



**INDIGENOUS
TOURISM
ALBERTA**

STABILIZING NOW *FOR THE FUTURE*

2021-22 ACTION PLAN



FRONT COVER: MÉTIS CROSSING • SMOKY LAKE
THIS PAGE: WARRIOR WOMEN • JASPER
BACK COVER: WILD WEST BADLANDS TOURS • DRUMHELLER



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Sustaining Resiliency for a New Future Together

Dear fellow Indigenous tourism partners,

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Indigenous tourism has been hit harder than other tourism businesses. In 2020, we saw losses projected at 62 percent in GDP contribution, and a loss of 60 percent of jobs in the sector. 2020 was a difficult year for Indigenous tourism operators, and while 2021 shows signs of improvement, it will continue to challenge operators like never before.

Indigenous Tourism Alberta's mandate is to see the Indigenous Peoples of Alberta thrive through a financially sustainable Indigenous tourism economy. Along with our member businesses, our partners and the communities we operate in, we share the stories and experiences of our Peoples. ITA aims to grow and promote authentic, sustainable and culturally rich Indigenous tourism experiences showcasing Alberta as a premier Indigenous tourism destination in Canada.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, ITA has pivoted our strategic plans to help support member businesses survive. This has included the facilitation of funding in collaboration with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada totalling more than \$1.75 million. This funding was aimed to help member businesses survive the first year of COVID-19.

The pandemic has provided the opportunity for our industry to assess, adapt and revise our strategies. Indigenous tourism has proven to be resilient, and ITA is committed to contributing to the enhancement of economic viability for Indigenous peoples and communities. It is ITA's role to nurture partnerships across the province and to ensure that Indigenous tourism continues to be a vital component of



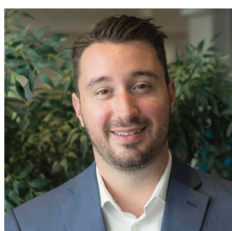
JASPER TOUR COMPANY • JASPER

the economic recovery of Alberta. Backed by the strength and expertise of our employees, as well as our strengthened relationship with the Government of Alberta, ITA will continue to work hard for Indigenous tourism operators.

With this action plan, ITA commits to continuing to build awareness of Indigenous tourism experiences throughout Alberta, showcasing the diversity of cultural offerings for the domestic audience, while remaining top of mind for future international visitors.

Our work is far from over. There continues to be a dire need for collaboration between the Government of Alberta, ITA and our partners. Sustaining Indigenous tourism in Alberta is a key priority for ITA as Indigenous tourism offers the opportunity to not only celebrate the richly diverse cultures within Alberta but also educate and share with our non-indigenous partners, domestic, and international visitors. The dedicated team at ITA will continue to work hard to support and sustain the Indigenous tourism sector for this year, and many years to come.

Sincerely,



Shae Bird

Chief Executive Officer
Indigenous Tourism Alberta



A photograph of two young women sitting in a rustic wooden interior, possibly a cabin or lodge. The woman on the left has long red hair, wears a green beanie and a red and black plaid shirt, and is smiling. The woman on the right has blonde hair tied back, wears a light blue denim shirt, and is also smiling. The background features wooden walls, a window with a green frame, and several horseshoes hanging on the wall.

Current State of the Industry

In the first stages of COVID-19, our member businesses were hit quite hard. In fact, Indigenous tourism was hit harder than other tourism sectors. We saw a substantial drop in visitation to businesses, a projected loss of 62% of GDP contribution and a loss of 60% of jobs in the sector.

With the continuing rollout of vaccines expected this year, 2021 is poised to be a year of slow transition as individuals and the travel and tourism industry continue to adapt to the changing tourism landscape. We are cautiously optimistic that business will start to slowly return to numbers seen pre-COVID-19.

Many of our businesses are perfectly positioned to welcome visitors in alignment with COVID protocols. With experiences aimed at small groups, our members have been able to implement health and safety standards to ensure the safety of their guests.

An aerial photograph of a modern, yellow building with a curved ramp and a glass roof, situated in a grassy field. The building has a curved ramp leading up to it, and a glass roof structure. The surrounding area is a mix of green grass and brown earth. A blue semi-transparent banner is overlaid on the top left of the image, containing the text "GOALS & ACTIVITIES" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

GOALS & ACTIVITIES

BLACKFOOT CROSSING HISTORICAL PARK • SIKSIKA





Marketing

Objective: *Develop and deliver marketing communications with messaging related to the positive community and cultural impacts of Indigenous tourism, while increasing awareness of Alberta as a premier Indigenous tourism destination. Align and partner with key industry partners.*

Member support and engagement

- Enhanced member profiles - storytelling, profiles of business, meet the operator for ITA website
 - » Ten member profiles on website
- Conduct webinars for developing marketing and communication strategy for members
 - » One webinar on how to implement a marketing strategy
- Assist members to make experiences available to book and purchase online
 - » One webinar on integrating online payments

Digital and social marketing

- Create and implement digital campaigns
 - » Increase overall traffic on ITA's website by 20%
- Implement influencer campaigns
 - » Host six influencers
- Grow following and engagement on social channels; Ongoing online usability assessment
 - » 25% growth in social media
 - » Add partner section and travel trade section to website



Communications and Public Relations

- Increase email subscription list
 - » Increase newsletter subscribers by 10%
- Send out monthly email newsletters
 - » Send twelve monthly email newsletters
- Increase media attention on ITA and industry
 - » Send ten media releases

Travel Trade and Media

- Strengthen ITA's position with Travel Trade
 - » Establish relationships with key receptive tour operators
- Increase product knowledge for Travel Trade partners
 - » Host three product knowledge sessions with Travel Trade
- Create marketing opportunities through membership driven organizations
 - » Attend Travel Trade event that targets ITA key markets
- Keep ITA and industry top of mind through media outlets
 - » Highlight ITA and industry efforts through media interviews and publications

Integrated marketing campaigns

- Produce videos on member sectors
 - » Six new videos featuring member stories for use in social and at trade shows
- Produce specialised digital product guides
 - » Produce export ready guide supporting Alberta's Indigenous travel trade experiences
- Produce public service announcements
 - » Air four PSAs
- Drive domestic visitation to operators with an increase of 25% (21/22)
 - » Create an annual campaign
- Ongoing campaigns highlighting Indigenous experiences
 - » Establish three campaigns that promote provincial travel



Development

Overall Goal: *Provide support for the development of Indigenous tourism through education and training targeted at community and industry.*

Alberta Indigenous Tourism Summit

- Hosting Alberta Indigenous Tourism Summit
 - » Host two single day virtual summits or a single two-day in-person summits for 150 delegates

ITA members value their membership

- Relay business development opportunities and research from Industry to members
 - » Connect members to: staff capacity development services, meaningful research
- Membership renewal and growth
 - » Grow membership to 100 and grow industry partners to ten (from zero)
- Develop/enhance Indigenous Tourism members through peer mentorship
 - » Four ITA Members will complete pilot mentorship program
- Strengthen partnerships with Indigenous members and industry partners in local regions
 - » Host two in person or virtual networking events between members and industry
- Host annual general meeting for members
 - » Host yearly general meeting for all members

Grow the sustainability of ITA's Indigenous Tourism Business Members

- Training - Deliver entrepreneur workshops
 - » Five sessions / 60 participants complete
- Training - Community Tourism Readiness Programs
 - » Deliver five (in person and virtual) sessions, or 60 participants
- Training - Deliver Market Preparedness Training (Tourism Business level enhancement)
 - » Deliver four virtual or in person workshops (in total) for doors open, visitor ready, market and export members in regard to business development



- Training - Community Tourism Pathways Program
 - » Two cohorts per program
- Strengthen partnerships with Indigenous members and industry partners in four regions
 - » Coordinate Indigenous tourism working groups in all four regions
- Development - enhancing the capacity of non-Indigenous Tourism partners to work with Indigenous Tourism in Alberta
 - » Deliver five in person or virtual one-day Indigenous Awareness trainings
- Development - Recognizing Indigenous Tourism Champions in Alberta through Brand Awareness for ITA
 - » Deliver four Indigenous Tourism Alberta Awards based upon the four pillars
- Development - highlighting successful entrepreneurs to create case studies of best practices
 - » Develop case studies profiling successful Indigenous Tourism Operators to support and inform the ongoing growth of emerging and established businesses and experiences within the sector
- Development - Stimulus Funding
 - » Administer micro-grant program for operators (contingent to funding)

Partnership

Overall Goal: *Establish relationships with industry leaders to develop mutually beneficial long-term industry partnerships.*

Strengthen partnerships with regional and provincial Destination Marketing Organizations, municipalities, and the private sector

- Establish partnerships with private and public sector organizations to further Alberta Indigenous Tourism
 - » Sign one private and one public MOU agreement
- Host online workshops showcasing Cultural Sharing, Land Awareness and Growth of Alberta Indigenous Tourism
 - » Support partners with twelve webinars, workshops and an online digital asset guide (Provincial Guidelines)



DRIFT OUT WEST • AIRDRIE

Create and maintain a consistent funding model to ensure organizational sustainability and success

- Secure financial support to sustain Indigenous Tourism Alberta
 - » Manage and meet expectations of funding agreements

Strengthen relationships with Indigenous Communities and entrepreneurs across the four regions of Alberta

- Work with Indigenous communities throughout ITA's four regions in Alberta
 - » Engage with all communities to build relations with relevant community members in effort to support the development of community tourism needs

Leadership

Overall Goal: *Build support for Indigenous tourism within the leadership of the industry and establish systems and techniques for long-term financial sustainability.*

Commitment to Indigenous Tourism In Alberta

- Align ITA with Researchers to create a research document analyzing Jobs, Employment and GDP contribution of Indigenous Tourism in Alberta
 - » Provide industry with up to date research and statistics provided by Industry partnerships (ITAC/GOA, TA)
 - » Maintain engagement and participation with economic development working groups throughout Alberta

ITA is valued as the leader of Indigenous Tourism for Alberta by all partners

- ITA is a keynote presenter for a virtual conference or trade show
 - » Speak at a minimum of five industry events.
 - » Ensure industry growth measurements are taken annually, implement a membership engagement and satisfaction survey among members and industry.
 - » Ensure timely reporting and communication with all funding partners on updates and highlights and ITA's success



Work with key stakeholders to develop a long-term Indigenous Tourism development plan

- Create a strategic document with stakeholders to showcase ITA as a partner in rebuilding tourism in Alberta
 - » Build relationships with economic development and tourism groups across the province to create and implement/integrate the Indigenous tourism product into existing operations

Support the supply of leadership and business skills and labour to enhance visitor experiences through quality service, hospitality, and cultural protocols

- Implement research and studies that further support ITA membership while delivering authentic Indigenous experiences
 - » Support ITAC's national standards
 - » Explore industry research projects for further provincial insight
 - » Support National RISE program
 - » Ensure alignment with economic measurement tools with GOA

Build organizational efficiencies while increasing organizational capacity

- Enhance internal processes
 - » Create and implement HR Strategy



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