparities, and ensuring our voices are heard. I am writing to you today in strong support of HB 1581, a bill that proposes the appropriation of \$500,000 in state funds for the purpose of providing tribal tourism grants through the Department of Commerce.

The establishment of a grant program for tribal tourism is a meaningful step toward supporting the economic growth and cultural preservation of Native communities in North Dakota. These funds would allow tribal governments to apply for grants of up to \$100,000 to promote and enhance tourism opportunities that showcase the rich history, culture, and traditions of our Native nations.

The potential benefits of HB 1581 are significant:

- Economic Growth
- Cultural Preservation and Education
- Empowerment of Tribal Government
- Strengthening Statewide Tourism
- Fostering Greater Collaboration

By supporting HB 1581, we are taking a proactive step toward not only enhancing the economic landscape of Native communities but also ensuring that North Dakota remains a place where Native American history, culture, and traditions are celebrated and shared with the world.

I urge the Government and Veterans Affairs Committee to give HB 1581 a **“Do Pass” recommendation**. By investing in tribal tourism, we are investing in the cultural, economic, and social growth of all the people of North Dakota. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,  
Erika Red Tomahawk



# North Dakota House of Representatives

STATE CAPITOL  
600 EAST BOULEVARD  
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



## Representative Jayme Davis

District 9  
601 John Street  
Rolette, ND 58366-7209  
[jdavis@ndlegis.gov](mailto:jdavis@ndlegis.gov)

## COMMITTEES:

Human Services  
Political Subdivisions

February 11, 2025

Good morning Chairman Schauer, Vice Chair Satrom and, members of the committee,

My name is Jayme Davis, and I am a Representative from District 9 that includes two Tribal Nations: Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and Spirit Lake Nation. District 9 also includes the beautiful Peace Gardens.

I am here today in strong support of House Bill 1581. This bill appropriates \$500,000 to the Department of Commerce for tribal tourism grants, providing up to \$100,000 per tribal government to enhance and promote tourism opportunities.

Investing in tribal tourism strengthens local economies, supports small businesses, and promotes North Dakota's rich Indigenous cultures. Tribal nations have unique histories, traditions, and landscapes that attract visitors, but they often lack the resources to fully develop and market these opportunities. This bill helps address that gap.

These funds could support cultural centers, outdoor tourism, marketing efforts, and tribal-owned businesses, creating jobs while preserving and sharing our heritage. Tribal tourism benefits not just Indigenous communities, but the entire state by expanding North Dakota's tourism economy.

I urge a "do pass" recommendation on HB 1581. Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions.



**MHA Nation Tourism**  
**Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara Nation – Fort Berthold Indian Reservation**  
**404 Frontage Road - New Town, North Dakota 58763**  
**Telephone: (701) 627-2243 Fax: (701) 627-2250**



Testimonial for House Bill No. 1581  
 February 12, 2025

Honorable Chairman and members of the Committee, for the record:

My name is Kiera Fox, I am the Acting Director of the MHA Nation Tourism Department and the MHA Nation Representative to the North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance Board. The MHA Nation Tourism Department wholeheartedly supports House Bill 1581, which appropriates \$500,000. This provides \$100,000 for the five Tribal Nations in North Dakota for Tribal tourism. This bill is a significant step towards preserving and promoting our rich cultural heritage, while also providing economic opportunities for our Tribal communities and surrounding communities.

Our Tribal Nations have a deep-rooted history and unique traditions that have been passed down through generations. By investing in Tribal tourism, we are not only preserving these invaluable cultural assets but also sharing them with the world. This funding will enable us to develop and maintain essential infrastructure, such as visitor centers, signage, and amenities that enhance the visitor experience. Additionally, it will allow us to create and promote engaging cultural programs, events, and workshops that showcase our heritage in an authentic and meaningful way.

The impact of this bill goes beyond cultural preservation. It will foster economic growth by creating jobs and stimulating local economies within our Tribal Nations. Tour guides, artisans, event organizers, and numerous other roles will benefit from the increased demand generated by tourism. This, in turn, will provide much-needed income and opportunities for our communities, helping to improve the overall quality of life.

Moreover, Tribal tourism fosters greater understanding and appreciation between different cultures. Visitors to our communities will have the opportunity to learn about our history, traditions, and values firsthand. This exchange of knowledge and experiences can lead to stronger relationships and mutual respect, fostering a more inclusive and harmonious society.

By supporting HB1581, the state of North Dakota is committing to honor and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of its Indigenous communities. This investment will not only benefit the Tribes but also enhance the state's reputation as a destination that values and respects cultural diversity. I urge the state to recognize the immense value of this bill and the positive impact it will have on our communities and beyond.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kiera Fox  
*Acting Director*  
*MHA Nation Tourism*  
*NDNTA Board member – MHA Nation Representative*

February 12, 2025

Tamara St John  
Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate  
Tribal Archives and Collections

**RE: Support for HB 1581 – Funding for Tribal Tourism Development**

Dear Chairman Schauer, Vice-Chairman Satrom, and members of the Government and Veterans Affairs Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 1581, which could provide critical funding for tribal tourism development in North Dakota. As a Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribal member and a board member of the North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (NDNTA), I have witnessed the immense potential of tribal tourism to drive economic growth, preserve cultural heritage, and create opportunities for Indigenous communities.

Tourism centered on Native American history and culture attracts visitors from across the country and around the world. By investing in tribal tourism, North Dakota not only enhances its economy but also strengthens relationships with tribal nations, supporting small businesses, artisans, tour operators, and hospitality industries in rural and tribal communities.

This funding is:

- Economic Development – Stimulating job creation and entrepreneurial growth in tribal communities.
- Cultural Preservation – Ensuring that Native traditions, stories, and cultural lifeways are preserved.
- Educational Opportunities – Promoting greater public awareness and appreciation of North Dakota's Indigenous heritage.

HB 1581 is a meaningful investment in both North Dakota's tourism industry and the Indigenous nations that have shaped its history. I urge you and your colleagues to support this important legislation, ensuring that tribal tourism continues to thrive as a key part of North Dakota's economic and cultural landscape.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tamara St John

(605) 268-0920

TamaraS@swo-nsn.gov



Kenneth J. Graywater Jr  
3951 SkiJump Rd  
St Michael ND 58370  
kjgraywater@gmail.com  
701-351-2182

February 12, 2025

North Dakota State House Committee on Government and Veterans Affairs  
State Capitol Building  
600 E. Boulevard Ave.  
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Members of the North Dakota State House Committee on Government and Veterans Affairs,

I am an enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Tribe, and I am a United States Marine Combat Veteran that participated in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Marines. I have been a North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance board member since June 2022.

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed bill HB 1581, which aims to provide much-needed support for tribal tourism grants in North Dakota. This legislation offers a unique opportunity to further elevate tribal tourism, bringing economic benefits and fostering greater understanding and connection between tribes, local communities, and the state.

As an entrepreneur who is in the process of developing a glamorous camping site (or "glamping") on tribal lands, I have firsthand experience of the challenges faced when trying to introduce new tourism products into the market, particularly when it comes to access to financing and navigating the complex landscape of land use regulations. The costs involved in bringing these ideas to life are substantial, especially given the barriers around credit access for small businesses, particularly those that involve tribal lands. As such, I am requesting that the Committee consider allocating a portion of the funding from HB 1581 to support small businesses and entrepreneurs who may not always be represented as stakeholders when discussing tribal and state relations.

Many of the issues that entrepreneurs like me face are not simply financial, but also logistical. The intricacies of land-use regulations, coupled with the need for access to credit and lending, often put new ventures at a disadvantage when attempting to navigate the complexities of the tribal and state infrastructure. This makes it extremely difficult to compete with larger, more established entities in the tourism industry. For small businesses, especially those with a focus on sustainable and culturally significant tourism products, the inability to access necessary resources and capital can result in missed opportunities for both economic growth and cross-cultural engagement.

By ensuring that a portion of the funds allocated through HB 1581 be directed towards supporting small business entrepreneurs, we can open doors to innovative, culturally rich tourism ventures that will not only benefit local communities but also provide a diverse and sustainable tourism experience in North Dakota. With the right access to funding, resources, and support, entrepreneurs like me can overcome barriers to market entry, contribute to tribal economic growth, and support the state's tourism efforts in meaningful ways.

