

INTEGRATED MARKETING

COMMUNICATIONS
STRATEGY





PEI PEI CHEI OW

CORE FOUNDATION

The core foundation of Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) is to see the Indigenous Peoples of Alberta thrive through a financially sustainable Indigenous tourism economy that shares culture and stories. As an organization, ITA is devoted to helping grow and promote authentic, sustainable and culturally rich Indigenous tourism experiences with the world. In all four regions of Alberta – North, Central, Southern and Rockies, Indigenous tourism operators have a rich cultural history and unique stories to share. The integrated Marketing and Communications Strategy outlined here within, ultimately serves to communicate the diversity and the connection of the Indigenous peoples in Alberta and showcase the immersive experiences that make Alberta a premier Indigenous tourism destination in Canada.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Indigenous Tourism Alberta acknowledges that we are on traditional territories in Alberta, home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who have called these territories home for time immemorial. We acknowledge with respect the traditional territories of Treaty 6, 7, 8, 4, and 10. We also acknowledge the homelands of the Métis, the 6 Métis Regions of the Métis Nation of Alberta, and the diverse histories and cultures of all the Indigenous Peoples of this province.

Indigenous Tourism Alberta's integrated Marketing and Communications Strategy lays the foundation for a strategic approach to marketing and communications for the organization. It takes into consideration the strategies that formed the ITA 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, which 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.

This integrated Marketing and Communications Strategy is in alignment with Travel Alberta's marketing strategy and international key target audiences. In all marketing efforts, ITA works collaboratively with Travel Alberta, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, and provincial and federal governments.

Launching in three phases, all efforts are aligned with Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), the national guide for ITA.

PHASE 1

RESPONSE

APRIL 2020 — DECEMBER 2021

PHASE 2

RECOVERY

DECEMBER 2021 — DECEMBER 2022

PHASE 3

RESILIENCY

DECEMBER 2022 — MARCH 31, 2024

TALKING ROCK TOURS

Additionally, to inform the Marketing and Communications Strategy, insights and discoveries were gathered through primary and secondary research, as well as extensive review of existing market channel activities.

The strategy will allow ITA to reach its strategic organizational goals as it transcends the COVID-19 Response phase, moves solidly through Recovery, and shifts forward into the future of Resiliency.

By outlining an integrated paid, earned and owned approach in order to generate awareness and move consumers down the path to purchase, efforts will drive conversion to ITA members across Alberta.

The digital recommendations target consumers' emotions and interests first as they start or continue their journey online to seek information or learn more about Indigenous experiences. The goal of which is to portray an authentic and enticing experience for potential travellers. Indigenous Tourism Alberta is well positioned to collaborate with partners to market authentic Indigenous tourism experiences in order to activate the visitor economy and meet the global demand for Indigenous activities.

SUPPORTING FOUR YEARS OF INDIGENOUS TOURISM RESPONSE, RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE ENSURES A TOURISM ECONOMY IN ALBERTA FOR YEARS TO COME.

The intention of the strategy is to provide a framework for effective marketing and communications activities for 2020-2024, setting a basis of strong, impactful relationships with members, consumers and stakeholders, clear consistent messaging, thought leadership and positive reputation management.

The strategy reflects ITA's vision and mission and will be a living document. It is recommended that the strategy be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect evolving priorities and the ongoing transformation of ITA as it meets the needs of an ever-changing hospitality and tourism industry from now through 2024 and beyond.



JASPER TOUR COMPANY

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Primary research was conducted in March 2021 through Canadian market research firm Leger to determine both the current awareness levels and prospective interests of regional travellers specific to Indigenous tourism in Alberta. Commissioned by ITA, the online survey engaged 1,000 adult Albertans through a series of closed and open-ended questions. The primary research results (found in **Appendix F**) guided the recommended tactics, using up-to-date data to drive the marketing strategy for ITA for the next four years.

