



COME WALK WITH US

2025-2026 Annual Report
April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026





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LETTER FROM THE CEO

There's a metaphor that often gets used in business applications that I've been thinking a lot about this year: *We're all paddling the canoe together.*

In most contexts, this could be seen as business jargon related to teamwork. For Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA), however, this metaphor has taken on new meaning over the past year. On one level, it represents the ways we support ITA members in their business growth. It speaks to the partnerships we've built across the tourism sector over the past several years. It also holds special meaning for me as a Métis woman and so many other Indigenous Peoples, given the importance of the canoe and reciprocity in our cultures and histories.

But perhaps the most important part of that metaphor over the past year is how it relates to the partnership and teamwork that gets the canoe through turbulent waters.

Leading up to this year, ITA was coming to the end of our previous six-year growth phase. We saw the opportunity to take a step back and

closely examine everything we do in preparation of a new long-term strategy. That meant talking to Elders, members, community leaders, funders and partners. The result is a new strategic plan that will be revealed in the next fiscal year.

The exercise itself was a reminder of both the importance of our organization and the opportunity that lies before us. Over the 2025-'26 fiscal year, our team maintained significant momentum. We successfully offered business development programs, advice and opportunities to dozens of ITA members. We developed and rolled out new entrepreneurial support programs, including our first program to support artisans and vendors, and a brand and logo development program. Our marketing team expanded our digital reach to tens of millions of impressions directing hundreds of thousands of potential travellers to member booking sites.

All of this came as the global events kept throwing up challenges. Tariffs, geopolitical tensions, inflation,

changing traveller behaviours, disruption in federal spending priorities — all of these items hit our industry hard, and have forced us to make some difficult decisions.

As we exit the fiscal year and enter a new era for ITA, we are feeling deeply optimistic about the future. The reason for that is simple: partners and relationships. We continue to work with our members to improve our supports. Our industry partnerships have never been stronger, from Travel Alberta and Tourism Calgary, to WestJet and beyond, our canoe has never been more full of strong paddlers than it is today. Even amid significant changes in federal priorities, we are grateful for the relationships we've built with our friends at Indigenous Services Canada and PrairiesCan.

Challenges will always be there for us. That's the nature of working in an industry as competitive and ever-changing as tourism. But we have comfort in knowing that the best way forward hasn't changed. We will keep *paddling the canoe together.*



Sincerely,

Chelsey Quirk
Chief Executive Officer
Indigenous Tourism Alberta



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

The life of an entrepreneur in the tourism sector is never boring. In addition to making sure we’re delivering unforgettable experiences for our guests, many of whom look forward to their vacation for the entire year, we also need to take care of the everyday things: warm coffee, clean washrooms and up-to-date websites.

Working in tourism as an Indigenous entrepreneur requires even more care. We need to share our stories in an authentic way. We must respect Protocol. We need to overcome systemic barriers. This may sound daunting, but it is also an opportunity because nobody else can do this — we are the only ones who can share our stories authentically.

This is part of the reason we founded Indigenous Tourism Alberta in the first place, and what keeps us motivated today. Indigenous tourism is special when it has authenticity and truth. ITA exists to support that. In all of the work we do — from supporting entrepreneurs, to marketing, to industry leadership, to simply acting as welcoming hosts — ITA exists

to support members so they can bring their culture, language, stories and experiences to the world with authenticity and truth.

We’ve made great strides in recent years. Indigenous culture has become a cornerstone of Alberta’s tourism identity. We are not a niche segment; we are a vibrant, essential force for economic reconciliation. In reflecting back on a year of growth and change, and in looking forward to a new strategic plan next year, I find it helpful to remind myself that our original focus was on supporting our members, and that remains our focus today.

We’ve come a long way, and we’ll continue to have ups and downs, but I take comfort in knowing that we are well prepared for the future, whatever it may bring.



