

# Labour Market Study of Alberta's Indigenous Tourism Sector

*Insights and Recommendations Toward a Successful  
Indigenous Tourism Workforce Strategy*



Prepared for Indigenous Tourism Alberta  
Prepared by Tourism HR Canada

Copyright ©2022  
Tourism HR Canada  
All Rights Reserved.

Tourism HR Canada  
4-71 Bank Street  
Ottawa, ON K1P 5N2  
Canada  
[tourismhr.ca](http://tourismhr.ca)

### **About Tourism HR Canada**

Tourism HR Canada is a pan-Canadian organization with a mandate aimed at building a world-leading tourism workforce. Tourism HR Canada facilitates, coordinates, and enables human resource development activities which support a globally competitive and sustainable industry and foster the development of a dynamic and resilient workforce.

Tourism HR Canada is recognized as a global leader in setting occupational standards, building competency frameworks, developing occupational training and certification programs, conducting research into the tourism labour market, and analyzing the resulting data to plan and implement HR strategies for the industry.

Tourism HR Canada is committed to building a world-leading workforce. It works on initiatives that serve the needs of individuals, associations, professional bodies, educators, and governments. For more information, email [research@tourismhr.ca](mailto:research@tourismhr.ca) or visit [tourismhr.ca](http://tourismhr.ca).

## Table of Contents

Goals of the Project .....	1
Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction .....	4
The Impacts of COVID-19 on Canada’s Tourism Sector .....	5
The Indigenous Workforce and Indigenous Tourism’s Economic Contributions Face Volatility .....	11
Employment and Tourism Sector Trends in Alberta.....	13
Employment and Employment Rate of Indigenous People in Alberta .....	19
International Versus Domestic Travellers as Drivers of Indigenous Tourism Growth in Alberta .....	21
Travellers to Alberta .....	22
Findings of Focus Group Research .....	25
Hiring Challenges .....	25
Business Challenges, Supports, and Opportunities .....	27
Federal Supports for the Indigenous Tourism Industry .....	28
Opportunities to Embrace New Drivers of Demand .....	29
Important Themes for Strategic Workforce Recovery.....	29
Toward a Successful Indigenous Tourism Workforce Strategy in Alberta.....	32
Embrace a Young and Growing Indigenous Population.....	33
Anticipate the Workforce Needs of Indigenous Women.....	33
Promote the Benefits of Flexible Work Arrangements.....	34
Address Key Issues Impacting Worker Mobility.....	35
Promote a Concerted Approach to Early and Life-Long Skills Development.....	36
Workplace Advancement and Career Progression .....	37
Embrace Pre-COVID Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship Trends .....	37
Education and Training Needs .....	38
Literacy and Numeracy .....	38
Barriers to Employment.....	38
Conclusion.....	39
Recommendations .....	40
Focus Group Sessions.....	40
Strategic Action Items.....	41
Additional Considerations.....	43
Pan-Canadian Tourism Workforce Recovery and Growth Task Force.....	44

Appendix ..... 45  
Notes on Research Methodology ..... 45

## Goals of the Project

The research will result in a comprehensive labour market analysis that will clearly outline the current political, social, and economic environment of the Indigenous tourism labour market within Alberta, while also taking COVID-19 into consideration. This will create an in-depth assessment of the current labour force, while identifying key challenges that need to be addressed to increase labour force capacity to align with the growth rate of Indigenous tourism pre and post COVID-19.

The research project will provide information to guide short- and long-term planning. The research will define reasonable expectations about future labour market developments, such as relative skill surpluses and shortages, regional differences in labour market performance, the characteristics of occupations (e.g., skill requirements), and other essential indicators.

## Executive Summary

In 2019, Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA)-led research identified access to capital and staffing as the most significant barriers to the success of the province's Indigenous tourism businesses. Present tourism employment, both nationally and in Alberta, lags behind pre-pandemic levels. However, as the sector moves through an anticipated period of recovery in summer and autumn 2022, key employment indicators show an increase in the participation of Indigenous persons within Alberta's workforce, while youth employment in the province is also on the rise. This indicates very positive signs for employment growth in the near term if employers are able to tackle the sector's pressing challenge of filling job vacancies and finding solutions to pressing labour market challenges faced by Indigenous tourism employers—in particular, barriers to employment among members of the province's Indigenous communities and difficulty attracting youth to tourism employment.

Unfortunately, the tourism sector is experiencing shortages in a wide range of job types and across each of its five industry groups. There persists a perception that efforts to raise awareness of the tourism sector as a place of employment for Indigenous persons need greater consistency. Moreover, pressing economic and social factors are dissuading Indigenous youth from seeking employment in tourism ventures located outside of their local communities or at Alberta's rural tourism attractions. The most significant barriers to recruiting and hiring prospective Indigenous applicants within the tourism sector are a lack of access to transportation and a lack of specialized skillsets.

Despite present economic and social conditions, there is a shared sense of optimism among industry stakeholders that business and workforce levels may rebound due to increased demand from travellers, supplemented with tailored public support initiatives.

The following report is a culminating piece of a comprehensive labour market study of Alberta's Indigenous tourism sector, led by Tourism HR Canada between January and September 2022 on behalf of Indigenous Tourism Alberta, with the collaboration of the Government of Alberta and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada. This report analyzes the recent trends, challenges, and opportunities that Alberta's Indigenous tourism industry employers have related to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the province's tourism workforce, as well as opportunities that Indigenous tourism businesses are embracing as the sector looks toward regrowth in the near and long term.

The report provides analysis of labour market intelligence for Canada's tourism sector, augmented by the results of primary research activities conducted by Tourism HR Canada on behalf of Indigenous Tourism Alberta, including a series of focus groups conducted with Albertan Indigenous tourism employers and industry stakeholder organizations in early 2022.

The report concludes with a series of brief policy recommendations to help mitigate the negative impacts of tourism labour force shortages, part of a broader toolkit that will help tourism employers address workforce barriers to talent attraction and retention specific to the needs of Indigenous tourism

employers. In addition to the policy recommendations, the research supported seven strategic actions recommended as a 'go forward' plan for ITA:

1. Develop an Indigenous-led Attraction, Development, and Retention Strategy
2. Create an Indigenous Worker Employment Registry
3. Develop skills/training aligned with Indigenous culture and values
4. Create a Welcoming Workplace Program
5. Build capacity for Indigenous employment services in Indigenous communities—emphasis on collaboration, connection, coordination, community
6. Seek appropriate and sustained financial supports for policy and program priorities
7. Build/maintain strong leadership and governance structure

The report has one final recommendation, considered essential towards building a sustained Indigenous workforce strategy. The mandate of ITA is essential. Without the leadership of ITA, along with a governance structure that is representative of all stakeholders, Indigenous tourism in Alberta would not thrive. ITA's strong leadership and governance structure should be supported with sustained government funding.

## Introduction

Indigenous tourism makes up a significant and growing portion of Canada’s tourism sector. In broad terms, tourism is defined as economic activity, industries, and labour force supported by the activity of, and spending by, visitors and travellers outside of their usual environment, whether it be for the purpose of business, leisure, or other personal activities.<sup>i</sup> The tourism sector includes five industry groups: accommodations, food and beverage services, recreation and entertainment, transportation, and travel services. Combined, these industries account for those that supply tourism products and receive a significant share of their revenue from tourism spending.<sup>ii</sup>

Tourism is an important sector in Canada’s economy, representing, on average, 10% of the country’s overall workforce. In the years leading up to 2019, tourism employment routinely accounted for 2 million full-year jobs. That year, Canada’s tourism sector generated \$43.7 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP)<sup>iii</sup> and accounted for 2,076,100 jobs.<sup>1</sup>

The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) defines Indigenous businesses as businesses that are majority owned, operated, and/or controlled by First Nations, Métis, or Inuit peoples, and able to demonstrate a connection and responsibility to the local Indigenous community and traditional territory where the operation resides. Most of Canada’s Indigenous-owned companies are small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and many of these are sole proprietorships.<sup>iv</sup> The Indigenous tourism sector is quite diverse, including co-operatives and community-owned ventures, incorporated businesses, and a range of sole proprietors, from independent artists to wilderness guides. The variety of participants also includes not-for-profit organizations, such as museums owned and operated by Indigenous communities and organizations, cultural festivals, theatre groups, and natural heritage sites. With this diversity, the Indigenous tourism sector presents a unique collection of values and tourism experiences.

Indigenous tourism provides a significant economic opportunity for Indigenous groups and the province of Alberta. Indigenous peoples hold many perspectives on the value that tourism brings to their community. Tourism increases jobs, businesses, and economic growth for Alberta’s Indigenous communities, as well as offering a strong potential to provide economic self-dependence, which supports greater self-determination, cultural autonomy, and control over traditional resources.<sup>v</sup> Tourism ventures can serve as an avenue for education and cross-cultural exchange, while some see tourism as a means for encouraging Indigenous youth to learn traditional activities.<sup>vi</sup>

Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) plays a vital role in helping member businesses from within Alberta’s Indigenous tourism industry to access needed business supports and funding, and to make industry connections. As of May 2022, ITA had grown its membership to 206 business operators and

---

<sup>1</sup> Annual workforce statistics are based on customized unadjusted data sets from Statistics Canada’s Annual Labour Force Survey provided to Tourism HR Canada. The number of tourism jobs may also be reported as all jobs in Canada supported by tourists spending money. By that measure, there were 691,950 jobs due to tourism in Canada in 2019, according to the national tourism indicators. As this report is concerned with labour issues within the tourism sector, most statistics are for the total number of people or jobs within tourism. Where data on “jobs due to tourism” is used, it is noted.

entrepreneurs (from 70 in 2017). Over half of the business members of ITA reported that they are First Nation (55.3%), followed by Métis (30.1%), non-status (10.7%), and Inuit (1.0%). Slightly over one third of the members (37.1%) are on reserve or Métis settlement. Most ITA-member businesses are small enterprises with fewer than five employees.

Alberta's Indigenous tourism operators feel their businesses have a strong connection to the local community. As both local employers and community members, these operators embrace leadership roles that go beyond contributions to the tourism sector and reflect a strong sense of pride in their ability to have a palpable social impact on regional and local well-being. While incredible success stories abound, there is shared frustration that efforts to tap into talent in the local labour market, particularly within Indigenous communities, have been greatly impacted by the restrictive economic and social conditions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

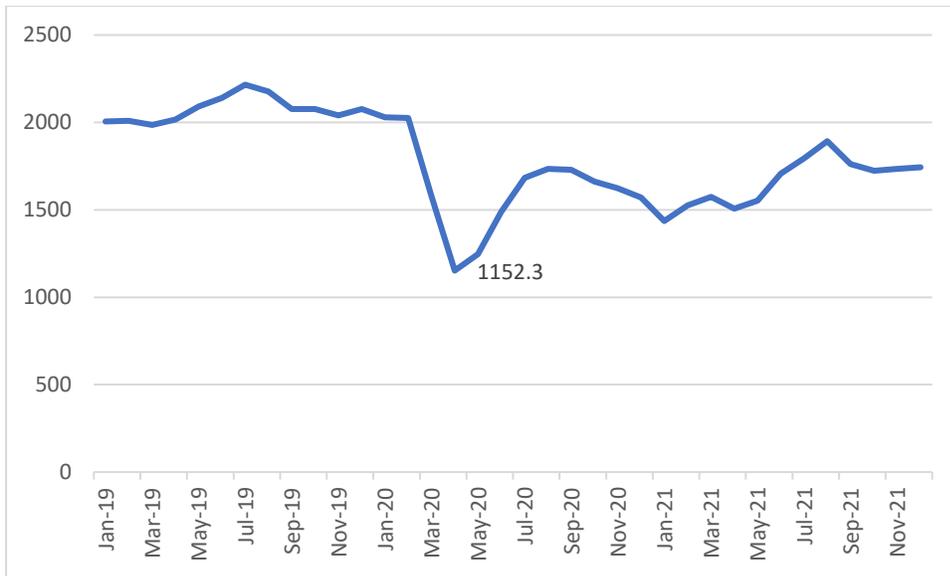
Indigenous tourism in Alberta was worth an estimated \$166.2 million in GDP prior to COVID-19 and supported close to 3,000 jobs and 125 Indigenous tourism businesses. During the height of the pandemic, in 2020, the industry saw dramatic drops of 62% in direct GDP and 65% in jobs.

To understand the impacts of the global health crisis on Alberta's Indigenous tourism workforce, it is important to first explore the broader context and consequences that Canada's tourism sector faced due to closed international borders, grounded airlines, limitations on domestic travel, public health measures, and a loss of consumer demand. The following sections therefore provide a thorough overview of tourism labour force and economic metrics pertinent to understanding the rapid decline and growth trends of the tourism sector at the national and provincial levels, as well as statistical analysis specific to the Indigenous tourism industry.

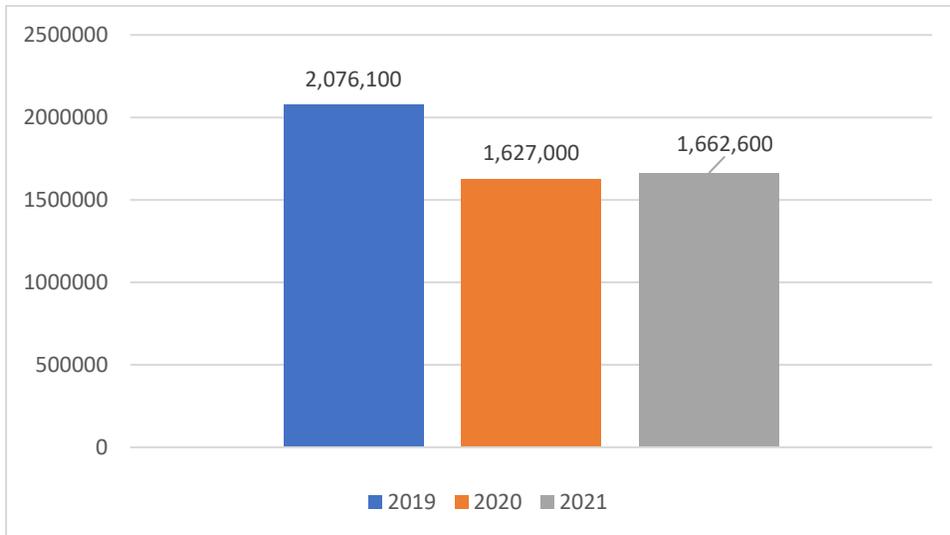
## **The Impacts of COVID-19 on Canada's Tourism Sector**

The COVID-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on the tourism sector across the country, which was felt within each of its five industry groups. By April 2020, the tourism sector had shed 880,000 employees (Figure 1). In all, tourism employment dropped to 1.62 million workers for 2020 and grew by a mere 2.2% to 1.66 million workers in 2021—413,500 fewer workers than the level in pre-pandemic 2019 (Figure 2).

