



INDIGENOUS
TOURISM ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

ASSOCIATION TOURISTIQUE
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DU CANADA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Close to 100 Indigenous tourism businesses receive \$1.850 million in stimulus funds from phase one of Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada's COVID-19 Development Stimulus Fund.

COAST SALISH TERRITORY (Vancouver, BC) – May 14, 2020 – The first phase of funding is being released to 94 export-ready Indigenous tourism businesses from across Canada who applied for grants of up to \$25,000 from the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada's (ITAC) COVID-19 Development Stimulus Fund.

Following the April 30 application deadline, ITAC had received over 600 applications from Indigenous tourism businesses across Canada requesting \$14.4 million in total. These funds are being used to help Indigenous entrepreneurs and their businesses stay afloat during the shutdown of the global tourism industry as a result of COVID-19.

To raise as much money as possible, ITAC allocated its annual development grant money along with a large amount of savings from other programs. Paired with additional federal funding, ITAC hopes the program will help businesses to prepare for future tourism seasons by allowing them to focus on market awareness, training qualified staff and designing sustainable business growth strategies.

“As we are still advocating for more funding for the Indigenous tourism industry, we are releasing funds in phases, knowing these funding requests are becoming more and more urgent every day,” says Keith Henry, President and CEO of ITAC.

As ITAC is successful in raising more funding, grants will be distributed to Indigenous tourism businesses who are at various stages of their tourism development:

Phase 1: Export-ready businesses - refers to tourism experiences offered by businesses which meet all of the Market-Ready criteria and are also prepared to market and partner with travel trade and international distribution sales channels.



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Phase 2: Market Ready Businesses - refers to tourism experiences offered by businesses which meet all of the Visitor Ready criteria and has been in operation for more than two years.

Phase 3: Visitor Ready Businesses - refers to tourism experiences offered by businesses who have all of the licenses, permits and insurance in place in order to operate legally.

Phase 4: Doors Open Businesses - refers to tourism-related services and experiences that are newly available, in start-up and that currently receive customers, mostly locals and regionals.

“As I have said in the past, we continue to work with our partners at the federal government level to identify additional funding from Indigenous-led sources as each day becomes more critical for the survival of our industry,” says Keith Henry, ITAC’s President and CEO. “Without an immediate injection of funds including grants, hundreds of Indigenous tourism operators are forecasted to go out of business before the end of the (non-existent) summer season with potential losses of \$1.4B in GDP Contribution and more than 32,000 jobs losses. This money will literally mean the difference whether our members will survive this pandemic or not and we are currently reviewing the phase 2 applicants and hoping to help more businesses in the near future.”

To view the initial successful applicants in Phase 1, click [here](#).

For more information on the ITAC’s COVID-19 Development Stimulus Fund, click [here](#).

To view all of ITAC’s communications around COVID-19 and the resources available, click [here](#).

About the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada

The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) is the lead organization tasked with growing the Indigenous tourism industry across the country. Inspired by a vision for a thriving Indigenous tourism economy sharing authentic, memorable and enriching experiences, ITAC develops relationships with other groups and regions with similar mandates. By uniting the Indigenous tourism industry in Canada, ITAC works to enable collective support, product development, promotion and marketing of authentic Indigenous cultural tourism businesses in a respectful protocol. Prior to 2020, Indigenous tourism was outpacing Canadian tourism activity overall, and international demand for Indigenous experiences was at an all-time high. Due to Covid-19, ITAC recently released [a report](#) on the financial challenges facing Indigenous tourism operators and recommended stimulus solutions. As well, a 2020-2021 revised [action plan](#) focused on sustaining Indigenous tourism in the face of COVID-19 was released in March.



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