

COME THRIVE WITH US

2023-2024 Annual Report
April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024



**INDIGENOUS
TOURISM
ALBERTA**



Matricia Brown, Warrior Women

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LETTER FROM THE CEO

Come Walk With Us. This phrase is part of the brand that Indigenous Tourism Alberta worked hard developing as a way of bringing together the Indigenous tourism industry in Alberta under a consumer-friendly message.

What we didn't anticipate is how, during the fiscal year of 2023-'24, the ideas of the brand started coming to life in so many ways across the industry.

It was a year in which Indigenous tourism further cemented itself as a core part of the tourism identity of Alberta and Canada. It was a year in which Indigenous-led partnerships, collaboration and hard work led to successes for the entire industry. It was a year in which international demand for Indigenous traveller experiences grew to new heights. But it was also a year that laid bare the barriers still faced by the industry.

We should all take a moment to celebrate the successes of the year. ITA members continue to develop their businesses in ways that create

unforgettable tourism experiences while also supporting Indigenous families, communities, cultures and languages. Demand from both national and international travellers for Indigenous experiences continues to grow. Partnerships are flourishing as more people in the industry see how Indigenous-led collaborations lead to great outcomes. Growth in GDP and jobs continues to climb, driven by Indigenous entrepreneurs who are growing their businesses, hiring more people, expanding their products and innovating.

ITA also had a strong year. We cemented long-term funding partnerships with organizations such as Travel Alberta and Prairies Economic Development Canada, which gives us the stability we need to better support members and think bigger into the future. We now have dozens of partnerships with non-Indigenous businesses and last year helped educate hundreds of workers in the tourism industry through our cultural awareness programs. We were also able to support members with programs, mentorships, education, networking opportunities and global

marketing. We continue to innovate and grow these programs to better meet the needs of ITA members.

Yet, barriers remain. The industry is not yet fulfilling the demand from travellers, which presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Further public- and private-sector investment in true, authentic Indigenous-owned businesses is needed to capture the moment. Labour struggles continue, and the industry has not fully tapped into the potential of Indigenous communities to fill career opportunities that, not only provide great tourism experiences for guests, but support families and communities. Structural barriers and colonial institutions and ideas still hold back Indigenous entrepreneurs in too many aspects of life.

But thanks to the spirit of Come Walk With Us, we are moving forward together. Inspired by the boundless energy, passion and potential of our Indigenous entrepreneur members, ITA will continue to strive, innovate, partner and work tirelessly to support members in achieving their dreams.



Sincerely,

Shae Bird
Chief Executive Officer
Indigenous Tourism Alberta



Tracey Klett, Painted Warriors

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

When I first started working in the Indigenous tourism industry years ago, I knew we had something special. But I wasn't sure how long it would take for the world to realize it.

Today, the world is taking notice. From industry-leading American travel magazines putting Metis Crossing on their cover for millions of people to see, to European travellers booking experiences with Warrior Women and Painted Warriors months in advance, to Patrick Mitsuing of Powwow Times dancing at the Super Bowl, Indigenous tourism is no longer a hidden gem. It's central to the tourism industry in Alberta.

It's so gratifying to see this growth. Those of us who have been in the industry for some time have always known that Indigenous tourism is not just a great experience for travellers — we often hear people say it is part of their visit to Alberta they will cherish the most — but it can also support Indigenous families, communities,

culture, language and youth. This is the real potential of the industry. We talk a lot about economics, including things like GDP, labour and setting ambitious targets for growth. But that's only part of the equation. The more important part is the way it can improve the lives of people in our communities, and help non-Indigenous people better understand our culture, our history and our lives today.

It hasn't always been smooth sailing, and it may never be easy. We are always going to need to work hard to ensure the success of the industry, to dismantle colonial systems that stand in our way, and to maintain our rightful place in the industry. But seeing the growth of the industry over the past year, and to see how much of an impact it has on the lives of Indigenous Peoples and travellers is something that truly warms my heart.

