



FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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A LETTER FROM OUR CEO



When we look back on 2021, despite it containing some of the darkest times of the global pandemic, the year will be remembered for the foundation built by Indigenous Tourism Alberta that will carry our organization, our members and our industry toward a successful future.

ITA's employees and Board worked tirelessly to support members, not just to survive the lingering economic impact of enduring COVID-19 shutdowns, but to build solid business foundations and, in many cases, grow and prosper. We worked together to build meaningful awareness and unity in the industry as a way of cementing the very idea of Indigenous tourism and cultural experiences in the minds of travellers, partners and industry stakeholders. Through member engagement, webinars, conferences, education, marketing and advocating on behalf of the Indigenous tourism industry, ITA has built a foundation for our industry that will build into 2022 and beyond.

2021 saw ITA achieve some impressive successes amongst continuing challenges presented by COVID-19. Despite those challenges, ITA saw a 100 per cent growth in membership, the biggest growth of any provincial Indigenous tourism organization in Canada. ITA members contributed 70 percent of pre-pandemic levels to Alberta's GDP, an amazing achievement given the state of the tourism industry and among the highest in Canada.

With our members' success, ITA has been able to secure several important partnerships that will allow for the continued growth of the Indigenous tourism industry throughout the province. In addition to forging new partnerships with industry leaders such as Edmonton International Airport, strengthening our partnership with Travel Alberta, and continuing to advocate for the Indigenous tourism industry nationally with our partners at the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, ITA was able to secure funding agreements with both the provincial and federal governments. Stable, multi-year funding agreements, such as the close partnership we've built with Travel Alberta, will be a crucial part of a sustainable future for ITA.

We also saw the return of in-person events with the success of the Alberta Indigenous Tourism Summit in which more than 300 tourism members and partners came together to learn and collectively strengthen the Indigenous tourism industry in Alberta.

As we look forward to 2022 and beyond, we believe we can return to pre-pandemic levels of employment and GDP contribution by 2024 and it's clear that the strong foundation and stability reached in 2021 is a big reason why. There is still much work to be done, but Indigenous tourism is an industry in growth mode and as we continue to come together as an industry, there's reason for optimism.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Bird', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shae Bird

Chief Executive Officer
Indigenous Tourism Alberta

“

2021 was a truly remarkable year for sales. 2020 was a bit of a write off, but from 2019 levels I have increased sales 400 per cent. I can't ever imagine what this process would have looked like without all of the support and I'm so grateful to (the ITA team) and for the funding of projects over this time.

Natalie Pepin

Reskilled Life, ITA Member



A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF OUR BOARD



As I look back on 2021, I can't help but reflect on all that we have achieved over the past 12 months and feel an immense sense of gratitude and, dare I say, hope.

The Board and I have been heartened to see the hard work undertaken by all of our members. There have been significant achievements in the past year and, even through an incredibly difficult time, our industry has remained resilient.

This past year saw major growth to ITA's membership — a testament to the strength of the Indigenous tourism spirit and the desire to rebuild our industry to levels even beyond the heights achieved before the pandemic. This growth drove new and strengthened partnerships across the country and the industry, including important relationships with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, Edmonton International Airport and the ongoing, stable multi-year relationship and investment by Travel Alberta, all of which are shining examples of the importance of partnerships to ongoing success in

the sector.

We showed the power and importance of our industry by strengthening our relationships with tourism organizations across the province. These are important steps in stabilizing our industry, but also in highlighting the importance of Indigenous tourism to our overall economy and social consciousness. The work that everyone has put in to weather the storm of the pandemic allowed ITA to establish a foundation that will lead to continued engagement with Indigenous operators, leadership, and private sector partners to boost investment in Indigenous tourism. This will undoubtedly impact our collective future positively and create a path to reconciliation across the country.

As ITA member businesses continue to rebuild and refocus their business offerings, ITA and its Board will continue to leverage partnership opportunities and investment with provincial organizations to strengthen our industry together. The achievements of 2021 have set the base for the future growth and successes that we will achieve.

