Alberta Indigenous Tourism Planning Day
Celebrated by over 200 attendees from across the province

Tsuut’ina Nation, Treaty 7 Territory (Calgary, AB), November 6, 2017 -- Collaboration, partnership, strategy and growth were the themes of the Alberta Indigenous Tourism Planning Day, held at the Grey Eagle Resort & Casino on November 6, 2017, and organized by the Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada (ATAC).

The planning day was a next step following ATAC’s extensive research and outreach to the local Indigenous tourism industry across Alberta earlier this year. This outreach included online and in person surveys, where 98 per cent of respondents supported the development of an Indigenous tourism association for Alberta, led by Indigenous tourism entrepreneurs.

The goal is for the local Alberta Indigenous tourism community to launch an Alberta Indigenous tourism association in early 2018. ATAC has committed three years of support funding (2018-2021) of $65,000 per year or $195,000. ATAC has also identified 86 export-ready Indigenous tourism businesses and the goal for the new provincial organization is to grow tourism-related Indigenous businesses across the province.

Over 200 Indigenous entrepreneurs attended Monday’s workshop, with many staying on to attend the larger 2017 International Aboriginal Tourism Conference, November 7 & 8. Discussion themes for the day included community development; entrepreneurial development; artisan development; tourism marketing and experience development; and partnering for tourism growth.

“The passion and interest we experienced across Alberta has already established a strong foundation for success,” says Keith Henry, CEO of ATAC. “Now is time for action and I am calling on our partners across Canada and Alberta to help support this significant endeavor for positive economic development for all Indigenous communities in this province.”

To ensure a new association is successful, the following areas for ongoing support were identified:

1) Training, Education, Awareness
2) Access to Capital/Financial Support
3) Marketing of Indigenous Tourism
4) Product Development and Business Planning
5) Authenticity, Protocol and Cultural Respect
6) Partnerships and Tourism Industry/Government Support

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“The level of engagement since we launched this initiative has been fantastic including the participation in today’s full day workshop,” says Brenda Holder, owner of Mahikan Trails based in Canmore and an ATAC board director. “By working together, I have no doubt Alberta can lead the country with the quality and growth of Indigenous tourism experiences.”

ATAC has identified nine Indigenous tourism industry champions who will work with Holder to move forward in establishing the Alberta Indigenous tourism association. Once formed, Alberta will join BC, Quebec and Yukon who have already established regional Indigenous tourism associations. The role of the regional association is to deliver strategy and establish industry sustainability, led by the support and feedback from local Indigenous operators. Key partners who are supporting ATAC’s development work include Destination Canada, Travel Alberta, Government of Alberta (Ministry of Culture & Tourism) and Indigenous Northern Affairs Canada.

About the Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada
The Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada (ATAC) works to improve the socio-economic condition of Aboriginal people through the provisions of economic development advisory services, tourism conferences, capacity development training and workshops, industry research, and information for Aboriginal tourism operators and communities within the 13 regions; 10 provinces and three territories of Canada. ATAC develops relationships with other groups and regions with similar mandates, uniting the Aboriginal tourism industry in Canada and works to enable collective support, product development, promotion and marketing of authentic Aboriginal cultural tourism businesses in a respectful protocol. The ATAC Board is made up of Aboriginal tourism industry representatives from each of the provinces and territories. www.aboriginalcanada.ca.

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