Heritage Park Historical Village, Calgary Travel Alberta / Colin Way

QUESTION 2: WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR INDIGENOUS BUSINESS TO BE?

QUESTION 2: What do you want your Indigenous business to be?

In this section, we will explore what you want your Indigenous business to be. When starting up a new business, it is important to have an idea that you are passionate about and a vision to strive towards. Do you want your business to reach a certain size, continue growing, be sustainable in the long-term or recognized as an exceptional experience that attracts international visitors? Working through the activities in this section will help you explore the answers to these questions.

Choosing Your Tourism Business Idea

Alberta's tourism industry has many opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs to build businesses. These tourism opportunities include:

- Outdoor adventure/experiences with an Indigenous perspective (whitewater rafting, canoeing, hiking, etc.)
- Accommodations (tipi camping, hotels, campgrounds, B&Bs, resorts)
- Attractions (cultural centres, historical sites, medicine walks, storytelling)
- Tours and Guiding (horseback riding tours, guided cultural tours)
- Hospitality (traditional catering, shore lunches, restaurants, catering)
- Transportation (shuttle services, vehicle/equipment rentals)
- Travel agencies and intermediaries (selling packaged tourism products)
- Tourism related retail (gift shops, equipment rentals)
- And many more!



Write down your idea(s) for a tourism business that you would like to start below.

Will you incorporate and share your culture to make it an Indigenous cultural tourism experience? How will you share the culture?

1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Market Research

When choosing your tourism business idea, it is a good idea to do some market research and understand who your customers may be. Researching the market will help you understand the opportunity your tourism business might have. The tables below are helpful guides for conducting market research yourself. It is a good idea to look at all potential markets for Alberta, your region and Indigenous tourism.

Market Research				
	Ask or think about	Look		
Size	 Size of your market? Is there enough to create a business opportunity? 	Alberta demographics (Treasury Board and Finance) http://www.alberta.ca/popu- lation-statistics.aspx Tourism research and statistics (Alberta Economic Development, Trade and Tourism) http://www.alberta.ca/ alberta-tourism-industry -research.aspx Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada http://www. indigenous Tourism Alberta http://www. indigenous Tourism Alberta http://www. indigenous tourismalberta.ca Métis Settlement Investment Corporation https://www. destination Canada http://www. destinationcanada.com		
Demographics	• Who will be interested in your tourism business? Men, women, children, youth, seniors, families, couples, local communities, Canadian tourists, international travellers/tourists, other businesses?			
Indigenous Tourism Markets	 Is there a seasonal component? Summer? Winter? Visitors are now searching for more authentic and interactive experiences Can your tourism product/service support this market trend? 			
Local Trends	 What is trending locally? Short- or long-term? Any link to your product/service? Opportunities? Threats? 			
Competitors	 Can you make your product/service different? How can you make your product/service different? 			
Pricing	 At what price are people willing to buy your product/service? Can you make a profit? Will you spend money to travel to sell your product? Can you exchange services with other businesses to offset expenses? 			

Consumer Research				
	Look			
Focus Groups	 Gather a group of friends that you think would be interested in your product/service and ask them questions Searching for previous focus group results 	Yelp Google Reviews Trip Advisor		
Social Media Questionnaires	• Follow a similar product/service/company on Twitter or Facebook			
	 Develop a short survey on a tool like Survey Monkey 	Twitter		
Advisory Groups	 Gather those interested in your business - elders, community, youth for their input 	Facebook		

Industry				
	Ask or think about	Look		
Environment	 Are there any legal or cultural restrictions or limitations to your business? How will your business protect the environment for future generations? Is your business to be located on or off-reserve or on a Métis settlement? 	www.google.ca is a great place to test out search terms and discover more detail Alberta & Canada government sites, Statistics Canada, Industry Canada (SME Benchmarking Tool) Media – online newspapers or news sites Industry Associations		
Trends	 Is your product/service in a growth phase? Decline? Does it align with the Indigenous tourism trends and growth? 			
Associations	 Are you familiar with Alberta tourism associations? Local Destination Marketing Organization? Indigenous Tourism Association for Canada and Alberta? 			
Averages	 What are the financial averages? Employment averages? (usually a 35% profit margin is factored in the pricing strategy) 			
Spending Trends	• Can you identify a spending trend within your product/service area? (For example, spending on children has changed greatly over the last 20 years, and this trend could impact your product/service.)			