Sincerely,

Brenda Holder
Board Chair
Indigenous Tourism Alberta

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It will be monumental once it’s all established. Everyone who was instrumental in building this vision will be right there in the recognition, because you’re always a helpful guidance to everything that we’re doing. You’re not only part of the foundation, but part of the structure of our tourism, very vital. Thank you for everything that you do, you’re always available at any given time for us.

Cassandra Potskin
Sucker Creek First Nation

”



THE STATE OF INDIGENOUS TOURISM

The defining story of 2025-26 in Indigenous tourism is something that can be viewed as both a challenge and an opportunity: Demand continues to grow faster than supply.

According to multiple sources of data and consumer surveys, traveler demand for authentic Indigenous tourism experiences shows no signs of slowing. We know one in three international travellers are seeking Indigenous experiences. Among Canadians, 79% say they are interested in participating in an Indigenous experience. And that demand grows the younger the travelers – a Deloitte study found that, while 44% of baby boomers say they are likely to take part in an Indigenous tourism experience in Canada, that number rose to 75% among Gen Z. That suggests that this traveller desire isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

The industry in Alberta is showing progress in meeting that demand. There were more Indigenous entrepreneurs from Alberta at the travel industry's signature event in 2025, RendezVous Canada, than ever before. Revenue for the Indigenous tourism sector in Alberta recently moved past British Columbia for the first time to become the province with the second highest total in the country.

Despite these positive developments, there is still demand that is going unfulfilled. To address this, ITA undertook a number of initiatives over the past year. Our development team supported more than 60 ITA members on everything from entrepreneur skill development to mentorship and experience development programs. The team added new programs to better support brand development and Indigenous artisan vendors. More than 300 tourism industry partners completed ITA's cultural awareness programs.

The marketing team also found success. The media relations team scored significant wins with major media organizations featuring ITA members, including *Lonely Planet*, *Backpacker Magazine*, and *Breakfast Television*. The summer marketing campaign generated more than 50 million digital impressions. And collaborative marketing projects among Alberta Destination Marketing Organizations including Explore Edmonton and Tourism Calgary in support of Indigenous tourism helped raise awareness of the sector across Canada.

Still, new challenges emerged. New tariffs not only drove up operating and capital costs for ITA entrepreneurs, it also drove changes in travel patterns that impacted business. Inflation

continued to eat at margins and long-term system barriers remain, including access to capital on reserve and rigid colonial practices in the industry. And a change in priorities by the federal government means the end of some programs that offered significant support to ITA and its members in the near future.

Still, Indigenous tourism in Alberta has never been stronger, and the future remains bright.

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This was a wonderful program! Many thanks to all of you, as this was deeply needed and appreciated support!

Karlee Fellner

”

7 years

of relationship-building, an active presence across the entire province, and sector leadership.

6-8

Indigenous communities taking part in structured multi-month development programs annually.

60+

Indigenous businesses taking part in personalized, structured mentorship and support programs annually.

10

customized ITA-designed programs developed and delivered annually.

206 Members

across all regions of Alberta as of 2025.

78 In Development
52 Market Ready
49 Visitor Ready
27 Export Ready

4-8 events

hosted annually that engage Indigenous entrepreneurs, communities, and regions.

9

active MOUs between partners/formal partnerships.

300

non-Indigenous individuals participating in cultural awareness training annually.

15%

of Canada's Indigenous tourism revenue

\$566 M

Indigenous tourism revenue

\$635.3 M

total GDP impact

\$234 M

direct in GDP contribution

200+

Indigenous tourism businesses operating (2024-25)

6,618

jobs supported

4,000+

jobs projected by 2026

“

Thank you, I appreciate you, and you really helped me to just kind of put things together and gave me some ideas for some professionalism, like those frameworks and kind of taking my ideas and helping me refine them. It's been great to go from that entrepreneur program and to go right into this program with you — it really gave me a solid foundation and direction of what I want to do. And just thank you for all of your insights, all of the help and your opinions. It's been invaluable for me.