THE OPPORTUNITIES

50%

of Albertans would participate in an Indigenous owned and operated tourism experience

65%

of Albertans use Google to find new activities within Alberta

52%

of Albertans use TravelAlberta.com to find new activities within Alberta

THE CHALLENGES

78%

of Albertans haven't heard of Indigenous Tourism Alberta

20%

of Albertans believe Indigenous tourism only operates on reserves

37%

of Albertans are most aware of casinos and events when it comes to Indigenous tourism experiences

25%

of Albertans say cost is the main factor in not booking an Indigenous tourism experience

A number of prominent challenges face Indigenous Tourism Alberta as the organization continues on the journey to realize its overall mission – specifically, the general lack of awareness of the organization and its purpose and the understanding amongst consumer audiences as to what constitutes an Indigenous tourism experience. In order to solve the issue of overall awareness, core marketing goals can be further broken down by tactic and channel to encapsulate each area that are all ultimately tied back to awareness building.

Read the full **Leger primary research report** and **open-ended question responses**. (March 2021).



TRAVELLER TYPES

Note: The most recently available data on traveller type/Explorer Quotient (EQ) for travel to Alberta with the inclusion of an Indigenous tourism experience as a key driver was captured pre-COVID-19. With this in mind, the information below is the best we have available at this time. Very little data has been collected on the domestic or regional audiences in recent years as pre-COVID marketing efforts focused more-so on international visitation which is referenced below.

Working to enhance the findings of Destination Canada's EQ segmentation, which links traveller psychographics with their travel preferences, Travel Alberta's Ultimate Traveller personas go deeper into the audience to understand individual motivators and attitudes to enable more focused targeting.

Travel Alberta

In 2019, Travel Alberta led a comprehensive stakeholder engagement and analysis exercise to identify the travellers that can help Alberta achieve their tourism goals of stimulating sustainable growth and increasing industry profitability across the province. These personas identify future travellers that represent the greatest economic potential across the province matching travellers interests and expectations with the experiences we have to offer.



CURIOUS ADVENTURERS

Immerse themselves in exploring and leave room for unplanned experiences. They are energized through authentic cultural experiences, love learning all about the destination they visit and are looking for a deeper connection to the places they travel.



HOTSPOT HUNTERS

Visit the top attractions, document every experience and connect with local experts. They enjoy taking part in one-of-a-kind experiences and fill their trips with as many stories and memories as possible.

**INDIGENOUS TOURISM
ALBERTA HAS AN INCREDIBLE
OPPORTUNITY TO RE-EDUCATE
TRAVELLERS ON **WHAT**
CONSTITUTES AN INDIGENOUS
TOURISM EXPERIENCE.**

ITA'S TARGET AUDIENCES

Indigenous Tourism Alberta's four primary target audiences are:



REGIONAL
TRAVELLERS



DOMESTIC
TRAVELLERS



INTERNATIONAL
TRAVELLERS



ITA
MEMBERS

Regional Travellers

Given the current travel restrictions imposed by the Canadian government as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, regional travellers within Alberta are a top priority to market Indigenous experiences within Alberta for 2021.

Travel Alberta outlines the regional traveller as one who is willing to drive

1-5 HOURS

for day trips and overnight or weekend getaways¹

From ITAC's 2020 research report via Insignia, it was further highlighted that travel-related behavioural shifts include a major surge in road trips taken within the province. Travellers are more actively searching for hidden gems, because road trips have gone from **2-3 days** to become the main family vacation of **1-2 weeks**. As interprovincial travel continues to be advised against by neighbouring provinces, road trips have expanded from weekend getaways, to week-long trips where travellers look for experiences within their local communities.

Domestic Travellers

According to a March 2021 report completed by Destination Canada, **80%** of Canadians plan to travel once non-essential travel is no longer discouraged². This makes up a significant target audience for Indigenous Tourism Alberta to direct their marketing efforts towards. However, in a Fall 2020 study, ITAC noted that domestic travellers do not have a clear idea of what Indigenous tourism and cultural experiences are.

Destination Canada's 2021 campaign focuses heavily on encouraging travel by air within Canada as being a key driver of the survival of the tourism industry so long haul travel within the country is a key opportunity area for the balance of the Recovery phase.

The market potential that has been identified domestically through 2021 landed at

2,584,000

people

Although COVID-19 has had dramatic impacts on potential to actively travel, this data is helpful to offer a potential for the future as the industry moves towards resiliency.

¹ 2020-22 Alberta (re)Bound Strategy

² Destination Canada. (2021). Revisiting Tourism: Canada's Visitor Economy One Year into the Pandemic (Rep.)



RIVER CREE CASINO

International Travellers

Historically, international travellers accounted for a substantial amount of revenue for Indigenous tourism operators with one in three visitors participating from the international market. While currently international travel is on hold, once Canadian borders reopen to inbound markets that have contained COVID-19, international markets will be a key area of focus for Indigenous Tourism Alberta on multi-day and multi-week visits for those coming from destinations beyond the **5-hour** flight distance.

International travellers account for a significant amount of tourism revenue in Canada and are recognized as high yield travellers. The following statistics, sourced by Destination Canada, showcase the average trip length and expenditures per person for each key market.

Target International Markets



UNITED
STATES

5 DAYS
\$700/TRIP



UNITED
KINGDOM

12 DAYS
\$1,500/TRIP



GERMANY

15 DAYS
\$1,500/TRIP



CHINA

30 DAYS
\$2,850/TRIP

Secondary International Markets Worthy of Consideration Based on Regularly Scheduled Flight Access (Post COVID Pending)



AUSTRALIA

18 DAYS
\$2,400/TRIP



JAPAN

14 DAYS
\$1,800/TRIP



FRANCE

16 DAYS
\$1,450/TRIP



MEXICO

16 DAYS
\$1,600/TRIP



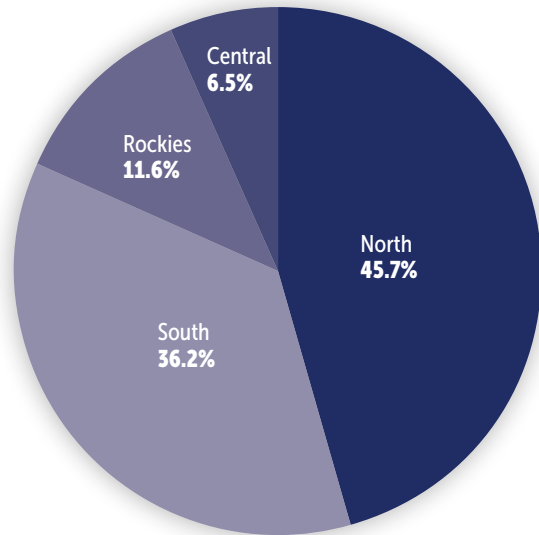
ITA Members

Of the **139 active** ITA members, currently **47%** are market/export ready. This showcases the increased need for awareness as **53%** of members offer a huge opportunity for development.

