



Indigenous Tourism Ontario and ORIGIN Partner to Grow Indigenous Tourism Through Virtual Reality Tours

July 28, 2020, Toronto, ON---Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) and ORIGIN partner to enhance Indigenous tourism product offerings as well as help Indigenous businesses on the path to recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ITO and ORIGIN have partnered to produce compelling, real-life Indigenous tourism experiences in Virtual Reality (VR). This innovative technology will be used to enhance product offerings, increase exposure, and contribute to the growing library of educational content in ORIGIN's ImmersiveLink Cultural App. The ability to produce VR content will provide Indigenous businesses with the tools to grow their products and fulfill increasing global demand for Indigenous tourism.

ITO recently released *Continuing Our Journey*, a 5-year Strategic and COVID-19 Recovery Plan for Ontario Indigenous tourism businesses. As ITO embarks on implementation of this plan, partnership with ORIGIN will help businesses 'renew' by expanding reach through different platforms and providing visitors with new and innovative ways of accessing cultural tourism experiences; this is an essential part of addressing short term travel restrictions and long term gaps in supply and demand.

Together, ITO and ORIGIN aim to sustain Ontario's Indigenous tourism industry; promote diversity and a deeper understanding of Indigenous world views; and highlight, capture, and preserve valuable Indigenous knowledge and traditions through accessible VR tours.

"Telling the Indigenous story through an Indigenous lens is critical for Indigenous experiences in Ontario. ITO and partners are helping the industry get structured in this technology era that will allow for the Indigenous tourism community to tell their story on their terms while preserving, renewing and rejuvenating the industry. This amazing work with Origin will advance the Indigenous, provincial, national and international tourism agendas."

- Kevin Eshkawkogan, President & Chief Executive Officer of ITO



“We are excited about the opportunity to work with ITO and its membership to increase awareness of Indigenous knowledge keepers and tourism experiences available in Ontario. We believe that our ImmersiveLink Cultural App and developing relationships like this one with ITO are ways that we can continue to contribute to reconciliation across Canada. Great teachings open people’s eyes, minds and hearts to new pathways. Our goal is to provide immersive and inspiring learning and development experiences using the power of technology!”

- Melissa Hardy Giles, Owner, ORIGIN

"Congratulations to ITO and ORIGIN on this partnership that will deliver innovative solutions for Indigenous tourism and hospitality operators who have been hit-hard by the COVID-19 pandemic," said Greg Rickford, Minister of Indigenous Affairs. "This use of technology will promote Indigenous tourism and create opportunities and economic growth for Indigenous businesses as our economy restarts and recovers."

About Indigenous Tourism Ontario

Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) is the province’s first and only dedicated Indigenous tourism organization that focuses on uniting communities, Indigenous organizations and industry leaders to support the growth of Indigenous tourism in Ontario. Through product development and marketing of authentic Indigenous experiences, ITO establishes a platform for Indigenous cultural expression and preservation through tourism.

About ORIGIN

ORIGIN has a passionate team of innovators, collaborators and connectors who are driven to engage and inspire our future workforce. The company innovates the way people connect to career and culture. The ORIGIN approach is to design, develop and deliver leading-edge technology solutions that improve access to employment and culture opportunities across diverse industries and sectors. A major focus of the company’s work is with Indigenous people and communities, in a spirit of economic reconciliation, as well as to celebrate the rich Indigenous culture of this land.

Contacts:

Kevin Eshkawkogan, Indigenous Tourism Ontario
keshkawkogan@indigenoustourimsontario.ca

Melissa Hardy-Giles, ORIGIN
melissa@originrecruitment.com