



**INDIGENOUS
TOURISM
ALBERTA**

2025-2026 Action Plan

**COME
GROW
WITH
US**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** A Message from ITA's CEO
- 4** A Message from the Board Chair
- 5** About Indigenous Tourism Alberta
- 6** State of the Industry
- 9** Goals and Activities: Action Plan 2025-2026
- 12** Our Partners

A MESSAGE FROM ITA'S CEO

Dear ITA Members and Partners,

I am pleased to present the annual plan for Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) for the fiscal year 2025-2026.

This past year has been a period of significant growth and achievement for Indigenous tourism in Alberta. We have seen continued expansion within our industry and within ITA itself. We are thrilled to see that Alberta's Indigenous tourism GDP has surpassed that of British Columbia for the first time, according to new numbers from the Conference Board of Canada, a milestone worth celebrating. While Alberta is experiencing success, the broader Indigenous tourism industry in Canada faces challenges and we must remain committed to pushing forward together.

In the coming year, ITA will build upon our successes and address these challenges head-on. We will maintain our focus on supporting market-ready businesses in becoming export-ready, ensuring Alberta is prepared to welcome visitors from

across the province, country, and the world. At the same time, we will welcome new entrepreneurs and their big dreams, by ensuring access to critical business development programs to propel our member businesses forward. From mentorship programs to practical entrepreneurial tips to one-to-one support, ITA continues to hone its programs in response to the needs of members.

Our marketing team will prioritize promoting ITA's market- and export-ready members, with broad goals of raising awareness of Indigenous tourism in Alberta and supporting members in their own marketing. Our marketing initiatives, both in partnership and spearheaded from within, will continue to build the ITA brand and drive customers to members with strong digital and traditional campaign tactics, and a robust presence at key travel-trade shows.

We will continue to champion our members' interests at all levels of government. We will continue to participate in trade shows, engage with policymakers, and foster robust partnerships to ensure the continuity and growth of ITA initiatives. We are grateful for the stable funding secured through multi-year partnerships with Prairies Economic Development Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, ITAC, and Travel Alberta, which allows us to execute our plan effectively. Collaborative relationships with Alberta's DMOs and integral partners including WestJet, Tourism Calgary, Explore Edmonton and the Edmonton International Airport, help elevate and amplify ITA's work, and will continue.

I am a new part of ITA's journey, and I am filled with optimism. I am focussed on creating positive change and economic opportunities for Indigenous tourism in Alberta. I thank our members, partners, and Board of Directors for their unwavering support. Together, we will build a thriving Indigenous tourism industry that empowers our communities and honours our cultures.



Sincerely,

Chelsey Quirk
Chief Executive Officer
Indigenous Tourism Alberta

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Dear ITA Board Members, Partners, and Supporters,

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I reflect on the achievements of the 2024-2025 fiscal year and look to the future. As Board Chair of Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA), I am deeply appreciative of the dedication and commitment of our team in advancing Indigenous tourism in Alberta.

Our success over the past year was built upon a strong strategic foundation encompassing Partnership, Leadership, Development, and Marketing. This comprehensive approach has been instrumental in supporting our growing membership and effectively showcasing the cultural richness of Indigenous tourism in our province. The results achieved are a testament to the tireless efforts of the ITA team, and for that, I am sincerely grateful.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to our partners who have shown genuine commitment to Indigenous reconciliation. Your financial and foundational support has been pivotal in enabling us to make significant strides in advancing Indigenous tourism in Alberta. Your belief in our vision has translated into tangible impact, and we deeply value these partnerships.

My sincere gratitude also goes to my fellow board members. Your steadfast dedication to ITA and support of our shared vision have been crucial in propelling our organization forward. Your consistent engagement and commitment to guiding ITA have earned my utmost respect. Your unwavering support has contributed significantly to our achievements.

With that in mind, our important work continues. Looking forward, the ITA team continues to refine and innovate to better support all ITA members achieve their business dreams. Members are the reason ITA exists, and they will continue to be the focus as the industry evolves. Together, we will continue to lead the way in amplifying Indigenous tourism in Canada, promoting cultural understanding and economic growth for Indigenous

communities. Each milestone achieved contributes to a brighter future for generations to come.

Thank you to everyone for your invaluable contributions, passion, and unwavering dedication. It is an honor to serve as Board Chair of Indigenous Tourism Alberta, and I eagerly anticipate the continued success and growth of our association.



In culture and appreciation,

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

Brenda Holder
Board Chair
Indigenous Tourism Alberta

ABOUT INDIGENOUS TOURISM ALBERTA

Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) encourages and promotes authentic Indigenous tourism that showcases the unique and immersive experiences offered by its members throughout our four regions; North, Central and Southern Alberta as well as the Rockies. ITA's goal is to enhance economic viability, further engage and support our Indigenous peoples, and nurture these partnerships throughout the province by sharing our stories, culture, and experiences with a global audience.