Kimberly Cardinal

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KEY PRIORITIES

DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Achieved

Six Cultural Awareness Programs for industry partners

Eight members complete Good Relations Mentorship program.

Eight members complete Strengthening Our Roots Business Development program

MARKETING GOALS

Achieved

Lowered cost-per-click compared to the previous fiscal year.

Earned over 40 media mentions with high quality scores in top-tier travel publications.

Earmark 15% of media buy to Indigenous media.

PARTNERSHIP & LEADERSHIP GOALS

Achieved

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

Maintain strategic partnerships with clear deliverables

Maintained 100% completion rate for all multi-year funding agreement deliverables

ACTION PLAN 2025-2026

LEADERSHIP

Priority	Key Performance Indicator	Completion %
Commitment to Indigenous Tourism In Alberta	Provide industry with up to date research on Indigenous tourism GDP, Jobs, Businesses	100%
ITA is Valued as the leader of Indigenous Tourism for Alberta by all partners.	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.	100%
Work with key stakeholders to develop long term Indigenous Tourism development plan	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.	Support ITAC's national guidelines Explore industry research projects for further provincial insight. Support National TOO Accreditation programs Ensure alignment with economic measurement tools with GOA	100%
Governance	Host quarterly board meetings (list dates once BOD approves) and AGM Annual board governance training Produce Annual Action Plan, Midterm Report and Annual Report Produce Annual audited Financial statements	100%
Strategic leadership of the organization	Produce a 5-year Industry development and data gathering strategy	100%
Strengthen Partnerships With Regional, Provincial Destination Marketing organizations, Municipalities, and private sector.	Maintain strategic partnerships with clear deliverables	100%
Create and maintain a consistent funding model to ensure organizational sustainability and success	Maintain multi-year funding agreements	100%

PARTNERSHIP

Establish guidelines to partnerships	Complete a statement and guidelines about building business partnerships that align with Indigenous values of reciprocity	100%
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DEVELOPMENT

Priority	Key Performance Indicator	Completion %
Education and engagement with members and industry partners	6 regional member/industry engagement circles	100%
ITA Members value their membership	Implement 2025 ITA Awards Member’s positive sentiments toward ITA maintained on the member survey Align member business levels with ITAC’s	100%
ITA Industry partners value their membership	Creation of an industry partner newsletter Host 4 quarterly industry partner webinars 6 Cultural Awareness Program for industry partners Develop a long-term industry partner strategy	100%
Grow export-ready membership	Five members complete travel-trade portion of Marketing Support Pilot Project (co-KPI with marketing)	100%
Grow the sustainability of member businesses	8 members complete Good Relations Mentorship program 2 communities complete Pathways Community Tourism Development Program 1.0 1 communities complete Pathways Community Tourism Development Program 2.0 Develop and pilot a member website support program (co-KPI with marketing) 6 members complete Six Senses Experience Development Program 8 members complete Strengthening Our Roots Business Development program Complete pilot project for ITA Marketing & Trade Support Program (co-KPI with marketing)	100%

MARKETING

Priority	Key Performance Indicator	Completion %
Member Support and Engagement	Distribute monthly marketing educational content to members Educational opportunities for members in-person Complete pilot project for ITA Marketing & Trade Support Program (co-KPI with development)	100%
Digital and Social Communities	30% growth in following year-over-year on Instagram, Facebook 30% growth in engagements (likes, comments, shares) on those platforms	100%
Earned media and influencer marketing	Earn 20 media mentions that rank above 12/15 on Media Quality Score Index Development quality score for influencer visits	100%
Integrated Marketing Campaigns	Develop and integrate two digital campaigns that align to the integrated marketing strategy Increase efficiency of digital marketing campaigns by lowering cost-per-click compared to 2023/24 Implement marketing effectiveness study Earmark 15% of media buy to Indigenous media	100%
Travel Trade and Media	Five members complete travel-trade portion of Marketing Support Pilot Project (co-KPI with development)	90%
Partnership	Leverage marketing funding from partners through 3 x marketing tactics	100%
Industry Communications and PR	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) 30% growth in audience and engagements on LinkedIn Development of an Industry-partner newsletter (co-KPI with development)	100%
Member Communications and PR	Monthly content that highlights ITA marketing activity and successes with members Share all earned media placements with relevant members that score higher than 10/15 on media-quality score. Share successes on LinkedIn	100%
Sponsorships	Commit to up to three sponsorships, based on events ranked by sponsorships matrix and funding	100%
Innovations	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	100%

