



Come Lead With Us.

INDIGENOUS TOURISM ALBERTA
ACTION PLAN 2023-24

HIDEAWAY ADVENTURE GROUNDS

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A LETTER FROM OUR CEO



Dear Fellow Indigenous Tourism Partners,

With great excitement I welcome you to walk alongside Indigenous Tourism Alberta as we continue to rebuild the Indigenous tourism economy. The reality of the last few years was that our members suffered a devastating financial impact and were forced to navigate uncertainty with resilience and patience. The journey to recovery has already begun as we're seeing sharp increases, with GDP contributions hitting as high as 82 per cent of pre-pandemic times. In 2023, we are projecting an ongoing recovery with revenue growth of \$258 million. Despite being hit harder than other industries, our members are recovering at a faster pace than the rest of the country, thanks to our member's commitment to business innovation, adaptation and, most importantly, our collective passion to share authentic and culturally rich Indigenous tourism experiences with the world.

We're also entering a year when awareness of, and interest in, Indigenous tourism is at all-time highs. Both domestically and internationally, travellers are looking for Indigenous experiences to enrich their lives, and ITA members are poised to deliver. This global interest can be seen in the media interest being generated internationally, highlighted by National Geographic naming Indigenous experiences in Alberta as the only Canadian destination on its list of 25 places to visit in 2023. The accolade brings a tremendous opportunity to further grow and promote our tourism operators on a global stage.

Many factors are coming together in favour of the Indigenous tourism industry. Through collaboration with key partnerships such as Travel Alberta, the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, and Western Economic Diversification Canada, ITA will continue to build on this momentum while remaining focused on supporting our member's businesses. That growth is important to the sector, but it's even more important because it supports our Indigenous nations, communities, culture and families. The team at ITA will continue to work hard to support and sustain the Indigenous tourism sector for this year, and many years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Shae Bird', written in a cursive style.

Shae Bird

Chief Executive Officer
Indigenous Tourism Alberta

A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR BRENDA HOLDER



One thing I often hear from fellow Indigenous entrepreneurs is the deep importance of tourism. More than just a job or an economic opportunity, Indigenous tourism has the power to help revitalize culture and language, support Indigenous entrepreneurs, communities and nations and, for travellers, inspire new perspectives, new ways of thinking about the world, and new opportunities for reconciliation.

All of us at ITA understand this, from the Board of Directors to the team to our members. That's why we're so excited about the position our sector is in at this moment. Despite the hardships of Covid and the significant barriers that remain in place for Indigenous tourism, it is evident that the strength and expertise of our team members, our valuable relationships with tourism partners, and the passion and commitment of ITA members, have helped create tangible momentum toward success.

In every corner of the province, members are displaying tremendous motivation to share, connect and succeed through their businesses. It's ITA's job to support this growth. Through ITA's development programs, marketing strategies, partnerships and leadership, we have recognized the opportunity and challenges of the current moment and are working tirelessly to deliver support and programs that can help our members succeed. ITA has made tremendous strides over the past few years, and we are, in many ways, the envy of the sector. But we know we need to keep working.

As the world takes notice of Indigenous tourism in Alberta, we will be there. Whether it's the partnerships with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) and Travel Alberta, or our new strategic partnerships with WestJet and the Edmonton International Airport, we're working hard to ensure that our members feel supported and empowered to share their stories with travelers. Together we will continue to advocate for Indigenous tourism nationally and worldwide because we know how important it is.

Sincerely,

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

Brenda Holder
Board Chair
Indigenous Tourism Alberta



Ice Walk



ARCTERYX

ZUCMIN GUIDING GLACIER WALK

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

The Indigenous tourism industry is in a moment of opportunity. After years of uncertainty because of the COVID-19 pandemic, awareness of Indigenous tourism is on the rise as consumers increasingly seek tourism opportunities that enrich their lives, offer new perspectives and present opportunities for reconciliation. At the same time, tourism partners, industry associations and government representatives are starting to understand the importance of amplifying our stories and are showing support like never before.