And ITA is a huge part of that. It's been several years of exponential growth for the organization, which means the ITA team has been continually developing, honing and innovating new ways to support members. And we're

seeing that pay off. The past year saw the organization deliver workshops, mentorships, grants and marketing in ways that are both proven and new. We saw some unprecedented growth, but also identified areas for improvement. We've done some good work, but we are not resting on our laurels. The good news is that I know what motivates the ITA team — it's the passion, success and drive of ITA members, which will never cease.

I often think about my early years in tourism. While it may seem like we've come a long way, I know we are just getting started.



Sincerely,

Brenda Holder
Board Chair
Indigenous Tourism Alberta



Joe Urie, Jasper Tour Company

THE STATE OF INDIGENOUS TOURISM



Economically, 2024 can be seen as the year that Indigenous tourism broke through.

According to the Conference Board of Canada’s projections, 2024 is the last time the Indigenous tourism industry will be held to the economic high-water marks that were set before the Covid pandemic. That’s because those projects show that the industry will surpass those economic marks in 2024 and keep growing into the future.

That’s significant for a number of reasons. For one, it means the industry is back on track and posting revenue, GDP and job growth at rates similar to 2019, before Covid-19. That growth also means the industry is on pace to hit new highs in the foreseeable future, which isn’t just a psychological victory, it’s also a sign that tourism is supporting Indigenous communities, families and entrepreneurs better than ever before.

That’s important, of course, but those economic numbers don’t capture the full story of the industry at this moment. The bigger story is one of demand. Indigenous tourism has never been in such demand from both international and regional travellers. Surveys show that travellers are increasingly looking for authentic, Indigenous experiences to enrich their trips to Canada. International travel-trade partners are also feeling that desire, and are looking for ways to fulfil it by increasingly seeking out Indigenous experiences to sell. Some veterans of Indigenous tourism are saying they’ve never seen as much interest in their experiences.

This creates a new challenge for the industry in meeting that demand. Indigenous tourism isn’t something that easily scales. Building solid, authentic Indigenous businesses takes time, commitment, understanding, knowledge, openness, learning and,



Very grateful for ITA reaching out to us... ITA feels like family to us!

Angelika Eirisch
Buffalo Nations Museum



perhaps most of all, investment. Only through investment in true, Indigenous-owned entrepreneurial ventures will the industry truly capitalize on this newfound demand.

The good news is that investment is starting to happen. This year, for example, Indigenous Tourism Alberta secured the biggest investment from a provincial partner in the country's history when Travel Alberta committed to a three-year \$6-million partnership program that will give the organization a strong foundation to build from. The federal government also committed to further funding, both to ITA and its members, through a number of programs, including Prairies Economic Development Canada and Indigenous Services Canada.

This is a good start, but more is needed. Deep investment in true Indigenous-owned businesses and experiences remains elusive, and a lack of stable, consistent and predictable funding over time hampers the growth potential of the industry as a whole.

Still, looking back on growth since the depths of the pandemic shows a remarkable recovery, and this year's growth points the way to a brighter future.



“

ITA is exceptional and has been absolutely wonderful to work with!

Jason Carter
Carter-Ryan Gallery

”

GROWTH OF INDIGENOUS TOURISM ALBERTA

2020 - 2024

Budget		Members		Microgrants to Indigenous Entrepreneurs		Marketing Digital Impressions	
2020	\$500 K	Start of 2020	0	2020	\$0	2020	0
2024	\$4.5 M	2024	180	2024	\$11 M	2024	95 M+
Staff		Market- and Export-ready Businesses		Development Programs		Marketing Clicks to Member Websites	
2020	1 contractor	End of 2020	39	2020	1	2020	0
2024	12 employees	2024	127	2024	6	2024	290 K+

KEY PRIORITIES

DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Achieved: **100%**

Number of ITA members connected with an entrepreneurial mentor

10

Number of tourism industry professionals who participated in ITA's cultural awareness programs

350

Number of industry partners, up from 31 the previous year

45

Number of nations completing community tourism readiness program

2

MARKETING GOALS

Achieved: **100%**

Successful marketing campaigns that improved upon previous year's results

2

Number of earned media mentions at the highest score possible

2

Marketing boot-camp pilot project completed

1

Number of impressions from digital marketing campaigns, exceeding the goal

95 M

PARTNERSHIP & LEADERSHIP GOALS

Achieved: **100%**

Number of strategic partnerships achieved

2

Number of events where ITA leadership presented as industry leader

5

See Addendum for full results.

ACTION PLAN 2023-2024

MARKETING

Priorities, Projects and Programs	Activities	KPI	Completion Rate
Member Support and Engagement	Educate members on developing marketing and communication strategies and best practices	Monthly marketing content on ITA Connect Distribute marketing educational content to members One 1:1 marketing boot-camp pilot project Develop a brand toolkit for members	100
Digital and Social Communities	Grow a vibrant community of advocates to amplify ITA messages Inspire visitors to the ITA website to learn more	30% growth in following year-over-year on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn 30% growth in engagements (likes, comments, shares) on those platforms Consistently post two high-quality posts per week that align to the brand and to the social-media content pillars of education, inspiration and member profiles	100
Earned media and influencer marketing	Raise awareness of Indigenous tourism through earned media mentions	Earn 12 media mentions that rank above 12/15 on Media Quality Score Index	100
Integrated Marketing Campaigns	One winter and one summer marketing campaign	Develop and integrate two digital campaigns that align to the integrated marketing strategy Increase efficiency of marketing campaigns by lowering cost-per-click compared to 2022 campaigns by five per cent Update brand guidelines	100

MARKETING
(continued)

Priorities, Projects and Programs	Activities	KPI	Completion Rate
Travel Trade and Media	Maintain relationships with key RTOs Attend Travel Trade events that target ITA key markets Support export-ready members getting listed by RTOs	Support two export-ready members being listed with new RTOs or travel-trade partners Ensure ITA members are represented at key travel-trade events within key markets, and attend at least two international travel-trade events	100
Partnership	Lead joint marketing campaigns with key marketing partners	One ITA-led marketing campaign or activity that partner with five Alberta DMOs Develop a brand toolkit for partners	100
Industry Communications and 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	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 Monthly newsletter content that highlights ITA successes	100
Member Communications and 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	Monthly ITA Connect content that highlights member successes Share all earned media placements with relevant members that score higher than 10/15 on media-quality score. Member profiles for consumers also shared to LinkedIn	100
Sponsorships	Sponsor events with customers/markets that overlap with target markets	Evaluate goals of sponsorships to determine value – advertising or community support Set KPIs based on evaluation	100
Innovations	Raise awareness of Indigenous tourism	Earmark funds for an innovation project that ITA has never tried before with a goal of raising awareness of Indigenous tourism	100

DEVELOPMENT

Priorities, Projects and Programs

Activities

KPI

Completion Rate

Indigenous Tourism Alberta Gathering

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

Four regional tourism town halls

100

ITA Members value their membership

Maintain membership

Grow membership to 200

85

Grow Industry partners

Grow industry partners from 31 to 45

100

Introduce Paid Membership Fee

Introduce paid membership fee:
 In-development: \$49
 Visitor ready and non-voting market-ready: \$100
 Market- and export-ready business: \$149

Grow the sustainability of ITA's Indigenous Tourism Business Members

Enhance business acumen of members through mentorship

10 ITA members will complete Good Relations mentorship program with in-person training for each participant

100

Provide business development support to jumpstart member business initiatives

Deliver 7 in-person one-day Indigenous Awareness trainings per year for 350 people

100

Enhance the capacity of non-Indigenous tourism partners to work with Indigenous partners

Host six Tea Time sessions with members

Strengthen partnerships with Indigenous members and industry partners in local regions

Implement Indigenous Tourism Builder Block Series based on in-development, visitor, market and export ready

100

Pilot Building Blocks Series to help members ascend toward export-ready status

Establish a relationship with a third-party business to support Indigenous tourism entrepreneurs with training programs

100

Implement an Entrepreneurship training program

Accept two nation, settlement or community intakes for cohort program

100

Implement Community Tourism Pathway 2.0 Program

Pilot Experience Development Program

Deliver Experience Development Program to six market-ready Indigenous tourism businesses