Thank you to our members and everyone that has continued to work hard to support our members across the province. Your passion, optimism, and continued commitment to building Indigenous tourism back better and stronger than ever are an inspiration. More than ever, I feel gratitude to know you and work alongside you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'B Holder', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brenda Holder

Board Chair

Indigenous Tourism Alberta

“

*Thank you, thank you, thank you!
ITA is a true partner in my business,
it is appreciated and noticed. You
have honestly been amazing.*

Grant Berg

Grant Berg Gallery, ITA Member



THE STATE OF INDIGENOUS TOURISM

In many ways, 2021 will be remembered for what was lost. Much of the year was marred by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the closures to businesses and borders that devastate the tourism industry across the world. ITA members did not escape this damage. While many members reported business improvements over the previous year, the industry is still years away from meeting the levels seen prior to the pandemic. According to Destination Canada, almost 900,000 tourism jobs were lost during 2020 at the height of the pandemic, nearly half of all tourism jobs in the country. While the industry was recovering in 2021, tourism employment during the first 10 months of the year remained 21 per cent below pre-pandemic levels, even though employment in the overall economy had recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

Yet, in many other ways, 2021 will be remembered as a foundational year for Indigenous tourism in Alberta. Established ITA partnerships bore fruit with more stable and consistent funding from the provincial government and renewed support from the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada. New industry partnerships created opportunity. This funding enabled ITA to thrive. It also led to some of the most successful marketing initiatives in the organization's history, including a winter campaign that drove more than 45 million impressions and nearly 120,000 clicks to member websites.

Most importantly amid a global tourism crisis : Indigenous tourism entrepreneurs made progress. Membership in ITA grew by an incredible pace: From 138 members in 2021 to 206 in 2022, offering an incredible range of experiences. There was also significant tourism-industry development among members, including a 46 per cent increase in the number of in-development ITA members over the past year, a 46 per cent increase in visitor ready members, a 78 per cent increase in market-ready members and an eight per cent increase in export-ready members.

Just as importantly, consumer demand for Indigenous experiences is climbing at rates never seen before. At a time when Canadians are increasingly seeking ways to connect and reconcile with Indigenous Peoples and recognizing that Indigenous tourism is a great way to do so, this progress helped build a solid foundation for post-pandemic success for the Indigenous tourism industry. Success comes from momentum which comes from strong foundations. 2021 was a year of building strong, new foundations.



“

Joining ITA has been one of the best choices for connecting with other Indigenous businesses and growing my business. I am very happy with the support we've received. Please keep up the good work, to support other new and growing Indigenous businesses!

Kalyn Byrne
Kodiak Herbal

ITA'S IMPACT

Highlights from an important year in establishing Indigenous Tourism Alberta.

206

Number of ITA members, up from 138 the previous year

78%

Increase in the number of market-ready ITA businesses from the previous year

45,000,000

Number of ad impressions from 2021 winter marketing campaign, up from 7 million during the previous campaign

120,000

Number of clicks to member websites generated by 2021 winter marketing campaign, up from 2,082 during the previous campaign

11

Number of ITA staff, up from two the previous year

300+

Number of attendees at the ITA annual conference

“

Indigenous Tourism Alberta continues to demonstrate significant growth and capacity for the benefit of Indigenous tourism businesses throughout Alberta. The leadership provides tangible marketing and development support and positions Indigenous Tourism Alberta as one of Canada's leading Provincial/Territorial Indigenous Tourism organizations.

Keith Henry

CEO of the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada

ITA'S GROWTH IN CANADA

“Indigenous tourism, and our partnership with ITA, is a critical piece to Travel Alberta’s long-term strategic priorities. We look forward to the continued collaboration with ITA as we grow Alberta’s visitor economy to new heights, together.

David Goldstein
CEO of Travel Alberta

50%

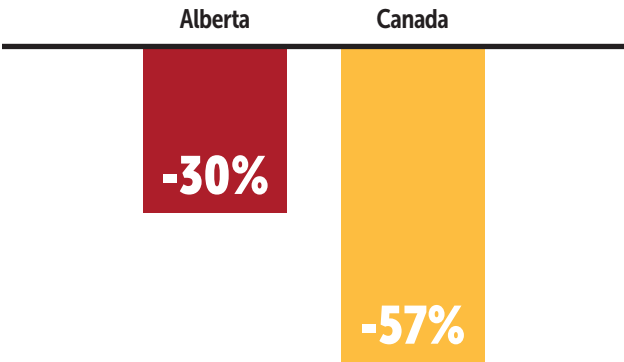
Percentage of Albertans who say they want an Indigenous experience, compared to 25% for Canadian travellers as a whole