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Indigenous tourism is growing into an inseparable part of the tourism identity of Canada, but in many ways, has yet to realize its potential. While awareness among consumers and industry is at an all-time high, more and more Indigenous entrepreneurs are finding success and working their way toward export-readiness, and the industry is increasingly recognized as a key differentiator in an ultra-competitive global industry, the fundamentals that support the Indigenous tourism sector itself remain precarious. Stable funding, investment, support and growth has not materialized across the country, and not in equal ways.

Fortunately, Alberta remains a leader within Canada. ITA is currently strong, stable and ambitious for the future. Strong partnerships have diversified ITA's funding and unlocked new opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs and the industry, and enabled ITA to level-up its operations and programs.

The economic numbers tell an interesting story across Canada. While the industry continues to grow, it has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels of 2019 by most measures. According to a new report by the Conference Board of Canada, employment in the Indigenous tourism sector reached 34,711 jobs,

which is still five per cent lower than 2019. At the same time, direct GDP contributions of the sector, while rising, remain 24 per cent lower than pre-pandemic levels.

But this is not the full story. While growth in labour and employment was strong, the gains were largely eroded by inflation — the Conference Board of Canada report found that rising costs far outstripped changes in prices charged to consumers, raising hope these numbers will stabilize over time into consistent growth.

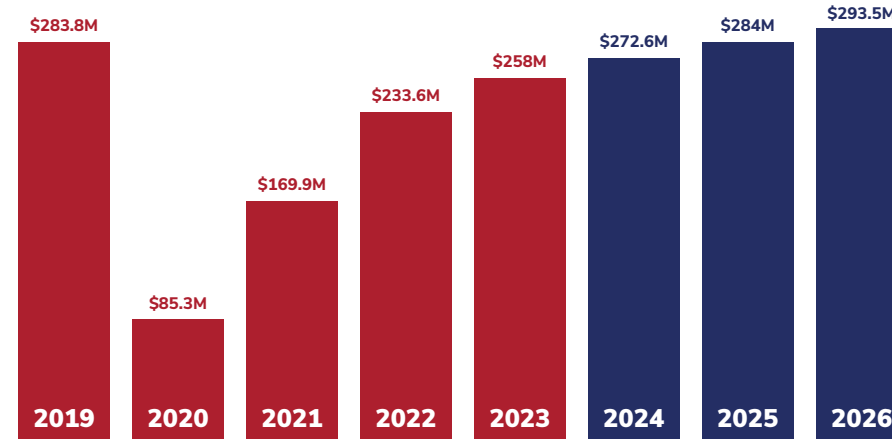
Optimism, however, remains high. Indigenous tourism businesses anticipate revenues would rise by six per cent in 2024, and many feel a corner has been turned on the inflationary pressures. Both anecdotally and empirically, demand for Indigenous tourism continues to grow both domestically and internationally. Deloitte's Summer Tourism Outlook in 2024 found that growth is strong among Canadian baby boomers, 41 per cent of whom say they are likely to take part in an Indigenous experience, and that demand grows the younger the traveller — 55 per cent of Gen Xers, 68 per cent of millennials and 75 per cent of Gen Zers report they are likely to take part.

Optimism also abounds in Alberta. The economic impact of the Indigenous tourism sector in Alberta soared past British Columbia in 2023 for the first time, according to the Conference Board of Canada, reaching \$1.3B in revenue and \$653 million in GDP contributions, trailing only Ontario among Canadian provinces. It's a sign of the growth of the sector in Alberta, and a symptom of focus, sustained investment and collaborative work.

The year 2025-'26 begins with uncertainty, thanks mostly to the political turmoil in the U.S. An abnormally low Canadian dollar presents an opportunity for attracting U.S. travellers, but that's offset by talk of tariffs and bellicose political rhetoric. This uncertainty looks unlikely to wrap up quickly, so the industry is likely to face rising costs and ongoing challenges for the foreseeable future.