**Figure 1. Tourism Employment – Monthly, 2019–2021 (x1,000) (seasonally unadjusted)**

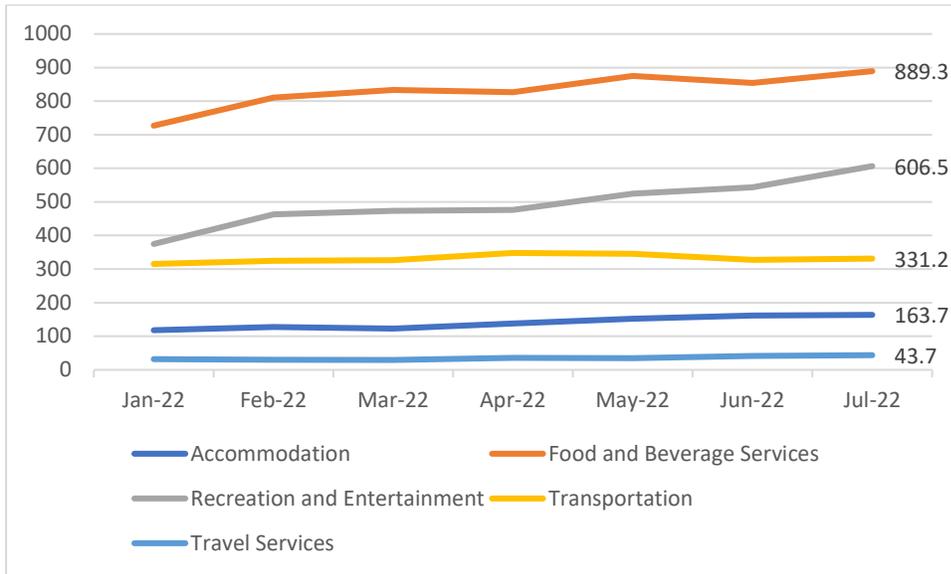


**Figure 2. Tourism Employment – Annual, 2019–2021 (seasonally unadjusted)**



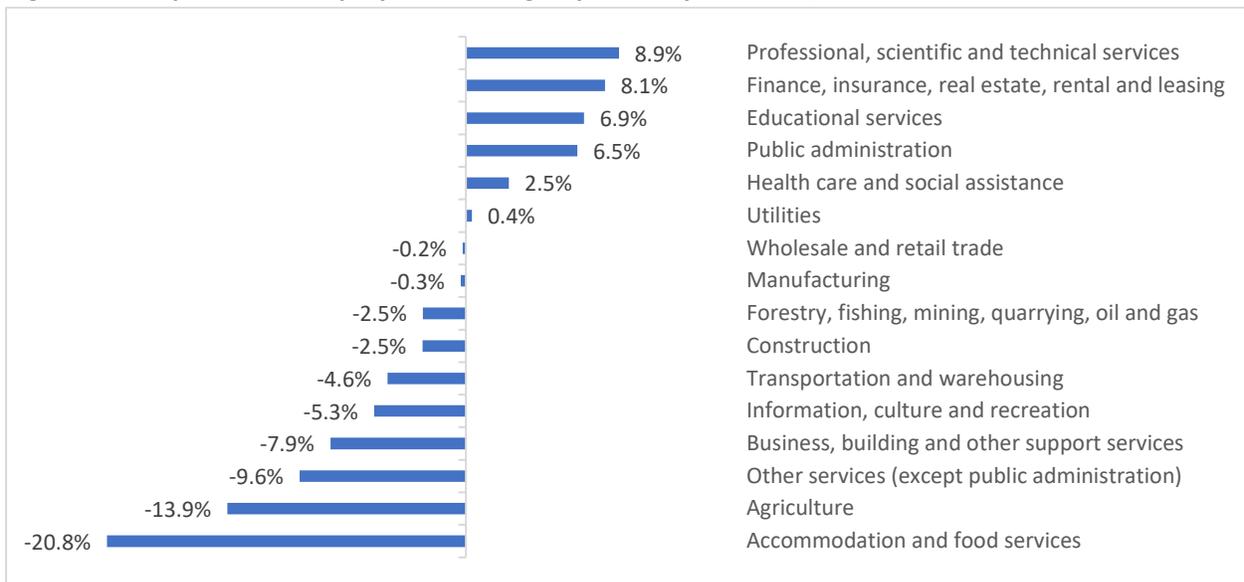
The sector has since faced unprecedented challenges related to talent attraction and retention—to the extent that, from a labour perspective, tourism remains one of Canada’s hardest hit sectors. Though the sector is currently in a period of workforce recovery, with positive signs of labour force and employment growth in 2022, monthly data from Statistics Canada’s Labour Force Survey show a high level of volatility when it comes to employment levels across the five industry groups.

**Figure 3. Tourism Employment by Industry Group – Canada, Monthly, 2022 (x1,000) (seasonally unadjusted)**



Tourism was one of the hardest-hit sectors when it comes to the impacts of the economic slowdowns related to the pandemic. Many workers who lost tourism jobs due to the impacts of COVID-19 have taken opportunities in other sectors that were far less impacted (Figure 4).

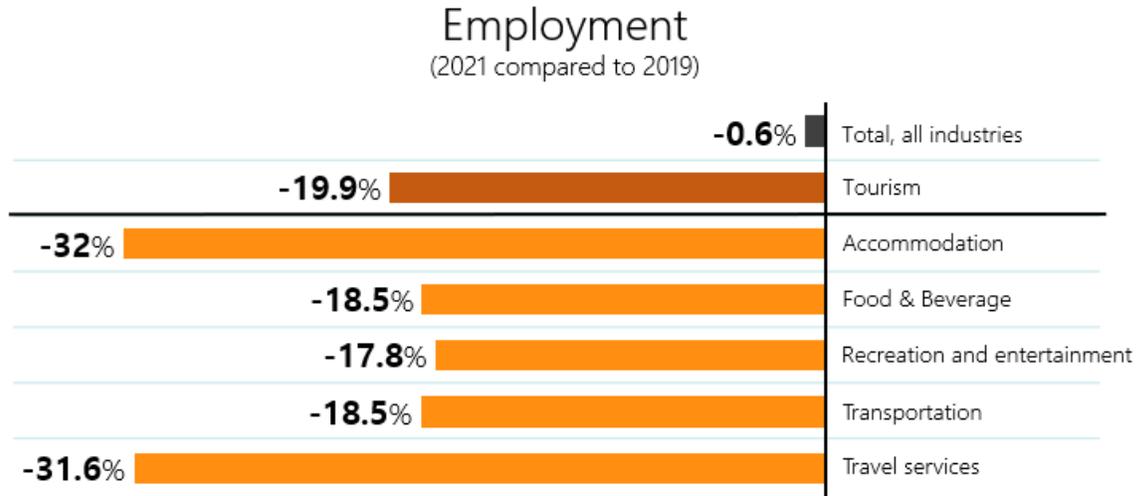
**Figure 4. Comparison of Employment Change by Industry – Canada, 2019 to 2021**



Looking at the five industry groups that make up the sector by the annual percentage change in employment between 2019 and 2021 reveals that accommodation saw the greatest impact on its annual workforce in the first two years since COVID-19 public health measures greatly reduced the

number of travellers to Canada and created restrictions around social gatherings and reduced consumer spending (Figure 5).

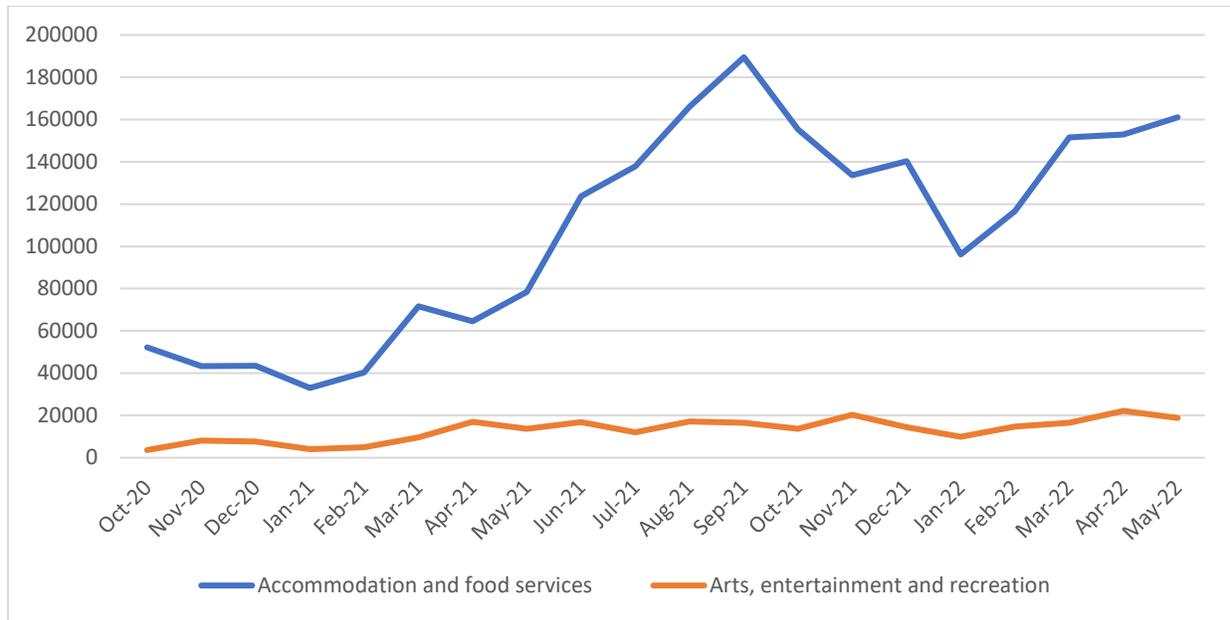
**Figure 5. Employment Change (%) by Tourism Industry – Annual, 2019–2021**



Several tourism industry reports have demonstrated there are both demand- and supply-related impediments to the recovery in tourism employment to date.<sup>vii</sup> These issues existed pre-pandemic but were made much worse over the past two years. Employment levels were adversely affected due to the challenging operating environment in 2021 that was heightened significantly by the emergence of the Omicron COVID-19 variant between December 2021 and early 2022.<sup>viii</sup> Coupled with this, industry groups which saw increases in demand into early spring 2022 faced hurdles related to talent attraction, and unprecedented job vacancy numbers stifled the potential for rapid workforce recovery in 2022.

The most recent Statistics Canada job vacancy data—for April and May 2022—show that job vacancies remained high for the accommodation and food services industry and the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry (Figure 6).<sup>ix</sup> Typically, job vacancies for tourism-related industries are highest in off-peak months. The most recent data signal that tourism businesses faced difficulty in hiring employees throughout the spring—a crucial ramp-up period for the sector. Figure 7 reveals that vacancies remained elevated for the accommodation and food services industry and the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry, with May 2022 job vacancies reaching 161,115 and 18,845, respectively.

**Figure 6. Job Vacancies for Tourism-Related Industries**



**Figure 7. Total Vacancies by Industry, Canada, Monthly**

Tourism-Related Industry	January 2022	February 2022	March 2022	April 2022	May 2022
Arts, entertainment and recreation	9,935	14,765	16,515	22,170	18,845
Accommodation and food services	96,125	116,595	151,555	152,985	161,115

Statistics Canada’s most recent monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS) reveals encouraging signs for the sector’s labour market. Total tourism employment in Canada saw a month-over-month increase between May and July 2022, growing to 2,034,400 workers (or by 5.5%) (Figure 8). This marks the first time since February 2020 that monthly tourism sector employment has topped the 2 million mark—which it had consistently done pre-pandemic, throughout 2018 and 2019.

**Figure 8. Month-over-Month Employment** (seasonally unadjusted)

	June 2022	July 2022	% Change
<b>Tourism</b>	<b>1,928,100</b>	<b>2,034,400</b>	<b>5.5%</b>
Accommodation	161,900	163,700	1.1%
Food and Beverage Services	853,900	889,300	4.1%
Recreation and Entertainment	543,600	606,500	11.6%
Transportation	327,200	331,200	1.2%
Travel Services	41,600	43,700	5.0%

While employment numbers are growing compared to 2021, looking at the same month in pre-pandemic 2019, July's overall tourism employment numbers continue to lag, with July 2022 employment data revealing a decline of 181,500 workers (or -8.2%) from the pre-pandemic baseline.

**Figure 9. Employment Change by Industry, July 2022 vs. July 2019 and July 2021** (seasonally unadjusted)

	<b>Employment change from 2019</b>	<b>% change from 2019</b>	<b>Employment change from 2021</b>	<b>% change from 2021</b>
<b>Tourism</b>	<b>-181,500</b>	<b>-8.2%</b>	<b>240,800</b>	<b>13.4%</b>
Accommodation	-55,000	-25.1%	15,700	10.6%
Food and Beverage Services	-94,100	-9.6%	28,800	3.3%
Recreation and Entertainment	1,600	0.3%	121,900	25.2%
Transportation	-21,600	-6.1%	71,800	27.7%
Travel Services	-12,400	-22.1%	2,500	6.1%

Though July's data reveal an eagerly anticipated positive uptick in tourism sector labour force and employment levels, recent employment projections prepared by the Conference Board of Canada for Tourism HR Canada in June 2022 anticipate that employment in the tourism sector—both nationally and within the prairie provinces—is not projected to reach pre-pandemic levels until 2025.<sup>x</sup> Meanwhile, tourism's share of overall employment in the Canadian economy in 2025 is expected to fall just shy of its annual share from 2019.<sup>2</sup>

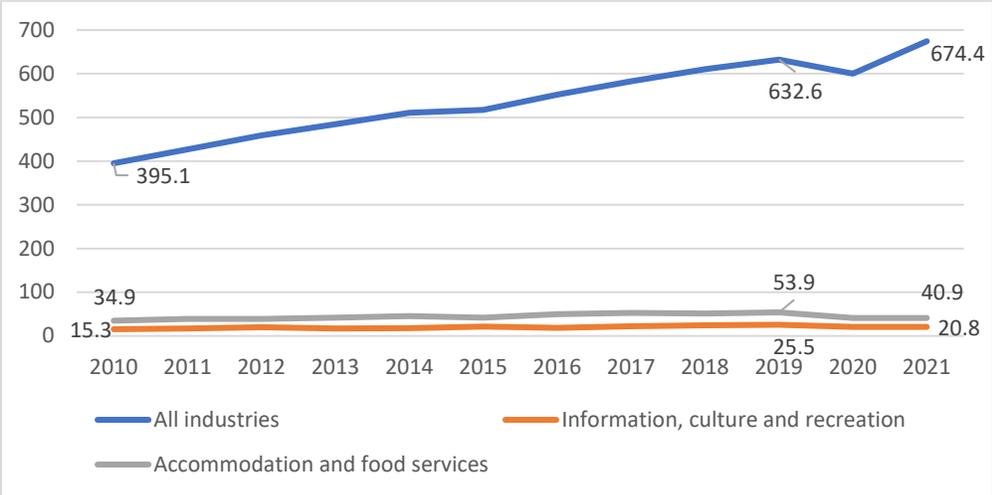
Going forward, the tourism industry faces multiple challenges that it must tackle to address unprecedented labour shortages. These include labour challenges on the supply side, namely in the form of job vacancies; skills shortages among available workers and the availability of adequate education and training services; and mobility issues related to employment barriers, including affordable housing, childcare, and transportation. These issues are impacting all of tourism; however, these influences are highly acute for Indigenous tourism and the Indigenous workforce.

<sup>2</sup> In a typical year, the sector accounts for 10% of overall employment. Tourism's share of overall employment in Canada in 2025 is projected to be 10.5%; this will fall just shy of its share in 2019 (10.8%).