I believe that by embracing small businesses as essential partners, the state can create an inclusive, thriving tourism ecosystem that reflects the rich diversity and potential of our tribal lands. I encourage you to consider the inclusion of this provision in HB 1581 and look forward to seeing this bill move forward with the potential to support all stakeholders involved in North Dakota's future growth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Kenneth J. Graywater Jr

*Kenneth J. Graywater Jr*





Les Thomas, President (TMBCI) [lesthomas52@yahoo.com](mailto:lesthomas52@yahoo.com)  
 Gary Snow, Vice President (MHA) [gsnow@mhanation.com](mailto:gsnow@mhanation.com)  
 Matthew Thompson, Secretary (SWO) [matt.thompson.sd@gmail.com](mailto:matt.thompson.sd@gmail.com)  
 Colette Brown, Treasurer (SLN) [cbrownsln@gmail.com](mailto:cbrownsln@gmail.com)  
 Jennifer Martel At Large (SRST) [jennifer.martel@sittingbull.edu](mailto:jennifer.martel@sittingbull.edu)  
 Stacey LaCompte, Executive Director (SRST) [info@ndnta.com](mailto:info@ndnta.com)

**Hihaani Waste - Good morning Chairman Schauer, Vice Chair Satrom and, members of the committee,**

**My name is Stacey LaCompte, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe: Executive Director North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (NDNTA). I express my strong support for House Bill 1581, A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants.**

### **Supporting Cultural Heritage Tourism Development in North Dakota A Path to Economic Growth and Cultural Preservation**

#### **Introduction**

Cultural Heritage Tourism is a rapidly growing sector that presents a unique opportunity for North Dakota to enhance its economy while honoring and preserving the rich traditions of its Indigenous communities.

The North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (NDNTA) leads the Nation in *coordinated statewide tribal tourism* development. The statewide alliance model – first funded by the NATIVE Act and developed by North Dakota tribes – is the most successful Native tourism development model in the U.S. today. NDNTA Board consists of 2 Tribal Members from each of the respected 5 Tribal Nations in ND.

Native tourism development builds community capacity, creates jobs, educates visitors and helps sustain a tribe's culture and environment. NDNTA has developed a strong partnership and collaboration with the ND Tourism Office to build a broad and unique Cultural Heritage Tourism in North Dakota.

Despite the potential for significant economic and cultural benefits, Tribal Nations in North Dakota face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to invest in tourism development. This document outlines the importance of integrating Indigenous Cultural Heritage Tourism into the state's budgeting process and creating dedicated funding streams to support this initiative.

#### **The Need for State Support**

##### **Challenges Facing Tribal Nations:**

- **Competing Priorities:** Tribal governments are often burdened with addressing critical issues such as healthcare, housing, and public safety. These pressing needs leave limited financial capacity to invest in tourism infrastructure and business development.
- **Limited Financial Resources:** Without external support, Tribal Nations struggle to allocate funds towards the growth of cultural tourism, which is essential for fostering economic independence and cultural sustainability.

#### **Proposed Solutions:**

##### **1. Inclusion in State Budgeting Process:**

- **Dedicated Funding Streams:** Establish a new funding mechanism within the state budget specifically earmarked for Indigenous Cultural Heritage Tourism. This could include:
  - **Start-Up Grants for Indigenous Entrepreneurs:** Provide seed funding to support the creation and growth of tourism-related small businesses in Indian Country. These grants would empower local entrepreneurs to develop authentic cultural experiences, crafts, and services that attract tourists.
  - **Tourism Infrastructure Development:** Allocate funds for the development and improvement of tourism infrastructure, such as cultural centers, museums, and parks within Tribal lands.
  - **Park Improvement Funding:** Enhance existing parks and recreational areas to make them more accessible and appealing to visitors, incorporating Indigenous cultural elements and history.

## 2. Economic and Cultural Benefits:

- **Job Creation and Economic Growth:** By investing in cultural tourism, North Dakota can stimulate local economies, creating jobs and new revenue streams for Indigenous communities.
- **Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** Funding cultural heritage tourism ensures the protection and promotion of Indigenous traditions, languages, and histories, offering educational and enriching experiences for visitors.

## Conclusion

Integrating Indigenous Cultural Heritage Tourism into North Dakota's budgeting process is not just an investment in economic development but also a commitment to preserving and celebrating the state's rich cultural diversity. By supporting Tribal Nations with dedicated funding, the state can foster a thriving tourism industry that benefits all North Dakotans while honoring its Indigenous heritage.

I urge the Government and Veterans Affairs Committee to give HB 1581 a **"Do Pass" recommendation**. By investing in tribal tourism, we are investing in the cultural, economic, and social growth of all the people of North Dakota. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Contact Information:** For more information or to support this initiative, please contact Stacey LaCompte, Executive Director, NDNTA at [info@ndnta.com](mailto:info@ndnta.com).

## Intro HB 1581 House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

Chairman Schauer, and members of the House Government and Veteran Affairs committee. My name is Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille, I represent District 4A that includes MHA Nation. Thank you for the opportunity to present this bill before you today. As a sponsor of HB 1581, which provides an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants.

Tourism is a vital tool for fostering economic development and cultural preservation on tribal lands. By promoting and investing in tribal tourism, North Dakota can support job creation, diversify local economies, and provide a platform for sharing the cultural heritage of Indigenous communities. According to the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association<sup>1</sup> (AIANTA), tribal tourism contributes significantly to regional and state economies, with non-Native visitors frequently seeking authentic experiences, cultural education, and outdoor recreation<sup>2</sup>. Tribal tourism not only strengthens economic self-sufficiency for tribal nations but also builds cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

Investing in tribal tourism infrastructure and marketing through targeted grants will ensure that North Dakota's tribal nations are positioned to capitalize on growing interest in cultural tourism. The U.S. Department of Commerce reports that cultural and heritage tourism accounts for over \$171 billion annually<sup>3</sup> in the U.S. economy, with Native American sites and experiences playing an increasingly popular role. States that have supported tribal tourism initiatives have seen measurable returns in visitor spending and local business development.

This bill will provide \$500,000 in grants for tribal governments in North Dakota to enhance and promote tourism opportunities, helping to expand local economies and boost job creation. Tribal governments may apply for grants of up to \$100,000 to develop tourism initiatives such as cultural heritage centers, interpretive trails, community events, and marketing campaigns that highlight their unique histories and landscapes.

The proposed tribal tourism grants represent a strategic investment in the future of North Dakota's economy and its relationship with tribal nations, promoting sustainable growth, cultural preservation, and mutual prosperity.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I ask that the House GVA committee gives HB 1581 a do pass recommendation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aianta.org/economic-impact-study-reveals-native-tourism-is-a-14-billion-industry/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://nasaa-arts.org/newsletter/2010-nasaa-notes-issues/january-2010-nasaa-notes/cultural-heritage-travel-contributes-192-billion-annually-u-s-economy/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2014/by\\_program/reports\\_and\\_data/toolkits/cultural\\_districts/issue\\_briefs/Cultural-Tourism-Attracting-Visitors-and-Their-Spending.pdf](https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2014/by_program/reports_and_data/toolkits/cultural_districts/issue_briefs/Cultural-Tourism-Attracting-Visitors-and-Their-Spending.pdf)

# 2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Government and Veterans Affairs Committee Pioneer Room, State Capitol

HB 1581  
2/14/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants.

9:41 a.m. Chairman Schauer opened the meeting.

Members present: Chairman Schauer, Vice Chairman Satrom, Representatives Brown, Grindberg, Karls, Rohr, Schneider, Steiner, VanWinkle, Vetter, Wolff  
Members absent: Representatives Bahl, Christy, McLeod

### Discussion Topics:

- Committee work
- Proposed amendments

10:09 a.m. Representative Vetter moved to amend the bill, LC#25.1320.01001.

10:09 a.m. Representative Steiner seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Austen Schauer	Y
Representative Bernie Satrom	Y
Representative Landon Bahl	AB
Representative Collette Brown	Y
Representative Josh Christy	AB
Representative Karen Grindberg	Y
Representative Karen Karls	Y
Representative Carrie McLeod	AB
Representative Karen Rohr	Y
Representative Mary Schneider	Y
Representative Vicky Steiner	Y
Representative Lori VanWinkle	Y
Representative Steve Vetter	Y
Representative Christina Wolff	Y

10:10 a.m. Motion passed 11-0-3.

10:10 a.m. Representative Vetter moved a Do Pass as Amended and referred to appropriations.

10:11 a.m. Representative Grindberg seconded the motion.

<b>Representatives</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Representative Austen Schauer	Y
Representative Bernie Satrom	Y
Representative Landon Bahl	AB
Representative Collette Brown	Y
Representative Josh Christy	AB
Representative Karen Grindberg	Y
Representative Karen Karls	Y
Representative Carrie McLeod	AB
Representative Karen Rohr	N
Representative Mary Schneider	Y
Representative Vicky Steiner	Y
Representative Lori VanWinkle	Y
Representative Steve Vetter	Y
Representative Christina Wolff	N

10:11 a.m. Motion passed 9-2-3.

Representative Brown will carry the bill.

10:12 a.m. Chairman Schauer closed the meeting.

*Jackson Toman, Committee Clerk*

Sixty-ninth  
Legislative Assembly  
of North Dakota

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1581**

Introduced by

Representatives Finley-DeVille, Brown, Davis, Ista

Senators Mathern, Walen

*2-14-25*  
*[Signature]*  
*1 of 1*

1 A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism  
2 grants; and to provide for a legislative management report.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1. APPROPRIATION - DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE - TRIBAL TOURISM**

5 **GRANTS - ONE-TIME FUNDING - LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT REPORT.** There is  
6 appropriated out of any moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise  
7 appropriated, the sum of ~~\$500,000~~ \$100,000, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to  
8 the department of commerce for the purpose of providing tribal tourism grants, for the biennium  
9 beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027. A tribal government in the state may apply to  
10 the department of commerce for a grant of up to ~~\$100,000~~ \$20,000 to match funds committed by  
11 a tribal government to promote and enhance tribal nation tourism opportunities. A grant  
12 application must include a plan for using funds to promote and enhance tribal nation tourism  
13 opportunities to be overseen by the department of commerce division of tourism. The  
14 department of commerce shall report to legislative management regarding the distribution, use,  
15 and impact of grants. The funding provided in this section is considered a one-time funding  
16 item.

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE  
HB 1581**

**Government and Veterans Affairs Committee (Rep. Schauer, Chairman)** recommends **AMENDMENTS** ([25.1320.01001](#)) and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** and **BE REREFERRED** to the **Appropriations Committee** (9 YEAS, 2 NAYS, 3 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1581 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.

**2025 HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS**

**HB 1581**



# 2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Appropriations Committee Roughrider Room, State Capitol

HB 1581  
2/19/2025

Provide appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants; and to provide for a legislative management report.

5:49 p.m. Chairman Vigesaa opened the meeting.

Members present: Chairman Vigesaa, Vice Chairman Kempenich, Representatives Anderson, Berg, Bosch, Brandenburg, Fisher, Hanson, Louser, Martinson, Meier, Mitskog, Monson, Murphy, Nathe, Nelson, O'Brien, Pyle, Richter, Sanford, Stemen, Swiontek, Wagner

### Discussion Topics:

- Committee Work

5:50 p.m. Representative Schauer introduced the bill with testimony #38109.

5:55 p.m. Representative Brandenburg moved a Do Pass.

5:55 p.m. Representative O'Brien seconded the motion.

### Roll Call Vote

Representatives	Vote
Representative Don Vigesaa	Y
Representative Keith Kempenich	Y
Representative Bert Anderson	Y
Representative Mike Berg	Y
Representative Glenn Bosch	Y
Representative Mike Brandenburg	Y
Representative Jay Fisher	Y
Representative Karla Rose Hanson	Y
Representative Scott Louser	Y
Representative Bob Martinson	Y
Representative Lisa Meier	Y
Representative Alisa Mitskog	Y
Representative David Monson	Y
Representative Eric J. Murphy	Y
Representative Mike Nathe	Y
Representative Jon O. Nelson	Y
Representative Emily O'Brien	Y
Representative Brandy L. Pyle	Y
Representative David Richter	Y
Representative Mark Sanford	Y

Representative Gregory Stemen	Y
Representative Steve Swiontek	Y
Representative Scott Wagner	Y

Motion passed 23-0-0.

Representative Brown will carry.

5:56 p.m. Chairman Vigesaa closed the meeting.

*Krystal Eberle for Risa Berube, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE  
ENGROSSED HB 1581 ([25.1320.02000](#))**

**Appropriations Committee (Rep. Vigesaa, Chairman)** recommends **DO PASS** (23 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1581 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.

1581

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Appropriations committee. We meet again for the final time.

My name is Austen Schauer, District 13, West Fargo.

I have nothing against **Josh Duhamel** of Minot. From every indication, he's a good guy, a good actor and a good voice for North Dakota.

But when it comes to tourism and when it comes to ***interest*** from people in the United States and internationally, Josh Duhamel does not hold a candle to the story of the **North American Indigenous people**.

It is a story of loss, hardship, violence, betrayal, and misappropriation.

It is also a story of community, bravery, honor, resilience and the buffalo.

We're told the **attention** on ***tribal travel experiences*** has never been stronger.

People are fascinated with the encounters between European settlers and Native tribes.

They want to know more about the French and Indian War, the Creek War, the Indian Removal Act, the Seminole Wars, the Trail of Tears, the Long Walk of the Navajo, the Battle of Little Bighorn, the massacre at Wounded Knee, and the plight of the Sioux.

They want to know about Sakakawea and her role in the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Few history books capture the beauty and complexity of indigenous life and rich Native American history.

But we don't need a history book to tell the story.

The Native American story is alive and well and on display right here in North Dakota within its five Tribal Nations.

The tribes **want** to tell their story. They **want** visitors. They **understand** the value of tourism and **HB 1581** allows it to happen.

**HB 1581** is a partnership between the State of North Dakota and the Tribal Nations to provide **one-to-one matching grants** for tourism.

The State will appropriate **\$100 thousand dollars** and each of the five tribes can seek up to **\$20 thousand dollars** to promote and enhance **tribal tourism**.

A grant application must be made to the Commerce Department and include a plan for using the funds. Commerce will submit a report to Legislative Management at the end of the biennium.

The support of **HB 1581** seen in **LAWS** does not do justice to the passion and desire of Native leaders to tell their story especially as we near our country's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Semi-quin-centennial.

And the good news is...the **framework** for tribe tourism is already in place.

The North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (**NDNTA**) is one of the most successful Native tourism models in the country.

The **NDNTA** consists of two Tribal Members from each of the five Nations. The group has already been involved in several International Roundups and conferences.

The **NDNTA** has developed a strong partnership and collaboration with the ND Tourism Office to market their story.



Despite the desire to host visitors and provide a first-hand experience in Native culture, tourism development among the tribes faces challenges.

There are competing priorities such as healthcare, housing, public safety, addiction, and education. Thus, the need for **HB 1581**.

If approved, **HB 1581** can be used in the following ways.

- **Start-Up Grants for Indigenous Entrepreneurs.** Seed money for tourism-related small businesses to develop authentic cultural experiences, crafts and services to tourists.
- **Tourism Infrastructure.** Grants to improve cultural centers, museums and sites within Tribal lands.
- **Park Improvement Funding.** Enhance existing parks and recreational areas to make them more accessible and appealing to visitors.

Mr. Chairman and Committee members, timing is everything.

With the opening of **Teddy Roosevelt Presidential Museum**, the nation's **250<sup>th</sup> birthday** and a strong *appetite* to seek Native **American history and culture**, we can truly create a **memorable experience** for visitors to our state.

One, that Josh Duhamel would be proud of...along with you and me.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I stand open to questions.

**2025 SENATE AGRICULTURE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**HB 1581**

# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

Fort Union Room, State Capitol

HB 1581  
3/20/2025

A bill for an act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants; and to provide for a legislative management report.

10:30 a.m. Chairman Luick opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Luick, Vice-Chair Myrdal, Senator Marcellais, Senator Weston, Senator Weber, Senator Lemm

### Discussion Topics:

- Department of Commerce
- Cultural preservation of tribal lands
- Job creation and economic diversification
- Appropriation clarification
- One-to-one matching grants and a one-time allocation
- Federal tourism funding
- ND Native American Tourism Alliance and economic impact
- Economic impact of tourism in ND
- Tribal nation individual uses
- Great American Roundup
- International Peace Powwow
- Destination Development Grant
- Cultural Heritage Tours

10:30 a.m. Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille, District 4A, testified in favor and submitted testimony #43183.

10:35 a.m. Senator Tim Mathern, District 11, testified in favor.

10:37 a.m. Representative Collete Brown, District 9, testified in favor.

10:43 a.m. Senator Richard Marcellais, District 9, testified in favor and submitted testimony #43288 and #43289.

10:48 a.m. Les Thomas, Vice President, ND Native American Tourism Alliance, testified in favor.

11:00 a.m. Stacey LaCompte, Executive Director, ND Native American Tourism Alliance, testified in favor and submitted testimony #43153.

11:06 a.m. Kiera Fox, MHA Tourism/NDNTA MHA Nation Board Representative, testified in favor and submitted testimony #43158.



11:08 a.m. Daniel Wookie, Director, Turtle Mountain Tourism Site and part of the ND Native Tourism Alliance, testified in favor.

**Additional written testimony:**

Kenneth J. Graywater Jr., SkiJump Adventures, submitted testimony #43119 in favor.

11:11 a.m. Vice-Chair Myrdal closed the hearing.

*Audrey Oswald, Committee Clerk*



Kenneth J. Graywater Jr  
3951 SkiJump Rd  
St Michael ND 58370  
kjgraywater@gmail.com  
701-351-2182

February 19, 2025

North Dakota State House Committee on Government and Veterans Affairs  
State Capitol Building  
600 E. Boulevard Ave.  
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Members of the North Dakota State House Committee on Government and Veterans Affairs,

I am an enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Tribe, and I am a United States Marine Combat Veteran that participated in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Marines. I have been a North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance board member since June 2022.

The North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance consists of all 5 tribes in North Dakota. We have worked together to develop tourism experiences that allow visitors to learn our unique histories and listen to the amazing stories of our people. The experiences are educational, emotional and also very entertaining.

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed bill HB 1581, which aims to provide much-needed support for tribal tourism grants in North Dakota. This legislation offers a unique opportunity to further elevate tribal tourism, bringing economic benefits and fostering greater understanding and connection between tribes, local communities, and the state. Tourism has the ability to help our communities grow in a healthy and sustainable way. The more support our reservation gets the better our communities can become. That in turn will equal better relationships with surrounding communities which turns into a better state of North Dakota.

As an entrepreneur who is in the process of developing a glamorous camping site (or "glamping") on tribal lands, I have firsthand experience of the challenges faced when trying to introduce new tourism products into the market, particularly when it comes to access to financing and navigating the complex landscape of land use regulations. The costs involved in bringing these ideas to life are substantial, especially given the barriers around credit access for small businesses, particularly those that involve tribal lands. As such, I am requesting that the Committee consider allocating a portion of the funding from HB 1581 to support small businesses and entrepreneurs who may not always be represented as stakeholders when discussing tribal and state relations.

Many of the issues that entrepreneurs like me face are not simply financial, but also logistical. The intricacies of land-use regulations, coupled with the need for access to credit and lending, often put new ventures at a disadvantage when attempting to navigate the complexities of the tribal and state infrastructure. This makes it extremely difficult to compete with larger, more established entities in the tourism industry. For small businesses, especially those with a focus on sustainable and culturally significant tourism products, the inability to access necessary resources and capital can result in missed opportunities for both economic growth and cross-cultural engagement.

By ensuring that a portion of the funds allocated through HB 1581 be directed towards supporting small business entrepreneurs, we can open doors to innovative, culturally rich tourism ventures that will not only benefit local communities but also provide a diverse and sustainable tourism experience in North Dakota. With the right access to funding, resources, and support, entrepreneurs like me can overcome barriers to market entry, contribute to tribal economic growth, and support the state's tourism efforts in meaningful ways.

I believe that by embracing small businesses as essential partners, the state can create an inclusive, thriving tourism ecosystem that reflects the rich diversity and potential of our tribal lands. I encourage you to consider the inclusion of this provision in HB 1581 and look forward to seeing this bill move forward with the potential to support all stakeholders involved in North Dakota's future growth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Kenneth J. Graywater Jr

*Kenneth J. Graywater Jr*



Les Thomas, President (TMBCI) [lesthomas52@yahoo.com](mailto:lesthomas52@yahoo.com)  
 Gary Snow, Vice President (MHA) [gsnow@mhanation.com](mailto:gsnow@mhanation.com)  
 Tamara St. John, Secretary (SWO) [tamara.stjohn@yahoo.com](mailto:tamara.stjohn@yahoo.com)  
 Colette Brown, Treasurer (SLN) [cbrownsln@gmail.com](mailto:cbrownsln@gmail.com)  
 Jennifer Martel At Large (SRST) [jennifer.martel@sittingbull.edu](mailto:jennifer.martel@sittingbull.edu)  
 Stacey LaCompte, Executive Director (SRST) [info@ndnta.com](mailto:info@ndnta.com)

Hihaani Waste - Good Morning Chairman Representative Vigesaa. Vice-Chairman Representation Kempennich and members of the committee:

My name is Stacey LaCompte, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe: Executive Director North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (NDNTA). I express my strong support for House Bill 1581, A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants.

## Supporting Cultural Heritage Tourism Development in North Dakota

### A Path to Economic Growth and Cultural Preservation

#### Introduction

Cultural Heritage Tourism is a rapidly growing sector that presents a unique opportunity for North Dakota to enhance its economy while honoring and preserving the rich traditions of its Indigenous communities.

The North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (NDNTA) leads the Nation in *coordinated statewide tribal tourism* development. The statewide alliance model – first funded by the NATIVE Act and developed by North Dakota tribes – is the most successful Native tourism development model in

the U.S. today. NDNTA Board consists of 2 Tribal Members from each of the respected 5 Tribal Nations in ND.

Native tourism development builds community capacity, creates jobs, educates visitors and helps sustain a tribe's culture and environment. NDNTA has developed a strong partnership and collaboration with the ND Tourism Office to build a broad and unique Cultural Heritage Tourism in North Dakota.

Despite the potential for significant economic and cultural benefits, Tribal Nations in North Dakota face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to invest in tourism development. This document outlines the importance of integrating Indigenous Cultural Heritage Tourism into the state's budgeting process and creating dedicated funding streams to support this initiative.

### The Need for State Support

#### Challenges Facing Tribal Nations:

- **Competing Priorities:** Tribal governments are often burdened with addressing critical issues such as healthcare, housing, and public safety. These pressing needs leave limited financial capacity to invest in tourism infrastructure and business development.
- **Limited Financial Resources:** Without external support, Tribal Nations struggle to allocate funds towards the growth of cultural tourism, which is essential for

fostering economic independence and cultural sustainability.

## Proposed Solutions:

### 1. Inclusion in State Budgeting Process:

- **Dedicated Funding Streams:** Establish a new funding mechanism within the state budget specifically Allocated for Indigenous Cultural Heritage Tourism. This could include:
  - **Start-Up Grants for Indigenous Entrepreneurs:** Provide seed funding to support the creation and growth of tourism-related small businesses in Indian Country. These grants would empower local entrepreneurs to develop authentic cultural experiences, crafts, and services that attract tourists.
  - **Tourism Infrastructure Development:** Allocate funds for the development and improvement of tourism infrastructure, such as cultural centers, museums, and parks within Tribal lands.
  - **Park Improvement Funding:** Enhance existing parks and recreational areas to make them more accessible and appealing to visitors, incorporating Indigenous cultural elements and history.

### 2. Economic and Cultural Benefits:

- **Job Creation and Economic Growth:** By investing in cultural tourism, North Dakota can stimulate local

economies, creating jobs and new revenue streams for Indigenous communities.

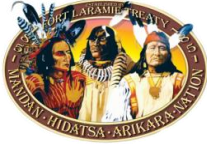
- **Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** Funding cultural heritage tourism ensures the protection and promotion of Indigenous traditions, languages, and histories, offering educational and enriching experiences for visitors.

## Conclusion

Integrating Indigenous Cultural Heritage Tourism into North Dakota's budgeting process is not just an investment in economic development but also a commitment to preserving and celebrating the state's rich cultural diversity. By supporting Tribal Nations with dedicated funding, the state can foster a thriving tourism industry that benefits all North Dakotans while honoring its Indigenous heritage.

I urge the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs to give HB 1581 a "Do Pass" recommendation. By investing in tribal tourism, we are investing in the cultural, economic, and social growth of all the people of North Dakota. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Contact Information:** For more information or to support this initiative, please contact Stacey LaCompte, Executive Director, NDNTA at [info@ndnta.com](mailto:info@ndnta.com).



MHA Nation Tourism  
307 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, New Town, ND 58763  
O:701.627.2243



## Testimonial for House Bill 1581

March 17, 2025

Good morning Chairman Representative Vigesaa. Vice-Chairman Representative Kempennich and members of the committee:

My name is Kiera Fox, MHA Nation Tourism Acting Director and North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (NDNTA) MHA Nation Board Representative.

The MHA Nation Tourism Department wholeheartedly supports House Bill 1581. This bill is a vital investment in preserving our cultural heritage and creating economic opportunities for our communities.

Tribal tourism allows us to protect and share our unique histories, traditions, and stories. The funding will help enhance infrastructure like visitor centers, signage, and amenities, making the experience more welcoming. It will also enable us to create and promote cultural programs and events that authentically highlight our traditions.

A key part of our initiative is the growing partnership between our Tribes and surrounding Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs). Together, we are coordinating regional tours that connect our communities with neighboring areas, expanding the reach of our cultural tourism. This collaboration promotes a deeper understanding of our shared history, offering visitors a richer experience, and increases opportunities for cross-promotion across North Dakota communities.

The economic impact is significant. The growth of tourism will create jobs for our people in roles like tour guides, artisans, and event planners, bringing much-needed income to our communities and improving overall quality of life. Tribal tourism also fosters cross-cultural understanding and respect, providing visitors a chance to experience our history and values firsthand. This helps build stronger relationships and a more inclusive society.

Supporting HB1581 shows North Dakota's commitment to honoring Indigenous cultures and recognizing their importance to the state's identity. This investment benefits our Tribal Nations and enhances North Dakota's reputation as a place that values and celebrates diversity. We urge the state to support this important bill and its lasting impact on our communities.