OUR PARTNERS

Thank you to our
funding partners



Prairies Economic
Development Canada

Développement économique
Canada pour les Prairies



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

ADDENDUM

Audited Financial Statements



Indigenous Tourism Alberta
Financial Statements
March 31, 2026

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, 2026, and the statements of operations, 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, 2026, 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

June 29, 2026

MNP LLP

Chartered Professional Accountants

Indigenous Tourism Alberta

Statement of Financial Position

As at March 31, 2026

	2026	2025
Assets		
Current		
Cash	749,648	1,076,659
Accounts receivable (Note 3)	129,351	94,196
Prepaid expenses and deposits	30,431	142,631
	909,430	1,313,486
Capital assets (Note 4)	-	1,459
	909,430	1,314,945
Liabilities		
Current		
Accounts payable and accruals	182,362	634,863
Deferred contributions (Note 6)	184,475	126,660
	366,837	761,523
Contingencies (Note 10)		
Net Assets		
Net assets	542,593	553,422
	909,430	1,314,945
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, 2026

	2026	2025
Revenue		
Indigenous Services Canada	1,872,725	1,587,560
Other Grant Revenue		
Travel Alberta - Partnership Agreement	1,800,000	1,800,000
Prairies Canada - Strategic Plan	844,254	853,334
Tourism Calgary	250,000	250,000
Indigenous Tourism Association Canada	-	51,309
Ministry of Labour - Government of Alberta	-	2,926
Sponsorship - IITC 2026	-	300,000
Summit registrations, sponsorships, and other	310,700	312,734
Memberships	28,887	7,006
Deferred revenue - from prior years	116,655	783,098
Deferred revenue - future expenditures	(169,775)	(116,655)
	5,053,446	5,831,312
Expenses		
Marketing and advertising	1,862,979	2,392,746
Administration, salaries and benefits	1,563,210	1,410,709
Community development	481,380	558,789
Travel	323,918	213,174
Contracted services	234,950	263,341
Summit expenses	217,175	365,901
Office rent	93,018	101,720
Professional fees	76,933	78,208
Conferences	71,247	34,858
Computer	37,595	32,325
Cultural	30,145	22,711
Office expenses	26,649	23,766
Membership fees	16,190	6,860
Meals and entertainment	10,955	10,541
Training and education	5,368	16,875
Insurance	4,368	4,360
Bank charges and interest	3,748	4,455
Indigenous entrepreneur development program	2,988	10,105
Amortization	1,459	1,459
	5,064,275	5,552,903
(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses before other items	(10,829)	278,409
Other items		
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	-	1,413
Amortization	-	(1,413)
	-	-
(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses	(10,829)	278,409
Net assets, beginning of year	553,422	275,013
Net assets, end of year	542,593	553,422

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements

Indigenous Tourism Alberta
Statement of Cash Flows
For the year ended March 31, 2026

	2026	2025
Cash provided by (used for) the following activities		
Operating		
(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses	(10,829)	278,409
Amortization	1,459	2,872
Amortization of deferred contributions related to capital assets	-	(1,413)
	(9,370)	279,868
Changes in working capital accounts		
Accounts receivable	(35,155)	13,048
Prepaid expenses and deposits	112,200	16,095
Accounts payable and accruals	(452,501)	478,060
Deferred contributions	57,815	(656,438)
(Decrease) Increase in cash resources	(327,011)	130,633
Cash resources, beginning of year	1,076,659	946,026
Cash resources, end of year	749,648	1,076,659

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements