

A group of people, including a woman in the foreground holding a large drum, are walking across a wooden bridge over a calm lake. The background is a dense forest of evergreen trees, some with yellow autumn foliage. The sky is overcast. A large blue diagonal graphic element is overlaid on the left side of the image.

RECOVERY TO RESILIENCY —TOGETHER

A STRATEGIC RECOVERY PLAN
FOR THE INDIGENOUS TOURISM
INDUSTRY IN ALBERTA

2020-24



BLACKFOOT CROSSING HISTORICAL PARK • SIKSIKA

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FRONT COVER: WARRIOR WOMEN • JASPER
BACK COVER: MÉTIS CROSSING • SMOKY LAKE



Diversifying Today for Future Prosperity

Indigenous tourism in Alberta is the foundation of increased economic and socio-economic prosperity for Indigenous entrepreneurs and communities throughout Alberta while also contributing to our responsibility in reconciliation. Businesses have been hit especially hard by COVID-19. Our continued goal at Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) is to help member businesses and our industry as a whole, remain competitive to accelerate our recovery and contribute to the diversification of our provincial economy.

COVID-19 has provided the opportunity for our industry to assess, adapt and revise our strategies. As the world continues to change in response to the global pandemic, ITA has revised our five year strategy for the continued support of our members through these challenging times.

ITA was created to support the enhancement of economic viability and further support Indigenous peoples and communities. It is ITA's role to nurture partnerships throughout the province by sharing stories, cultures and experiences with domestic and global markets. Indigenous tourism is a resilient and vital component to the economic recovery of this province and it is ITA's role to continue to foster the growth of this industry.

Indigenous tourism in Alberta was worth an estimated \$166.2 million in GDP pre-COVID-19 while providing over 3000 jobs and 125 Indigenous tourism businesses. ITA's revised 5 year strategy is the foundation of supporting the economic recovery of the Indigenous tourism industry in Alberta to pre-COVID-19 numbers by 2024. 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.

Sincerely,



Shae Bird

Executive Director, Indigenous Tourism Alberta

Shae@IndigenousTourismAlberta.ca



Stronger Together

COVID-19 has necessitated changes in our industry that none of us could have predicted one year ago. It has brought forth challenges for the tourism industry, but in the same breath, there is opportunity.

Our latest one year action plan puts forth our strategy for ensuring the continued support, and ultimately growth, of the Indigenous tourism industry in Alberta. Indigenous tourism is a key economic driver in our province, providing millions of dollars of revenue, providing jobs and supporting entrepreneurs, businesses and communities.

It is our tradition and culture to share with and welcome visitors to our territories since time immemorial. Our communities are guided by values of respect, honour and integrity. The experiences offered by our member businesses demonstrate how Indigenous tourism entrepreneurs and Indigenous communities welcome visitors to learn, share and celebrate together.

Indigenous tourism has the power to change perspectives, preserve culture, language and traditions and provide our Indigenous tourism entrepreneurs and Indigenous communities with a platform to be the leading voice in reclaiming our space in history—both ancient and modern.

This strategy is industry driven, industry lead and directed by Indigenous people. Through a unified industry voice, Indigenous Tourism Alberta focuses on creating partnerships between associations, organizations, governments and industry leaders from across Alberta to support the growth of Indigenous tourism.

Sincerely,



Brenda Holder

Chair, Indigenous Tourism Alberta

Brenda@IndigenousTourismAlberta.ca



About Indigenous Tourism Alberta

Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) encourages and promotes authentic Indigenous tourism that showcases the unique and immersive experiences offered by its members throughout our four regions: North, Central and Southern Alberta as well as the Rockies. The goals of this work is to enhance economic viability, further engage and support our Indigenous peoples, and nurture these partnerships throughout the province by sharing our stories, culture, and experiences with a global audience. A strengthening emphasis on the reconciliation, economic and social impacts to Indigenous communities and people is of high importance.

Vision

To see the Indigenous Peoples of Alberta thrive through a financially sustainable Indigenous tourism economy sharing culture and stories.

Mission

To grow and promote authentic, sustainable and culturally rich Indigenous tourism experiences showcasing Alberta as a premier Indigenous tourism destination in Canada.

Values

RELATIONSHIPS

- Emotional Intelligence
- Empathetic
- Connection - to land and culture
- Caring
- Responsibility
- Trusting

ACCOUNTABILITY

- To work, staff, and self
- Professional
- Inspire(ational)
- Respectful to time, financial and priorities (of all)

COLLABORATIVE

- Supportive
- Selfless
- Perspective seeking
- Team work
- Share burden and responsibilities
- Trust

COMMUNICATION

- Kindness
- Transparent
- Precision
- Intentional (with good intentions)



Current State of Indigenous Tourism in Canada

Based on Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada's revised definition, at least 1,699 Indigenous businesses participate in Canada's Indigenous tourism sector. ^[1]

In 2019, over 36,000 people worked in the sector's associated industries. Their combined direct economic footprint in 2019 was estimated to exceed \$1.6 billion in GDP. ^[1]

Based on a high-level comparison between the 2020 estimates and the 2019 footprint, it appears that drastic losses in direct employment and GDP have resulted from COVID-19's impact on the Indigenous tourism sector. ^[1]

Compared to 2019, the 2020 impact assessment projects a 65.9% decline in direct GDP, down to \$555 million, and a 59.4% decline in employment, down to 14,624 jobs. ^[1]

Indigenous led financial support has now furthered the work we have all created, supported and achieved for more nearly a decade; the belief is that this entire network of Indigenous tourism products and programming is at further risk unless funding partners support the direct asks of Indigenous associations provincially, territorially and nationally to facilitate the stimulus injection.

Current State of Indigenous Tourism in Alberta

ITA conducted multiple surveys throughout the past 6-months and we have concluded the following:

- Approximately 70% of members remain open with extensive restrictions to comply with the provincially led focus for a safer and prepared province (August, 2020)
- Indigenous Tourism job loss - 65% ^[1]
- Loss of direct GDP - 62% ^[1]
- Membership increased from 70 - 89 year over year
 - » 45% in Development or Visitor Ready (40 Members)
 - » 34% Market Ready (30 members)
 - » 21% Export Ready (19 members)

[1] Key findings from Conference Board of Canada Research for Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada



DRIFT OUT WEST • AIRDRIE

How We Reach Resiliency

Supporting 4 years of Indigenous tourism response, recovery and resilience ensures a tourism economy in Alberta for years to come

ITA's strategic vision for Indigenous tourism anticipates that by 2024 the Alberta GDP impact of Indigenous tourism operators will increase to \$166.2M in GDP (return to pre-COVID-19 levels); and the Indigenous tourism workforce will increase to 2939 Jobs (pre-COVID-19 numbers). While our assessments for 2017 and 2019 suggest the sector has been steadily advancing towards these goals, our estimate of COVID-19's impact in 2020 paints the picture of a sector in crisis.

- ITA strategically aligns with other organizations, groups and regions to unite the Indigenous tourism industry across Canada
- ITA will work to enable collective support, promotion and marketing of authentic Indigenous cultural tourism businesses in a respectful way
- Product development support, tourism economic development conferences and advisory services
- Marketing and sales support
- Professional development training and workshops
- Industry research, statistics and information
- Virtual and small gathering based ITA Summit (x2)
- Ability to leverage funding with private, philanthropic, community and provincial or territorial partnerships

Strategic Recovery Main Goals

Ensuring the sustainability of ITA Member businesses across the province: Support the implementation of the stimulus investment fund for Indigenous tourism operators and an increased emphasis on education and training in Alberta.

Ensuring the sustainability of the provincial Indigenous Tourism Association (ITA): Support ITA to maintain its membership and infrastructure.

Ensuring the sustainability of ITA's operations: This will be achieved with an emphasis on leadership and through a strengthening of relationships with our industry and government partners.



WILDHORSE RANCH • ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE

3 Phases of Action: Response, Recovery and Resilience

Support COVID-19 Indigenous tourism decline in Alberta 2020-2024 - \$8,000,000.00

- **Response** - Phase 1 - April 2020 – December 2021
- **Recovery** - Phase 2 - December 2021 – December 2022
- **Resiliency** - Phase 3 - December 2022 – March 31, 2024

Our plan is aligned with the recommendations of the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), the United Nations World Tourism Organization and with Destination Canada's COVID-19 Plan. It mitigates the immediate impact of the crisis, provides stimulus for recovery, and guides the long-term development and resilience of the sector.

Our strategic recovery plan will launch in 3 phases, all aligned with ITAC, the National Guide for ITA and other associations.



Phase 1 - Response

Objective

To ensure the survival of as many Indigenous tourism businesses as possible, while strengthening Indigenous Tourism Alberta and preparing for future recovery.

Partnership

OVERALL GOAL – Establish relationships with industry leaders to develop mutually beneficial long-term industry partnerships.

- Establish and strengthen partnerships with tourism associations, government ministries and agencies, and non-Indigenous tourism entities
- Strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs across the 4 regions of Alberta
- Create and maintain a consistent funding model to ensure organizational sustainability and success

Leadership

OVERALL GOAL – Build support for Indigenous tourism within the leadership of the industry and establish systems and techniques for long-term financial sustainability.

- Create and maintain a consistent funding model to ensure organizational sustainability and success
- Provide advocacy through meetings, presentations for industry partners and events
- Explore new funding opportunities with new and existing funding partners
- Maintain consistent measurement tools agreed upon with ITA and the Government of Alberta to collect data actively
- Mature organization through HR capacity growth FTE staff vs contractors

Development

OVERALL GOAL – Provide support for the development of Indigenous tourism through education and training targeted at community and industry.

- Expand delivery of Indigenous tourism and community, and market readiness workshops for Indigenous tourism operators



- Host online workshops showcasing Cultural Sharing, Land Awareness and Growth of Alberta Indigenous tourism for non-Indigenous operators and industry partners
- Create a work plan with key partners to identify components and timelines for the formulation of long-term Indigenous Product Development Plan
- Create and distribute Business Development Grants to membership based on a defined evaluation process
- Deliver two-day Indigenous tourism summit to share best practices and provide educational opportunities for existing and potential Indigenous tourism stakeholders and industry partners

Marketing

OVERALL GOAL - Develop and deliver marketing communications with messaging relating to 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.

- Focus on digital marketing
- Develop marketing and sales assets through video and photo content creation
- Create an agreement with one Destination Marketing Organization to prioritize Indigenous tourism as a key focus point with objectives for implementation
- Host online interviews with ITA members to post online to talk about their business and experiences available
- Connect Export-Ready businesses to receptive operators via online communication to establish relationships for future business



Phase 2 - Recovery

Objective

To safely restart the Indigenous tourism industry with a focus on domestic travel while continuing to build capacity amongst our membership and providing stimulus support where required.

Partnership

OVERALL GOAL – Establish relationships with industry leaders to develop mutually beneficial long-term industry partnerships.

- Establish and strengthen partnerships with tourism associations, government ministries and agencies, and non-Indigenous tourism entities
- Strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs across the 4 regions of Alberta
- Create and maintain a consistent funding model to ensure organizational sustainability and success
- Grow ITA Membership of: 30 Voting Members, 90 Non-Voting Members

Leadership

OVERALL GOAL – Build support for Indigenous tourism within the leadership of the industry and establish systems and techniques for long-term financial sustainability.

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- Provide advocacy through meetings, presentations for industry partners and events
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- Work with key stakeholders to develop long term Indigenous Tourism development plan



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- Deliver two-day Indigenous Tourism summit to share best practices and provide educational opportunities for existing and potential Indigenous Tourism stakeholders and industry partners

Marketing

OVERALL GOAL - Develop and deliver marketing communications with messaging relating to positive community and cultural impacts of Indigenous tourism. Align and partner with key industry partners.

- Focus on digital marketing
- Develop marketing and sales assets through video and photo content creation
- Include export-ready Indigenous tourism operators in travel trade or media familiarization trips if available
- Provide opportunities for Export-Ready businesses to participate in travel trade marketing opportunities and sales missions if available



Phase 3 - Resilience

Objective

To reach our 2024 targets while ensuring the long-term sustainability of our industry and strengthening its ability to handle future pandemics or other disasters.

Partnership

OVERALL GOAL – Establish relationships with industry leaders to develop mutually beneficial long-term industry partnerships.

- Establish and strengthen partnerships with tourism associations, government ministries and agencies, and non-Indigenous tourism entities
- Strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs across the 4 regions of Alberta
- Create and maintain a consistent funding model to ensure organizational sustainability and success
- Maintain ITA Membership of: 30 Voting Members, 90 non-voting Members

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OVERALL GOAL – Build support for Indigenous tourism within the leadership of the industry and establish systems and techniques for long-term financial sustainability.

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- Work with key stakeholders to implement a long term Indigenous tourism development plan



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- Include Indigenous tourism operators in travel trade or media familiarization trips if available
- Provide opportunities for Export-Ready businesses to participate in travel trade marketing opportunities and sales missions if available



Outcome: 2020-2024 Targets

COVID-19 has pressed pause on the Indigenous tourism industry's flourishing growth. With the new and emerging realities at play, our revised target for 2024 is to return to our pre-COVID-19 levels:

- 125 Indigenous tourism businesses
- 2939 Indigenous tourism employees
- \$166.2 million in direct GDP contributions

Recommendation

In conclusion, based on the summary assessment of the impacts presented by this proposed solution to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board of Directors, and the ITA operational team recommends that an injection of funds to distributed to Indigenous Tourism Alberta as a solution to mitigate further decline in the Alberta economy. The continual funding of \$2 million year over year will safeguard Indigenous tourism in Alberta and create jobs, GDP, and new business for Alberta.

Required Investment

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
	Response	Recovery	Resilience	Resilience
Leadership	\$750,000	\$750,000	\$750,000	\$750,000
Partnership	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
Development	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Marketing	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000

Total four year investment of \$8,000,000.00



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