

## **Canada's authentic Aboriginal travel experiences worth \$1.4 billion annually** *Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada unveils The Path Forward 2016-2021*

**March 29, 2016, Coast Salish Territories (Vancouver, BC)** – The Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada (ATAC) plans to overcome barriers and maximize opportunities for differentiation, growth, and financial reward, increasing annual Canadian GDP from Aboriginal tourism by \$300 million over the next five years.

As outlined within ATAC's [strategic five-year plan](#) (2016-2021), when ATAC reaches this goal by 2021, the Aboriginal tourism industry in Canada will employ a total of 40,233 Aboriginal tourism workers and have 50 new Aboriginal tourism operators at export-ready status. ATAC has identified a required investment of \$13 million over five years to fund the tactics and programs to meet the objectives.

“Our aim is to build key partnerships and leverage resources, such as the MOU signed in December 2015 with Destination Canada. The ATAC plan will address the demand for development and marketing of authentic Aboriginal experiences that are market and export ready, delivering a meaningful and memorable experience to travellers in Canada,” says Keith Henry, CEO of ATAC. “This five-year strategic plan understands the reality of the challenges, success through existing and future partnerships, and identifies key opportunities to strategically overcome obstacles to success and foster a thriving Canadian Aboriginal tourism economy.”

The recent [Economic Impact of Aboriginal Tourism in Canada](#) report commissioned by ATAC found the Aboriginal tourism industry in Canada employs more than 33,000 people and produces \$1.4 billion toward Canada's annual GDP. The report also highlighted key findings that may hinder the growth and sustainability of Canada's Aboriginal tourism industry such as a lack of leading organizations with a coordinated industry approach, and limited support and mentorship for new Aboriginal tourism businesses and associations.

### **Further highlights of the ATAC Plan:**

#### Strategic areas of focus:

- Development of product/experiences, training/education, and quality assurance.
- Marketing to international targets, maximize ROI, and align with Destination Canada.
- Leadership in advocacy, representation, strategy, and organizational sustainability.
- Partnership with members and supporters that is collaborative and mutually beneficial.

#### Key opportunities:

- Marketing efforts to increase awareness and demand for Aboriginal tourism.
- Product and business development of market/ export-ready Aboriginal tourism experiences.
- Support of provinces/territories to develop and grow their Aboriginal tourism associations.
- Securing long-term funding support and industry expertise from major organizations.
- Creation of standards, guidelines and best practices for Aboriginal tourism businesses to achieve market and export-ready status.
- Growth in interest from travel trade/ tour operators.

For more information on the Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada (ATAC), visit [www.AboriginalCanada.ca](http://www.AboriginalCanada.ca).

### **About Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada**



Originally formed as the Aboriginal Tourism Marketing Circle, the Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada (ATAC) was incorporated in 2015 as a not-for-profit society. Today the ATAC Board of Directors includes representation from 15 Aboriginal tourism industry representatives and organizations from across the country who understand the challenges and opportunities to grow Aboriginal tourism. Through a unified Aboriginal tourism industry voice, ATAC focuses on creating partnerships between associations, organizations, government departments and industry leaders from across Canada to support the growth of Aboriginal tourism including 80 Aboriginal experiences from every province and territory in Canada. The ATAC research findings were from the “National Aboriginal Tourism Research Project” completed in 2015 by ATAC in order to: develop a current profile of the Aboriginal tourism industry in Canada; understand Aboriginal tourism industry trends and identify opportunities and challenges associated with these trends; and determine the direction and needs of Canada’s Aboriginal tourism industry to move forward.

[www.AboriginalCanada.ca](http://www.AboriginalCanada.ca).

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