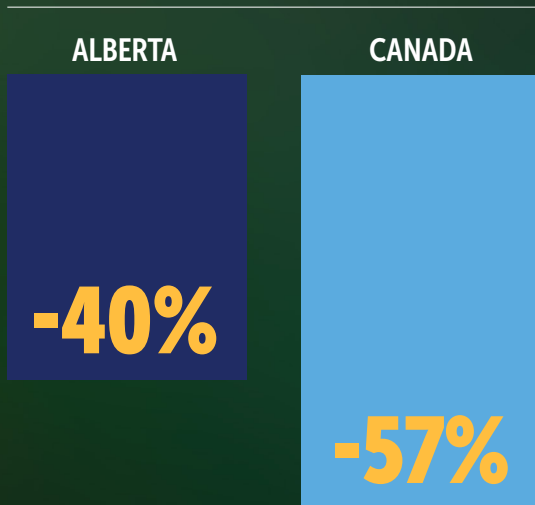
But much work remains. In 2022, we saw a substantial post-Covid spike in visitation, which contributed \$233.6 million in GDP, bringing revenue for the Indigenous tourism sector up to 82 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. Despite that success, the Conference Board of Canada predicts that GDP contributions for the sector won't reach full 2019 levels until 2026.

One key factor holding back growth continues to be labour shortages. The challenges of hiring into the Indigenous tourism sector mean it will likely be years before employment is back to pre-pandemic levels. This limits the potential of individual businesses and holds back growth of the entire sector. This will be an ongoing challenge, so work to mitigate the problem must continue to amp up.

These conditions have put the Indigenous tourism sector in a position where demand for our experiences is outstripping the available supply. This is why Indigenous Tourism Alberta's continued work is crucial. We will continue to work hard to facilitate entrepreneurial education, prepare nations and communities for tourism, seek out grant opportunities, help with labour shortages, and do whatever we can to facilitate the businesses growth of members. To date, 13 Indigenous communities have completed our seven-week community readiness pathway program specifically designed to ensure community members feel confident in welcoming visitors through tourism, for example. Dozens of market- and export-ready members have also participating in mentorship programs, and hundreds of members have taken advantage of ITA-led business growth programs.

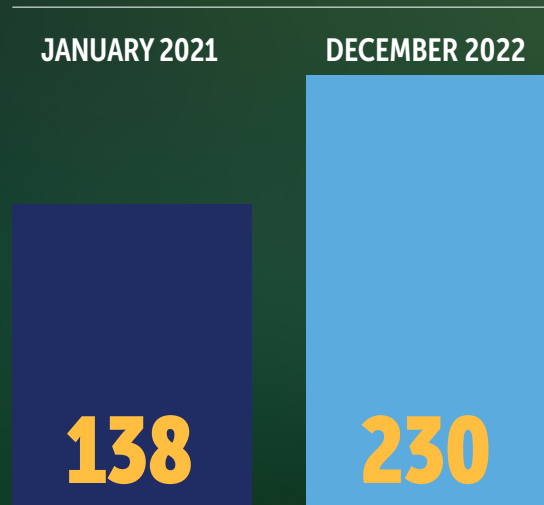
As business development continues, we will keep marketing our members in ways that raise awareness of the sector and inspire travellers to make direct bookings with members. It's a moment of opportunity for Indigenous tourism, and ITA will be there to help capitalize.

Resilience Through Covid



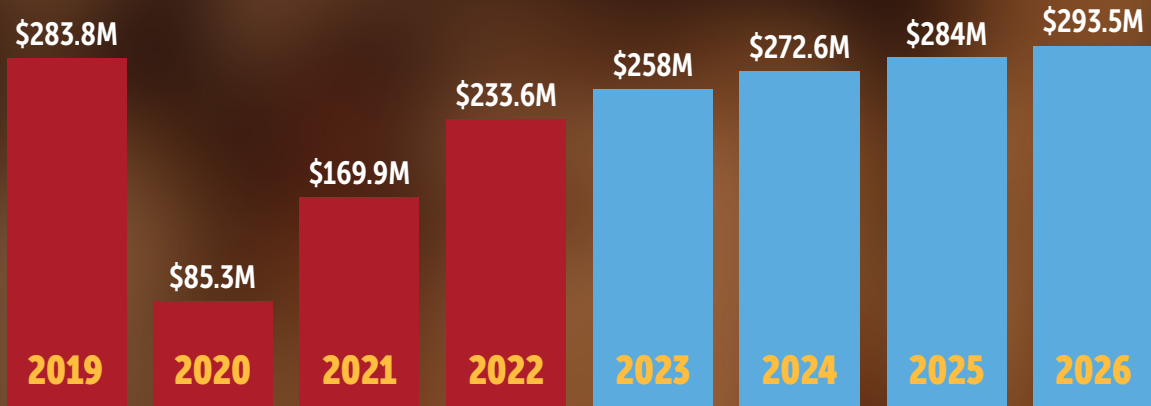
Decline in Indigenous tourism GDP contribution because of Covid

