

# TOURISM 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 family-owned business creates and sells “art,” not crafts. Items are wearable art in the form of beading, smoked hide, and other unique Indigenous designs.

It all started years ago with Yvonne, a well-known Cree artist who established herself when there was no real industry for selling Indigenous art. 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, 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 and gallery in 2009. Amy had just given birth to her 7-month-old son. Instead of returning to a workplace that was not accommodating to her needs as a single mother, Amy and Yvonne started Moonstone Creation so that Amy could raise Colton full time and they could support the family financially. They created a business with personal investment and hard work, reaching out to contacts in the Indigenous art world without accessing government funding. They reached out to 12 other Indigenous artists to promote and sell their work in Moonstone Creation. Presently, the immediate family creates more than half of the inventory onsite and

represents 70 other Indigenous artists at the store.

### **How did they diversify their product offering?**

Through the initial Art Gallery, Moonstone Creation has consistently been recognized as a leader in corporate gifting, and this continues to be an essential part of the business. Facilitating Indigenous art workshops has become an increasingly important part of the revenue stream. Interactive and hands-on workshops pass on the authentic skills and teachings behind creating these original works of art. They have broad appeal as lunch-and-learn sessions for tourism markets looking for more immersive experiences. During COVID-19 restrictions of no in-person gatherings, Moonstone Creation adapted by hosting virtual workshops through video demonstrations and mailed out art kits. The virtual art workshops were successful as they even reached an international audience and sustained a revenue stream throughout the pandemic.

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

Yvonne and Amy always advised those entering the Indigenous tourism industry to 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, making the interaction special. Yvonne says that sharing the knowledge of her ancestors has been the core of Moonstone Creation.