

North American Edition

TIME FOR

DEMOCRACY

**CASE STUDY:**

Travel  
Alberta  
Canada 

# Indigenous Tourism Engagement

*From: Travel Alberta*







A long-term commitment to reconciliation and genuine partnership with Indigenous tourism businesses across Alberta



## ABOUT

In early 2020 when the global pandemic began, Indigenous tourism businesses were the hardest hit. Without international visitors engaging with these businesses, 62% of expected GDP was lost along with 60% of jobs. As Canada's third largest population of Indigenous peoples and the only recognised Metis land base in the country, Travel Alberta recognised the importance of a meaningful partnership with Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA).

In addition to providing C\$3.75 million in financial support to ITA, a shared office arrangement led to a greater sense of collaboration and cost savings for both ITA and their members. ITA was able to expand their operations to support Indigenous tourism businesses and enhanced exposure through Travel Alberta's ongoing marketing campaigns.

But perhaps more importantly is the long-term commitment to reconciliation and genuine partnership this initiative has fostered. What started as a 3-year partnership with ITA to help nullify the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, has now changed the way Travel Alberta thinks about diversity, equity and inclusion.

All staff have now attended cultural awareness training with ITA to broaden their understanding of Indigenous people's history, land and stories. And there is now recognition of the:

- Unique funding challenges facing Indigenous entrepreneurs and communities – and the need for a strategy to help support ambitions.
- Importance of supporting Indigenous tourism to bring about changed perspectives and cultural preservation.



## TAKEAWAYS

Travel Alberta offers the following advice to other DMO's who may wish to advance similar initiatives:

- Invest your time and money in true long-term partnerships and genuine reciprocal relationships (it cannot be just a financial transaction). It takes time to build trust and understanding.
- Be patient, listen and be open to learning. Truly listen to the needs of Indigenous partners and what they want to see for the sector.
- Develop and educate your team. Consult Indigenous groups to conduct cultural awareness training.
- Let Indigenous people lead partnerships and projects. Do not try to take them over. Again, be better at listening, not just suggesting solutions from a colonial mindset.
- Indigenous is not homogenous – every community will have their own challenges, priorities, and process of reclaiming its culture. Some communities may not be in a place where they want to share with the world.

*"Approach Truth and Reconciliation from a place of respect, action, commitment, understanding, and continually striving to be better"*

## RESOURCES

Further reading:

[Indigenous Tourism Alberta](#)

[Indigenous | Alberta Canada \(travelalberta.com\)](#)

[Experience Indigenous Culture & Heritage | Destination Indigenous](#)



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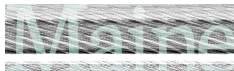
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