Sincerely,



MHA Nation Tourism  
307 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, New Town, ND 58763  
O:701.627.2243



Kiera Fox

Acting Director, MHA Nation Tourism

NDNTA Board member – MHA Nation Representative





# North Dakota House of Representatives

STATE CAPITOL  
600 EAST BOULEVARD  
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



## Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille

District 4A  
P.O. Box 501  
Mandaree, ND 58757-0501  
[lfinleydeville@ndlegis.gov](mailto:lfinleydeville@ndlegis.gov)

## COMMITTEES:

Industry, Business and Labor  
Transportation

### Testimony of Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille on HB 1581

March 20, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture and Veteran Affairs committee. My name is Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille, I represent District 4A that includes Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation. Thank you for the opportunity to present this bill before you today. As a sponsor of HB 1581, which provides an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants.

Tourism is a vital tool for fostering economic development and cultural preservation on tribal lands. By promoting and investing in tribal tourism, North Dakota can support job creation, diversify local economies, and provide a platform for sharing the cultural heritage of Indigenous communities. According to the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association<sup>1</sup> (AIANTA), tribal tourism contributes significantly to regional and state economies, with non-Native visitors frequently seeking authentic experiences, cultural education, and outdoor recreation<sup>2</sup>. Tribal tourism not only strengthens economic self-sufficiency for tribal nations but also builds cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

Investing in tribal tourism infrastructure and marketing through targeted grants will ensure that North Dakota's tribal nations are positioned to capitalize on growing interest in cultural tourism. The U.S. Department of Commerce reports that cultural and heritage tourism accounts for over \$171 billion annually<sup>3</sup> in the U.S. economy, with Native American sites and experiences playing an increasingly popular role. States that have supported tribal tourism initiatives have seen measurable returns<sup>2-21</sup> in visitor spending and local business development.

This bill will provide \$500,000 in grants for tribal governments in North Dakota to enhance and promote tourism opportunities, helping to expand local economies and boost job creation. Tribal governments may apply for grants of up to \$100,000 to develop tourism initiatives such as cultural heritage centers, interpretive trails, community events, and marketing campaigns that highlight their unique histories and landscapes.

The proposed tribal tourism grants represent a strategic investment in the future of North Dakota's economy and its relationship with tribal nations, promoting sustainable growth, cultural preservation, and mutual prosperity.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I ask that the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs committee gives HB 1581 a do pass recommendation.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aianta.org/economic-impact-study-reveals-native-tourism-is-a-14-billion-industry/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://nasaa-arts.org/newsletter/2010-nasaa-notes-issues/january-2010-nasaa-notes/cultural-heritage-travel-contributes-192-billion-annually-u-s-economy/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2014/by\\_program/reports\\_and\\_data/toolkits/cultural\\_districts/issue\\_briefs/Cultural-Tourism-Attracting-Visitors-and-Their-Spending.pdf](https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2014/by_program/reports_and_data/toolkits/cultural_districts/issue_briefs/Cultural-Tourism-Attracting-Visitors-and-Their-Spending.pdf)



# North Dakota Senate

STATE CAPITOL  
600 EAST BOULEVARD  
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



## Senator Richard Marcellais

District 9  
301 Laite Loop NE  
Belcourt, ND, 58316-3877  
[rmarcellais@ndlegis.gov](mailto:rmarcellais@ndlegis.gov)

## COMMITTEES:

Finance and Taxation  
Agriculture and Veterans Affairs

## HB 1581

Chairman Luick, members of the Senate Agriculture/Veterans Affairs Committee for the record my name is Richard Marcellais, North Dakota State Senator in District 9.

Today I am here to testify in favor of HB 1581, to provide an appropriation to the Department of Commerce for Tribal Tourism Grants.

North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (NDNTA) started in 2016 is a nonprofit organization committed to protecting, preserving, promoting and education the world about the Native American culture, history and environment of the five (5) Tribal Native nations in North Dakota.

North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance includes Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa Arikara (MHA) Nation, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.

## MISSION

To promote sustainable tourism and developing economic opportunities for Native people and Sovereign Nations. Committed to preserve, protect promote, and educate travelers of the culture, history, and environment of each North Dakota Tribal Nation.

## VISION

To enhance and promote Tribal Tourism as a means of economic development and growth for all North Dakota Tribal Nations, while maintaining respect for Sovereignty, tribal traditions and lands. Tourism is 3<sup>rd</sup> leading sources of economic impact for North Dakota. The 2023 economic impact was \$3.3 billion dollars within North Dakota including our Tribal Nations.

Chairman Luick members of the Agriculture/Veteran Affairs committee I would like you to consider the attached amendment to put HB 1581 back to its original state.

Chairman Luick members of the Committee I ask for your positive vote on HB 1581. I will try an answer any questions you may have.

Sixty-ninth  
Legislative Assembly  
of North Dakota

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO  
FIRST ENGROSSMENT**

**ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1581**

Introduced by

Representatives Finley-DeVille, Brown, Davis, Ista

Senators Mathern, Walen

- 1 A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism  
2 grants; and to provide for a legislative management report.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1. APPROPRIATION - DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE - TRIBAL TOURISM**  
5 **GRANTS - ONE-TIME FUNDING - LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT REPORT.** There is  
6 appropriated out of any moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise  
7 appropriated, the sum of ~~\$100,000~~\$500,000, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to  
8 the department of commerce for the purpose of providing tribal tourism grants, for the biennium  
9 beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027. A tribal government in the state may apply to  
10 the department of commerce for a grant of up to ~~\$20,000~~\$100,000 to match funds committed by  
11 a tribal government to promote and enhance tribal nation tourism opportunities. A grant  
12 application must include a plan for using funds to promote and enhance tribal nation tourism  
13 opportunities to be overseen by the department of commerce division of tourism. The  
14 department of commerce shall report to legislative management regarding the distribution, use,  
15 and impact of grants. The funding provided in this section is considered a onetime funding item.





*Richard J. McElharris*

## Help us with HB 1581

*Our Tribal Nations and North Dakota need your help!*

- Tourism is 3rd leading sources of economic impact for North Dakota. The 2023 economic impact was \$3.3 billion dollars within in North Dakota including our Tribal Nations.
- North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance preserves, protects, promotes and educates the world about the respect history and culture of the five Tribal Nations of North Dakota.
- North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance will assist each Tribal Nation to develop a tourism department and plan.
- To support the development and enhancement of tourism within Tribal Nations, the North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (NDNTA) is requesting financial assistance from the state of North Dakota to advance its tourism initiatives.
- The incredibly partnerships that NDNTA has developed between North Dakota Tourism and other regional Conventions and Visitors Bureau (CVB) will only bring in more visitors and enhance North Dakota's economy.
- North Dakota Tourism, in partnership with the North Dakota Native American Tourism Alliance (NDNTA), actively promotes the state as a premier travel destination both internationally and domestically. Their efforts focus on attracting visitors from key markets, including Australia, New Zealand, Italy, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Scandinavian countries.
- North Dakota Tourism has reported an increased demand for our Tribal Nations' travel experiences both domestically and internationally.



*Continued on back*

# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

Fort Union Room, State Capitol

HB 1581

3/28/2025

A bill for an act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants; and to provide for a legislative management report.

9:39 a.m. Chairman Luick opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Luick, Vice-Chair Myrdal, Senator Marcellais, Senator Weston, Senator Weber, Senator Lemm

### Discussion Topics:

- History of the bill
- Matching funds and affordability
- Grant applications
- Tourism as an industry in the state
- Heritage Center and the five tribal nations
- International Peace Garden Powwow
- Native American Tourism in the state
- Budget resolution

9:39 a.m. Chairman Luick updated the committee on the history of the bill.

9:41 a.m. Senator Marcellais moved to adopt Amendment LC #25.1320.02002.

9:41 a.m. Senator Myrdal seconded the motion.

9:48 a.m. Senator Marcellais rescinded his motion to adopt Amendment LC #25.1320.02002.

9:49 a.m. Senator Myrdal rescinded her second.

9:49 a.m. Voice Vote to Withdraw Motion - Motion passed.

9:51 a.m. Chairman Luick adjourned the meeting.

*Audrey Oswald, Committee Clerk*

# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

Fort Union Room, State Capitol

HB 1581

4/3/2025

A bill for an act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants; and to provide for a legislative management report.

9:06 a.m. Chairman Luick opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Luick, Vice-Chair Myrdal, Senator Marcellais, Senator Weston, Senator Weber

### Discussion Topics:

- Native American Tourism Alliance
- Matching grant capabilities and percentages
- Increased appropriation
- Original bill
- Committee action

9:06 a.m. Chairman Luick led the discussion.

9:08 a.m. Senator Marcellais explained the proposed amendment and submitted testimony #44956.

9:09 a.m. Senator Marcellais moved adopt Amendment LC# 25.1320.02004.

9:09 a.m. Senator Myrdal seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Larry Luick	N
Senator Janne Myrdal	N
Senator Randy D. Lemm	N
Senator Richard Marcellais	Y
Senator Mark F. Weber	Y
Senator Kent Weston	Y

Motion failed 3-3-0.

9:15 a.m. Senator Marcellais moved a Do Pass and be Rereferred to Appropriations.

9:16 a.m. Senator Myrdal seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Larry Luick	Y
Senator Janne Myrdal	N
Senator Randy D. Lemm	N
Senator Richard Marcellais	Y

Senator Mark F. Weber	Y
Senator Kent Weston	Y

Motion passed 4-2-0.

Senator Marcellais will carry the bill.

9:18 a.m. Chairman Luick closed the hearing.

*Audrey Oswald, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE  
ENGROSSED HB 1581 ([25.1320.02000](#))**

**Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee (Sen. Luick, Chairman)** recommends **DO PASS** and **BE REREFERRED** to the **Appropriations Committee** (4 YEAS, 2 NAYS, 0 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). Engrossed HB 1581 was rereferred to the **Appropriations Committee**. This bill does not affect workforce development.



25.1320.02004

Title.

Fiscal No. 1

Prepared by the Legislative Council  
staff for Senator Marcellais

April 1, 2025

Sixty-ninth  
Legislative Assembly  
of North Dakota**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO  
FIRST ENGROSSMENT****ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1581**

Introduced by

Representatives Finley-DeVille, Brown, Davis, Ista

Senators Mathern, Walen

- 1 A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism  
2 grants; and to provide for a legislative management report.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

- 4 **SECTION 1. APPROPRIATION - DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE - TRIBAL TOURISM**  
5 **GRANTS - ONE-TIME FUNDING - LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT REPORT.** There is  
6 appropriated out of any moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise  
7 appropriated, the sum of ~~\$100,000~~ \$500,000, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to  
8 the department of commerce for the purpose of providing tribal tourism grants, for the biennium  
9 beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027. A tribal government in the state may apply to  
10 the department of commerce for a grant of up to \$20,000 ~~to match funds committed by a tribal-~~  
11 ~~government~~ \$100,000 to promote and enhance tribal nation tourism opportunities. The  
12 department of commerce may spend the funds appropriated in this section only to the extent  
13 the tribal government has secured one dollar of matching funds from nonstate sources for every  
14 ten dollars provided by the department of commerce. A grant application must include a plan for  
15 using funds to promote and enhance tribal nation tourism opportunities to be overseen by the  
16 department of commerce division of tourism. The department of commerce shall report to  
17 legislative management regarding the distribution, use, and impact of grants. The appropriation  
18 provided in this section is considered a one-time funding item.

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT:****House Bill No. 1581 - Department of Commerce - Senate Action**

	Base Budget	House Version	Senate Changes	Senate Version
Tribal tourism grants		\$100,000	\$400,000	\$500,000
Total all funds	\$0	\$100,000	\$400,000	\$500,000
Less estimated income	0	0	0	0
General fund	\$0	\$100,000	\$400,000	\$500,000
FTE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

**Department 601 - Department of Commerce - Detail of Senate Changes**

	Adds Funding for Tribal Tourism Grants <sup>1</sup>	Total Senate Changes
Tribal tourism grants	\$400,000	\$400,000
Total all funds	\$400,000	\$400,000
Less estimated income	0	0
General fund	\$400,000	\$400,000
FTE	0.00	0.00

<sup>1</sup> One-time funding of \$400,000 is added from the general fund for tribal tourism grants to provide a total of \$500,000. The House approved \$100,000. The amendment also increases the maximum grant award a tribal government is eligible for from \$20,000 to \$100,000 and requires a tribal government that receives a grant to provide matching funds of 10 percent (\$10,000).

**2025 SENATE APPROPRIATIONS**

**HB 1581**

# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Appropriations - Government Operations Division Red River Room, State Capitol

HB 1581  
4/8/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants; and to provide for a legislative management report.

4:37 p.m. Chairman Wanzek opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Wanzek, Vice-Chair Dwyer, Senator Burckhard, Senator Erbele, and Senator Sickler.

### **Discussion Topics:**

- Grants from Commerce Department
- Tribes' eligibility for Destination Development grants from ND Tourism

4:43 p.m. Chairman Wanzek postponed action until further information from the bill sponsors and ND Tourism can be found.

4:45 p.m. Chairman Wanzek closed the meeting.

*Carol Thompson, Committee Clerk*

# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Appropriations - Government Operations Division Red River Room, State Capitol

HB 1581  
4/9/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants; and to provide for a legislative management report.

3:02 p.m. Vice-Chair Dwyer opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Wanzek, Vice-Chair Dwyer, Senator Burckhard, Senator Erbele, and Senator Sickler.

### Discussion Topics:

- Economic opportunities for Tribal Nations
- Promotion of Indigenous culture and history
- Pow Wows
- Indigenous aspect of USA 250 celebration

3:02 p.m. Senator Marcellais, District 9, testified in favor and submitted testimony #44866, #44868, and #44874.

3:18 p.m. Senator Burckhard moved to Amend HB 1581 by changing the amount from 100,000 to 500,000, with the funding being taken from the State Improvement and Investment Fund (SIIF) instead of the General Fund, and to be administered by ND Commerce Department.

3:18 p.m. Senator Sickler seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	N
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	Y
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y

Motion passed 4-1-0.

3:22 p.m. Vice-Chair Dwyer directed Brady Larson to prepare the amendment for a meeting and final vote on Thursday.

3:23 p.m. Vice-Chair Dwyer closed the meeting.

*Carol Thompson, Committee Clerk*



# North Dakota Senate

STATE CAPITOL  
600 EAST BOULEVARD  
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



## Senator Richard Marcellais

District 9  
301 Laite Loop NE  
Belcourt, ND, 58316-3877  
[rmarcellais@ndlegis.gov](mailto:rmarcellais@ndlegis.gov)

## COMMITTEES:

Finance and Taxation  
Agriculture and Veterans Affairs

## HB 1581

Chairman Luick, members of the Senate Agriculture/Veterans Affairs Committee for the record my name is Richard Marcellais, North Dakota State Senator in District 9.

Today I am here to testify in favor of HB 1581, to provide an appropriation to the Department of Commerce for Tribal Tourism Grants.

North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (NDNTA) started in 2016 is a nonprofit organization committed to protecting, preserving, promoting and education the world about the Native American culture, history and environment of the five (5) Tribal Native nations in North Dakota.

North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance includes Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa Arikara (MHA) Nation, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.

## MISSION

To promote sustainable tourism and developing economic opportunities for Native people and Sovereign Nations. Committed to preserve, protect promote, and educate travelers of the culture, history, and environment of each North Dakota Tribal Nation.

## VISION

To enhance and promote Tribal Tourism as a means of economic development and growth for all North Dakota Tribal Nations, while maintaining respect for Sovereignty, tribal traditions and lands. Tourism is 3<sup>rd</sup> leading sources of economic impact for North Dakota. The 2023 economic impact was \$3.3 billion dollars within North Dakota including our Tribal Nations.

Chairman Luick members of the Agriculture/Veteran Affairs committee I would like you to consider the attached amendment to put HB 1581 back to its original state.

Chairman Luick members of the Committee I ask for your positive vote on HB 1581. I will try an answer any questions you may have.

