



# ON THE RISE

INDIGENOUS TOURISM ALBERTA  
ACTION PLAN 2022-2023

DRIFT OUT WEST

# CONTENTS

STATE OF INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN ALBERTA .....	4
MARKETING GOALS .....	7
DEVELOPMENT GOALS .....	9
PARTNERSHIP GOALS .....	11
LEADERSHIP GOALS .....	13
PARTNERS .....	15

# A LETTER FROM OUR CEO



While 2021 was a far cry from the historic highs of 2019, we did start to see incremental gains in the Indigenous tourism industry across the province. Prior to the pandemic, Indigenous tourism growth was at a 30-year high and projected to add to its \$1.9 billion of direct GDP contributions in Canada. However, as we all know, the pandemic and the necessary restrictions put in place had a significant negative impact on our industry.

Despite that, Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) had some impressive successes. This past year ITA saw a 100-percent growth in membership, the biggest growth of any provincial Indigenous tourism organization in Canada, and with that came a 46 percent increase in visitor-ready businesses and a 42 percent increase in market-ready operators. ITA members also showed amazing resilience — in 2021, the contribution of Indigenous tourism to Alberta's GDP was at 70 percent of pre-pandemic levels, nearly twice as high as 2020.

ITA established a historic partnership with Travel Alberta to increase the prioritization and support of Indigenous tourism. We strengthened partnerships with Alberta businesses such as WestJet and we continued to advocate for Indigenous tourism nationally with our partners at the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada.

Today, as we look forward to 2022, we believe we can return to pre-pandemic levels of employment and GDP contribution by 2024 and our 2022 strategy is part of that process.

Indigenous tourism experiences fit uniquely well with domestic and international consumer demands arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic and Canada's desire for Indigenous reconciliation. Across society, we have seen attitudinal shifts that have moved closer to the core values of Indigenous culture. And while there is still much work to be done, we are seeing a coming together of Peoples to learn more about what makes us different and what makes us the same.

The ideal time is now to leverage these shifts by supporting and showcasing Indigenous tourism experiences. Increased funding and interest both federally and provincially can have a substantial impact on stabilizing the industry and growing interest. We are helping to build meaningful awareness, tangible results and creating a strategy that is consistent and unifying. I'm excited about the opportunity that 2022 presents and I look forward to overcoming the challenges ahead of us along with our members, stakeholders and partners.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large 'S' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

**Shae Bird**

Chief Executive Officer

# A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR BRENDA HOLDER



In 2021 we began to see a slow recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 on the Indigenous tourism sector both provincially and nationally. The Indigenous tourism industry provides strength to the visitor economy in Alberta, providing significant economic growth and stability. Additionally, Indigenous tourism operators across the province provide unparalleled opportunities for reconciliation and education to non-Indigenous people all around the province, while supporting the cultural and economic vitality of Indigenous Nations and communities.

Prior to the 2019 pandemic, Indigenous tourism employed 38,900 employees and generated an estimated \$1.9 billion in direct GDP nationally. In Alberta that amounted to \$166 million in GDP and more than 3,500 jobs. During the peak of the pandemic in 2020, Indigenous tourism dropped 62 percent in GDP contribution and 60 percent of jobs were lost.

Even amid these challenges, however, growth is happening. The last year saw in-development and visitor-ready Indigenous businesses grow by 46 percent. Market-ready operators increased by 42 percent, export-ready operators by eight percent and membership to Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) grew by 100 percent to more than 160 operators across the province. Of those, nearly 95 percent were open for business during the summer of 2021, despite the pandemic challenges. Alberta's Indigenous tourism industry also led the country in withstanding the negative impact of the pandemic, which is another testament to its resilience.

In Alberta, the province tied Quebec for the biggest expansion of any province in Canada in 2021 with 5.9 percent GDP growth and is poised to carry those gains into the next year with a GDP growth forecast of 4.3 percent in 2022. The current rebound is due to higher oil and gas activity, growth in the tech sector, manufacturing and services sectors and residential real estate investment.

ITA is focused on continuing to ensure stability and recovery for the Indigenous tourism economy in 2022. Through its 2022 strategy, ITA will continue to promote authentic, sustainable and culturally rich Indigenous tourism experiences showcasing Alberta as a premier Indigenous tourism destination in Canada, while continuing to grow and strengthen the strongest membership base in Canada.

Sincerely,

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

**Brenda Holder**  
Board Chair







# STATE OF INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN ALBERTA

In 2021, we began to see a slow recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 on the Indigenous tourism sector both provincially and nationally. The Indigenous tourism industry provides strength to the visitor economy in Alberta, providing significant economic growth and stability. Additionally, Indigenous tourism operators across the province provide unparalleled opportunities for reconciliation and education to non-Indigenous people all around the province, while supporting the cultural and economic vitality of Indigenous Nations and communities.

