



Indigenous Tourism Ontario Develops Five-Year Strategic & COVID-19 Recovery Plan

July 22, 2020 - Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation, Ontario

Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) has launched a five-year Strategic & COVID-19 Recovery Plan titled Continuing Our Journey which advances ITO's Path Forward Framework with the goal to Preserve, Renew, and Rejuvenate Canada's largest Indigenous tourism industry located in Ontario.

The Conference Board of Canada projects that the Indigenous tourism industry in Ontario could see a 63% decline in GDP, a 51% decline in employment, and the permanent closure of up to 218 businesses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic continues through the summer 2020 season, Indigenous tourism will continue to struggle and face uncertainty.

“We have lost 100% of our revenue for this summer and have already utilized all of our savings just to stay afloat to this point. We appreciate the support from the Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) Business Support program and are looking forward to further help... Although we are struggling right now, we have started thinking about how to come out of this.” - Art Trudeau, Mukwa Adventures, Sagamok, Ontario

ITO has worked diligently to develop a plan that explores and addresses how the Ontario Indigenous tourism industry can move forward balancing the social, economic, environmental, and cultural impacts (SEEC Model) of COVID-19. ITO's plan is inclusive of all and aligns with key partners such as the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) and the national Indigenous “Forward Together” recovery plan.

The four main goals of ITO's Strategic & COVID-19 Recovery Plan are:

- Developing Operational Sustainability & Brand Integrity
- Building Capacity & Increasing Economic Opportunities
- Marketing & Branding Authentic Products & Services
- Providing Support for Communities & Entrepreneurs

While identifying new opportunities that will allow the Indigenous tourism industry to continue pre-pandemic momentum, it is in alignment with over a dozen partners, including Destination Ontario and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario.



“Ontario is home to Canada’s largest Indigenous tourism industry and Destination Ontario recognizes the importance of Indigenous tourism experiences and products across the province. We commend Indigenous Tourism Ontario for their work in developing a five-year Strategic & COVID-19 Recovery Plan. We look forward to continuing our collaborative relationship with Indigenous Tourism Ontario to market unique and authentic Indigenous businesses and help drive visitation and expenditures back to this important sector.” - Lisa LaVecchia, President and CEO, Destination Ontario

“At the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) we are honoured to be a partner of Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO). Before the onset of COVID-19, Indigenous tourism was the fastest growing sector in our industry. Culture truly belongs to people and their communities, and we will continue to support ITO to ensure that Indigenous communities and businesses are able to share authentic Indigenous Stories with Ontario and the world. Indigenous culture and people represent the past and the future, and with the launch of this five year Strategic & COVID-19 Recovery Plan, we know that not only will Indigenous tourism recover, but it will continue to lead and take our industry to new heights.” - Beth Potter, President & CEO, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO)

The many voices of our industry have helped us curate this thoughtful plan which will **Preserve** our strong and resilient Indigenous tourism businesses, **Renew** our provincial Indigenous tourism industry on the heels of the pandemic’s retreat, and **Rejuvenate** the spirit of our people, visitors, and industry. ITO will continue to engage stakeholders and listen to our industry’s voices as we embark on implementing the plan.

“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 a manner that will allow for the Indigenous tourism community to tell their story on their terms while Preserving, Renewing, and Rejuvenating the industry. This work will complement and advance the Indigenous, provincial, and national tourism agendas.

To navigate these unfamiliar waters, we need many paddlers. By collaborating and welcoming partnerships while cementing financial commitments, we will collectively ensure ITO has the required resources to efficiently operate an organization dedicated to serving Ontario’s Indigenous tourism businesses.

Investment into ITO’s Plan will ensure sustainability and growth for our Indigenous tourism industry. We are mindful that we must work together hand in hand, while



ensuring Indigenous inclusivity for the betterment of all Ontarians.” - Kevin Eshkawkogan, President & Chief Executive Officer of ITO

View [ITO's Strategic and COVID-19 Recovery Plan](#)

About Indigenous Tourism Ontario

Indigenous Tourism Ontario is Ontario'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. As a member-driven provincial association guided by the needs of Indigenous tourism businesses, through product development and marketing of authentic Indigenous experiences, ITO establishes a platform for Indigenous cultural expression and preservation through tourism.

For more information, visit www.IndigenousTourismOntario.ca.

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