Resilience Through Covid



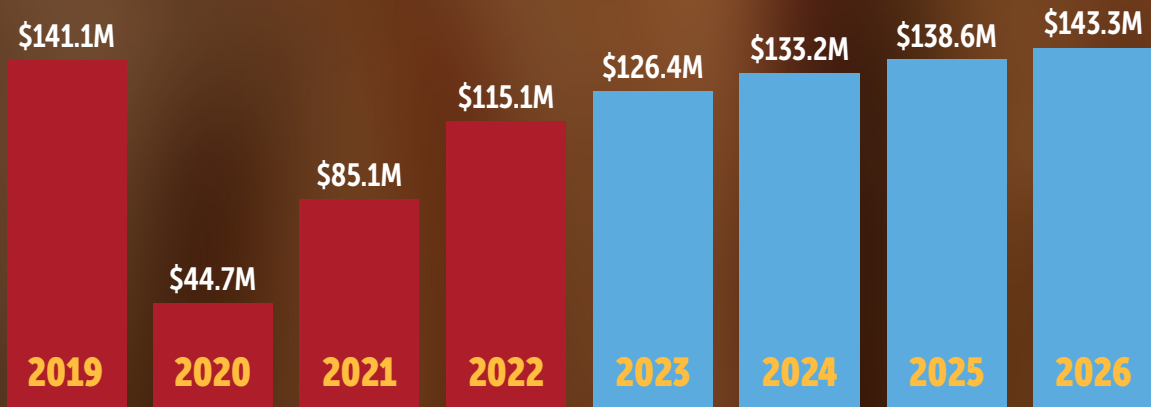
Number of ITA members

Projected Revenue Growth



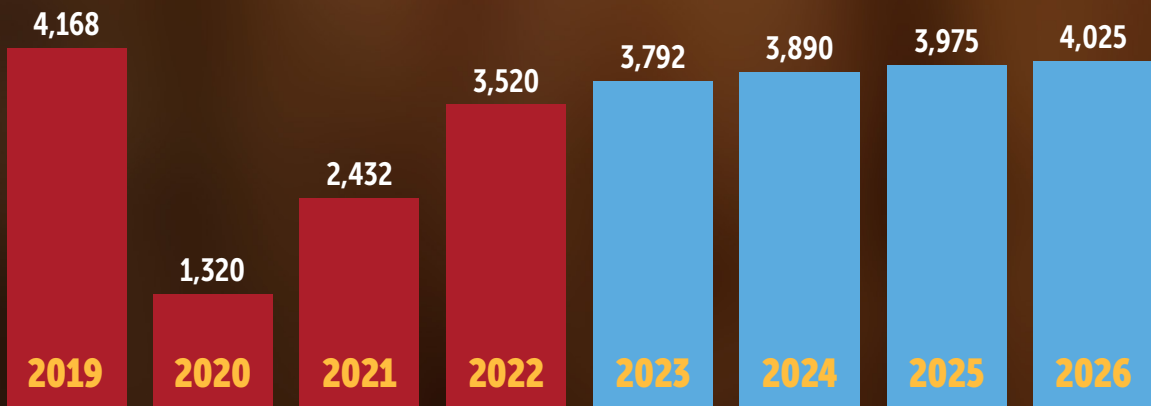
Revenue of Indigenous tourism sector in Alberta

Projected GDP Contributions



Revenue of Indigenous tourism sector in Alberta

Projected Job Growth



Employment in Indigenous tourism sector in Alberta

Source: Conference Board of Canada.

