



STATE OF ALASKA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**COMMERCE**  
COMMUNITY AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Office of the Commissioner

*Sarah Palin, Governor*  
*Emil Notti, Commissioner*

For Immediate Release

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### **Icy Strait Point honored for sustaining Native culture**

(HOONAH, Alaska) — The Travel Industry Association and National Geographic Traveler magazine recently named Icy Strait Point, Alaska's only private cruise ship destination, the winner of a "Travel to a Better World" award for sustaining an indigenous culture or community.

Given in conjunction with TIA's Odyssey Awards, this sustainable tourism honor recognizes the best in the global travel and tourism industry. TIA is a non-profit trade organization that represents the United States travel industry.

Icy Strait Point was chosen for the award due to its commitment to and support of the Tlingit Indian village of Hoonah, located about 1.5 miles from the port. Hoonah is home to many of the shareholders of Huna Totem Corporation, the Alaska Native village corporation that owns Icy Strait Point. To create the port, the corporation purchased and restored a salmon cannery that was the economic engine of the village from 1912 until the mid 1950s. The corporation then tapped the locals to create authentic cultural and nature-inspired excursions, such as fishing, bear viewing and a tribal dance performance. The cruise destination opened for the 2004 season and has since revitalized the village's economy and dropped seasonal unemployment to about 1 percent.

"We've maintained about 90 percent local hire and 85 percent Native hire over our five-year history," said Bob Wysocki, CEO of Icy Strait Point. "That translates into about 120 positions filled with local residents in a remote community of 850 people. We are the village's largest employer."

Commissioner Emil Notti stated, "The people of Hoonah and the village corporation deserve this award for their great ideas and outstanding work in creating a visitor stop that is sustainable and has 85percent local hire. In addition, they are keeping native culture alive, providing jobs for the community and taking care of the beautiful land and water. I congratulate everyone in Hoonah and especially Bob Wysocki, on their success."

Icy Strait Point helps keep the local Tlingit culture alive by involving elders and youth in the showcasing, storytelling and presentation of their history, artwork, values and lifestyles to travelers. Souvenir shops are all Alaskan-owned and the local salmon cannery has been restored to feature a museum and an authentic working canning line.

“With most Alaska villages declining in population and economic activity, Hoonah and Icy Strait Point stand out as proof that a culture can be maintained and that an economic base can be built providing jobs that keep the village and culture alive,” said Wysocki.

Because over half of the village’s residents are shareholders in Huna Totem Corporation, the company is invested in minimizing the port’s impact on the surrounding land and the everyday lives of its people. Icy Strait Point maintains a close watch on visitor volume, and construction at the port was completed using sustainable practices and manual labor to minimize scarring of the land.

Icy Strait Point will receive the “Travel to a Better World” award at TIA’s Marketing Outlook Forum at a gala dinner in late October. The winning entries will be featured in a National Geographic Traveler ad, displayed throughout the Marketing Outlook Forum and showcased on the TIA website. National Geographic Traveler magazine, a consumer travel magazine, reaches more than 6 million readers with each issue. To learn more about the awards, visit [http://www.tia.org/odysseyawards/OA\\_Past\\_Winners.html](http://www.tia.org/odysseyawards/OA_Past_Winners.html).

Located 50 miles west of Juneau, Icy Strait Point, Alaska’s only wilderness port, offers cruise passengers and independent travelers the experience of authentic Alaska. Icy Strait Point was originally a productive salmon cannery, and the 1912 buildings and salmon-packing equipment have been restored to their original luster. Icy Strait Point is owned by Huna Totem Corporation, the Native village corporation for Hoonah, and is the only privately owned cruise ship port in Southeast Alaska. For more information, visit [www.icystraitpoint.com](http://www.icystraitpoint.com).

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