# The Indigenous Workforce and Indigenous Tourism’s Economic Contributions Face Volatility

While there was tremendous growth among the number of Indigenous persons employed across the entire Canadian economy in the last decade, there was noticeably lower growth in tourism-related industries. Employment of the Indigenous population across all industries in Canada grew significantly (70.7%) from 2010 to 2021. Employment grew at a much slower rate in the information, culture and recreation industry (+35.9%) and in accommodation and food services (+17.2%).<sup>xi</sup> For the 2019–2021 period, Indigenous employment of the Indigenous population across all industries recovered to 2019 levels (+6.6%) by July 2021. However, employment of the Indigenous population was down in both the information, culture and recreation industry (-18.4 %) and the accommodation and food services industry (-24.1%).<sup>xii</sup>

**Figure 10. Employment – Indigenous Population by Industry**



ITAC estimates there were 1,900 Indigenous entrepreneurs and organizations working in tourism in 2019, employing between 37,000 and 39,000 Canadian workers and generating an estimated \$1.8 billion in direct GDP.<sup>xiii</sup> The decline in international travellers to Canada and public health measures that accompanied COVID-19 changed that dramatically. In 2020, Canada’s Indigenous tourism sector saw a 59.4% decline in employment (down to 14,624 jobs) and a 65.9% decline in direct GDP (down to an estimated \$555 million) when compared to 2019.<sup>xiv</sup> The picture brightened a bit in 2021, with estimates showing more than 18,000 people working in Indigenous tourism, creating more than \$774 million in GDP (Figure 11).<sup>xv</sup>

**Figure 11. Indigenous Tourism Employment and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 2019–2021**

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Change (%) 2019 to 2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Employees	36,700	14,600	-59.4%	18,000
GDP	\$1.78 billion	\$555 million	-65.9%	\$774 million

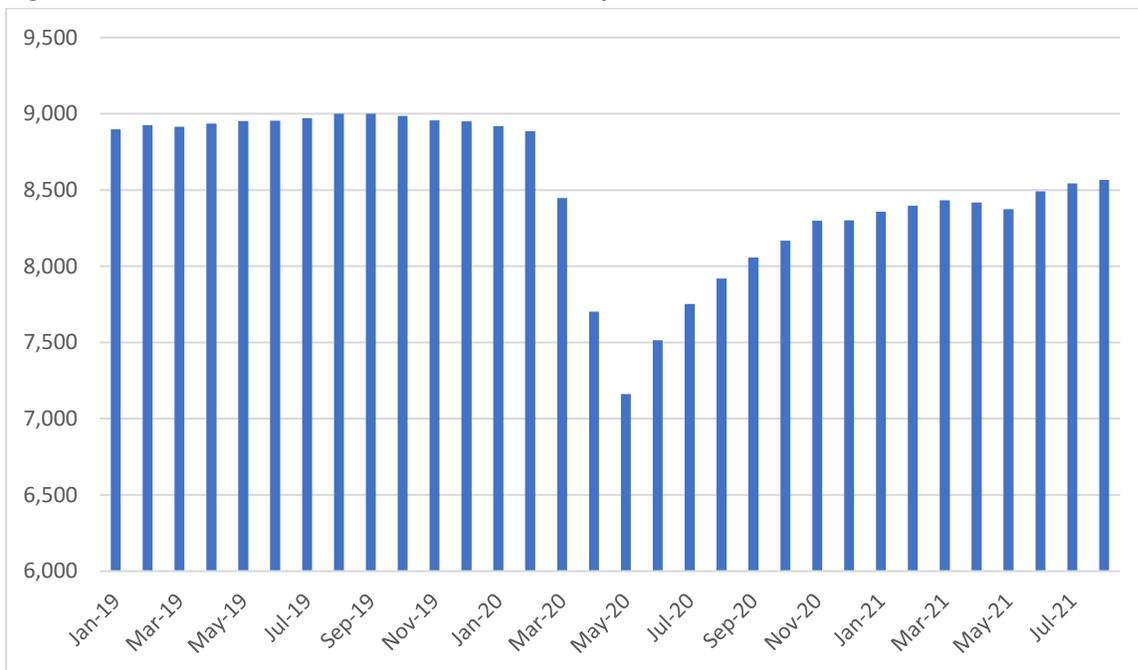
While, overall, workforce indicators remain volatile for the tourism sector and its five industry groups, ITAC anticipates that if targeted supports and investments are made, Indigenous tourism across the country should recover more quickly than the rest of the tourism sector, due to observable increases in consumer demand for Indigenous tourism products and services.<sup>xvi</sup> Though the most recent projections for the industry were produced without the hindsight of current economic conditions such as rising inflation and fuel prices, flight cancellations, and fluctuations in tourism job vacancies, ITAC predicts the Indigenous tourism workforce could exceed 40,000 and GDP could surpass its 2019 level by 2025, should funding and support be put in place to stabilize and accentuate economic and labour force recovery.<sup>xvii</sup>

## Employment and Tourism Sector Trends in Alberta

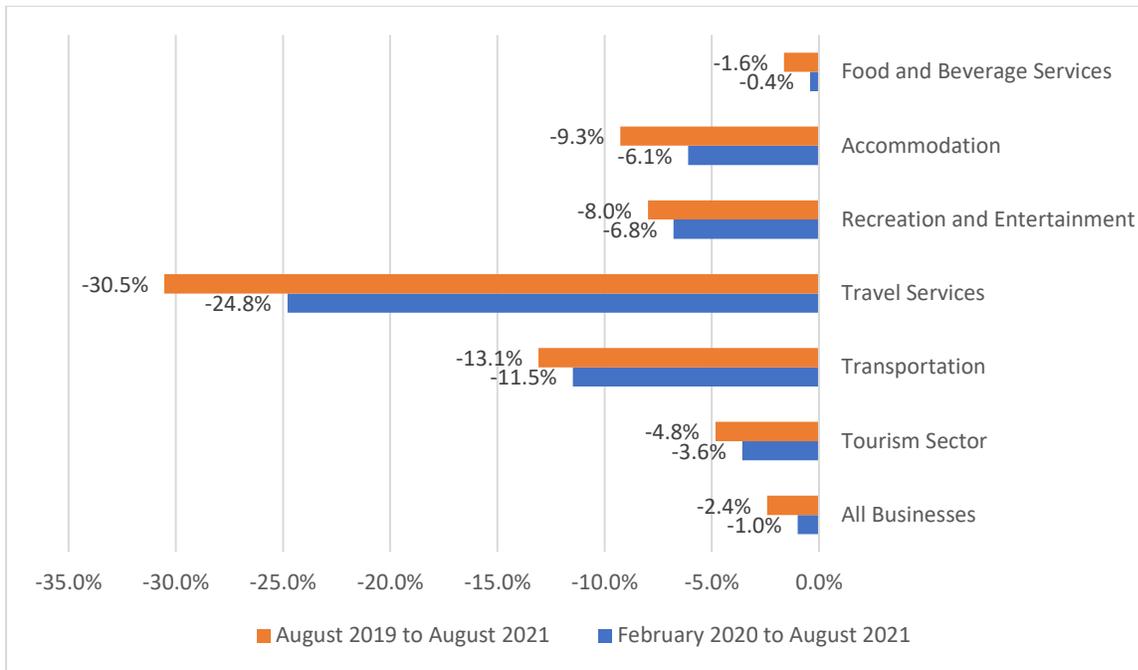
Present tourism employment levels, both nationally and in Alberta, have not yet recovered to the pre-pandemic workforce numbers. Tourism employed 248,400 Albertans in February 2020. By April of that year, the number of employed tourism workers had fallen by 41.9% to 133,200 people. The unemployment rate in the tourism sector reached an alarming 29.0% the following month, while the overall unemployment rate for the province reached 15.9%.<sup>xviii</sup>

Having hit its lowest point in May 2020, the number of active tourism businesses in Alberta is increasing gradually but has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. By the summer of 2021, the total number of active tourism businesses in Alberta showed signs of a positive recovery (Figure 12); however, the travel services industry and transportation industry had lost the most active businesses, down 24.8% and 11.5% since February 2020, creating a risk to businesses that rely on travel agencies and tour operators to book group tours and rely on transportation companies to move tourists across the province to their businesses (Figure 13).<sup>xix</sup>

**Figure 12. Active Tourism Businesses in Alberta by Month**



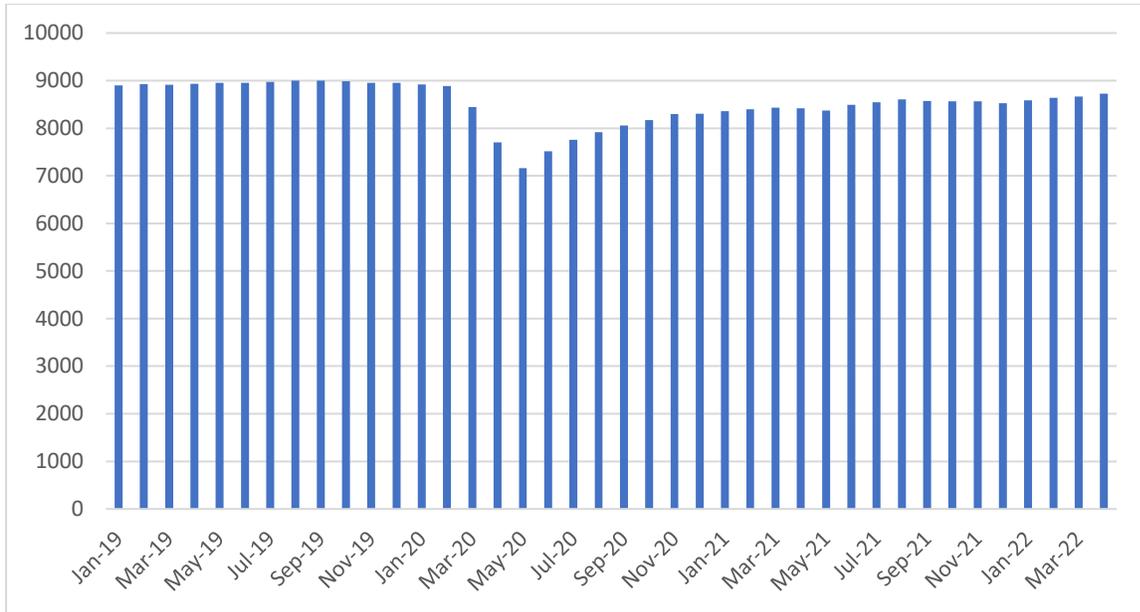
**Figure 13. Active Tourism Businesses by Industry Group – Alberta**



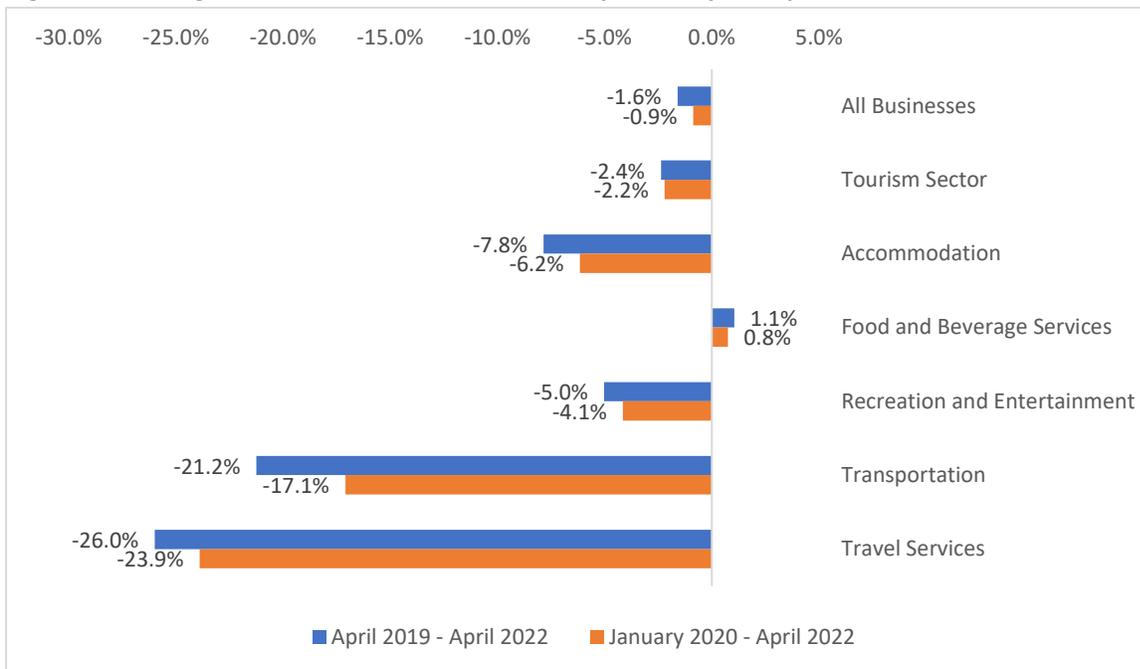
Data on the number of active tourism businesses was recently updated to the month of April 2022.<sup>3</sup> As of April, there were 8,723 active tourism businesses, which was 3.6% more than in April 2021, but 2.4% fewer than in April 2019 (Figure 14).<sup>xx</sup> Among the five tourism industry groups, only the food and beverage services group had recovered to the April 2019 and January 2020 levels (Figure 15).<sup>xxi</sup> Transportation and travel services were the hardest-hit tourism industry groups.

<sup>3</sup> Active businesses are defined as those businesses that reported having one or more employees in a given month. The dataset does not differentiate between businesses that have temporarily become inactive and those that have closed permanently. Because of uncertainty over whether a regular tourism season would be possible, some seasonal businesses may have chosen not to open in 2021. These businesses may become active once more in 2022. However, given the length of the pandemic, at least some of the reduction in active tourism businesses is due to permanent closures.

**Figure 14. Active Tourism Businesses in Alberta by Month**



**Figure 15. Change in Active Tourism Businesses by Industry Group – Alberta**

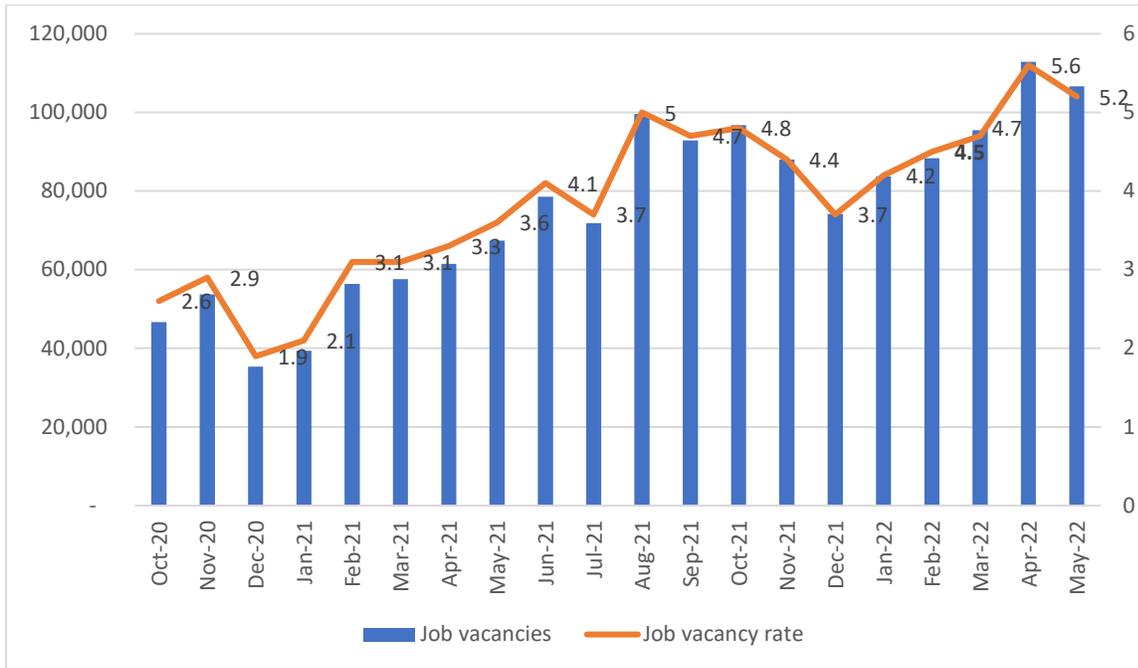


Though current employment levels in Alberta’s tourism sector are up significantly from last year, a high number of job vacancies persists while the number of people employed in the sector has fluctuated month by month throughout 2022.

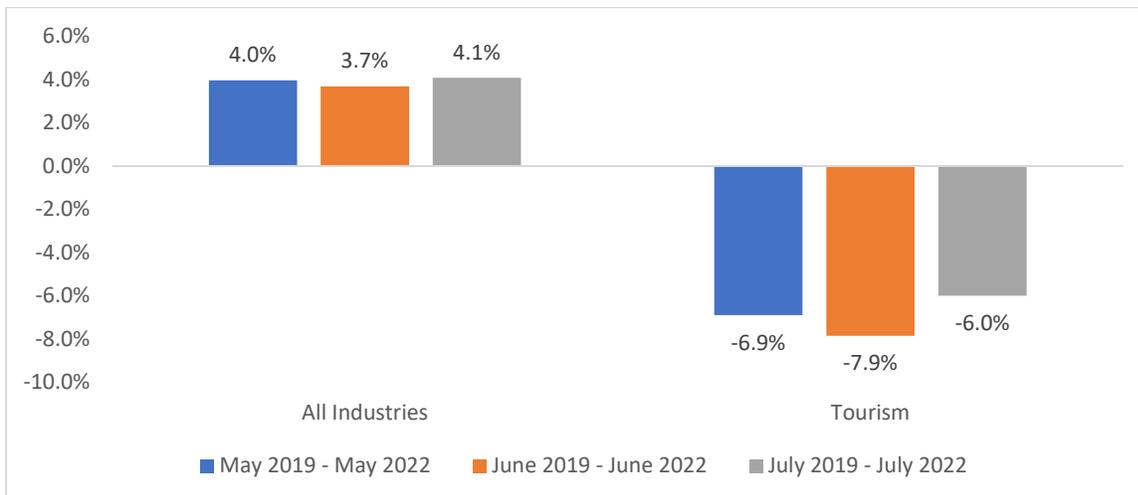
The latest job vacancy data is current to May 2022. Despite of some ups and downs, the number of job vacancies in Alberta rose overall since October 2020, reaching 106,630 in May 2022 (Figure 16). The

vacancy rate (the number of vacant positions as a percentage of all available jobs) reached 5.2% in May 2022, or 1.6% more than one year prior.<sup>xxiii</sup> While employment levels across all industries in Alberta had recovered, tourism employment remained suppressed and had fallen 6.0% compared to July 2019 (Figure 17).

**Figure 16. Job Vacancies and Job Vacancy Rate by Month – Alberta**



**Figure 17. Employment Change by All Industries and Tourism, May, June, and July 2019 to 2022 (percent, seasonally unadjusted) – Alberta**

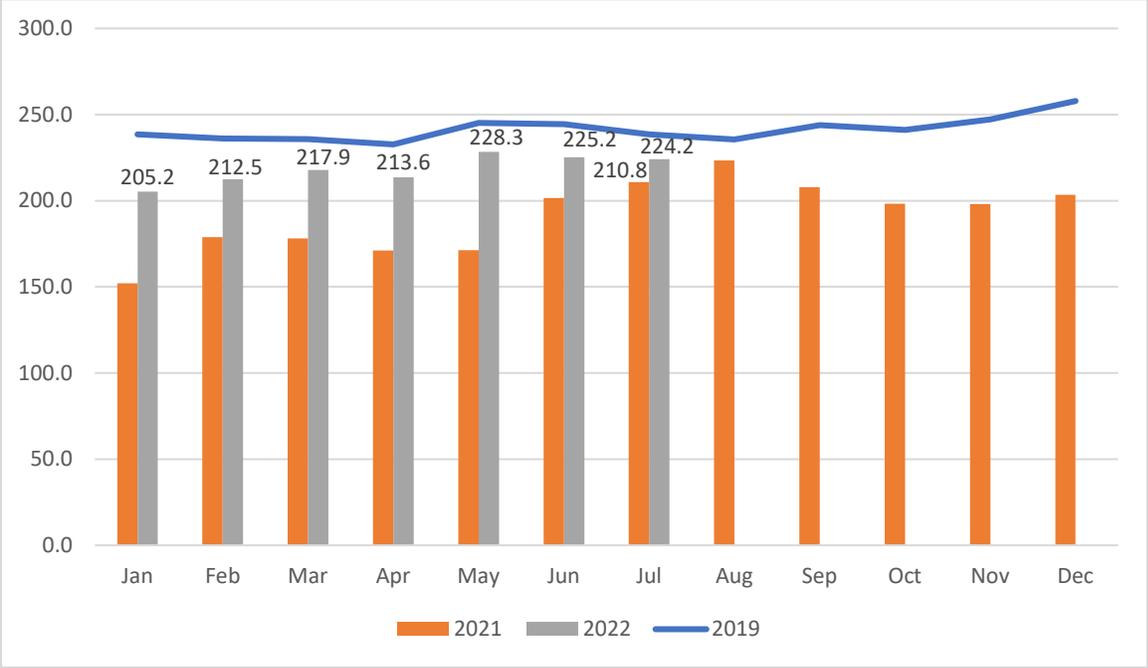


Alberta’s monthly tourism employment grew by 6.9% between April and May 2022 but remained 6.9% lower (or less 16,900 workers) when compared to May 2019. While spring data show positive signs towards employment recovery, tourism employment experienced consecutive decreases in the summer.

Unexpectedly, tourism employment in Alberta dropped by 1.8% from May to July 2022, though total tourism employment in Canada increased by 5.0% (Figure 18). Although it is smaller than the decrease in summer 2019 (-2.7%), such a decrease during the ramp-up to the peak summer tourism season is surprising, since analysis of previous years demonstrates that this is typically a growth period for Alberta’s tourism workforce. In 2020 and 2021, tourism employment was elevated by 32.4% and 23.1%, respectively, from May to July.

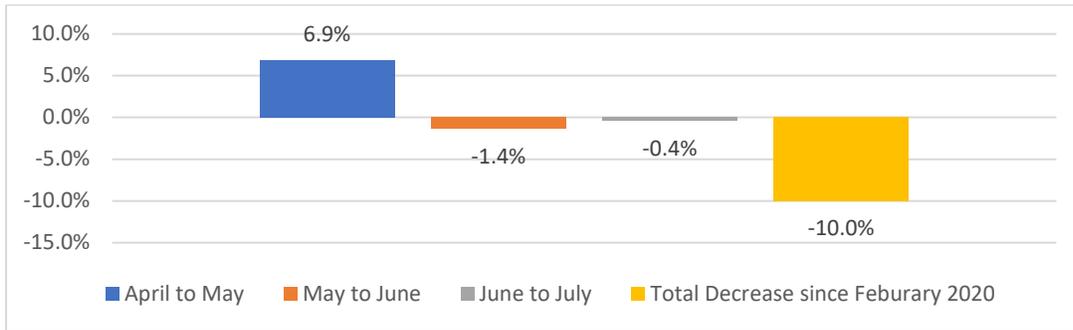
Still, positive signs of workforce recovery are evident. As of July 2022, tourism employment was 6.4% higher than in July 2021 and 6.0% lower than in July 2019.<sup>xxiii</sup>

**Figure 18. Tourism Employment in Alberta, 2019, 2021, and 2022** (seasonally unadjusted x1,000)



On a month-over-month basis, monthly tourism employment decreased by 1.4% and 0.4% in June and July, respectively. As of July 2022, tourism employment was 10.0% lower than the pre-pandemic level of February 2020 (Figure 19).

**Figure 19. Month-over-Month Employment Change in Tourism (percent, seasonally unadjusted) – Alberta**

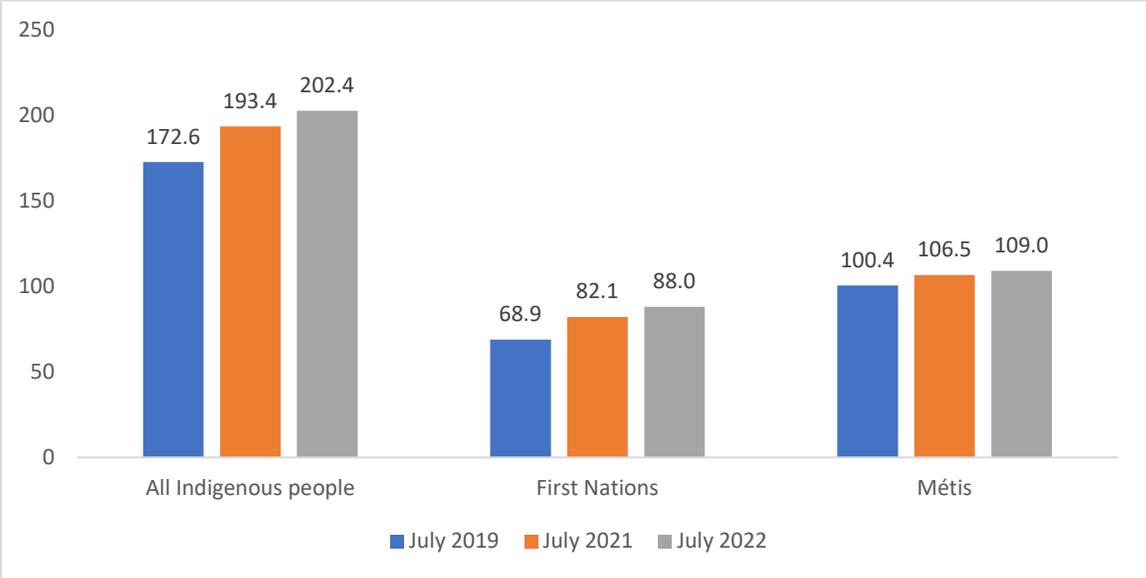


Indigenous youth were among those most likely to report a negative impact on employment earnings or work hours, or to become unemployed during the pandemic.<sup>xxiv</sup> As the sector moves through an anticipated period of early-stage recovery in summer 2022, key employment indicators show an increase in youth employment and a rise in the participation of Indigenous persons within Alberta’s total provincial workforce.

# Employment and Employment Rate of Indigenous People in Alberta

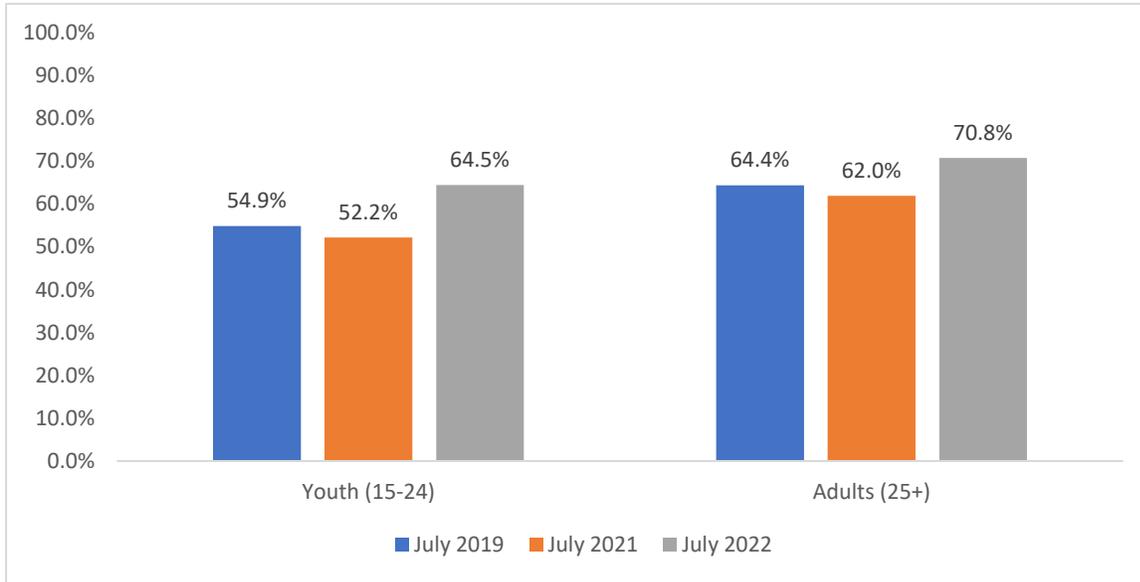
The employment of Indigenous people in Alberta was elevated from pre-pandemic levels (Figure 20). As of July 2022, there were 202,400 employed Indigenous people in Alberta (53.9% were Métis and 43.5% were First Nations), which was up 17.3% from July 2019 and 4.7% from July 2021.<sup>xxv</sup>

**Figure 20. Employment of Indigenous People Off-Reserve – Alberta<sup>xxvi</sup>**



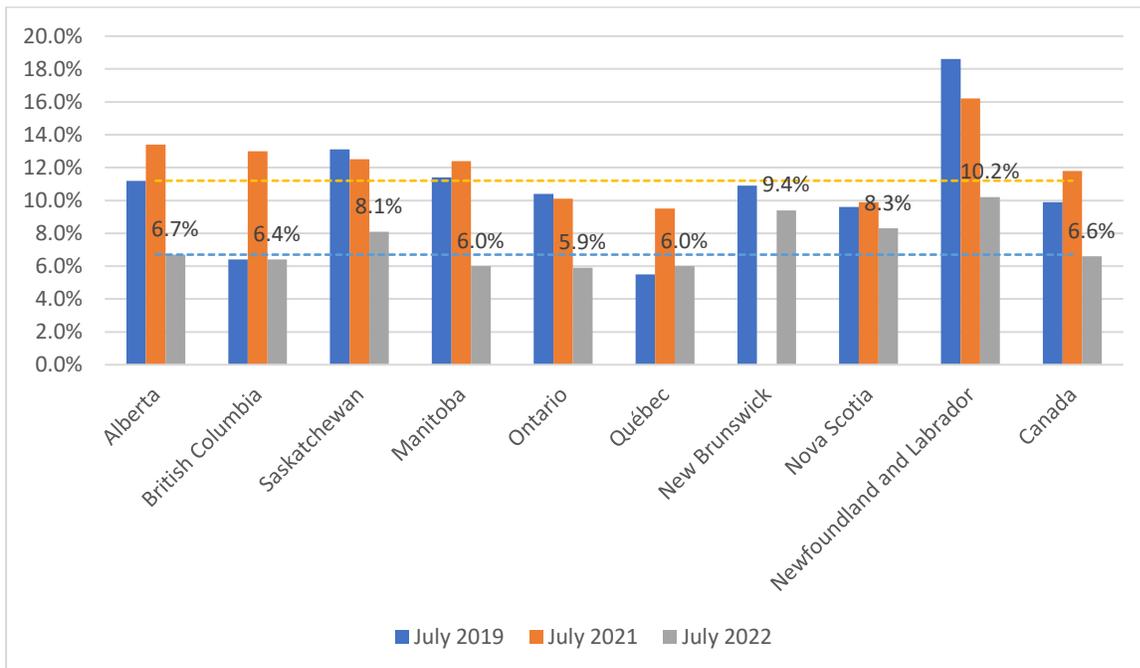
Youth have become a significant component of Alberta’s Indigenous workforce. The employment rate of youth was up significantly compared to July 2019 (9.6%) and July 2021 (12.3%) (Figure 21).<sup>xxvii</sup> On the other hand, the employment rate of adults was only elevated by 6.4% and 8.8% from July 2019 and July 2021, respectively.