Prior to the 2019 pandemic:

**38,900**  
INDIGENOUS TOURISM  
INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES

**\$1.9**  
BILLION IN DIRECT  
GDP NATIONALLY

In Alberta, that amounted to:

**\$166**  
MILLION IN GDP  
IN ALBERTA

**3,500+**  
JOBS

During the peak of the  
pandemic in 2020:

**62%**  
DROP IN GDP  
CONTRIBUTION

**60%**  
LOSS OF JOBS

Even amid these challenges, however, growth is happening:

**+46%**  
**IN-DEVELOPMENT  
INDIGENOUS BUSINESS**

**+46%**  
**VISITOR-READY  
INDIGENOUS BUSINESS**

**+42%**  
**MARKET-READY  
INDIGENOUS BUSINESS**

**+8%**  
**EXPORT-READY  
INDIGENOUS BUSINESS**

**+100%**  
**ITA MEMBERSHIP**

**160+**  
**OPERATORS ACROSS  
THE PROVINCE**

Nearly 95 per cent of ITA members were open for business during the summer of 2021, despite the pandemic challenges. Alberta's Indigenous tourism industry also led the country in withstanding the negative impact of the pandemic, which is another testament to its resilience.

ITA is focused on continuing to ensure stability and recovery for the Indigenous tourism economy in 2022. Through its 2022 strategy, ITA will continue to promote authentic, sustainable and culturally rich Indigenous tourism experiences showcasing Alberta as a premier Indigenous tourism destination in Canada, while continuing to grow and strengthen the strongest membership base in Canada.





# GOALS & ACTIVITIES



WILD WEST BADLANDS TOURS



# MARKETING GOALS

## ACTIONS

---

### Member Support & Engagement

- Educate members on developing marketing and communication strategies and best practises
- Assist members in making experiences bookable online

---

### Earned Media & Influencer Marketing

- Develop and implement a media quality scoring system to rank media mentions by both quality and quantity
- Strategize an influencer campaign to reach Curious Adventures

---

### Travel Trade & Media

- Establish relationships with key RTOs
- Host product knowledge sessions with Travel Trade
- Attend Travel Trade events that target ITA key markets
- Highlight ITA in Travel Trade media publications

---

### 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
- 

---

### 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

- Robust, seasonal marketing campaigns

---

### Partnership

- Increase frequency and quality of Indigenous tourism marketing products in the marketing activities of industry partners in Alberta

---

### 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



PAINTED WARRIORS



# DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## ACTIONS

### Alberta Indigenous Tourism Summit

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

### ITA Members Value Their Membership

- Maintain and grow ITA membership

### Grow the Sustainability of ITA's Indigenous Tourism Business Members

- Enhance business acumen of members through mentorship
- Provide stimulus funding to jumpstart member business initiatives
- Enhance the capacity of non-Indigenous tourism partners to work with Indigenous partners
- Strengthen partnerships with Indigenous members and industry partners in local regions
- Deliver entrepreneur workshops to educate members on business skills
- Create Building Blocks series to help members accelerate business maturity towards Export-Ready status
- Deliver Community Tourism Pathways Program to equip members in communities with skills for tourism advancement
- Enhance Community Tourism Pathways Program
- Develop an Experience Development Program

MÉTIS CROSSING





TRANSFORMATION FINE ART



# PARTNERSHIP GOALS

## ACTIONS

---

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

- Establish partnerships with private and public sector organisations to further Alberta Indigenous Tourism

---

### Create & Maintain a Consistent Funding Model to Ensure Organisational 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

JASPER TOUR COMPANY







WILD HORSE RANCH



# LEADERSHIP GOALS

## ACTIONS

---

### **Commitment to Indigenous Tourism In Alberta**

- Continue to complete and establish 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 at industry events
- 

### **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
- 

### **Build Organisational Efficiencies While Increasing Organisational Capacity**

- Enhancement of internal process
- 

### **ITA Members Value Their Membership**

- Host annual general meeting for members





TALKING ROCK TOURS



# PARTNERS



Prairies Economic  
Development Canada

Développement économique  
Canada pour les Prairies



Indigenous Services  
Canada

Services aux  
Autochtones Canada



PEI PEI CHEI OW



[Info@IndigenousTourismAlberta.ca](mailto:Info@IndigenousTourismAlberta.ca)

780.887.6240

5<sup>th</sup> Floor - 9990 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 1P7

[IndigenousTourismAlberta.ca](http://IndigenousTourismAlberta.ca)