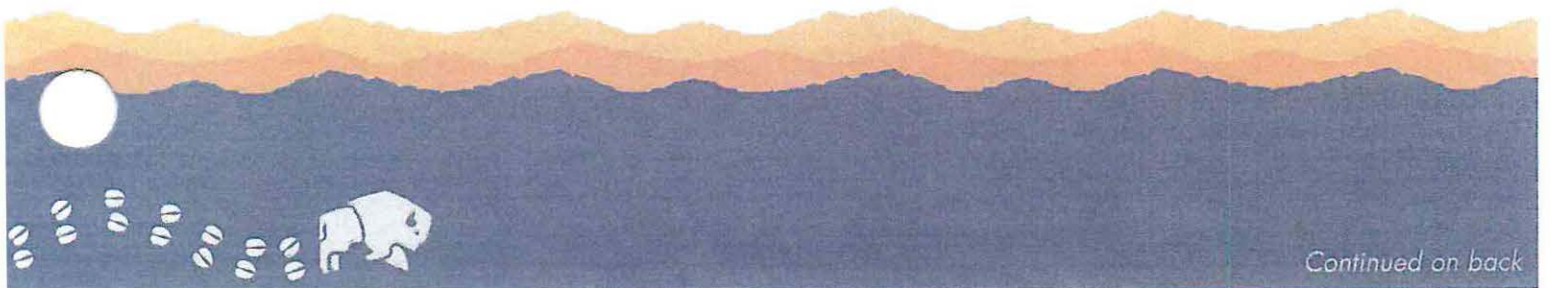




# Help us with HB 1581

*Our Tribal Nations and North Dakota need your help!*

- Tourism is 3rd leading sources of economic impact for North Dakota. The 2023 economic impact was \$3.3 billion dollars within in North Dakota including our Tribal Nations.
- North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance preserves, protects, promotes and educates the world about the respect history and culture of the five Tribal Nations of North Dakota.
- North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance will assist each Tribal Nation to develop a tourism department and plan.
- To support the development and enhancement of tourism within Tribal Nations, the North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (NDNTA) is requesting financial assistance from the state of North Dakota to advance its tourism initiatives.
- The incredibly partnerships that NDNTA has developed between North Dakota Tourism and other regional Conventions and Visitors Bureau (CVB) will only bring in more visitors and enhance North Dakota's economy.
- North Dakota Tourism, in partnership with the North Dakota Native American Tourism Alliance (NDNTA), actively promotes the state as a premier travel destination both internationally and domestically. Their efforts focus on attracting visitors from key markets, including Australia, New Zealand, Italy, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Scandinavian countries.
- North Dakota Tourism has reported an increased demand for our Tribal Nations' travel experiences both domestically and internationally.



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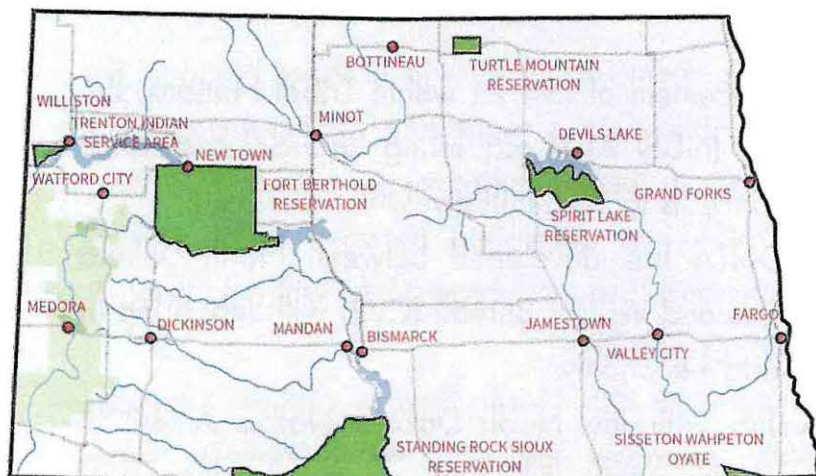
## HOPE, PROSPERITY, PARTNERSHIP, PEACE **ECONOMIC GROWTH**

"Few history books capture the beauty and complexity of Indigenous life and rich Native American history.

But we don't need a history book to tell the story.

The Native American story is alive and well and on display right here in North Dakota within its five Tribal Nations." - **Austen Schauer, District 13, West Fargo**

### TRIBAL CONTACT INFO



#### Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate

**Address:** 12554 BIA Hwy 711

Agency Village, SD 57262

**Phone:** (701) 698-8284

**Website:** swo.nsn.gov

#### Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians

**Address:** 4180 Highway 281

Belcourt, ND 58316

**Phone:** (701) 477-2600

**Website:** tmchippewa.com

#### MHA Nation

**Address:** 307 5th Ave

New Town, ND 58763

**Phone:** (701) 627-4781

**Website:** mhanation.com

#### Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

**Address:** 1 Standing Rock Ave

Fort Yates, ND 58538

**Phone:** (701) 854-8500

**Website:** standingrock.org

#### Spirit Lake Sioux Nation

**Address:** 816 3rd Ave. N

P.O. Box 65, Fort Totten, ND 58335

**Phone:** (701) 766-4221

**Website:** spiritlakenation.com

### For More Information

Stacey LaCompte - NDNTA Director

Les Thomas - NDNTA President

wakpasica@gmail.com

lesthomas52@yahoo.com

(605)280-8588

Prepared by NDNTA Marketing





# North Dakota House of Representatives

STATE CAPITOL  
600 EAST BOULEVARD  
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



## Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille

District 4A  
P.O. Box 501  
Mandaree, ND 58757-0501  
[lfinleydeville@ndlegis.gov](mailto:lfinleydeville@ndlegis.gov)

## COMMITTEES:

Industry, Business and Labor  
Transportation

## Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille-HB 1581 Overview.

Chair Wanzek or Vice Chair and Senate Appropriation committee on Government Operations Division.

### History of HB 1581:

- The Original HB 1581 was a grant of \$500,000 with \$100,000 grant per five tribal nations of ND.
- In the House Government and Veterans Affairs committee amended HB 1581 to total of \$100,000 grant with \$20,000 grant per five tribal nations of ND with a match of \$20,000 from the five tribal nations of ND that passed in the House
- In the Senate Agriculture & Veterans Affairs committee Senator Marcellais amended HB 1581 to the original bill but it failed.

### Purpose of HB 1581:

- The money will be used to promote tribal tourism in ND.
- This grant will ensure that ND tribal nations are positioned to capitalize on the growing interest in culture tourism in ND.
- The proposed tribal tourism grants represent a strategic investment in the future of North Dakota's economy and its relationship with tribal nations, promoting sustainable growth, Cultural preservation, and mutual prosperity.
- Utilize funds to assist with the 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration of USA.

### The Need for State Support, challenges facing tribal nations of ND:

- Competing priorities: Tribal governments are often burdened with addressing critical issues such as healthcare, housing, and public safety to name a few. These pressing needs leave limited financial capacity to invest in tourism infrastructure and business development.
- Limited Financial Resources: Without external support, ND tribal nations struggle to allocate funds towards the growth of culture tourism, which is essential for fostering economic independence and cultural sustainability.

### Other question asked, ND tourism have other funds to help ND Tribal tourism:

- It is my understanding that there is a grant with ND tourism. The ND tribal tourism have applied but this grant always awarded to another entity not ND tribal tourism.

On a personal note, I served on the North Dakota Vision West committee in 2014 during Governor Dalrymple term where we studied Building communities in western ND Bakken region, the population was growing fast. One of the key points in the conclusion of study was that the ND tribal nations tourism would bring in revenue for the ND tribes and ND state.



# TMBCI

#44874

The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Reservation in North Dakota is a diverse and unique tribe with a rich cultural heritage. Their transition from woodlands to plains greatly influenced their way of life, and the blending of various cultures shaped their language, customs, and traditions. The reservation offers attractions like Sky Dancer Casino & Resort, Chippewa Downs Live Horse Racing, Little Shell Pow-wow, Sky Chief Park (Gordon Lake), and the TM Heritage Center.



## MHA Nation

Maximum quality service, being responsible, accountable and respectful and caring while incorporating the traditional values of our elders and ancestors.

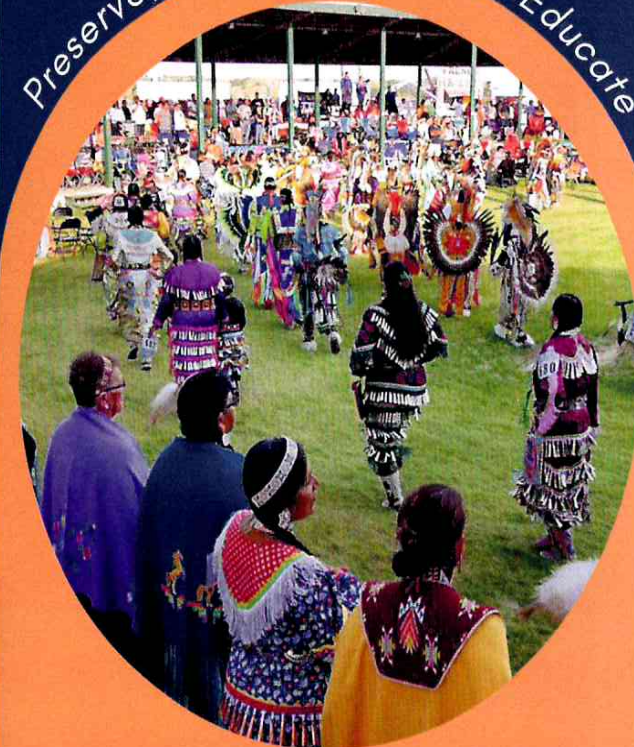
This will be accomplished through education and training to encourage the understanding of the cultural identity of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation.

North Dakota



Enhancing Tribal Tourism while presenting our Tribal Traditions & sharing our own stories with our own voices.