**Figure 21. Indigenous People Off-Reserve Employment Rates by Age – Alberta**



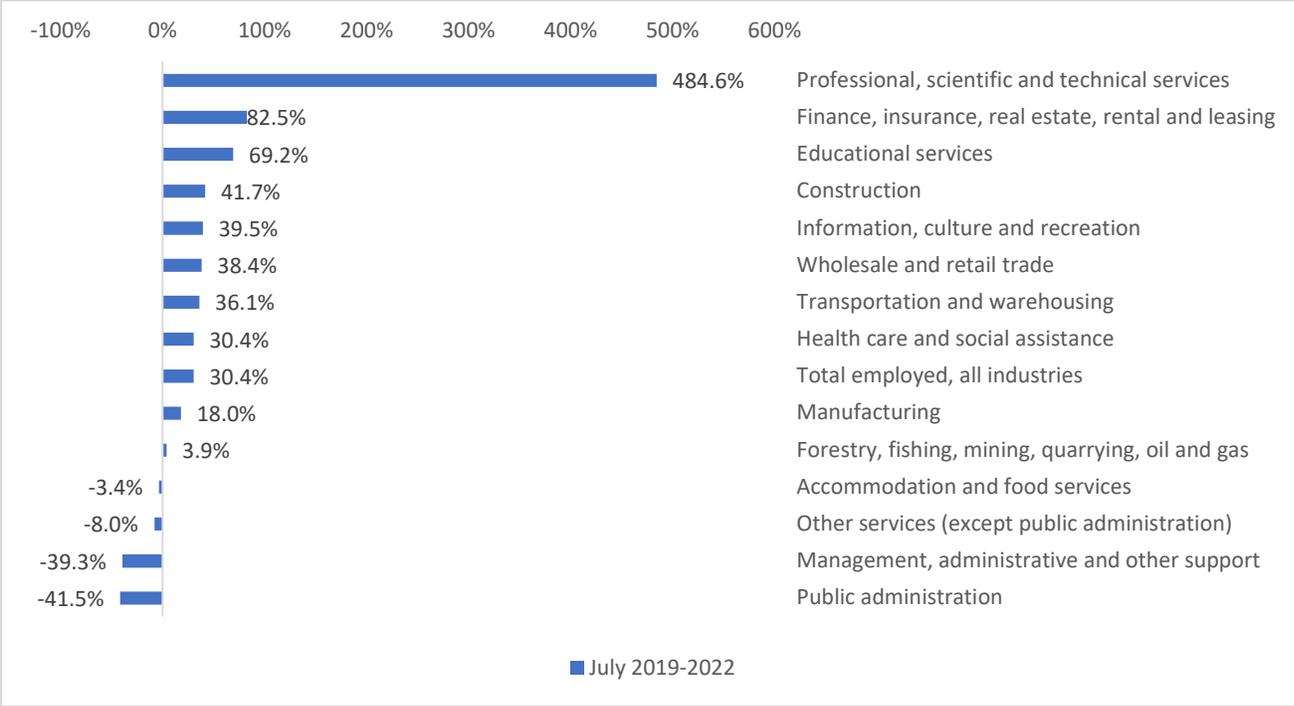
Additionally, Alberta saw a sharp decline in the unemployment rate among Indigenous people in July 2022. The unemployment rate of Indigenous people in Alberta was 6.7%, which was lower than that in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. This was a distinct improvement over the July 2019 unemployment rate of Indigenous people, which stood at 11.2% (Figure 22).<sup>xxviii</sup>

**Figure 22. Indigenous People Off-Reserve Unemployment Rate**



Looking at Indigenous employment by sector, when compared to July 2019, most sectors (especially the professional, scientific and technical services sector) in Alberta employed significantly more Indigenous people in July 2022 (Figure 23).<sup>xxix</sup> Four sectors have seen an employment loss of Indigenous people. Notably, significantly fewer Indigenous people were employed in the public administration sector in July 2022. The number of Indigenous people employed in the accommodation and food services industry was 3.4% less than it was in July 2019. However, the number of Indigenous people employed in the information, culture and recreation sector was 39.5% more than in July 2019.

**Figure 23. Indigenous People Off-Reserve Employment Change by Sector, July 2019 to July 2022 (seasonally unadjusted) – Alberta**



## International Versus Domestic Travellers as Drivers of Indigenous Tourism Growth in Alberta

To a great extent, the health of the Indigenous tourism workforce rests on the return of consumer demand. Those segments of the tourism sector which can draw on locals rather than tourists for revenue will see customer demand recover faster. This was the case for the restaurant industry in the summer of 2021, and it resulted in severe labour shortages. Such shortages are a potential future for all facets of the tourism sector, even those that are still waiting for their customers to return in significant numbers.

On September 7, 2021, the Canada/U.S. border reopened to any fully vaccinated travellers who had completed the full course of vaccination with a Government of Canada-accepted vaccine at least 14 days prior to entering Canada.<sup>xxx</sup> However, due to remaining high levels of uncertainty and the emergence of

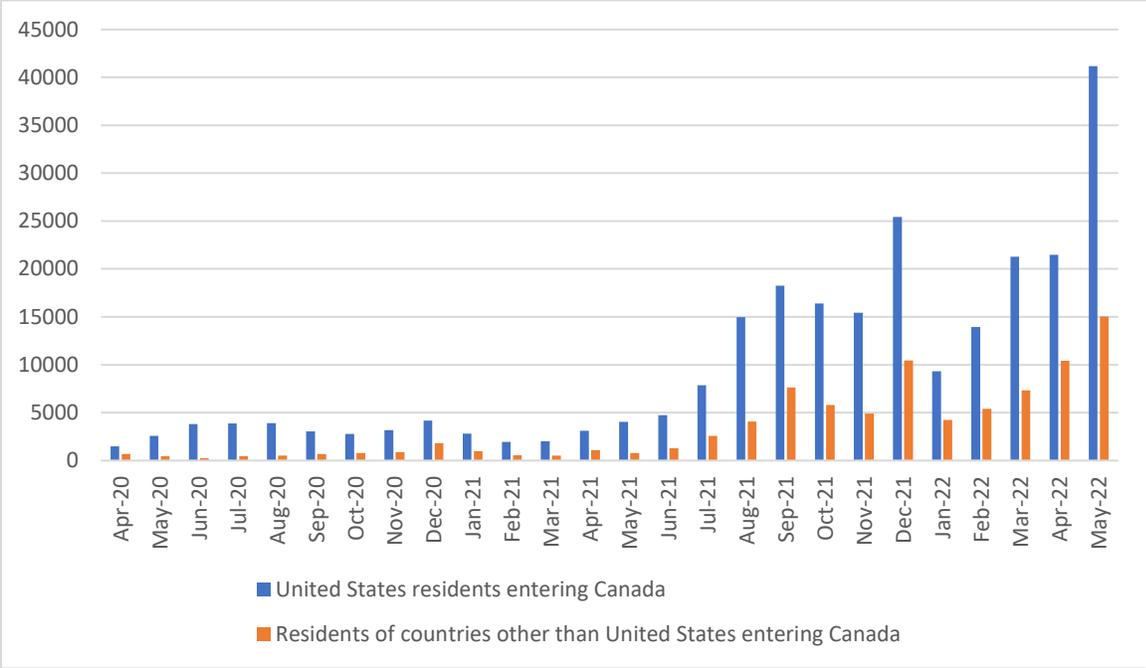
the Omicron COVID-19 variant, the number of U.S. travellers entering the country grew quickly but has been inconsistent throughout the past year.

### Travellers to Alberta

Data on travellers to Canada was most recently updated for the month of May 2022. Overall, international arrivals in the province are still well below pre-pandemic levels. In September 2021, the Conference Board of Canada released a travel market outlook to 2025 for the province of Alberta. One key takeaway was that Alberta was poised to welcome a tourism boom over the second half of the year, as vaccination rates increased across Canada.<sup>xxxix</sup> The total number of international travellers arriving in Alberta has indeed been recovering, though rather inconsistently.

In July 2019, almost 200,000 international tourists entered the province; in comparison, May 2021 saw fewer than 5,000 international tourists enter the province directly. In February 2020, over 50,000 international tourists entered the province, while February 2022 saw fewer than 20,000 international tourists enter the province directly. The number of international tourists surged in late spring 2022, reaching 56,236 in May, mostly due to a significant increase in the number of U.S. travellers (Figure 24).<sup>xxxix</sup> In fact, the number of international travellers doubled in just the two months from March to May. However, this was still down 73.1% compared to May 2019 (the number of U.S. travellers was down 73.3% and the number of non-U.S. travellers was down 72.4%).

**Figure 24. International Travellers Arriving in Alberta by Month**



Indigenous Tourism Alberta’s (ITA) research from 2019 reveals that the top five overseas markets by tourism demand in Alberta are the United Kingdom, China, Japan, Australia, and Germany,

respectively.<sup>xxxiii</sup> A survey of international travellers conducted by Tourism Saskatchewan revealed that demand for Indigenous tourism experiences by visitors to Canada was driven by a strong interest in engaging in activities predicated upon the sharing of traditional knowledge and cultural experiences. The most popular tourism activities indicated by respondents from all regions surveyed were “traditional cooking, stargazing, guided hiking tours, arts and crafts, powwows and horseback riding”, while across all markets there was also “a strong desire to participate in one-on-one conversations with Indigenous people and listen to storytelling in order to better understand Indigenous culture and history” and to engage with authentic Indigenous food and beverage options.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Similarly, Destination Canada research from 2016 shows that international travel markets are most interested in Indigenous tourism related to:

- enriching, engaged, immersive experiences with Indigenous people;
- experiences with nature and learning;
- authenticity; and,
- seeking benefits of ‘discoveries’ and ‘adventures’.

Connection to nature and an “Indigenous way of life” are highly linked to spirituality and the cultural traditions of Indigenous communities.

Unfortunately, the number of international travellers to Alberta did not see a sustained uptick until May 2022, despite the potential for significant pent-up demand. The unpredictability of the COVID-19 virus has made projections of international travellers to Canada unreliable for the time being. As international tourism faces a longer path to recovery, the tourism sector should look to offset the lost economic impacts of outbound travel with heightened domestic and local travel. This will be driven by travel from other provinces and intraprovincial travel by Albertans.

While the loss of international travel presents a challenge for Indigenous tourism across the country, prior to the pandemic, domestic travel accounted for roughly 80% of tourism expenditures within Canada. Research by Destination Canada and ITAC showed that, though international travellers are more likely to take part in an Indigenous experience than domestic travellers (the percentage of travellers from other countries engaging in an Indigenous experience ranged from 18% of U.S. visitors to 37% of visitors from France), in the three years prior to 2017, 9% of domestic travellers took part in an Indigenous tourism experience.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Pleasure travel is expected to drive Alberta’s initial tourism sector recovery. Business travel remains suppressed within the province—as it does across the country. The number of domestic visits for business purposes is not expected to reach 2019 levels until 2025. Business trips by international travellers will not be at pre-pandemic levels even by 2025, the furthest year of the projections. International pleasure travel visits may not recover until 2024. The slower recovery of business and international travel will negatively impact Calgary and Edmonton, as the cities attract more customers from these two travel segments.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Recent ITAC-sponsored research found strong potential that the domestic travel market will be a main driver of Indigenous tourism recovery, in particular through the provision of cultural experiences and

tourism offerings that span all tourism seasons. In the summer of 2020, its survey of Canadian travellers found that the majority exclusively intended on travelling domestically, primarily driving, to remain in control of their own environment in the near term. Travellers were largely interested in discovering local experiences both along the journey and at overnight stops and their final destination—creating a vast opportunity for untapped and underutilized Indigenous tourism and cultural experiences to be introduced to Canadians.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

## Findings of Focus Group Research

Embracing the principle that research informed by active participation and relationality leads to meaningful researcher-community engagement, Tourism HR Canada and ITA conducted structured focus group discussions with business operators and industry stakeholders from within Alberta's Indigenous tourism industry in January and April 2022. In January 2022, focus group discussions explored *issues and challenges* related to the tourism workforce. A second round of focus group sessions was held in April 2022 with discussion framed around potential *solutions and new opportunities* for the industry to grow and support a healthy labour market.

The focus groups employed semi-structured discussion guides to learn from the stories, knowledge, and experience of participants.<sup>4</sup> This qualitative data gathering process provided significant insights into the challenges faced by Alberta's Indigenous tourism industry during the COVID-19 pandemic and informed evidence-based approaches to industry recovery and advocacy while ensuring that social values, living practices, relationships, life cycles, and Indigenous self-recognition remain at the centre of the research findings.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Participants provided their perceptions on a series of questions under the broad themes "business health check", "challenges", "skills shortages", and "opportunities". Narratives and responses to questions observed during the discussions highlighted several social and economic trends that impact upon employment in the Indigenous tourism industry. The most pressing labour market challenges faced by Indigenous tourism employers included barriers to employment among members of the province's Indigenous communities and difficulty attracting Indigenous youth to tourism employment.

### Hiring Challenges

While a wide variety of themes were present in employers' perceptions of challenges related to hiring and retaining employees from within Indigenous communities, five main indicators emerged from the focus group research: proximity to employers, specialized skills and knowledge, cultural accommodation, fluctuations in employment, and compensation.

#### **Proximity to Employers**

Indigenous tourism operators feel their businesses have a strong connection to the local community. For many of those operating heritage- and cultural-experience-based tourism businesses, their "ideal candidate" would be a skilled Indigenous employee who is from the local area. They are often wary of hiring employees who are based outside the province, due to the time and resources spent on training these employees. Unfortunately, a lack of access to personal and public transportation is reported as a key barrier to attracting and retaining local Indigenous employees by employers from across the province. In particular, transportation posed a major hurdle for on-reserve members of Indigenous communities. Many of the province's Indigenous communities are located in remote areas and many lack local access to services or facilities such as Service Canada Centres, local insurance providers, or driver training programs, which disincentivizes workers from obtaining personal transportation.

---

<sup>4</sup> Please see the Appendix for a more detailed description of the research methodology employed.

Remoteness and lack of personal transportation are cited as key factors dissuading Indigenous youth, in particular, from attaining employment outside of their community.

### ***Specialized Skills and Knowledge***

There was near consensus among participants that the industry, on the whole, faces difficulty attracting workers with the necessary skills sets to support tourism operations. This is particularly the case for careers requiring highly specialized skills (e.g., creative skills needed to perform bead work or experience tanning hides) or specialized knowledge or certification (e.g., safety certifications required of wilderness guides). Skills gaps that businesses were looking to fill currently or anticipated filling in the coming months include communications and group facilitation skills (in particular for cultural interpreter, cultural ambassador, or curatorial roles), marketing skills, and event planning and coordination skills.

The creation of new training programs in the following areas is considered vital in addressing existing skills gaps: social media training and knowledge of e-commerce, accounting and financial management training, and safety certification and specialized certifications. Furthermore, employers indicated that there is often a need for highly specialized traditional, cultural, and historical knowledge among employees. To help mitigate this skills gap, there is a strong desire among businesses to see the industry augment connections with the community and to enable formal educational links between Indigenous Elders and youth.

### ***Cultural Accommodation***

A lack of Indigenous supervisors and peers and the perceived lack of inclusiveness in the workplace are considered to be top employee retention challenges specific to retaining Alberta's Indigenous job seekers. Increased cultural accommodation and inclusive workplace policies can offset these challenges while also helping to mitigate challenges related to absenteeism among the Indigenous labour force. A survey conducted by the Conference Board of Canada in 2012 reports that a key reason for absenteeism among Indigenous workers is due to a desire to participate in traditional or seasonal activities, such as hunting and fishing. Going forward, the tourism sector would benefit from increased efforts to embrace flexibility and awareness of cultural obligations as a competitive advantage in attracting potential Indigenous employees, particularly those who may seek seasonal jobs in order to accommodate the cultural aspect of their personal lives.

Multiple participants discussed the need for employers to embrace Indigenous values within a positive work environment and, in particular, the employment retention benefits of "taking a team approach", wherein staff members are empowered by a sense of common accomplishment.

Businesses that found a greater level of employee retention in their business benefited from:

- creating a more inclusive, accessible, and accommodating workplace;
- fostering a culture of work-life balance;
- hosting teambuilding and staff appreciation activities;
- holding internal contests and offering promotions and discounts to staff; and

- providing time off for family functions that are attuned to cultural accommodation.

### ***Fluctuations in Employment***

Participants felt that Indigenous employees were often deterred from seeking employment in the tourism sector because they were wary of the precariousness or fluctuations in the length of employment in many tourism roles—often in roles wherein seasonal employment was the norm.