First Nations / Métis Settlement



If your business will be located on reserve, there may be additional resources available to you. For example: the Métis Settlement Investment Corporation (SIC) serves the business community of the eight Métis Settlements in Alberta by providing the following products/services:

- Promoting developmental, business-driven economic development in these settlements;
- Enabling access to capital by providing diverse, tailored, developmental debt financing;
- Building the management capacity and business skills of its clients by providing necessary business planning, mentoring and management support services;
- Establishing partnerships and relationships with other Indigenous, public and private sector partners to enhance the developmental financing and support services available to its clients; and
- Managing and delivering related public- and private-sector programs and services.



ACTIVITY Self Market Research

Take some time to do self-market research using the guides on the previous page. What information can you find that supports your business idea?

MILESTONE 4



MILESTONE

Take a look at the list of tourism business ideas you wrote down and the market information you collected. Now pick the idea that excites and energizes you the most, and use it for the rest of the exercises in the workbook. You are encouraged to come back to this part of the workbook, and try exploring your other ideas, as well!

Based on market research, refine your Indigenous tourism business idea.



ACTIVITY What do you want your Indigenous business to become?

The following activities will help you uncover what your vision of success is for the business. Feel free to jot down your answers directly in the workbook!

What is the purpose of your business (why does it exist)?

What do you want your business to do?

Whom will your business serve?

What will success look like in 5 years?

- •
- •_____
- •_____
- •
- •_____
- •

How will you know you are successful?

• • • • • •

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QUESTION: What are smart goals? When developing objectives for your business, it is helpful to set **S.M.A.R.T.** goals.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals are:
SPECIFIC – a goal that is not too broad.
MEASURABLE – can be quantified to show progress.
ATTAINABLE – is realistic and achievable.
RELEVANT – will make a positive change to your business.
TIMELY – has a set deadline and can be completed in a reasonable time frame.

Imagine your business has been operating for 5 years and you are reading a news story describing the success of your tourism business. Fill in the following statements that appear in the article.

1. (Your tourism business) is known for:	
2. (Your tourism business) provides:	
to visitors from:	
3. (Your tourism business) is	to the local economy.
 4. (Your tourism business) is You need to remember to put as much attention to detail into the booking and administration the delivery of your experience. 	
5. The legacy of (your tourism business) will be	
You are welcome to create your own statements too!	
6.	
7	
8.	
9.	
10.	

SUCCESS STORY

Moonstone Creation

Moonstone Creation offers visitors to Calgary an opportunity to purchase authentic Indigenous art. That is an important part of its branding – the mother-daughter team creates and sells "art" not craft - wearable art in the form of beading, smoked hide, and other unique Indigenous designs.

It all started years ago with Yvonne, a well-known Indigenous artist, who established herself back in a time when there was no real industry to speak of. Yvonne would take her art to local conferences and events. Her daughter, Amy, learned these artistic skills from her mother at a very young age.

What prompted them to start an Indigenous tourism business?

For this family duo, it was a personal need to spend more time together that encouraged them to expand from being a mobile art vendor to opening their store in 2009. The alternative? Amy would have to return to work after the birth of her son James, who was just 7 months at the time. Instead, they started a business with personal investment and hard work, reaching out to contacts in the Indigenous art world, without





accessing any government grants. They reached out to 12 other Indigenous artists to promote and sell their work too. Presently, the immediate family creates more than half of the inventory onsite as well as representing 70 other Indigenous artists at the store.

How did they diversify their product offering?

Though the initial Art Gallery, Moonstone Creation has always been recognized as a leader in corporate gifting, and this continues to be an important part of the business. Holding workshops has become an increasingly important part of the revenue stream. Interactive and hands-on workshops pass on the authentic skills and teachings behind the creation of these original works of art. They have wide appeal as lunch-and-learns for the tourism markets looking for more immersive experiences. This portion of their business has grown substantially resulting in a micro grant from ITAC that has helped them upgrade their website and online booking tools.

What advice do they have for those entering the Indigenous tourism industry?

Amy advises those entering the Indigenous tourism industry to always be AUTHENTIC. Be true to yourself and your story. As one of this land's original people, visitors come to meet and learn about the culture from your unique perspective and this is what makes the interaction so special.

MILESTONE 5





MILESTONE

Now that you have completed the activities above, develop a 5-year mission statement and a 5-year vision statement for your tourism business keeping in mind the definitions below.

A **MISSION STATEMENT** articulates the purpose of our business and describes why it exists, what it does and for whom. It should serve as an ongoing guide that spells out what the business is all about. The mission should focus on the here and now. A **VISION STATEMENT** outlines the goals and aspirations for the future. It creates a mental picture of a specific medium-term target and should be a source of inspiration. It is the description of how things will be different if you are successful in your work.

5-YEAR MISSION*

5-YEAR VISION*

*As an example, the Indigenous Tourism Alberta has the following

MISSION: To provide leadership in the development and marketing of authentic Indigenous tourism experiences through innovative partnerships.

VISION: A thriving Indigenous tourism economy sharing authentic, memorable and enriching experiences.

GERC Evening Property

QUESTION 3: WHAT EXPERIENCE ARE YOU SELLING?

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QUESTION 3: What experience are you selling?

In this section, we will find out what you are selling. Tourism businesses primarily sell experiences. Even if you are selling a tangible product or service, it is really the experience created by the product/service that is motivating customers to make purchases. The demand for experiences has given rise to experiential travel, which is the basis of the modern tourism economy and the reason for the unprecedented growth of Indigenous tourism across Canada.



An experience is something that is personally encountered, lived through and affects the individual. It may involve observation or participation; be active or passive, planned or opportunistic, personal or shared.⁶



Experiential travel is travel that connects you with the essence of a place and its people by engaging visitors in a series of memorable travel activities revealed over time that are inherently personal, engage the senses and make connections on an emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual level. It responds to the desire to venture beyond the beaten tourist paths, dive deeper into authentic, local culture, connect with people and enriches their lives.⁵

Difference Between Products/Services and Experiences

Tourists purchase products (souvenirs, meals) and services (transportation) during their trips, but their major purchases are that of experiences. With some creativity, products and services can be transformed into experiences, which can then be sold at a higher price. For example, purchasing meals at a restaurant is a common product that tourists need. This product can be enhanced into an Indigenous tourism experience by adding traditional Indigenous ingredients and dishes or by sharing their history with the guests through an opportunity to meet the Indigenous chef, make bannock with an elder or re-create a traditional shore lunch as part of that tourism experience.

Holistic Experiences

It is important to recognize that a visitor's experience begins from the moment they start researching their trip. The trip reviews they read, the ease of booking, arriving at your business, paying for the experience, and the actual experience itself will all contribute to the visitor's overall experience. If any one of these components is negative, it can impact their whole experience. You need to remember to put as much attention to detail into the booking and administration of your business as into the delivery of your experience.



Because a visitor's primary motivation is to acquire memorable experiences, it will help you to describe your product offering in terms of the experience you will provide.

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ACTIVITY What experience are you selling?

The questionnaire below will help you define and refine the experience that you are selling. Feel free to jot down your answers directly in the workbook!

A) What are the basic components of your Indigenous experience? (i.e. Where will it take place? What activities will it include? When will it happen? Who will deliver the experience?)

B) How will these basic components be made into memorable experiences for customers? (i.e. What emotional, physical, spiritual, and/or intellectual connections will be made?)

C) How will you incorporate Indigenous culture into your visitors' experience in an authentic and meaningful way?



