

Global Marketing of Indigenous Culture: Discovering Native America with
Lee Tiger and the Florida Miccosukee
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Tourism is one of the world's largest and most global industries and is a major factor in the cultural and economic sustainability of local communities. The hundred-year history of tourism among the Miccosukee of South Florida provides an example of purposeful self-generated heritage and eco-tourism in which indigenous people maintain control of the enterprise's management and profits through their own strategic decisions. This small group of Native Americans began organized tourism in the early 1900s on the Miami River. By the 1930s, their villages in the Everglades west of Miami were Native owned and operated tourist destinations. In the 1980s, promotional efforts of Lee Tiger at international tourism exhibitions began a flow of international travelers from Europe, and by the 1990s this tourism and international marketing expertise benefited many other tribes. By the 2000s, exhibitions and Internet web pages promoted Native America at the global level. During this period, the Miccosukee transitioned from Everglades' hunters and traders to casino resort managers, from families striving for everyday survival to CEOs of a diverse array of economic enterprises.

Most histories portray indigenous peoples as responding, accommodating, and assimilating to non-Indians and the US government. Using a life-history approach, this article highlights the successful entrepreneurial skills of the Miccosukee from the perspective of Lee Tiger using ethnohistorical methods to triangulate interviews, participant-observation, archival documents, and existing publications. This story reveals the agency, empowerment, and voice that are part of self-generated tourism, cultural education, and the marketing of indigenous culture. Overall, this article adds to our knowledge of indigenous-led proactive endeavors, providing a model for indigenous communities throughout the world that strive to sustain their community's economic, cultural, and environmental integrity. It also highlights critical issues about tourism, the commodification of tribal culture, and forms of indigenous capitalism.

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