### ***Compensation***

Perceived low wages were also a deterrent for potential applicants. Compensation involving low wage rates and a lack of benefits for part-time employees are an employment barrier as many Indigenous workers seek wages that are viable for supporting young families. Compensation is a persistent challenge since competition for talent within Alberta's labour market is heightened due to the unique factor that many workers of various skill levels are drawn to the high-paying natural resource and oil and gas industries during peak economic times.<sup>5</sup>

In attempting to tackle these challenges, large tourism operators, such as hotels, casinos, national parks, and heritage sites, indicate they have seen success in attracting Indigenous talent by offering shuttle services to staff, providing on-site childcare, and offering seasonal living accommodations to staff. Smaller businesses have difficulty offering these incentives and the ability of larger employers to continue to offer these types of incentives is highly dependent upon the availability of funding, businesses' ability to maintain workers throughout peak and off-peak seasons, and the uncertainties tied to the return of travellers to Alberta.

## **Business Challenges, Supports, and Opportunities**

Labour shortages have resulted in a wide variety of challenges for Indigenous tourism businesses. When asked about business challenges during the pandemic, constraints around access to capital (business growth, expansion, diversification, and rising costs) were top of mind. More dire business challenges related to business operations were also prevalent. These included a high debt load, the risk of bankruptcy, an inability to pay staff, and the inability to pay rent. While the majority of Alberta's Indigenous tourism businesses were able to stay open during the last two years, most that did see a business interruption closed temporarily with the hope of reopening under more optimal operating conditions.

The impact of the pandemic on tourism businesses could have been much worse, were it not for various financial supports put in place.

---

<sup>5</sup> Rocky Mountain hotels, restaurants doubt help will arrive in time for summer tourist season  
Bryan Labby CBC News May 24, 2022  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/banff-canmore-temporary-foreign-worker-program-1.6448604>

## Federal Supports for the Indigenous Tourism Industry

Over the course of the pandemic, many supports for both individuals and businesses were introduced, including subsidies such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS), and the Canada Recovery Hiring Program (CRHP), grants such as the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund, and low-interest (or interest-free) loans such as those available through the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA)—which, as of December 2, 2021, had approved \$6.8 billion in loans and expansions for 125,000 Alberta businesses.<sup>xxxix</sup> These supports were needed by businesses. But many reported that it was challenging to understand how to access them, and this was particularly true of Indigenous-owned and -operated tourism businesses. Many businesses were in the early stages of development, and therefore had difficulty proving viability for supports such as the Business Credit Availability program. Some supports also required businesses to show a 30% loss of revenue, which was challenging for seasonal businesses. On-reserve businesses faced limitations applying for loans, and small operators were concerned about the risk of taking on loans even if they were eligible.

The majority of focus group participants accessed some form of business funding during the pandemic. In all, the single biggest benefit of available business supports, in particular grants, was they helped ensure businesses did not have to permanently close during periods where public health measures required full social lockdowns or heightened social distancing. Many reported that "regional grants" with values of between \$5,000 and \$20,000 were essential to maintaining businesses. Specifically, ITA, ITAC, and Travel Alberta were named as key resources that provided businesses start-up supports, and ITA's Alberta Marketing Micro Grant was named repeatedly as a preferred model for the granting process. The Canada-Alberta Job Grant was named as another key support that enabled "business survival", with funding for direct training costs for future and current employees. Federal government programs including CEWS, CERS, and CRHP were also accessed by a significant number of participants.

Grants that subsidized employment costs were viewed as the most impactful business support during the pandemic and for future industry recovery efforts. Wage subsidies have allowed businesses to maintain more staff than they otherwise would have; grants enabled businesses to hire extra part-time staff to assist with exploring new revenue streams and marketing opportunities (often via social media) while strategizing and pivoting to keep their businesses afloat during lockdowns and periods of slow demand; and training subsidies allowed operators to employ more people from within their local labour force and communities.

Difficulties associated with accessing supports were also reported. This included the fact that many businesses less than a year old did not qualify for federal COVID-19 supports. Support program applications and follow-up communications were considered time consuming for small business operators and took time away from their ability to create new products and make sales during a critical period for their businesses. Additionally, businesses expressed that they anticipated difficulty repaying government loans over the coming year.

While existing funding and business supports (particularly those offered through ITA, ITAC, and federal government COVID-19 support programs) have been an essential means of keeping businesses afloat during the pandemic, gaps in funding and business supports remain. The focus groups identified opportunities to advocate for the following near-term business support priorities:

- the continuation of current wage subsidy programs;
- new financing programs focused on start-up costs;
- marketing and promotional supports;
- B2B matching services; and
- a formal connection hub between businesses and the local community labour force.

## Opportunities to Embrace New Drivers of Demand

Though persistent workforce challenges existed throughout the past year, a significant number of focus group participants reported increased consumer demand for their tourism products and services during 2021. This was principally driven by:

- opportunities for new product innovation and to add new product and service offerings;
- unexpected, yet successful, shifts or pivots to online delivery or e-commerce; and
- remarkable demand from Indigenous persons looking to connect with their culture and community during the pandemic.

Essentially, Alberta's Indigenous tourism business operators have navigated through the pandemic by finding alternatives to their business models or new consumers. Many of those businesses that were able to sustain operations during the pandemic were quick to embrace online platforms as a means of reaching new customers by offering events, talks, tours, and education via the internet or by expanding their retail presence via e-commerce. Additionally, many participants mentioned that, during the lockdowns, Indigenous people "returned to their roots" by engaging in community and cultural activities via online platforms and content.

Businesses that could not offer services or products online have focused on attracting local tourists as a means to sustain operations, with many highlighting that, as a result, their revenue was lower during the pandemic. As such, business operators eagerly anticipate increased demand for Indigenous tourism cultural experiences and cultural products on the part of international visitors to the province in the coming year.

## Important Themes for Strategic Workforce Recovery

Alberta's Indigenous tourism operators emphasized the need for greater awareness of the tourism sector as a place of employment. In particular, awareness and promotion among Indigenous youth are needed to maintain a connection to the local community and ensure the next generation has the skills, training, and exposure to traditional knowledge that are fundamental to entering the labour market and growing successful careers within Indigenous tourism ventures. Efforts to tap into talent in the local

labour market, particularly within Indigenous communities, need a strategic vision and a plan on how to get there that is based on:

- programming that addresses key education and skills concerns—in particular, the preservation and teaching of traditional knowledge and cultural practices;
- recruitment through both formal and informal networks, partnerships, and collaborations to help promote the local tourism sector as a place to work and learn within Indigenous communities; and
- collaboration with the local Indigenous community leaders and economic development bodies.

The exchange of traditional skills and knowledge is vital to the Indigenous tourism labour market. In many cases, tourism job skills have a strong connection to Indigenous life skills. Therefore, making connections with the community and Elders and supporting the exchange of traditional knowledge for roles that require a thorough understanding of Indigenous ancestry, heritage, and cultural practices are incredibly important to the sustainability of tourism ventures and activities that showcase traditional skills and Indigenous culture.

Education was a significant topic of the April 2022 focus groups and follow-up interviews. According to Statistics Canada, in 2017, 63% of Indigenous adults aged 20 years and over living off reserve had received a high school diploma and 10% had completed a high school equivalency or upgrading program, while the remaining 27% had less than high school qualifications.<sup>6</sup> Focus groups' discussions stressed the importance of both formal and informal education. That is to say, there is a need to encourage and support the creation of new conduits of traditional knowledge among Indigenous communities and potential members of the tourism workforce (particularly youth), as well as to reinforce the importance of formal education and specialized training to the success of the sector.

To address labour market gaps, participants feel it is crucial to encourage a greater number of members of Indigenous communities to seek employment in the tourism sector. The vast majority of operators with Indigenous cultural tourism businesses cite word of mouth (primarily through friends and family or other tourism sector members) and soliciting informal connections with prospective Indigenous workers through community groups (such as cultural organizations, student employment centres, and colleges) as their main recruitment methods. These methods are, unfortunately, considered to be time consuming and, in many cases, ineffective.

To address the difficulty of finding skilled Indigenous job applicants when there is often little access to internet service or to career resources in the local community, participants feel that more frequent job fairs, trade shows, and open house events in local settings would be of benefit to the sector. Targeted job fairs would ideally be combined with programs to bolster resume-building and interview skills, along

---

<sup>6</sup> O'Donnell, V. & Arriagada, P. (2019). Insights on Canadian Society: Upgrading and high school equivalency among the Indigenous population living off reserve. Statistics Canada. Online posting: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00013-eng.htm>. September 19, 2019. Accessed June 2, 2022.

with helping youth to understand the link between tourism and the life-long (including career) benefits of learning traditional knowledge and skills.

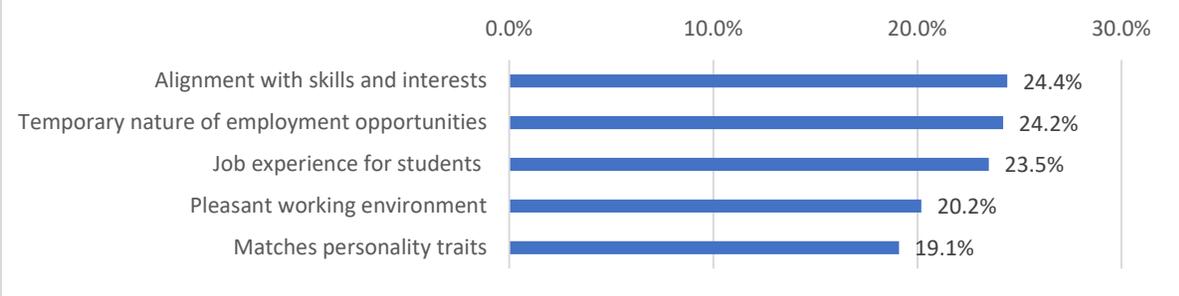
Since labour force recruitment is strongly tied to community engagement, support from local Indigenous community members and organizations is very important to the success of Indigenous tourism in the province. In particular, local economic development committees should be actively engaged and encouraged to support local economic growth through tourism. There is a perceived need to ensure outside initiatives do not appear to be competing with local economic development initiatives and to develop a concerted approach to sharing information about tourism career opportunities and programs directly with community members.

# Toward a Successful Indigenous Tourism Workforce Strategy in Alberta

Previous studies have shown that employing Indigenous workers generates many benefits for businesses and communities, including a better relationship and integration with the local community, because Indigenous workers often act as role models in their communities and the local community benefits from higher employment rates and income levels.<sup>xi</sup> Businesses that employ members of Indigenous communities can expect improved employee equity and inclusion, increased customer satisfaction or retention, reduced skills gaps, improved quality of work, reduced staff turnover, improved productivity, and increased profitability and competitiveness<sup>xli</sup>.

While tourism employment indicators for Indigenous persons have not kept pace with the overall economy, employment levels remain relatively consistent—tourism, as a place of work, remains popular with Indigenous people. According to research commissioned by Tourism HR Canada, Indigenous persons are likely to recommend a career in the tourism sector. Almost 45% of Indigenous respondents to a national survey from January 2022 would recommend a career in the restaurant and food services industry to family or friends.<sup>xliii</sup> More than half would recommend a career in the accommodations industry (e.g., hotels, campgrounds). Indigenous workers responded that they are attracted to tourism sector jobs that match their skills, provide temporary employment opportunities, and give students summer jobs (Figure 25). All of this signals positive perceptions of employment in the industry that can be built upon to help attract and retain workers from key demographics and target groups going forward.

**Figure 25. Reasons Why Indigenous People Decided to Work in the Tourism Sector**



As Alberta’s tourism businesses look to build from increased demand in summer 2022, consistent workforce recovery is top of mind for tourism employers and industry stakeholders. As travellers begin to return, there is an anticipated heightened need for tourism workers across all five of the key tourism industry groups. One means of workforce recovery is for the sector to embrace its reputation as one the most important employers for some of Canada’s most vulnerable populations, including youth and women. Another important element in a workforce recovery strategy is to promote the sector’s many

flexible employment opportunities and its draw for workers seeking to learn new skills and to explore entrepreneurial career goals.

## Embrace a Young and Growing Indigenous Population

Given that the Indigenous population is growing more rapidly than the general Canadian population, there is great opportunity to increase employment of Indigenous workers in the tourism sector, which not only benefits the sector but Indigenous communities as well.

First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit make up an increasingly large share of the population. In 2016, there were 1,673,785 Indigenous people in Canada, accounting for 4.9% of the total population. This was up from 3.8% in 2006 and 2.8% in 1996<sup>xliii</sup>. Since 2006, the Indigenous population grew by 42.5%, which is more than four times faster than the rest of the population.<sup>xliv</sup> The average age of Indigenous persons in Canada is significantly younger compared to the non-Indigenous population. From 2006 to 2016, the number of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth aged 15 to 34 increased by 39%, compared to just over 6% for non-Indigenous youth<sup>xlv</sup>. Inuit are the youngest of the three groups, with an average age of 27.7 years, followed by First Nations people (30.6 years) and Métis (34.7 years), all significantly younger than the non-Aboriginal population average of 40.9 years. Tourism offers an excellent opportunity for young people entering the job market, as they can gain a wide range of work skills and access pathways for advancement into management positions.

Tourism provides significant employment opportunities for young people. The 2016 census showed that 560,000 youth (aged 15—24) worked in tourism. Young people make up 31% of Canada's tourism workforce, compared to only 13% of Canada's overall labour force and population<sup>xlvi</sup>. Employers in the tourism sector can engage with Indigenous youth by building awareness around job opportunities, ensuring that the interests and aspirations of youth are understood, and implementing programs that foster leadership and skills development<sup>xlvii</sup>.

## Anticipate the Workforce Needs of Indigenous Women

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in disproportionate impacts on Indigenous participants, including on their mental health and on their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs.<sup>xlviii</sup> The disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on Indigenous people can be linked to pre-existing vulnerabilities, including long-lasting and persistent disparities in socio-economic conditions. Indigenous women, in particular, have reported stronger negative impacts.<sup>xlix</sup> Pre-COVID, a higher share of Indigenous men had employment per the 2016 census as compared to women<sup>l</sup>. Indigenous women were also more likely to work multiple jobs and were more likely to work part time than men.

Indigenous women entrepreneurs are also a vital part of the tourism sector in Canada. Indigenous women are starting businesses at twice the rate of non-Indigenous women, with recent estimates suggesting that there may be as many as 23,000 Indigenous women entrepreneurs across the country.<sup>li</sup>

Recovery in Alberta's Indigenous tourism industry must include a strategic focus on the workforce participation of women to avoid exacerbating gender inequalities in the labour market. To encourage return-to-work means flexibility and skills training will be a top priority for those who left the labour market. Careers in tourism have many benefits. Flexible hours, opportunities to advance to management positions, and exposure to diverse work skills are just a few of the examples. Women looking to return to the workforce, especially young women, seek these opportunities.

Another benefit of flexible work is to ensure young parents are included in the recovery of the sector. Statistically, Indigenous women are more likely to become young mothers compared to non-Indigenous women in Canada.<sup>lii</sup> Of Indigenous women aged 20 to 44, 45% of Inuit women, 28% of First Nations women living off reserve, and 20% of Métis women became mothers before the age of 20.<sup>liii</sup> This compared with 6% of non-Indigenous women in the same age group. Indigenous women who were early mothers were less likely to receive a high school diploma. The proportion of women who earned a post-secondary certificate or diploma also varied significantly by motherhood status. For example, among Inuit women aged 20 to 44, 22% of early mothers earned a post-secondary certificate or diploma, compared with 42% of women who became mothers in later years<sup>liv</sup>.

By providing flexible work hours and other job benefits such as childcare or transportation, the tourism sector is in a unique position to attract this market, but support and career advancement opportunities are critical, as some Indigenous women see their needs and experiences go unrecognized by organizations and governments. Tourism in Alberta, especially Indigenous tourism, can provide meaningful and flexible work for this incredibly valuable market, ensuring the sector comes back stronger and more inclusive than ever. Including women in the recovery plan for this sector will have incredible long- and short-term benefits, but must remain top of mind.

## Promote the Benefits of Flexible Work Arrangements

Working in tourism has many benefits that conventional industries do not. Flexible and seasonal work are especially appealing for Indigenous people. In a survey conducted by the Conference Board of Canada in 2012 on employing Indigenous people, absenteeism was the work performance challenge most commonly reported by employers surveyed (44.6%). Employers noted that a key reason for absenteeism amongst Indigenous workers is due to a desire to participate in traditional or seasonal activities, such as hunting and fishing.<sup>lv</sup> For example, Indigenous employees may work at a job until hunting season and then leave their job to hunt. While this may be a barrier for conventional industries, tourism experiences high and low seasons throughout the year, which can be seen as an incredible benefit for Indigenous workers who wish to participate in traditional activities for a period of time. Between 35–38% of the jobs in the tourism sector are part time, which is significantly higher than the total labour force for Canada, at 20%<sup>lvi</sup>. In 2017, about 1 in 5 employed First Nations people living off reserve worked part time (fewer than 30 hours per week at their main job)<sup>lvii</sup>. The main reason they worked part time was:

- 31% involuntary;

- 30% going to school;
- 15% other;
- 11% own preference;
- 7% caring for own children;
- 5% own illness or disability; and
- 2% other personal or family responsibilities.

Younger Indigenous people, aged 15 to 24, were more likely to work part time than core working-age adults or older adults. As mentioned earlier in this report, employers in the tourism sector can engage with Indigenous youth by building awareness around job opportunities, ensuring the interests and aspirations of youth are understood, and implementing programs that foster leadership and skills development.

Indigenous Tourism Alberta is in a unique position to not only increase employment of Indigenous people, but to also grow and strengthen Indigenous-owned businesses in Canada. In 2017, 14% of employed Métis, 11% of employed First Nations people, and 6% of employed Inuit people were self-employed. Freedom or independence was the leading reason for choosing self-employment. Other reasons included flexible hours. Again, these are vital attractions to a sector like tourism where seasonal operations are a common reality for business owners.

The percentage of young First Nations people who worked part time because they were attending school ranged from 84% in the Northwest Territories to 45% in Alberta (lowest in Canada). About one-fifth (19%) of core working-age women who worked part time reported doing so because they were caring for their children.

## Address Key Issues Impacting Worker Mobility

A contributing factor to the tourism sector's labour market challenges in Canada is worker mobility, which includes lack of affordable housing and transportation options at tourism destinations. When planning for the recovery of the tourism sector, Indigenous Tourism Alberta needs to consider these barriers to employment.

Analysis of the distribution of existing Indigenous tourism experiences across Alberta reveals strengths in the Calgary – Banff corridor, Edmonton and area, and southern Alberta<sup>lviii</sup>. This will help focus future product development as well as workforce needs. When building demand for tourism experiences in a destination, it is important to understand the access points that travellers utilize to explore a destination and the access or mobility of the workforce. There are geographic and experiential access points to Indigenous tourism. The geographic access points are the places that people stay and main traffic corridors. In Alberta, this includes:

- Calgary;
- Edmonton;

- Banff;
- Jasper;
- Highway 1;
- Queen Elizabeth Highway (2); and
- Highway 16.

According to Statistics Canada’s *Aboriginal Peoples Report*, most First Nations people who lived off reserve in 2016 lived in large population centres (populations of 100,000+). Outside Inuit Nunangat, one in six Inuit aged 25-54 had moved for job-related reasons, compared to 5% within Inuit Nunangat. Around one in ten core-working-age Métis had moved for job-related reasons in the past five years<sup>lix</sup>. When engaging Indigenous workers, support systems need to be in place at the tourism destinations. Access to transportation, help with moving costs, and affordable housing will not only attract this market, but enable long-term commitment.

## Promote a Concerted Approach to Early and Life-Long Skills Development

The tourism sector provides unique opportunities for skills advancements that range from entry-level positions to management to oversight of massive travel operations. It is an appealing sector for those looking to gain new skills, advance professionally, and continually be challenged in a range of work experiences.

Alberta’s tourism sector is built on a foundation of established networks—national, provincial, regional, and city/community Destination Marketing Organizations, as well as business and sector associations—that provide marketing and experience development programs to support the 19,000 tourism businesses in Alberta<sup>lx</sup>. When collaborating with these organizations, workforce issues need to be at the centre of planning and development. Without energized, competent staff, tourism operations will fail to provide visitors with meaningful experiences.

When looking at travel segments that are most interested in Indigenous tourism experiences, “Cultural Explorers” are at the top of the list and need to be considered when attracting, selecting, and training staff. This segment is also interested in related experiences, including:

- wildlife viewing;
- interpretative centres and museums;
- local arts and craft studios;
- dining at restaurants offering local ingredients;
- multicultural experiences;
- visiting World Heritage Sites; and
- visiting casinos.

A demand-driven product development plan will provide communities with valuable insights to identify potential products and experiences that will have economic sustainability. Demand and new product development require skills development as well. Indigenous tourism operators that provide (or would like to provide) these offerings must align their experiences with the staffing requirements and skills of these positions.

When developing training programs, cultural relevance and safety should be central to Indigenous training programs and measures, whether via the development of programs solely for Indigenous learners, the adaptation of content to Indigenous realities and cultures, culturally safe environments, or the training of school workers and educators.<sup>lxi</sup>

According to Statistics Canada's *Aboriginal Peoples Survey* from 2017<sup>lxii</sup>, over a third of Inuit and First Nations (living off reserve) and 40% of Métis people took courses, workshops, seminars, or training to develop their job skills in the prior 12 months. Of the respondents who did not take part in any training, over a quarter wanted to take courses, workshops, seminars, or training to develop their job skills but there were common barriers preventing them from taking training. These barriers included:

- personal or family responsibilities;
- training not available;
- cost; and
- too busy to participate.

## Workplace Advancement and Career Progression

Some organizations are increasingly realizing that to effectively recruit and, in particular, retain Indigenous workers, job satisfaction and a career path that includes genuine potential for upward mobility are pivotal. Yet many organizations lack opportunities for workplace advancement. And where opportunities do exist, organizations may not have the required training and professional development processes in place for employees to seize them.<sup>lxiii</sup>

Discriminatory practices mean that training does not necessarily always improve the employment opportunities and conditions of Indigenous workers. On the contrary, they are often confined to certain categories of employment (such as technical, intermediate, and elementary level jobs), which are generally less well paid, lower down the hierarchy, and of low quality. As a result, many individuals not only hold entry-level positions, but ones in sectors that also generally offer few benefits, on-the-job training, or advancement opportunities<sup>lxiv</sup>. The characteristics of jobs held by a majority of Indigenous people largely explain the higher turnover rate and discouragement in these populations in regard to the labour market.

## Embrace Pre-COVID Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship Trends

The self-employment rate among Indigenous peoples grew considerably from 2011 to 2014. In total, it grew by 10.7% compared to 1.4% among the non-Indigenous population<sup>lxv</sup>. In 2014, Indigenous women

also comprised 37.4% of the self-employed Indigenous workforce in Canada and were becoming entrepreneurs at twice the rate of non-Indigenous women (ESDC, 2015). When planning for pandemic recovery, this market is extremely important to consider and support. In Alberta, 15% of employed Métis (aged 15+) were self-employed in 2017, which is higher than Canadian average.

## Education and Training Needs

Indigenous people have made gains in high school and post-secondary completion. From 2006 to 2016, the share of First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit who had completed high school went up by roughly 10 percentage points<sup>lxvi</sup>. In 2016, employment rates were above 80% for degree holders among each of these groups, and among Métis with college diplomas or apprenticeship certificates. Employment rates were about 75% among First Nations people living off reserve who had college diplomas or apprenticeship certificate. In spite of the gains in educational qualifications, the employment rates of Indigenous people did not increase between 2006 and 2016.

## Literacy and Numeracy

Evidence from remote regions and reserves suggests that essential skills gaps can set in early. A 2014 Government of Canada report shows that in Alberta 28% of boys and 36% of girls met the provincial literacy standard, and 21% of boys and 19% of girls met the provincial numeracy standard.

While numeracy and literacy are important skills for employment, employers also have an opportunity to build bridges between Western and Indigenous conceptions of knowledge. Western approaches to knowledge centre on the literacy and numeracy skills described above. In contrast, Indigenous ways of knowing often focus on personal relationships and oral transmission, and incorporate experiential, holistic, and narrative approaches to learning.<sup>lxvii</sup> Balancing and incorporating these two approaches could lead to a host of benefits and position both employers and employees for greater success.

## Barriers to Employment

Many challenges lie along the path of Indigenous workers. Increasing participation in the labour market therefore requires not only the professional integration of job seekers, but also their retention. Measures that support diversity and inclusion must not only aim to facilitate the hiring of Indigenous workers, but also to create work environments that are free of racism and discrimination, to offer meaningful opportunities for growth, and to take the needs of different Indigenous groups into account.

As highlighted by the focus group discussions conducted for this project, it is essential that initiatives and collaborative approaches and solutions for augmenting Alberta's Indigenous tourism workforce stem from Indigenous perspectives and direct cultural connections and relationships. Such an approach is vital to meaningfully support and embrace reconciliation, reclamation, and revitalization as part of addressing challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for both the sector and Indigenous community members.

## Conclusion

The dramatic economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened persistent tourism sector challenges and the volatility faced by its many industry groups has worsened pervasive narratives that negatively portray employment in tourism. For full recovery, an aggressive and comprehensive strategy is necessary to create conditions that support labour needs in the sector and influence changes in policy and public opinion to see future gains.

The critical steps toward full labour market recovery will include: marketing tourism as a ‘destination for employment’; providing sustained investment in Indigenous-led enterprises and Alberta’s Indigenous workforce; developing coordinated, community-based training programs with appropriate supports for learners and employers; and incentivizing greater worker mobility by addressing structural barriers around accommodation, transportation, and childcare.

To best address chronic labour supply shortages and skills gaps and to improve the productivity and competitiveness of tourism businesses, the solution is multi-faceted but, at minimum, will require:

- a revitalized approach to supports, skills, and tourism employment training programs—one that expands existing training to be made available at no cost, with emphasis on tools for business owners/operators to address gaps in priority skills that support business transformation needs; and
- a concerted effort to connect young workers and women from Indigenous communities to tourism employment while ensuring that such groups most at risk of being left behind can access available introductory and flexible employment opportunities.

While it is anticipated that Canada’s tourism sector has entered a period of workforce growth, labour market recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector will be highly volatile. This presents significant challenges to the current and near-term competitiveness and sustainability of Alberta’s tourism business environment. The problem is multi-faceted for tourism employers who face persistent financial stresses as they deal with a number of short- and long-term structural issues impacting the recovery and growth of the tourism workforce. Tourism employers require sufficient support and strategic guidance as they attempt to mitigate the challenging economic environment and adapt a wide variety of solutions to help address the resulting labour shortage. Effective support for tourism workforce recovery and reducing barriers for talent attraction and retention requires evidence-based strategies, tailored short-term solutions, and changes to policies and programs aimed at providing an immediate and palpable impact.

## Recommendations

To maintain a healthy Indigenous tourism labour market, increased advocacy and promotion is needed to create career awareness among youth and a concerted effort among stakeholders is needed to support a message that tourism provides viable and personally fulfilling career opportunities.

### Focus Group Sessions

Focus group discussion of success factors for Alberta's Indigenous tourism industry uncovered the following short-term recommendations for both labour market and business recovery.

#### 1. To ensure a healthy labour market, industry stakeholders should:

- Encourage or incentivize employers to embrace flexible work arrangements
- Maintain a balance of both training and wage subsidies for the sector
  - Consider adjusting public programs to incentivize retirees, vulnerable populations, and part-time workers to return to the sector
  - Align supports with the cultural and career interests of Indigenous youth
- Offer and promote skills-based educational programming
  - Increase support for practicums and cooperative programs for students through partnerships with Alberta's post-secondary education system
- Augment mentorship initiatives and supports
  - Develop both formal and informal approaches toward Indigenous youth–Elder connections in support of cultural education and the transfer of traditional knowledge and skills

#### 2. More Indigenous youth (aged 15-24) can be attracted to tourism employment through:

- Mentorship opportunities and programs
  - Formal programs could be adopted, such as the Youth Mentorship for Tourism Program through the Northwest Territories Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI), which was named as an example to follow in Alberta
  - Informal mentorship opportunities could be sponsored and promoted, wherein employers could dedicate time for employees to spend time with Elders
- Outreach to and training for high school students in an active and engaging environment
  - Tourism can provide an “outdoor classroom” for Indigenous youth; “summer camps” could be tailored around tourism careers and the sharing of traditional knowledge

#### 3. To address existing support needs and knowledge gaps, needed follow-up research projects include:

- Exploring opportunities to develop tailored tourism-specific training programs for Indigenous youth so they may be able to develop specialized skillsets and qualifications for career advancement within Alberta's Indigenous tourism industry

- Working with local and provincial stakeholders to secure funding and solutions to address transportation-related barriers and provide greater access to rural tourism workplaces
- Augmenting regional mentorship initiatives specific to Indigenous tourism business operators, since the exchange of ideas and knowledge is seen as a central component of industry success
- Assessing the availability of customized training opportunities specific to:
  - Business innovation, digitalization, and e-commerce
  - Skills that support employment in public speaking and group facilitation roles

#### 4. **To facilitate tourism business recovery and growth:**

- Develop a growth toolkit for entrepreneurs that provides resources and learning opportunities that support business growth at various stages and facilitates access to capital
- Create networking and meeting spaces (i.e., a business connection hub) and engagement sessions
- Celebrate Indigenous tourism industry talent—this could be via a formal recognition event or informally via monthly social media or website features
- Provide advice and planning for the repayment of loans during the industry recovery period
- Emphasize partnerships as an opportunity to recognize talent, to “lift up” all members of the community, and to ensure future sector growth

## Strategic Action Items

Building on the recommendations stemming from the Alberta focus group sessions, seven strategic action items are recommended. Collectively, the action items address the prevailing structural and systemic issues and help build a sustainable, long-term Indigenous workforce strategy.

### 1. **Develop an Indigenous-led Attraction, Development, and Retention Strategy**

An Indigenous-led strategy with an overall aim to have tools that will attract, develop, and retain an Indigenous workforce is needed. The strategy must address essential challenges, including housing, transportation, mental health, and accommodating cultural practices. The strategy must:

- Prioritize development in cultural knowledge and practices
- Include workforce strategies that promote career progression
- Contain targeted information to build awareness on job, career, and entrepreneurial opportunities for each of the demographic target audiences (e.g., Indigenous youth, women, community members who are cultural experts)
- Promote recruitment, employment, and succession pathways
- Develop and maintain peer-support networks, mentoring

### 2. **Create an Indigenous Worker Employment Registry**

The overall aim of a free online employment registry is to match skilled/employment-ready workers with qualified employers. Designed to connect skilled job seekers and employers, the registry will help create long-term sustainable matches and enable ITA to collect important data, such as the occupations and skills in demand or employment trends by season and by region.

### **3. Develop skills/training aligned with Indigenous culture and values**

The types of skills training needed are for three distinct markets: job seekers and existing workers seeking skills upgrading; employers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous); and employment coordinators/career development practitioners. Tailored to each of these groups, the training should be based on an Indigenous cultural learning framework. Specific skills programs should be prioritized for the Indigenous market, in the following areas:

- Job readiness program for individuals getting a foothold in the labour market
- Entrepreneurship program

### **4. Create Welcoming Workplace Program**

A Welcoming Workplace Program is largely centred on the idea of accommodating cultural needs and recognizing additional supports or guidance Indigenous workers may require. The overall aim of the program should be increased Indigenous employment and workplace inclusion. Although not comprehensive, several ideas for a Welcoming Workplace Program were identified, including:

- An Indigenous recruitment guide
- Cultural competencies training
- Information on developing Indigenous employment partnerships
- Customizing recruitment strategies for Indigenous audiences
- Developing inclusive employment policies
- Welcoming workplace guidelines and tools, e.g., flexible work arrangements, transportation, family needs (child/elder care)
- Career planning, succession pathways
- Recruitment and retention strategies
- Emphasize good employer practices along with appropriate supports and guidance

### **5. Build capacity for Indigenous employment services in Indigenous communities—emphasis on collaboration, connection, coordination, community**

Develop a support network of Indigenous employment/career development coordinators (knowledge, skills, tools, supports).

