

# Walking Forward Together



mâmwokamâtowin created in partnership with

**EXPLORE  
EDMONTON**

With the support of:  
Prairies Economic  
Development Canada

**Canada**



**STORMY  
LAKE  
CONSULTING**



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I've always known that tourism is about relationships. But I have an even deeper, more personal understanding of the power and importance of relationships as I have started to know the Indigenous community here in Edmonton.

It all came together in a Pipe Ceremony at the Enoch Cree First Nation that my colleagues and I were honoured to be part of a few weeks ago. I've had a lot of different experiences in my career and in my life, but this was a first for me. A highlight. And a humbling experience.

After a brief, very cold and fortunately very sunny tour of the community, we gathered in the lower level of a community building. In the maskêkosak nêhiyawêwin office I was told. I was a bit apprehensive. I didn't know what to expect. On the inside I was worrying I would mess it up.

Sitting in ceremony I was focused on being in the moment. Thinking about the meaning behind the ceremony. Why we had been asked to participate and what it meant to be in the room. To get the blessing from the Enoch Cree and be invited into their homes and their nation. To understand a bit more about their day-to-day life and the work they have done over years to provide the quality of life they do for their community. That really struck me. It was a very welcoming.

There was power in the mix of people in the room. Elder Lorraine and the different generations. Watching Pipe Holder George work with his assistants.

The formality of the preparation for the ceremony. Caring for the pipe and treating it as a special thing. Watching the Pipe Holder pass knowledge to youth.

I was really surprised by the weight of the pipe. Not just physically, but emotionally. I was making sure I was following the instructions as well. And trying not to cough.



It was more insightful than anything else. I wanted to make sure I was offering myself and my whole self to be there for the moment. I was able to reflect on this journey we have started and how important it is to me that we continue.

The word “transformational” is thrown around quite loosely these days. It's too bad there isn't a better word I can use, but the whole experience was nothing short of transformational.

I knew in my head that it was important to support Indigenous Tourism. I left the Pipe Ceremony knowing in my heart it is about taking that journey together with a long-term commitment. A willingness to want to work together. An understanding of the tourism landscape and how much opportunity there is for tourism to contribute to the community in a good way.

This is the just the start of our relationship. To be offered to come into your homes and your nation was something quite special. And to be invited into your hearts as well.

Paul Hawes  
Explore Edmonton

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## TANSI, HELLO

Hello, my name is Willow. I am a composite of the people we've met during this journey to build an Indigenous Tourism Strategy for our people in Edmonton.

I represent the shared vision and experience of my community and I'd like to tell you my story of the Strategy.





I am a young nêhiyaw iskwêw (Cree woman). Not a “wet-behind-the-ears” youth, but still a youth. Especially in the eyes of nohkôm (my grandmother).

I am one of almost 100 Indigenous tourism operators in amiskwaciwâskahikan, Beaver Hills House. We host, we share stories and we share our traditions. Then we send our new friends home with a reminder of our thriving and beautiful culture. My cousin Aimee is a wonderful beader and her work hangs from many ears.

I am grounded by my connection to Mother Earth and inspired by my community and my Elders. They have taught me everything and I try to share what I have learned with others. Whenever I spend time with a visitor, I hope they leave looking at the world a bit differently. And it’s okay if they have more questions than answers. I do too.

I heard someone from the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada speak recently and they said, “Indigenous Tourism is BY Indigenous people. Not ABOUT Indigenous people.” This rang profoundly true.

Indigenous tourism is not a story of businesses serving guests. It is a story about relationships. Relationships with Mother Earth. Relationships with the Indigenous community, with tourism operators and with visitors from anywhere.

My story is the story of the future of Indigenous Tourism on Treaty 6 territory. It is a story of how we will build community and welcome visitors. How we support each other and build new relationships. How we – our visitors and our tourism community – will look deep into ourselves and feel a transformation begin.

As I have been taught, everything comes from the land. Everything we do will be on, with and for the land. Let me take you on a journey through this strategy to grow Indigenous tourism for the benefit of the community and to change the way every visitor views the world.