GOALS & ACTIVITIES



MARKETING GOALS

ACTIONS

Member Support & Engagement

- Educate members on developing marketing and communication strategies and best practices

Earned Media & Influencer Marketing

- Raise awareness of Indigenous tourism through earned media mentions

Travel Trade & Media

- Maintain relationships with key RTOs
- Attend Travel Trade events that target ITA key markets
- Support export-ready members getting listed by RTOs

Industry Communications & PR

- Highlight ITA or Indigenous tourism successes to stakeholders
- Highlight partnership successes that impact both Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders
- Position ITA as an industry leader in Indigenous tourism

Sponsorships

- Sponsor events with customers/markets that overlap with target markets

Digital & Social Communities

- Grow a vibrant community of advocates to amplify ITA messages
- Inspire visitors to the ITA website to learn more

Integrated Marketing Campaigns

- One winter and one summer marketing campaign

Partnership

- Lead joint marketing campaigns with key marketing partners

Member Communications & PR

- Educate members on marketing and business
- Inform members of important relevant opportunities, events and initiatives
- Inspire members and potential members by showcasing successes by peers in their communities

Innovations

- Creation of an innovation fund to experiment with strategies for raising awareness of Indigenous tourism



DEVELOPMENT GOALS

ACTIONS

Indigenous Tourism Alberta Gathering

- Enable member/industry education and connection opportunity by hosting Indigenous Tourism Alberta Gathering

ITA Members Value Their Membership

- Maintain membership
- Grow Industry partners
- Introduce Paid Membership Fee

Grow the Sustainability of ITA's Indigenous Tourism Business Members

- Enhance business acumen of members through mentorship
- Provide business development support to jumpstart member business initiatives
- Enhance the capacity of non-Indigenous tourism partners to work with Indigenous partners
- Stengthen partnerships with Indigenous members and industry partners in local regions
- Pilot Building Blocks Series to help members improve business acumen and ascend market status
- Implement an Entrepreneurship training program
- Implement Community Tourism Pathway 2.0 Program
- Pilot Experience Development Program
- Develop an Industry Development Strategy

BUFFALO STONE WOMAN





CREATIVE CUISINE

PARTNERSHIP GOALS

ACTIONS

Strengthen Partnerships with Regional, Provincial Destination Marketing Organizations, Municipalities & Private Sector

- Establish Partnerships with Private and Public sector organizations to further Alberta Indigenous Tourism

Create & Maintain a Consistent Funding Model to Ensure Organizational Sustainability & Success

- Maintain Financial support to sustain Indigenous Tourism Alberta

Strengthen Relationships with Indigenous Communities & Entrepreneurs Across the Four Regions of Alberta

- Work with all regions of Alberta's Indigenous Communities

ENOCH CREE NATION





GIRTH HITCH GUIDING

LEADERSHIP GOALS

ACTIONS

Commitment to Indigenous Tourism In Alberta

- Continue to complete and established industry focussed research to support decision making for ITA and their members
-

ITA is Valued as the Leader of Indigenous Tourism for Alberta by all Partners

- ITA is a keynote for a industry conferences or trade show
-

Work with Key Stakeholders to Develop Long Term Indigenous Tourism Development Plan

- Create a strategic document with stakeholders to showcase ITA as a partner in rebuilding Tourism in Alberta
-

Support the Supply of Leadership, Business Skills & Labour to Enhance Visitor Experiences Through Quality Service, Hospitality & Cultural Protocols

- Implement research and studies that further support ITA membership while delivering authentic Indigenous experiences
-

ITA Members Value Their Membership

- Host annual general meeting for members
-

Grow ITA Capacity

- Implement succession planning tools for the orgaization
-

Governance

- Hold quarterly meetings for board of directors and team, and implement board committees as directed by the board.

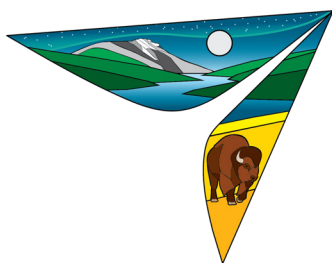


FORT MCMURRAY MÉTIS TRADING POST

FUNDING PARTNERS



PARTNERS THROUGH MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING



PAINTED WARRIORS



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