### **6. Seek appropriate and sustained financial supports for policy and program priorities**

Indigenous employers, job seekers, and workforce-related serving agencies require access to sustained government funding. The complex and ever-changing landscape of funding options makes it difficult for these groups to benefit from the opportunities, i.e., it takes specialized knowledge and resources to identify and act on the funding streams. ITA could provide an essential service by identifying opportunities and supporting applications to the respective funding sources. This would require dedicated resources and expertise at ITA to fulfil this role.

The overall aim would be:

- Financial supports to enable access and further education and training opportunities
- Appropriate and sustained funding towards targeted programs for sector
- Increased advocacy and capacity of ITA to provide the needed information and supports

## 7. Build/maintain strong leadership and governance structure

The mandate of ITA is essential towards a sustained Indigenous workforce strategy. Without the leadership of ITA, along with a governance structure that is representative of all stakeholders, Indigenous tourism in Alberta would not thrive. Specific to a workforce strategy, ITA needs sustained resources to provide:

- Continued advocacy
- Oversight and accountability
- Coordination, e.g., professional development
- Continued labour intelligence

## Additional Considerations

Many unfilled business support needs remain during this time of industry recovery, including:

- **Business investment supports**
  - Grants for start-up costs
  - Capital investment for infrastructure
  - Funding to help expand business product and service offerings
- **Education for both new entrepreneurs and experienced business leaders, focused on:**
  - Getting products to market
  - Acquiring financing
  - Following business processes, including filing for trademarks and patents
- **Additional training subsidies**
  - Training programs in order to employ more local people
  - Grants to subsidize labour costs, particularly wage incentives targeted toward Indigenous youth
- **Marketing supports**
  - Assistance with the promotion of new products and market entry
  - Promoting businesses in the online/digital environment
  - Navigating e-commerce, as it is considered to be cost prohibitive by many business owners and online discoverability is a concern
- **Connection hubs for businesses and skilled workers**
  - An Indigenous tourism B2B "matching service" to connect with other Indigenous product and service providers, aimed at growing collaboration and connecting to future employees
  - A recruiting database for effective targeted hiring and better access to post-secondary students

## Pan-Canadian Tourism Workforce Recovery and Growth Task Force

Building on what was learned in Alberta, extend the work for a pan-Canadian approach with targeted efforts for regional implementation tailored to local needs. Of note, Tourism HR Canada is facilitating, coordinating, and enabling a Tourism Workforce Recovery and Growth Task Force. Expert advice and recommendations on how to help the tourism workforce recover and grow are needed from a broad range of stakeholders fully representative of the industry.

The Task Force will include leaders from each of the national (pan-Canadian) associations, representation by Destination Canada, representation from provincial and territorial tourism industry associations and tourism human resource organizations (HROs), and specialists in workforce-related matters.

Minimally, the Task Force will explore six pillars as part of workforce recovery framework:

1. Recovery Programs and Services for Reskilling and Upskilling
2. Digitalization Strategy to Enhance Business Resilience
3. Comprehensive Attraction and Retention Strategy
4. Tools to Help Employers Manage New HR Demands
5. Policy and Advocacy Efforts
6. Continued Workforce/LMI Research to Inform Strategies

A comprehensive workforce recovery strategy can only be informed by a diverse cross-section of stakeholders from across Canada, who will provide recommendations and ideas, and who will be instrumental to implementing tools and strategies to address the issues. The Task Force will help facilitate and enable many engagement activities, including roundtables, expert presentations, and written submissions.

Tourism can help lead the Canadian economy to recover if there is the right investment in its workforce. Although harder hit than any other major economic sector, the reality is this situates the tourism sector as a fundamental opportunity and driver for recovery—but it can't happen without a ready and skilled workforce. Urgency is at hand—recovery and growth are commensurate with the number of workers. The slower the sector is to attract and retain workers, the more hampered recovery will be. Tourism is a driver of job creation and economic growth in every region. Tourism is about cultural heritage, the ability to enable vulnerable workers get a foothold in the labour market, for Indigenous populations to reclaim heritage, and for Canada to invest in these communities to address wrongdoings as part of reconciliation.

# Appendix

## Notes on Research Methodology

Informed by an understanding of Indigenous research methodologies, Tourism HR Canada engaged with Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) member businesses and community leaders, including Elders, within a series of focus group discussions held in January and April 2022. In January, focus group discussions explored *issues and challenges* related to the tourism workforce. During the second round of focus group sessions held in April, discussion was framed around potential *solutions and new opportunities* for the industry to grow and support a healthy labour market. These sessions had a total of 41 and 31 participants, respectively, representing the Indigenous tourism industry from across the province. As part of discovery-phase research activities, six focus groups were conducted between January 17 and 20 and an additional six focus groups were held between April 11 and 14, 2022. Hosted by ITA, participants representing six regions (Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, Fort McMurray, and the Rockies) attended two-hour sessions held online via the Zoom communications platform. Additionally, two follow-up interviews were held with business owners in May 2022 to help validate findings. Desk research was performed between May and August 2022 to further validate findings and inform recommendations.

---

<sup>i</sup> United Nations. (2008). *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008*. New York: Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, Statistics Division. Pp. 10, point 2.9.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid. Pp. 40 point 5.0

<sup>iii</sup> Destination Canada. (2020). *National Tourism Indicators 2019 Highlights*. Available [www.destinationcanada.com](http://www.destinationcanada.com). This figure encapsulates gross value added by all industry in response to tourism consumption plus amount of net taxes on products and includes domestic and international tourism consumption.

<sup>iv</sup> Evans, Todd. (2022). "How Indigenous businesses are taking on the world". Export Development Canada (EDC). Online posting: <https://www.edc.ca/en/blog/how-indigenous-businesses-are-taking-on-the-world.html>. June 06, 2022.

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED). (2022). *SME Profile 2020: Tourism Industries in Canada*. According to the report, 1% of small to medium-sized tourism enterprises in Canada were Indigenous-owned just prior to the pandemic—this is very similar to the percentage of Indigenous-owned SMEs from all sectors of the economy.

<sup>v</sup> Colton, W. J. (2022). Indigenous Tourism Development in Northern Canada: Beyond Economic Incentives. Online posting: [www3.brandonu.ca/cjns/25.1/cjnsv25no1\\_pg185-206.pdf](http://www3.brandonu.ca/cjns/25.1/cjnsv25no1_pg185-206.pdf). Accessed 8 February 2022. Pp. 187-188.

Swaikoski. (2020). Leisure in the time of coronavirus: indigenous tourism in Canada and the impacts of COVID-19. *World Leisure Journal*, 62(4), 311–314. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1080/16078055.2020.1825266>

<sup>vi</sup> Colton. (2022). Pp. 197.

<sup>vii</sup> Tourism HR Canada and Ontario Tourism Education Corporation (2022). *The Impacts of COVID-19 on the Tourism Workforce in Canada*. Toronto: May 2022.

Tourism HR Canada (2022). *Projections of Tourism Employment Demand in Canada, 2019 – 2025*. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada. June 2022.

<sup>viii</sup> Tourism HR Canada (2022). *Projections of Tourism Employment Demand in Canada, 2019 – 2025*. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada. June 2022.

<sup>ix</sup> Statistics Canada. Table: 14-10-0372-01. Job vacancies, payroll employees, and job vacancy rate by industry sector, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality

- 
- <sup>x</sup> Tourism HR Canada. (2022). *Projections of Tourism Employment Demand in Canada, 2019-2025*. Ottawa, ON: Conference Board of Canada. July 2022.
- <sup>xi</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0364-01 Labour force characteristics by province, region and Indigenous group. The term 'Aboriginal' or 'Indigenous' used on the Statistics Canada website refers to individuals identifying themselves as 'First Nations people, Métis or Inuit'.
- <sup>xii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xiii</sup> ITAC (2021). Mid-term Report: Progress Towards the 2021-22 Action Plan Performance Indicators. Ottawa: ITAC. Conference Board of Canada (2021). The Impact of COVID-19 on Canada's Indigenous Tourism Sector: 2021 Update.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Conference Board of Canada (2021). The Impact of COVID-19 on Canada's Indigenous Tourism Sector: 2021 Update.
- <sup>xv</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xvi</sup> ITAC (2022). Building Back Better: Strategic Recovery of Indigenous Tourism in Canada. Ottawa: ITAC.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0017-01 Labour force characteristics by sex and detailed age group, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality (x 1,000)
- <sup>xix</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 33-10-0270-01 Experimental estimates for business openings and closures for Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas, seasonally adjusted
- <sup>xx</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 33-10-0270-01 Experimental estimates for business openings and closures for Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas, seasonally adjusted
- <sup>xxi</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 33-10-0270-01 Experimental estimates for business openings and closures for Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas, seasonally adjusted
- <sup>xxii</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0372-01 Job vacancies, payroll employees, and job vacancy rate by industry
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, customized tabulations. Unless otherwise noted, these tables are the source for tourism employment data in this report.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Environics Institute for Survey Research. (2021). Making up time: The impact of the pandemic on young adults in Canada. Prepared in collaboration with the Diversity Institute and the Future Skills Centre. November 2021. Available: <https://www.torontomu.ca/diversity/reports/making-up-time/>
- <sup>xxv</sup> Statistics Canada's Labour Force Surveys provide the timeliest data available on labour market characteristics of Indigenous people in Canada. It should be noted, however, that the LFS is not conducted on reserve, uses a different methodology to survey the Territories, and does not include some remote communities. Because of these limitations, LFS data in this report refer to Indigenous people living off reserve in the 10 provinces.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Government of Alberta. Labour force statistics: Alberta Indigenous people living off-reserve package
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Ibid. Note: A few sectors are not listed due to insufficient data.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Data available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/07/government-of-canada-announces-easing-of-border-measures-for-fully-vaccinated-travellers.html>
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Conference Board of Canada. (2021). "Province's Allure Brings Back Tourists, Alberta's Travel Markets Outlook to 2025". Issue Briefing. September 22, 2021.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 24-10-0053-01 International travellers entering or returning to Canada, by type of transportation and traveller type
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Indigenous Tourism Alberta. (2019). *Indigenous Tourism Alberta Strategy 2019-2024: Strengthening Alberta's Indigenous Tourism Industry*.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Tourism Saskatchewan. (2020). *Indigenous Tourism Experiences: Creating Opportunities in Saskatchewan's Export Markets*.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Destination Canada. (2019). *Market Snapshots: Understanding the Opportunity for Indigenous Tourism Business in Canada*.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Conference Board of Canada. (2021). "Province's Allure Brings Back Tourists, Alberta's Travel Markets Outlook to 2025". Issue Briefing. September 22, 2021.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> ITAC. (2022). *COVID-19 Driven Interest Assessment of Canada's Domestic Market for Indigenous Tourism & Cultural Experiences*. Prepared by Insignia Marketing Research Inc.
- ITAC (2021). *Building Back Better: Strategic Recovery of Indigenous Tourism In Canada 2022-2025*.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Bagele, C. (2012). *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. London: Sage Publications Inc.

---

Gaudet, C.(2019). "Keeoukaywin: The Visiting Way - Fostering an Indigenous Research Methodology". *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, 7(2). January 2019. Pp: 47-64.

Wilson, S. (2001). What Is an Indigenous Research Methodology? *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 25(2). Pp.: 175-79.

xxxix Data sourced from <https://ceba-cuec.ca/statistics/>, accessed December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021

xl MacLaine, Cameron, Melissa Lalonde, and Adam Fiser. (2019). *Working Together: Indigenous Recruitment and Retention in Remote Canada*. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada.

xli Ibid.

xlii Leger (2022). "Canadians' Attitudes Toward Tourism as a Place of Employment and Economic Driver". January 2022. Research commissioned by Tourism HR Canada.

xliii Statistics Canada (2021). "First Nations People, Métis and Inuit in Canada: Diverse and Growing Populations". March 20, 2018. Available: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-659-x/89-659-x2018001-eng.htm>

xliv Two main factors have contributed to the growing Indigenous population: the first is natural growth, which includes increased life expectancy and relatively high fertility rates. The second factor relates to changes in self-reported identification. Over time, more people are newly identifying as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit on the census.

xlv Statistics Canada (2021). "First Nations People, Métis and Inuit in Canada: Diverse and Growing Populations".

xlvi Tourism HR Canada. "Census Data: Who Works in Tourism?" Tourism Labour Highlights from Census 2016. Available: [www.tourismhr.ca](http://www.tourismhr.ca)

xlvii MacLaine, Cameron, Melissa Lalonde, and Adam Fiser. (2019).

xlviii Bleakney, A, Masoud, H. and Robertson, H. (2020). Labour market impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous people: March to August 2020. November 2, 2020. Available: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00085-eng.htm>

xlix Palmater, P. (2020). "Canada is ignoring the gendered impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous women". Canadian Dimension. March 25, 2020. Online posting: <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/canada-ignoring-gendered-impacts-of-covid-19-on-indigenous-women>

l Statistics Canada. (2017). Aboriginal Peoples Survey. Available: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/89-653-X>

li Saba, T., Blanchette, S., & C., Kronfl. (2021). Supporting Entrepreneurship and SMEs: A Post-Pandemic Skills and Training Agenda. Toronto: The Future Skills Centre. Available at: <https://www.torontomu.ca/diversity/reports>

lii Boulet, V. and N. Badets. (2017). Early motherhood among off-reserve First Nations, Métis and Inuit women. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. December 2017. Available: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2017001/article/54877-eng.htm>

liii Ibid.

liiv Ibid.

lv Howard, A., Edge, J., & D. Watt. (2012). Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations Workers. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada. July 2012.

lvi Tourism HR Canada. "Census Data: Who Works in Tourism?" Tourism Labour Highlights from Census 2016. Available: [www.tourismhr.ca](http://www.tourismhr.ca)

lvii Statistics Canada. Indigenous Peoples Survey (IPS).

lviii Indigenous Tourism Alberta. (2019). *Indigenous Tourism Alberta Strategy 2019-2024: Strengthening Alberta's Indigenous Tourism Industry*.

lix Statistics Canada. Indigenous Peoples Survey (IPS).

lx Indigenous Tourism Alberta. (2019). *Indigenous Tourism Alberta Strategy 2019-2024: Strengthening Alberta's Indigenous Tourism Industry*.

lxi Mills, S. (2011). "The Difficulty with Diversity: White and Aboriginal Women Workers' Representations of Diversity Management in Forest Processing Mills" in *Labour/Le Travail*, 67, Pp.45–7.

lxii Statistics Canada. Now known as the Indigenous Peoples Survey (IPS).

lxiii MacLaine, Cameron, Melissa Lalonde, and Adam Fiser. (2019). *Working Together: Indigenous Recruitment and Retention in Remote Canada*. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada. Pp. 57

---

<sup>lxiv</sup> Hunter, B. & M. Gray. (2017). "Dynamics of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Labour Markets" in *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, 20 (1), 207–226.

<sup>lxv</sup> National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (NCCAHA). (2017). "Employment As a Social Determinant of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Health". Available: <https://www.ccnsa-nccah.ca/docs/determinants/FS-Employment-SDOH-2017-EN.pdf>

<sup>lxvi</sup> Statistics Canada (2021). "First Nations People, Métis and Inuit in Canada: Diverse and Growing Populations".

Statistics Canada. "Statistics on Indigenous peoples". Available: [https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/subjects-start/indigenous\\_peoples](https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/subjects-start/indigenous_peoples)

<sup>lxvii</sup> Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. "Indigenous Ways of Knowing.". Toronto. University of Toronto.