The Path Forward
A Framework for Ontario Indigenous Tourism Recovery

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ABOUT ITO AND INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN ONTARIO

Ontario is resilient. Tourism Operators are resilient. Indigenous people are resilient. With Ontario home to the largest Indigenous tourism industry in Canada contributing $622 M to the GDP, 12,924 jobs, and 558 Indigenous tourism businesses (see 2019-20 Economic Impact Diagram below), the Ontario Indigenous Tourism sector will persevere and is well positioned to restart and recover when the world is ready.

ITO is the voice for Indigenous tourism in Ontario and is Ontario’s first and only province wide Indigenous tourism organization. As a grassroots organization, ITO supports, markets and grows Indigenous tourism in Ontario by focusing on the "4 pillars" - Cultural Authenticity, Training, Product Development, and Marketing.

PRIOR TO COVID 19

Indigenous tourism has seen unprecedented growth year after year through commitment-based partnerships between ITO, the Government of Ontario (through the MHSTCI), the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), the Government of Canada (through RDAs - Fednor & Feddev) and our many partners and members; bolstering the growth of Indigenous tourism to where it is today.

Indigenous led financial support will further the work we have all created, supported and achieved for nearly a decade; our belief is that this entire network of Indigenous tourism products and programming is at further risk unless ITO is able to align and co-facilitate support for the Ontario Indigenous tourism businesses and events in a meaningful way.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

As we collectively identify solutions to respond to an unprecedented event that will cause major issues within the broader tourism industry; we at ITO know it will undoubtedly be catastrophic for the Indigenous tourism industry in Ontario if we don’t continue to act.

From the Destination Canada – “Sustaining Canada’s tourism sector through COVID-19” analysis and options report. It is anticipated that approximately 57% of tourism businesses are expected to fail within 60 days of March 27th.

Based on information previously reported by ITO and ITAC; information in the Destination Canada report; the 2019-20 Economic Impact; and the possibility of losing 36% of revenue due to losing the 2021 summer. We are expecting the following conservative losses to occur in ONTARIO:

REVENUES: Loss of $330 million in direct revenues.

JOBS: Loss of 4,000 jobs in Indigenous tourism. Ontario is home to 12,924 (36.59%) Indigenous tourism jobs of the 39,038 in Canada.

BUSINESSES: Loss of 267 businesses. 558 (57%) of Canada’s 1,875 Indigenous tourism businesses are located in Ontario.
As an already vulnerable and fragile sector in the tourism industry, we are looking at likely losing much more than the estimates previously mentioned. This will not only cripple the Ontario Indigenous tourism industry but will also severely damage the National Indigenous tourism industry as well. Ontario is the largest contributor to the sector nationally.

In order for ITO to help the sector get through this, alignment with Ontario, Canada, and strong industry leaders is critical. Thus, ITO will focus on a Three Phase Approach on The Path Forward.

**PROTECT: PHASE 1** - ITO will help protect the Ontario Indigenous tourism sector and continue to support and align with direct Investment into national partners such as ITAC, Destination Canada, TIAC, and Tourism HR Canada; Provincial partners such as the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) and the other Ontario Tourism Sector organizations; and regional partners like the Ontario Regional Tourism organizations. ITO has already repurposed resources to engage Business Support Brokers to help Indigenous tourism businesses navigate through the crisis and prepare for a Summer with little to no revenue.

**RESTART: PHASE 2** - ITO will coordinate and administer direct investment into ITO’s “4 pillars” for 3 years to offset long term issues facing Indigenous tourism businesses and events in Ontario. This will include coordinating the following;

- Embracing innovative experience delivery methods and revenue models for Indigenous tourism businesses;
- Assisting businesses develop new product offerings for both domestic and international markets;
- Engage 7 Business Recovery Specialists to assist businesses through this phase;
- Align the Ontario Indigenous tourism businesses with partners and organizations who can help them not just recover but surge forward when the time comes; and
- Partner and Coordinate the necessary training so Ontario Indigenous businesses can thrive in 2021 and beyond.

**RECOVER: PHASE 3** - Coordinate and Administer the ITO Strategic and post pandemic plan while developing a sustainable tourism model to support Ontario Indigenous businesses over the next two years. As recovery is not solely a short term process, ITO is committed to monitoring and responding to the needs of the industry in a responsible and evidence-informed manner. ITO is also committed to effectively and efficiently assist in the growth of the sector in the next 3-5 years of recovery.

**RESOURCES NEEDED 2020-22**

Should “hyper-domestic” or domestic travel occur in 2020 with International travel permitted in 2021 and we plan expected timelines of our Three Phase Approach, we anticipate $2.5 M will be needed by ITO to help support the Indigenous Tourism industry over the next two years.

While the situation is still evolving, ITO continues to collaborate and move forward in a responsible and strategic manner. As ITO progresses through the framework, Indigenous tourism operators will be well positioned to once again contribute to the Ontario and Canadian economies.