85

Develop Marketing 101 Program

100

PARTNERSHIPS

Priorities, Projects and Programs

Activities

KPI

Completion Rate

Strengthen Partnerships With Regional, Provincial Destination Marketing organizations, Municipalities, and private sector

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

Five regional tourism town halls

100

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

Maintain Financial support to sustain Indigenous Tourism Alberta

Confirm signed multi-year funding agreement that meets foundational needs of the organizations to succeed

100

Strengthen relationships with Indigenous Communities and entrepreneurs across the 4 - regions of Alberta

Work with all regions of Alberta's Indigenous Communities

Engage with each Indigenous community and entrepreneur identified by ITA

100

LEADERSHIP

Priorities, Projects and Programs	Activities	KPI	Completion Rate
Commitment to Indigenous Tourism In Alberta	Continue to complete and established industry focussed research to support decision making for ITA and their members	Provide industry with up to date research on Indigenous tourism GDP, Jobs, Businesses through CBOC	100
ITA is Valued as the leader of Indigenous Tourism for Alberta by all partners	ITA is a keynote for a virtual conference or trade show	<p>Speak at a minimum of five industry events</p> <hr/> <p>Ensure industry growth measurements are taken annually, implement a membership engagement and satisfaction survey among members and industry</p> <hr/> <p>Ensure timely reporting and communication with all funding partners on updates and highlights and ITA's success</p>	100
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	Build relationships with economic development and tourism groups across the province to create and implement / integrate Indigenous tourism product into existing operations	100
Support the supply of leadership and business skills and labour to enhance visitor experiences through quality service, hospitality, and cultural protocols	Implement research and studies that further support ITA membership while delivering authentic Indigenous Experiences	<p>Support ITAC's national standards</p> <hr/> <p>Explore industry research projects for further provincial insight</p> <hr/> <p>Support National TOO Accreditation programs</p> <hr/> <p>Ensure alignment with economic measurement tools with GOA</p>	100
ITA Members value their membership	Host annual general meeting for members	Host yearly general meeting for all members at the Annual ITA Gathering in September 25-29	100
<p>Grow ITA capacity</p> <hr/> <p>ITA Members value their membership</p> <hr/> <p>Grow ITA capacity</p>	Implement succession planning tools for the organization	Implement a succession planning worksheet for all team	100
Governance	Have quarterly meetings for board and team	<p>April, 2023</p> <p>July, 2023</p> <p>October, 2023</p> <p>January, 2024</p>	100

OUR PARTNERS

Thank you
to our partners.



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada



Prairies Economic
Development Canada

Développement économique
Canada pour les Prairies

ADDENDUM

Audited Financial Statements



Indigenous Tourism Alberta
Financial Statements
March 31, 2024

Management's Responsibility

To the Members of Indigenous Tourism Alberta:

Management is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the accompanying financial statements, including responsibility for significant accounting judgments and estimates in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations. This responsibility includes selecting appropriate accounting principles and methods, and making decisions affecting the measurement of transactions in which objective judgment is required.

In discharging its responsibilities for the integrity and fairness of the financial statements, management designs and maintains the necessary accounting systems and related internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that transactions are authorized, assets are safeguarded and financial records are properly maintained to provide reliable information for the preparation of financial statements.

The Board of Directors is composed primarily of Directors who are neither management nor employees of the Association. The Board is responsible for overseeing management in the performance of its financial reporting responsibilities, and for approving the financial information included in the annual report. The Board fulfils these responsibilities by reviewing the financial information prepared by management and discussing relevant matters with management and external auditors. The Board is also responsible for recommending the appointment of the Association's external auditors.

MNP LLP is appointed by the Members to audit the financial statements and report directly to them; their report follows. The external auditors have full and free access to, and meet periodically and separately with, both the Board and management to discuss their audit findings.