\$279,525,229

Revenue of Indigenous tourism operators in Alberta in 2021, the second-highest provincial total in Canada

\$116,382,642

Contribution to GDP by Indigenous tourism operators in Alberta in 2021, the second highest total in Canada



Decline in Indigenous tourism GDP contribution in Alberta because of Covid compared to the rest of Canada

“Alberta’s visitor economy has begun its recovery after two very difficult years and Indigenous tourism is a key part of that recovery. While Indigenous entrepreneurs faced the same challenges as others, the work of Indigenous Tourism Alberta meant they fared better than their counterparts across the country. I am encouraged by the leadership at Indigenous Tourism Alberta and their ongoing work, which is so essential for the overall recovery of Alberta’s economy.

Martin Long
Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism



KEY PRIORITIES

WILD HORSE RANCH

KEY PRIORITIES

DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Select Key Performance Indicators

- Host a two-day in-person summit for 150 delegates.
 - Grow membership to 100 and grow Industry partners to 10 (From zero)
 - Four ITA Members will complete pilot mentorship program
 - Deliver five in-person or virtual one-day Indigenous Awareness trainings per year
 - Administer Micro-grant program for operators
- See addendum for complete list

MARKETING GOALS



Select Key Performance Indicators

- Marketing campaigns that drive increasing website visitation by 20% year-over-year
- Build 10 member profiles and create photo and video content on six new members
- Highlight ITA efforts through earned media interviews
- Air four Public Service Announcement television spots
- Attend key travel-trade events
- Establish relationships with key receptive tour operators

PARTNERSHIP GOALS



Select Key Performance Indicators

- Establish Partnerships with Private and Public sector organizations to further Alberta Indigenous Tourism
- Secure Financial support to sustain Indigenous Tourism Alberta
- Strengthen relationships with Indigenous Communities and entrepreneurs across the four regions of Alberta

LEADERSHIP GOALS



Select Key Performance Indicators

- Align ITA with Researchers to create a research document analyzing Jobs, Employment and GDP contribution of Indigenous Tourism in Alberta.
- ITA is a key Note for a virtual conference or trade show.
- Create a strategic document with stakeholders to showcase ITA as a partner in rebuilding Tourism in Alberta.

PARTNERS

Indigenous Tourism Alberta is grateful for the ongoing support of the following valued partners.



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada



Prairies Economic
Development Canada

Développement économique
Canada pour les Prairies












APPENDICES

WILD WEST BADLANDS TOURS

ACTION PLAN 2021-2022







MARKETING

PRIORITIES, PROJECTS & PROGRAMS	ACTIVITIES	KPI	COMPLETION RATE
Digital & Social Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and implement digital campaigns Implement Influencer Campaigns Grow following and engagement on social channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall growth in traffic on ITA's website of 20% YOY Hosting of six influencers YOY 25% growth in social media 	
Communications & Public Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase email subscription list Send out monthly email newsletters Increase media attention on ITA and industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase newsletter subscribers by 10% YOY Send 12 monthly email newsletters Send 10 media releases YOY 	
Travel Trade & Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen ITA's position with Travel Trade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish relationships with key Receptive tour operators 	
Travel Trade & Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Product knowledge for Travel Trade Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host three Product Knowledge Sessions with Travel Trade 	Delayed because of COVID-19.
Travel Trade & Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create marketing opportunities through membership driven organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Travel Trade event that targets ITA key markets 	
Travel Trade & Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep ITA and industry top of mind through media outlets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight ITA and industry efforts through media interviews and Publications 	

PRIORITIES, PROJECTS & PROGRAMS	ACTIVITIES	KPI	COMPLETION RATE
Integrated Marketing Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce videos on member sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six new videos featuring member stories for use in social and at trade shows YOY 	
Integrated Marketing Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce specialised digital product guides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce guide to virtual experiences and holiday gift guide 	Gift guide 100% complete. Virtual experiences changed because of COVID-19.
Integrated Marketing Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce public service announcements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air four PSAs 	
Integrated Marketing Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drive domestic visitation to operators with an increase of 25% (20/21) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an annual campaign 	
Integrated Marketing Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing campaigns highlighting Indigenous Experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish three campaigns that promote provincial travel 	






DEVELOPMENT

PRIORITIES, PROJECTS & PROGRAMS	ACTIVITIES	KPI	COMPLETION RATE
Alberta Indigenous Tourism Summit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosting Alberta Indigenous Tourism Summit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host two one-day virtual summits or one two-day in-person summit for 150 delegates 	
ITA Members value their membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host online workshops showcasing Cultural Sharing, Land Awareness and Growth of Alberta Indigenous Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 members supported through 12 webinars, workshops and online digital asset guide (Provincial Guidelines) 	
ITA Members value their membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relay business development opportunities and research from Industry to members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect members to: staff capacity development services, meaningful research 	
ITA Members value their membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership renewal and growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow membership to 100 and grow Industry partners to 10 (from zero) 	
ITA Members value their membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development - Enhancement of Indigenous Tourism members through peer mentorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four ITA Members will complete pilot mentorship program 	
ITA Members value their membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen partnerships with Indigenous members and Industry partners in local regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host two in-person or virtual networking events between members and industry 	
ITA Members value their membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host annual general meeting for members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host yearly general meeting for all members 	

PRIORITIES, PROJECTS & PROGRAMS	ACTIVITIES	KPI	COMPLETION RATE
Grow the sustainability of ITA's Indigenous Tourism Business Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen partnerships with Indigenous members and industry partners in local regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate Indigenous Tourism Working Groups in all major destinations (Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Banff/Lake Louise) (4 year) 	
Grow the sustainability of ITA's Indigenous Tourism Business Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development - Enhancing the capacity of Non Indigenous Tourism partners to work with Indigenous Tourism in Alberta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver five in-person or virtual one-day Indigenous Awareness trainings per year 	
Grow the sustainability of ITA's Indigenous Tourism Business Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development - Recognizing Indigenous Tourism Champions in Alberta through Brand Awareness for ITA (similar to ITAC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver four Indigenous Tourism Alberta Awards based upon the four pillars 	
Grow the sustainability of ITA's Indigenous Tourism Business Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development - highlighting successful entrepreneurs to create case studies of best practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	
Grow the sustainability of ITA's Indigenous Tourism Business Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training - Community Tourism Pathways Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two intakes for program 	
Grow the sustainability of ITA's Indigenous Tourism Business Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development - Stimulus Funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer micro-grant program for operators (contingent to funding) 	
Grow the sustainability of Indigenous Tourism Business Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop entrepreneur startup workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement five workshops 	<p>Funds re-allocated because of COVID-19 restrictions</p>

PARTNERSHIPS

PRIORITIES, PROJECTS & PROGRAMS	ACTIVITIES	KPI	COMPLETION RATE
Strengthen partnerships with regional, provincial Destination Marketing Organizations, municipalities, and private sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Partnerships with Private and Public sector organizations to further Alberta Indigenous Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sign one private and one public MOU (or equivalent) agreement within each sector 	
Create and maintain a consistent funding model to ensure organizational sustainability and success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure Financial support to sustain Indigenous Tourism Alberta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm signed multi-year funding agreement that meets foundational needs of the organizations to succeed 	
Strengthen relationships with Indigenous Communities and entrepreneurs across the four regions of Alberta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with all regions of Alberta's Indigenous Communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with each Indigenous community and entrepreneur identified by ITA 	

PRIORITIES, PROJECTS & PROGRAMS	ACTIVITIES	KPI	COMPLETION RATE
Commitment to Indigenous Tourism In Alberta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align ITA with Researchers to create a research document analyzing Jobs, Employment and GDP contribution of Indigenous Tourism in Alberta. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ITA is a keynote for a virtual conference or trade show 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 long term Indigenous Tourism development plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a strategic document with stakeholders to showcase ITA as a partner in rebuilding Tourism in Alberta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build Relationships with economic development and tourism groups across the province to create and implement/integrate 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement research and studies that further support ITA membership while delivering authentic Indigenous Experiences 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support ITAC's national standards Explore industry research projects for further provincial insight Support National RISE program Ensure alignment with economic measurement tools with Government of Alberta 	
Build organizational efficiencies while increasing organizational capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancement of internal process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and implement HR Strategy 	



MÉTIS CROSSING



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