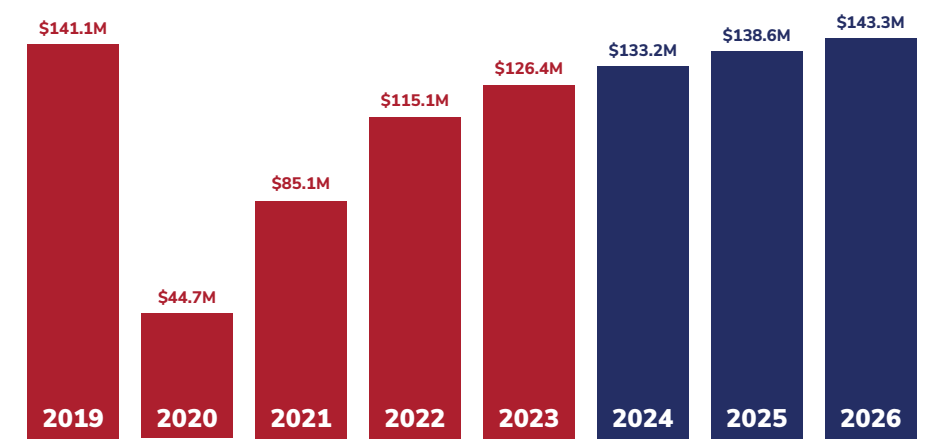
In the longer term, however, the optimistic view is that the growing demand for Indigenous tourism will more than offset what will hopefully prove to be short-term rising costs and political changes. In the meantime, ITA and the tourism industry in general, are looking for new strategies to face these challenges.

Revenue Growth



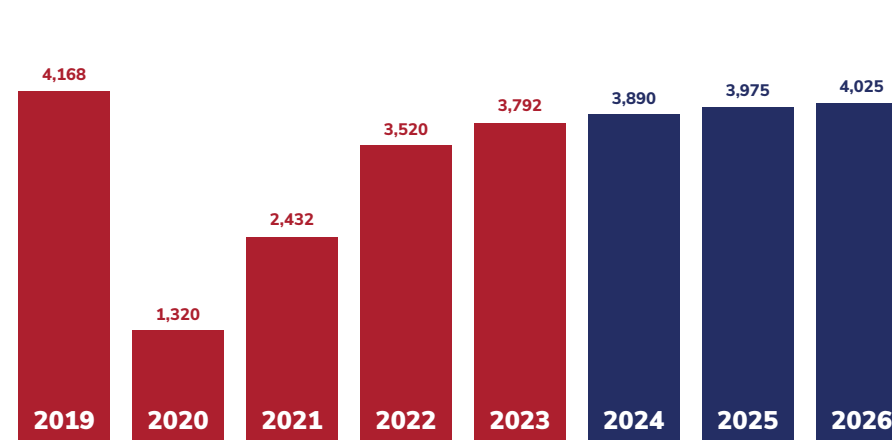
Revenue of Indigenous Tourism Sector in Alberta

GDP Contributions



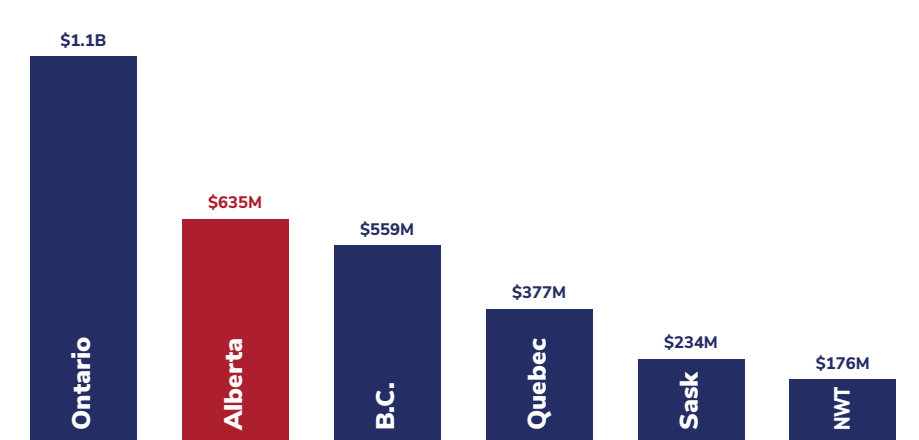
Revenue of Indigenous Tourism Sector in Alberta

Jobs



Employment in Indigenous Tourism Sector in Alberta

GDP Impact, 2023



Economic Impact of the Indigenous Tourism Sector on GDP, 2023

AWARENESS IS GROWING

1 in 3

International travellers say they are interested in an Indigenous tourism experience in Canada

58%

of Canadians are aware of Indigenous tourism experiences across Canada

DEMAND WILL KEEP GROWING

 **44%**
Boomers

 **55%**
Gen X

 **68%**
Millennials

 **75%**
Gen Z

Canadian respondent travellers who say they are likely to take part in an Indigenous travel experience in the future

GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Action Plan 2025-2026

LEADERSHIP

Deliverable

Commitment to Indigenous Tourism In Alberta.

ITA is valued as the leader of Indigenous Tourism for Alberta by all partners.

Work with key stakeholders to develop long term Indigenous Tourism development plan.

Support the supply of leadership and business skills and labour to enhance visitor experiences through quality service, hospitality, and cultural protocols.

Governance

Strategic leadership of the organization.

Strengthen partnerships with regional and provincial destination marketing organizations, municipalities and the private sector.

Create and maintain a consistent funding model to ensure organizational sustainability and success.

Key Performance Indicator

Provide industry with up to date research on Indigenous tourism GDP, Jobs, Businesses.

Speak at five industry events.

Ensure industry growth measurements are taken annually, implement a membership engagement and satisfaction survey among members and industry.

Ensure timely reporting and communication with all funding partners on updates and highlights and ITA's success.

Build relationships with economic development and tourism groups across the province to create and implement / integrate Indigenous tourism product into existing operations.

Support ITAC's national guidelines.

Explore industry research projects for further provincial insight.

Support National The Original Original (TOO) Accreditation programs.

Ensure alignment with economic measurement tools with Government of Alberta.

Host quarterly board meetings and AGM.

Annual board governance training.

Produce Annual Action Plan, Midterm Report and Annual Report.

Produce annual audited financial statements.

Produce a 5-year industry development and data gathering strategy.

Maintain strategic partnerships with clear deliverables.

Maintain multi-year funding agreements.

PARTNERSHIP

Deliverable

Establish guidelines to partnerships.

Key Performance Indicator

Complete a statement and guidelines about building business partnerships that align with Indigenous values of reciprocity.

DEVELOPMENT

Deliverable

Education and engagement with members and industry partners.

ITA members value their membership.

ITA industry partners value their membership.

Grow export-ready membership.

Grow the sustainability of member businesses.

Key Performance Indicator

Six regional member/industry engagement circles.

Implement 2025 ITA Awards.

Positive sentiments toward ITA is maintained over the previous year on the member survey.

Align member business levels with ITAC's.

Creation of an industry partner newsletter.

Host four quarterly industry partner webinars.

Six Cultural Awareness Program for industry partners.

Develop a long-term industry partner strategy.

Five members complete travel-trade portion of ITA Marketing & Trade Launch Program Pilot (co-KPI with marketing).

Eight members complete Good Relations Mentorship Program.

Two communities complete Pathways Community Tourism Development Program 1.0.

One communities complete Pathways Community Tourism Development Program 2.0.

Develop and pilot a member website support program (co-KPI with marketing).

Six members complete Six Senses Experience Development Program.

Eight members complete Strengthening Our Roots Business Development program.

MARKETING

Deliverable

Key Performance Indicator

Member Support and Engagement	<p>Distribute monthly marketing educational content to members.</p> <p>Ensure opportunities for members at in-person member events.</p> <p>Complete pilot project for ITA Marketing & Trade Launch Program Pilot (co-KPI with development).</p> <p>Develop and pilot a member website support program (co-KPI with development).</p>
Digital and Social Communities	<p>30% growth in following year-over-year on Instagram, Facebook.</p> <p>30% growth in engagements (likes, comments, shares) on those platforms.</p>
Earned Media and Influencer Marketing	<p>Earn 20 media mentions that rank above 12/15 on Media Quality Score Index.</p> <p>Development quality score for influencer visits.</p>
Integrated Marketing Campaigns	<p>Develop and integrate two digital campaigns that align to the integrated marketing strategy.</p> <p>Increase efficiency of digital marketing campaigns by lowering cost-per-click compared to 2023/24.</p> <p>Implement marketing effectiveness study.</p> <p>Earmark 15% of media buy to Indigenous media.</p>
Travel Trade and Media	<p>Five members complete travel-trade portion of Marketing Support Pilot Project (co-KPI with development).</p>
Partnership	<p>Leverage collaboration and funding from partners on three marketing tactics.</p>
Industry Communications and PR	<p>Three earned media placements in publications that target stakeholders that position Alberta as a leader in Indigenous tourism and/or members as entrepreneurial leaders in their sector (in conjunction with leadership KPIs).</p> <p>30% growth in audience and engagements on LinkedIn.</p> <p>Development of an Industry-partner newsletter (co-KPI with development).</p>
Member Communications and PR	<p>Monthly content that highlights ITA marketing activity and successes with members.</p> <p>Share all earned media placements with relevant members that score higher than 10/15 on media-quality score.</p> <p>Share successes on LinkedIn.</p>
Sponsorships	<p>Commit to up to three sponsorships, based on events ranked by sponsorships matrix and funding.</p>
Innovations	<p>Implement a marketing tactic that ITA has never tried before with a goal of raising awareness of Indigenous tourism, and evaluate its success for future.</p>

OUR PARTNERS

Thank you
to our funders.



With the support of:
Prairies Economic
Development Canada



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada



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