



**INDIGENOUS**  
TOURISM ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

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## Indigenous Tourism Sector in Canada Exceeding All Growth Targets

*New research by the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada and The Conference Board of Canada shows the Indigenous tourism sector in Canada continues to grow at a rapid rate*

**February 20 2019, Coast Salish Territories (Vancouver, B.C.)**— Indigenous tourism sector growth is outpacing Canadian tourism activity overall, according to new research released by The Conference Board of Canada and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC).

The research shows the direct economic benefits (GDP) attributed to the Indigenous tourism sector in Canada rose 23.2 per cent between 2014 and 2017, going from \$1.4 billion to \$1.7 billion. Compared with a 14.5 per cent increase in overall tourism activity in Canada, this growth shows the recent and momentous acceleration of the Indigenous tourism sector across the country.

Five key findings highlighted in the research:

- 1) Indigenous tourism sector growth is outpacing Canadian tourism activity overall.
  - Growth in Indigenous tourism sector employment and GDP is substantially outpacing growth in employment and GDP generated by overall tourism activity in Canada (employment: +17.3% vs +5.1%; GDP: +23.2% vs +14.5%)
- 2) Indigenous tourism is diverse and made up of many different business models.
  - While the main drivers of employment and GDP contributions come from air transportation and resort casinos, it is the cultural workers, such as Elders and knowledge keepers, who define many of the authentic Indigenous cultural experiences available to tourists in Canada.
- 3) Barriers to growth include access to financing and training.
  - Indigenous tourism is growing and wants to grow more, with business owners identifying access to financing and marketing support & training as their main barriers to growth.
- 4) International travellers are particularly important to Indigenous cultural tourism.
  - Compared with Indigenous tourism businesses without a cultural focus, those involved in cultural tourism more frequently mentioned tourists from foreign markets as part of their customer base.
- 5) Indigenous tourism has growth potential.
  - At the current pace of Indigenous tourism growth, and with continued investment, there is a strong case for ITAC to reach its goals outlined in its new Five-Year Plan: [\*Accelerating Indigenous Tourism in Canada \(2019–2024\)\*](#).

Ontario employs the largest amount of people in the Indigenous tourism sector, providing 12,924 jobs, followed by British Columbia (6,957) and Quebec (4,083). In terms of direct economic footprint of the Indigenous tourism sector, Ontario continues to lead the way, with the highest GDP at \$622.1 million, followed by British Columbia (\$260.3 million) and Alberta (\$166.2 million).

[Click here for the full research report by The Conference Board of Canada.](#)



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### Quotes:

- “The findings of this study are very encouraging, and I am pleased to see that Indigenous tourism is thriving in Canada. Tourism is one of our nation’s most important growth opportunities and provides economic benefits in every region of our country. I want to make sure that Indigenous tourism gets the recognition it deserves, in a spirit of respect, openness and sincere partnership.” - Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie.
- “Indigenous tourism plays a significant role in the Canadian economy, and is outpacing the growth of other tourism sectors. Our government is proud to support this quickly expanding industry through the Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program. And as this report clearly demonstrates, there is an incredible amount of opportunity created through tourism for Indigenous peoples and businesses across the country.” – Honourable Seamus O’Regan, Minister of Indigenous Services
- “Indigenous tourism operators are clear in the need for balanced growth that also promotes local cultures, preserves heritage, and supports community economic development.” - Adam Fiser, Principal Research Associate, The Conference Board of Canada.
- “This research shows what an enormous impact the Indigenous tourism sector has on our country’s overall economic and cultural success. Investments in Indigenous tourism are paying off for all of Canada.” - Keith Henry, president and CEO of ITAC.

### About The Conference Board of Canada

The Conference Board of Canada is Canada’s leading independent research organization. Our mission is to empower and inspire leaders to build a stronger future for all Canadians through our trusted research and unparalleled connections.

### About the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada

The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) is a national non-profit and membership association which focuses on creating partnerships between associations, organizations, government departments and industry leaders from across Canada to support the growth of Indigenous tourism in Canada and address the demand for development and marketing of authentic Indigenous experiences. ITAC has an established [membership process](#) that enables Indigenous tourism industry partners to engage with and show support for Indigenous tourism.

ITAC also publishes an annual experience guide, detailing Indigenous tourism experiences available for visitors across Canada. Interest in Indigenous tourism has grown dramatically as more travelers experience the authenticity, uniqueness and diversity of stories and products offered by Indigenous peoples and communities across Canada. This year’s guide features more than 170 experiences, stories and businesses to inspire you to visit and learn more about the many Indigenous nations, peoples and communities across Canada. To download the full 2018/19 Guide to Indigenous Tourism in Canada go to: <https://indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/indigenous-tourism-experience-guide/>.



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For more information, visit [www.indigenoustourism.ca](http://www.indigenoustourism.ca).

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