ITA MEMBERS

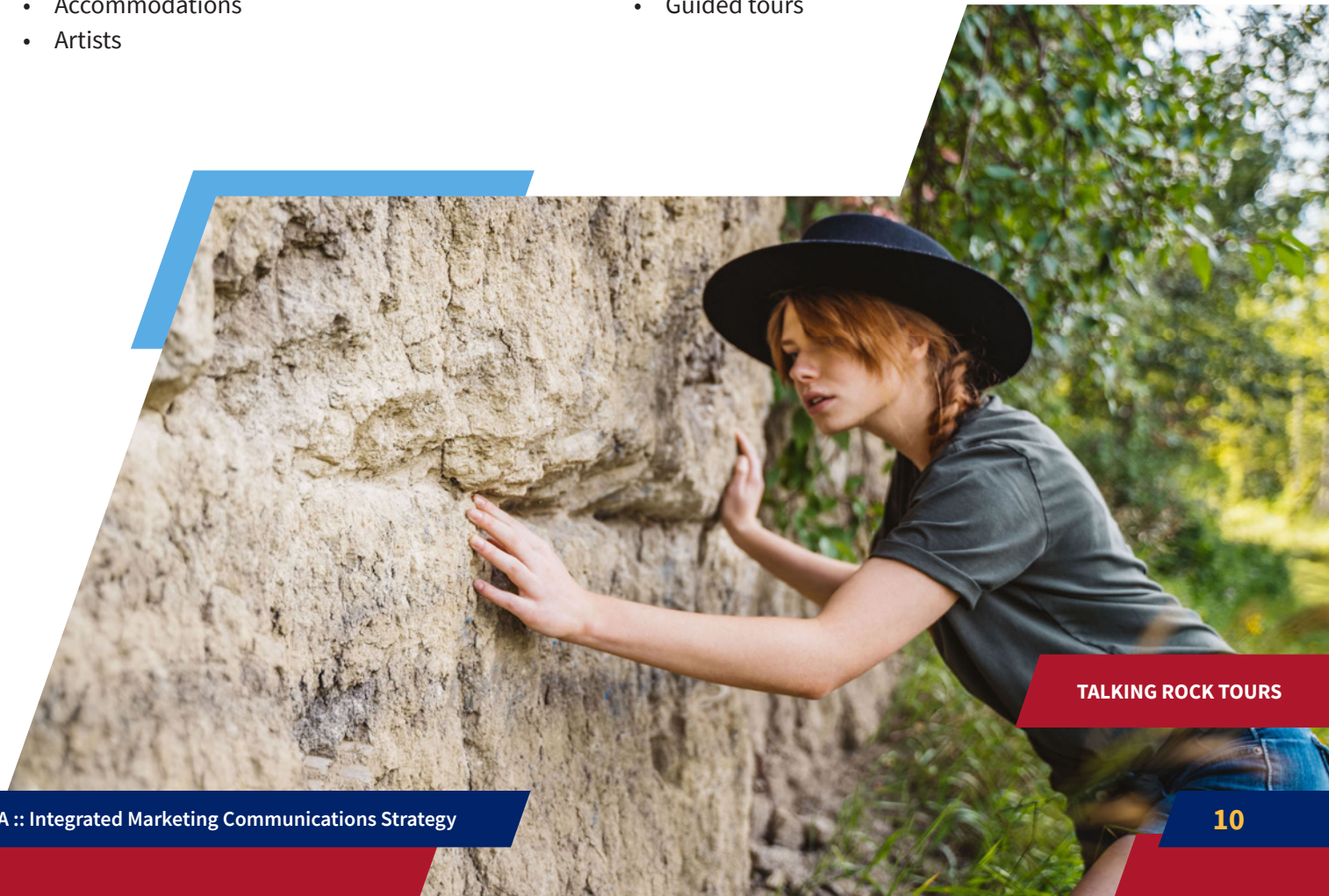


INDUSTRY MEMBERS PER REGION



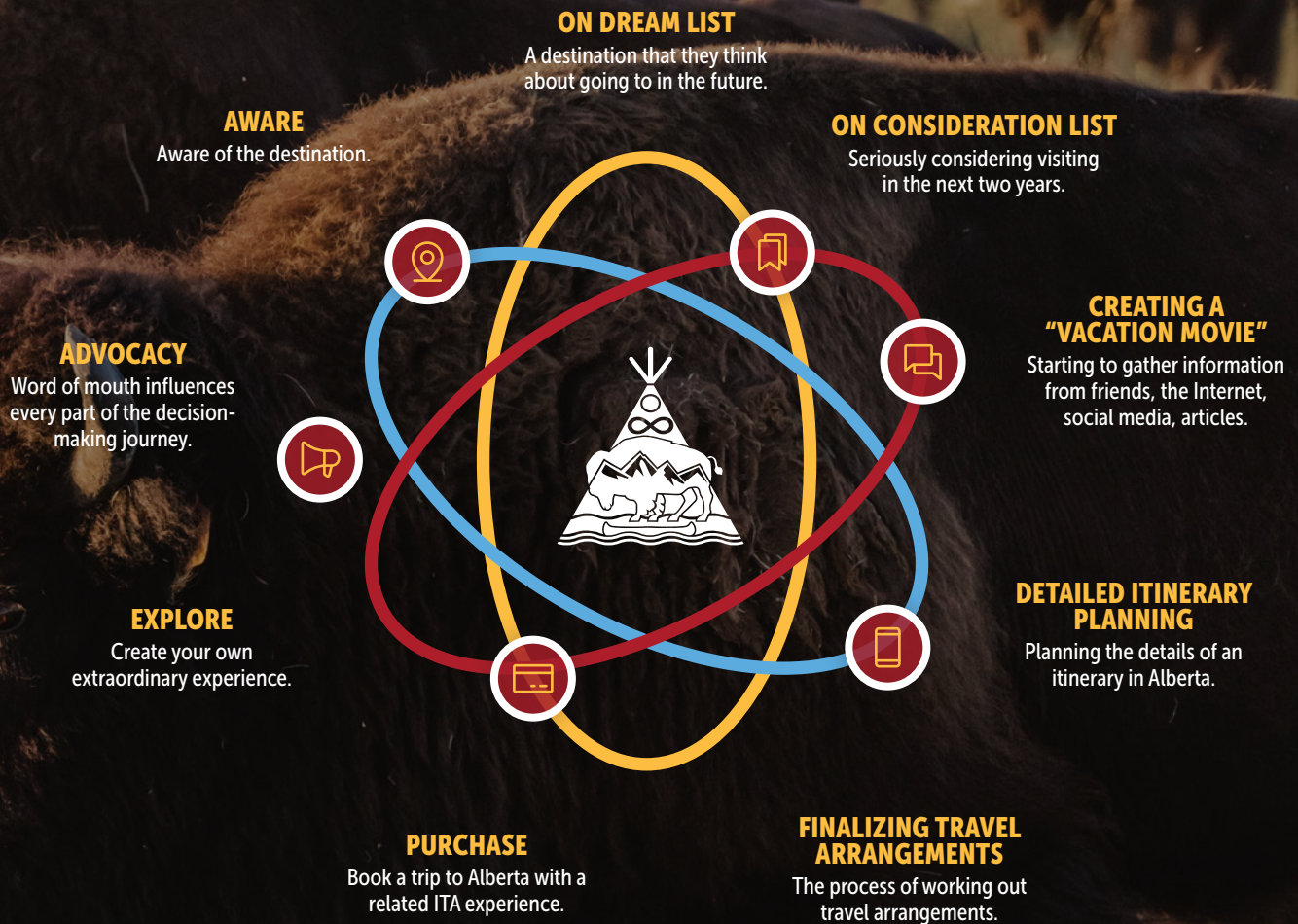
Current ITA members span a variety of sectors including:

- Outdoor adventure
- Culinary
- Accommodations
- Artists
- Casinos/entertainment
- Attractions
- Guided tours



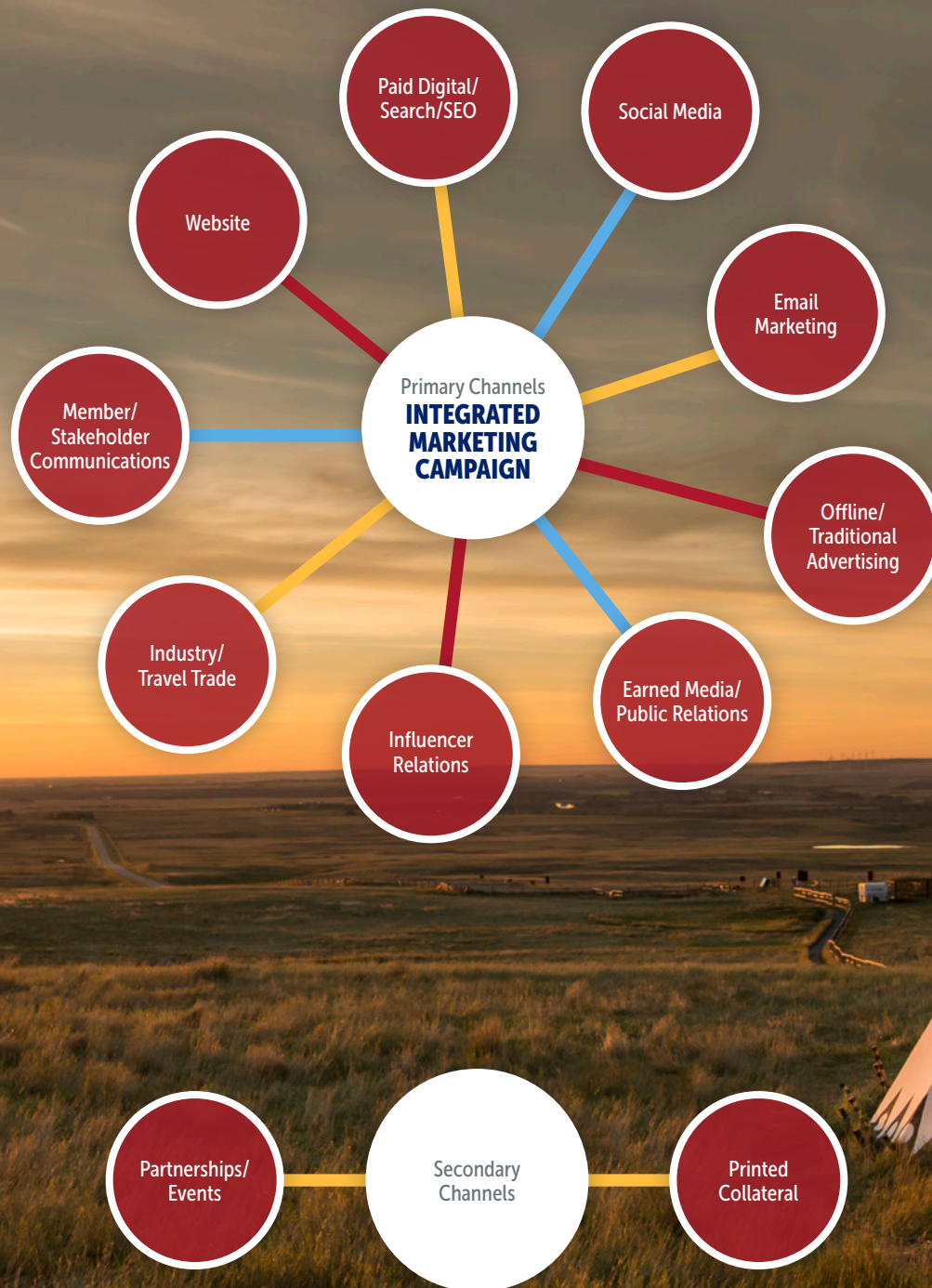
TALKING ROCK TOURS

EVOLVED PATH TO PURCHASE



WILD WEST BADLANDS TOURS

MARKETING CHANNEL APPROACH



ITA MARKETING OBJECTIVES

- Develop effective and targeted marketing for ITA through website, social media, and travel trade channels to sustain and grow ITA and Membership.
- Promote cultural awareness and understanding of Indigenous tourism in the tourism industry through webinars, PSAs and industry communications.
- Integrating Indigenous tourism as a key pillar in destination marketing partners' domestic and international marketing programs.
- Include Indigenous tourism experiences in Alberta's destination marketing partners' media and travel trade familiarization trips.

DIGITAL MARKETING

Overall Website Insights and Recommendations

Maintaining the user functionality and efficiencies within the website, monitoring and review of data and continuous adaptation based on metrics - based on insights (data-driven)

Social Media Insights

We recommend continuing to highlight unique cultural experiences throughout Alberta that reflect authentic storytelling, wanderlust, cultural expertise, transparency and trust offered by Indigenous-owned and operated businesses.

Digital Marketing Strategy

Understanding that a majority of consumers are unaware of ITA including what an authentic Indigenous experience consists of, ITA will focus digital marketing efforts on showing experiences as exciting, adventurous with playful and creative graphics to attract the audience and raise awareness for stakeholders.

78% of the target audience has never heard of Indigenous Tourism Alberta before

DIGITAL TACTICS

We will activate the following digital tactics to maximize website efficiency and SEO

- Owned Digital
 - Blog
 - E-Newsletter
 - Website
- Paid Digital
 - Paid search
 - Paid display
 - Paid social media
- Organic Digital
 - Organic search
 - Organic social media

PAID ADVERTISING

Paid advertising opportunities create impactful ways to share stories of ITA members from their perspective and gain engagement. By capitalizing on a variety of options we can ensure a dynamic audience reach while maximizing impact.

- TV Segments (editorial-led)
- Radio/TV Advertising
- Native Content and Sponsored Content
- Other

EARNED MEDIA / INFLUENCER ENGAGEMENT

Earned media and influencer engagement allow for the opportunity to share corporate stories as well as wanderlust travel stories with a vital third-party endorsement. Earned media and influencer engagement opportunities could include:

- Press Releases/Proactive Travel Media Stories
- Media and Influencer FAM Trips
- Guidebooks
- Travel Media Shows
- Travel Media Collaboration through DMO partners

TRAVEL TRADE AND PARTNERSHIPS STRATEGY

Through strategic partnerships in the travel trade industry we will continue to grow awareness of ITA. Potential opportunities include:

- Marketing and Training Materials
- Trade Shows
- Sales Missions
- Online Travel Agencies (OTAs)
- FAM Trips and Product Knowledge
- Partnerships
- Business Partnerships/Marketing Collaboration
 - DMOs, PMOs, industry associations and regional municipalities
 - MICE the Meetings, Incentive, Conventions and Events (MICE)
- Awareness through Event Collaboration

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Engaging ITA membership is a vital part of retaining current members and enticing potential members. Membership engagement is how we show value and that includes:

- Webinars (new programming ideas for 2021)
- Alberta Indigenous Tourism Summit (2021/2022)
- Roadshows (2021)
- Member-specific Newsletter/Blog/Industry Content Hub

CONCLUSION

Facing the reality of COVID-19, ITA continues to advocate for Indigenous tourism and will fight alongside our members to ensure their survival.

The key components of this Marketing Strategy are to stabilize the ITA membership as well as ITA as an organization through the Response, Recovery and ultimately the Resiliency phases.

In collaboration with Travel Alberta, ITA has aligned themselves with the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, Destination Marketing Organizations, industry associations and regional municipalities across the Province.

This communications strategy takes steps to realign and revitalize ITA's marketing and communications efforts. It begins with a commitment from the team and Board and the focus to realize results in today's complex environment.

ITA's marketing and communications strategy, as outlined above, lays the foundation for a strategic approach to marketing and communications in alignment with the 2020 - 2024 Strategic Plan.

This strategy is meant to be a living document, updated to reflect evolving priorities and the ongoing transformation of ITA as it meets the needs of an ever-changing hospitality and tourism industry.

By taking an integrated approach to marketing and communication and implementing strategies and tactics outlined herein, ITA will find themselves in a position to thrive.

FUNDING PARTNERS



Western Economic
Diversification Canada

Diversification de l'économie
de l'Ouest Canada



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada



ALEX JANVIER GALLERY

APPENDICES

AUDITS

APPENDIX A – **Social Media Audit** (completed spring 2020)

APPENDIX B – **Website Audit** (completed winter 2019)

APPENDIX C – **Newsletter Audit**

APPENDIX D – **Spring Digital Advertising Audit** (completed spring 2021)

APPENDIX E – **Blog Audit & Strategy**

APPENDIX F – **Leger Market Survey** (Primary Research March 2021)

RECOMMENDATIONS, BEST PRACTICES, TOOLS

APPENDIX G – **Newsletter and Blog Best Practices**

APPENDIX H – **Workback Tactical Plan**

APPENDIX I – **Social Media Best Practices**

APPENDIX J – **Google My Business/Google Reviews Best Practices**

APPENDIX K – **Media Kit**

APPENDIX L – **Social Media Content Calendar**

APPENDIX M – **Brand Standards**





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