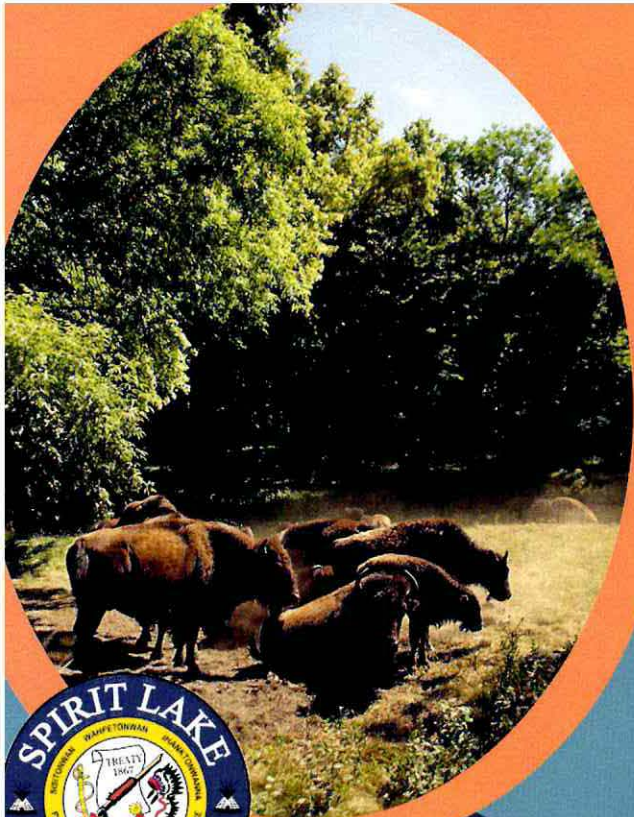
Preserve, Protect, Promote & Educate



NDNTA.COM







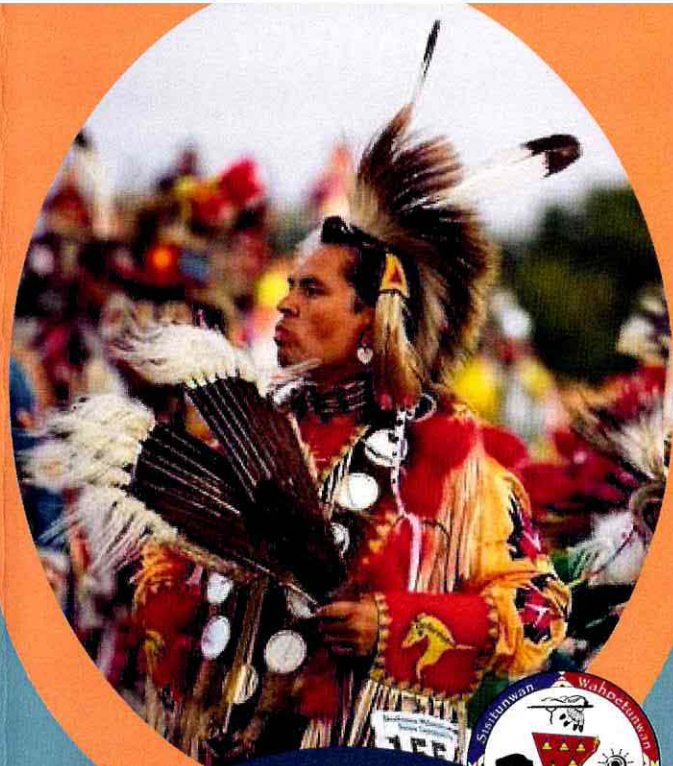
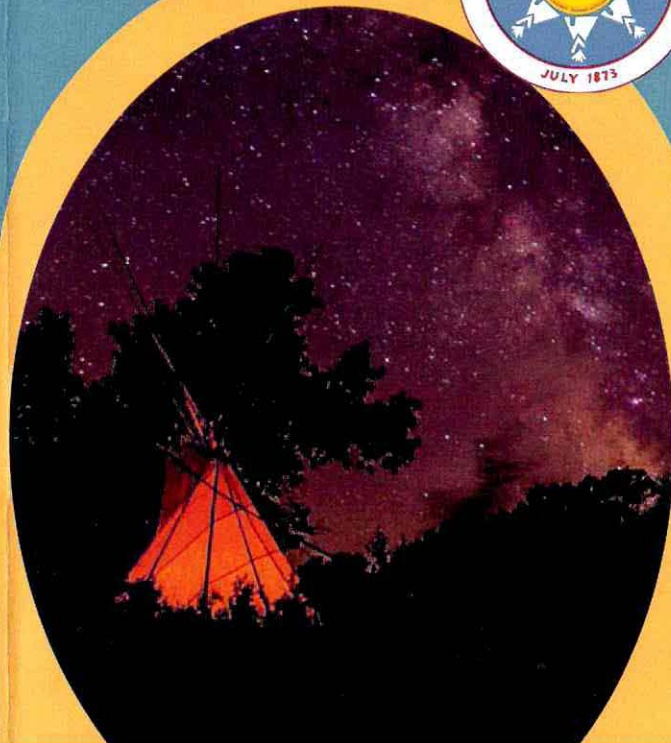
## Spirit Lake Nation

Spirit Lake Nation's Tourism Department promotes tourism activities, including tribal, federal, and state events. Look for their brochure at State Rest Areas, Devils Lake Chamber of Commerce, Spirit Lake Casino, and their Visitors Center. Don't miss Sullys Hill National Game Preserve and Fort Totten State Historic Site.

## Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

Welcome to our Nation, where a hearty handshake welcomes you to our stunning lands of the Standing Rock Reservation, stretching over 2.3 million acres across North and South Dakota. Explore the rolling hills, prairies, and breathtaking waterways like the Missouri River and Lake Oahe.

Begin your journey at the Sitting Bull Visitor Center in Fort Yates, North Dakota, to learn about our rich history and legendary leaders like Sitting Bull, Gall, and Two Bears, along with pivotal events such as the victory at Little Big Horn and the reservation era.



## Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate

The ancestral home of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate lies amid the picturesque landscapes of northeastern South Dakota and southeastern North Dakota.

The tribal headquarters at Agency Village is surrounded by lush, gently sloping prairies, and the prominent Sisseton Wahpeton College, known as "Song to the Great Spirit," stands as both an educational center and a tribute to the Dakota people's heritage.

Additionally, the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate owns three casinos and maintains a buffalo farm at Enemy Swim, offering guided tours for visitors.



# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Appropriations - Government Operations Division Red River Room, State Capitol

HB 1581  
4/10/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants; and to provide for a legislative management report.

11:32 a.m. Chairman Wanzek opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Wanzek, Vice-Chair Dwyer, Senator Burckhard, Senator Erbele, and Senator Sickler.

### Discussion Topics:

- Grant opportunities available to Tribes through ND Tourism

11:33 a.m. Senator Erbele moved to Reconsider the Amendment changing the grant amount of HB 1581 from 500,000 back to 100,000 and bring the bill back to original form.

11:33 a.m. Senator Dwyer seconded the motion.

11:34 a.m. Chairman Wanzek called for a voice vote on the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

11:34 a.m. Senator Erbele moved a Do Pass for HB 1581.

11:35 a.m. Senator Dwyer seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	Y
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y

Motion passed 5-0-0.

Senator Dwyer will carry this bill.

11:38 a.m. Chairman Wanzek closed the hearing.

*Carol Thompson, Committee Clerk*

# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Appropriations Committee Harvest Room, State Capitol

HB 1581  
4/11/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of commerce for tribal tourism grants; and to provide for a legislative management report.

8:35 a.m. Chairman Bekkedahl opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman Bekkedahl, Vice-Chairman Erbele, and Senators Burckhard, Cleary, Conley, Davison, Dever, Dwyer, Magrum, Mathern, Meyer, Schaible, Sickler, Sorvaag, Thomas, Wanzek.

### Discussion Topics:

- Tourism Promotions
- Committee Action

8:35 a.m. Senator Erbele introduced the bill.

8:37 a.m. Senator Erbele moved a Do Pass.

8:37 a.m. Senator Wanzek seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Brad Bekkedahl	Y
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator Cole Conley	Y
Senator Kyle Davison	Y
Senator Dick Dever	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	Y
Senator Jeffery J. Magrum	N
Senator Tim Mathern	Y
Senator Scott Meyer	Y
Senator Donald Schaible	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y
Senator Ronald Sorvaag	Y
Senator Paul J. Thomas	N
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y

Motion Passed 14-2-0.

Senator Marcellais will carry the bill.

8:40 a.m. Chairman Bekkedahl closed the hearing.

Senate Appropriations Committee

HB 1581

04/11/2025

Page 2

*Elizabeth Reiten, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE  
ENGROSSED HB 1581 ([25.1320.02000](#))**

**Appropriations Committee (Sen. Bekkedahl, Chairman)** recommends **DO PASS** (14 YEAS, 2 NAYS, 0 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). Engrossed HB 1581 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.