July 23, 2024



Shae Bird, Chief Executive Officer

To the Members of Indigenous Tourism Alberta:

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Indigenous Tourism Alberta (the "Association"), which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2024, and the statements of operations and changes in net assets, cash flows and the related schedules for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Association as at March 31, 2024, and the results of its operations, changes in net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Association's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Association's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Association's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Association to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Calgary, Alberta

July 23, 2024

MNP LLP

Chartered Professional Accountants

Indigenous Tourism Alberta Statement of Financial Position

As at March 31, 2024

	2024	2023
Assets		
Cash		
Cash	946,026	30,480
Accounts receivable (Note 3)	107,244	526,947
Prepaid expenses and deposits	158,726	16,726
	1,211,996	574,153
Capital assets (Note 4)	4,331	8,853
	1,216,327	583,006
Liabilities		
Current		
Accounts payable and accruals	156,803	413,722
Deferred contributions (Note 6)	783,098	96,354
	939,901	510,076
Deferred contributions related to capital assets (Note 7)	1,413	5,205
	941,314	515,281
Contingency (Note 9)		
Net Assets	275,013	67,725
	1,216,327	583,006

Approved on behalf of the Board



Director



Director

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements

Indigenous Tourism Alberta

Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets

For the year ended March 31, 2024

	2024	2023
Revenue		
Indigenous Services Canada	1,675,164	1,189,501
Other Grant Revenue		
Travel Alberta - Partnership Agreement	1,800,000	1,650,000
Prairies Canada - Strategic Plan	798,367	1,850,000
Indigenous Tourism Association Canada	76,555	176,555
Indigenous Tourism Association Canada - Cultural Feasibility Study	-	65,000
Indigenous Tourism Association Canada - Accreditation Program	-	25,000
Ministry of Labour - Government of Alberta	5,376	1,800
Summit registrations, sponsorships, and other	233,612	167,986
Memberships	35,745	14,461
Deferred revenue - from prior years	96,354	444,119
Deferred Revenue - future expenditures	(783,098)	(96,354)
	3,938,075	5,488,068
Expenses		
Marketing/advertising	1,445,153	2,477,286
Administration, salaries and benefits	1,164,895	987,977
Summit expenses	308,484	431,425
Travel	255,085	293,109
Contracted services	136,984	218,120
Community development	99,633	307,884
Office rent	62,871	44,158
Conferences	52,390	92,477
Professional fees	51,702	63,931
Non-recoverable Goods and Services Tax	43,553	42,079
Cultural	31,913	111,655
Computer	31,208	23,014
Community readiness	15,000	213,942
Office expenses	13,912	20,978
Meals and entertainment	10,744	9,191
Membership fees	9,126	2,084
Training and education	7,103	9,937
Insurance	4,360	2,900
Bank charges and interest	3,725	5,758
Indigenous entrepreneur development program	1,668	66,035
Amortization	730	730
Recovery on expenses	(19,452)	-
	3,730,787	5,424,670
Excess of revenue over expenses before other items	207,288	63,398

Continued on next page

Indigenous Tourism Alberta Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets

For the year ended March 31, 2024

	2024	2023
Excess of revenue over expenses before other items <i>(Continued from previous page)</i>	207,288	63,398
Other items		
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	3,793	5,243
Amortization	(3,793)	(5,243)
	-	-
Excess of revenue over expenses	207,288	63,398
Net assets, beginning of year	67,725	4,327
Net assets, end of year	275,013	67,725

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements

Indigenous Tourism Alberta
Statement of Cash Flows
For the year ended March 31, 2024

	2024	2023
Cash provided by (used for) the following activities		
Operating		
Excess of revenue over expenses	207,288	63,398
Amortization	4,522	5,972
Amortization of deferred contributions related to capital assets	(3,793)	(5,243)
	208,017	64,127
Changes in working capital accounts		
Accounts receivable	419,703	(313,317)
Prepaid expenses and deposits	(142,000)	103,312
Accounts payable and accruals	(256,918)	325,613
Deferred contributions	686,744	(347,765)
	915,546	(168,030)
Investing		
Purchase of capital assets	-	(4,377)
Increase (decrease) in cash resources	915,546	(172,407)
Cash resources, beginning of year	30,480	202,887
Cash resources, end of year	946,026	30,480

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements