



So, How Long Have You Been Native?: Life as an Alaska Native Tour Guide

Alexis C. Buntin

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So, How Long Have You Been Native? is Alexis C. Bunten's firsthand account of what it is like to work in the Alaska cultural tourism industry. An Alaska Native and anthropologist, she spent two seasons working for a tribally owned tourism business that markets the Tlingit culture in Sitka. Bunten's narrative takes readers through the summer tour season as she is hired and trained and eventually becomes a guide.

A multibillion-dollar worldwide industry, cultural tourism provides one of the most ubiquitous face-to-face interactions between peoples of different cultures and is arguably one of the primary means by which knowledge about other cultures is disseminated. Bunten goes beyond debates about who owns Native culture and has the right to "sell" it to tourists. Through a series of anecdotes, she examines issues such as how and why Natives choose to sell their culture, the cutthroat politics of business in a small town, how the cruise industry maintains its bottom line, the impact of colonization on contemporary Native peoples, the ways that traditional cultural values play a role in everyday life for contemporary Alaska Natives, and how Indigenous peoples are engaging in global enterprises on their own terms. Bunten's bottom-up approach provides a fascinating and informative look at the cultural tourism industry in Alaska.

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