## WHAT IS INDIGENOUS TOURISM?

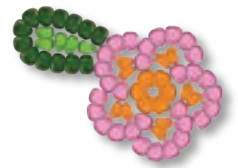
My tourism business is about sharing traditional stories to youth while their parents enjoy a wide array of Indigenous art. I am joined in the tourism community by other artisans, festivals, restaurants, attractions, outdoor experiences and accommodations. Most are Indigenous owned and operated, while others have been developed with meaningful and ongoing involvement from our people. These businesses offer employment, they build respectful relationships, and they are genuinely inclusive. We are allies.

It is important that we welcome into our Indigenous tourism community any business that shares our culture in a meaningful, authentic and appropriate way. Indigenous owned and operated is preferred, but we support any authentic experience. We come with open minds and open hearts and we can support them in many ways.

I've noticed that more and more tourism businesses are emerging. Most have very little profile and many visitors come and go without seeing them. It is important that we support these businesses and give them an opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.







## MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

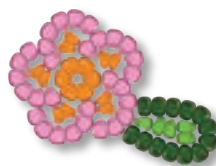
I want to build a relationship with Explore Edmonton – a relationship that is equitable, respectful and fair. It starts with an understanding of the truth. The truth of our past, our present and our future.

The spirit of Treaty is essential. We say, “we are all Treaty people,” but in my experience this isn’t fully appreciated by the non-Indigenous community. I’m living Treaty in my relationship with the tourism community and I hope the spirit of Treaty will be returned and honoured.

Indigenous Tourism must be led by our community. It is for us to determine what tourism means, what stories we want to share and how we want it to grow. Explore Edmonton is welcomed – even embraced – as a supporter of our vision. But it is not for them to decide what our tourism will look like.

This means we will move forward together as partners. This includes all our Indigenous friends, Treaty 8, Treaty 7, the Métis Nation of Alberta and our urban Indigenous relations. There are so many opportunities where we can explore and build stronger relationships.

When we follow these principles, we will move forward, together, in a good way.







## OUR GOAL

When I was growing up, I was taught that family is everything. Your ancestors ground you in who you are and your relations ground you where you belong. I was raised by my community, and I have the privilege of being able to give back. I am only starting on this journey, but it is one I commit my life to doing.