Many tourism products are highly seasonal. This means that demand for tourism products peaks during some seasons and drops off in others (e.g. river rafting, ski hills). Your business will need to consider how to manage the seasonality of its product offering. Can you adapt your experience for different seasons? Or offer something different?

SUCCESS STORY

The Jasper Tour Company

The best experience boils down to personal touch and personality. With the Jasper Tour Company you'll get plenty of both. Opting for quality over quantity and despite plenty of opportunity to expand over the years, Joe and Patti Urie have always opted to keep their adventures more of a boutique experience. This helps them connect more deeply with the visitors and helps everyone to connect with this beautiful piece of Planet Earth called Jasper National Park. With Patti's attention to detail in booking, and Joe's deep Métis connections to the land, they help to engage their visitors and bring the mountains and animals to life. The connection to the lands and history of this place is becoming more and more important to the visitor and they both know this.

What led them to become an Indigenous Tourism entrepreneurs?

After many years of working for some of the larger tour companies of Jasper, Joe and his wife Patti realized that they had a story to share. They wanted to pursue their own desire to connect people more deeply with the land than Joe could accomplish as a tour guide with the larger companies.

It was evident to them that a very fortunate geography with almost 2 million annual visitors had great opportunity especially with people now researching who and what they wanted to see with an authentic





connection to the land and its history. The Jasper Tour Company has answered that need through Joe's own personal and authentic connection to the river. He's been quoted as saying, "the water of the Athabasca River is the blood in my veins."

Given its success, Jasper Tour Company is fortunate to do very little traditional advertising and is relies primarily on the reputation it's built and on word-ofmouth referrals. The company is the #1 destination to go to in Jasper on Trip Advisor based on its trategically chosen tagline "Adventure every day" that is optimized for search engines. The experience itself and feedback from past guests is enough promotion to keep Joe and Patti at full capacity.

What advice do you have for a new Indigenous tourism entrepreneur?

According to Joe, new Indigenous tourism entrepreneurs should start small. Though coming from a big company and starting small, he has no intention of growing any bigger eight years into the business. He wants to keep the company and tours the "boutique experience" that has always been the vision. This setup allows Joe to be a Lifestyle Millionaire – with money to pay the bills but also the time and money to enjoy a quality of life with his family.

Finally, Joe emphasized the importance of having good mentors who have already experienced the hardships, and can share what they have learned along the way. Finding them is crucial.

MILESTONE 6



MILESTONE

Summarize your findings from Activity 6 in one or two sentences below. This concise description should clearly describe what your experience is.

What experience are you selling? Is there a way to make this an authentic Indigenous experience?

What tools or elements can you add to make this experience an authentic reflection of your culture and community (i.e. Indigenous guides, elders storytelling, Indigenous artwork on display)?

Rocky Mountain House Travel Alberta / AV Wakefield

QUESTION 4:

WHY WILL PEOPLE BUY YOUR EXPERIENCE [WHAT IS YOUR PITCH]?

QUESTION 4: Why will people buy your experience (what is your pitch)?

In this section, we will discover why people will buy your experience. What is valuable about your experience? How is it different from other similar experiences? This is often referred to as a value proposition. For the purposes of this document, the value proposition refers to the visitor's perception of the experience your business will offer. The three questions below will help you identify your value proposition.

1. What is unique and authentic about your experience? Does it allow the visitor to experience something new from an Indigenous perspective?

2. What tourism-related needs are satisfied by your experience (e.g. Accommodations? Convenience? Adventure? Novelty?)

3. How is your experience different from other similar experiences (e.g. maybe you offer a similar guided canoe tour down a local river, but your Indigenous guide provides a traditional shore lunch and traditional teachings to enhance their experience).



An elevator pitch is a succinct and persuasive sales pitch. It should take no longer than 30 seconds to deliver and should convince listeners of the value your offering has.

MILESTONE 7





MILESTONE

Now that you have answered the questions above, write down your "elevator pitch" explaining why people will buy your experience. Your answer should be short, clear and compelling.

Why will people buy your Indigenous experience (what is your pitch)?