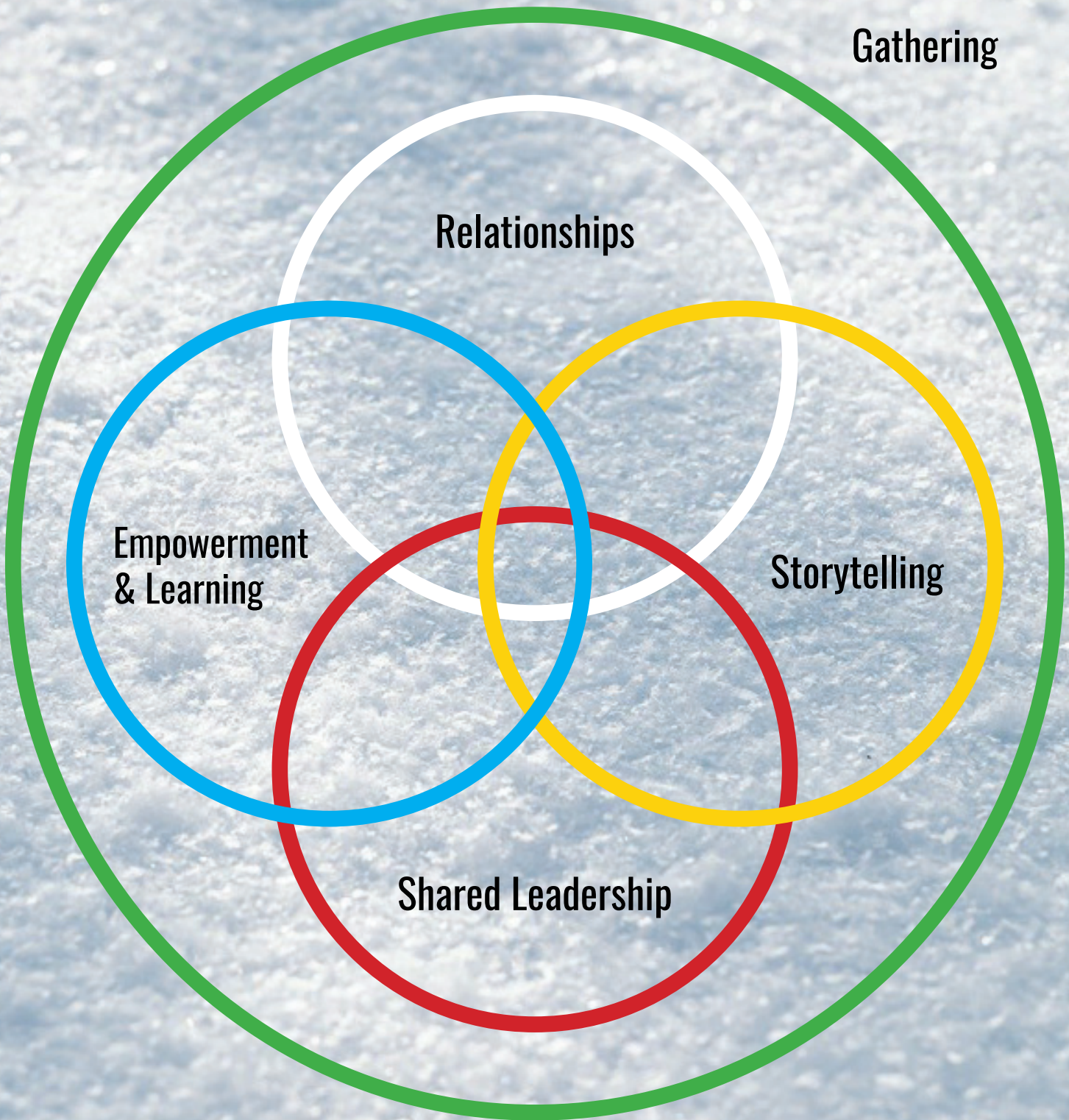
When I think about tourism, I see the same thing. The goal isn't only to earn money, it is to support the community. To help it thrive. Of course, this includes the financial aspects. More importantly, it includes relationships. It includes sharing the truth and sharing our culture in an appropriate way. It includes doing everything in a good way.

Our goal must be to include those people that see themselves as part of the tourism industry, and others who may not yet realize they are part of tourism. My cousin Aimee, the beautiful beader, had no idea her work meant something to tourists until one of them saw her work at my place. Those are the kinds of opportunities I hope we can create.

Of course, events where we gather to celebrate are important. No one can come to a Pow Wow, feel the drums and see the colours without being a different, better person when they leave. Gathering is essential to our culture and gathering is an important part of Indigenous Tourism.

I want us to build a thriving community of Indigenous tourism operators, entrepreneurs and events.





**Gathering**

**Relationships**

**Empowerment  
& Learning**

**Storytelling**

**Shared Leadership**



**To move forward in a good way, we will focus on five interconnected elements: relationships, storytelling, shared leadership and empowerment & learning, all surrounded by people gathering.**

**Like the hunters and gatherers, these will require wisdom, patience and resourcefulness. This is why we will be most successful when we do this as a community.**





## MIYO-WICÊHTOWIN: GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

We are living in a moment of “truth and reconciliation.” But I hope it is not just a moment. This must be a long-term commitment to working together. Together with our partners, including Explore Edmonton, we will need to invest our time and our hearts. We will need to build sincere and personal relationships. This is not about organizations working together, but people working together.

We want a strong Indigenous tourism community. One that is able to face adversity - because in tourism there are always challenges. And one that is joyful and proud. We will welcome other tourism operators and we will find allies and nurture our relationships with them.

There are some specific things we can do. We can build an Indigenous Tourism community and find and welcome as many people to join it as possible. We can build relationships with the communities in which we live.

We can share experiences with Explore Edmonton and other partners. Let's go to Pow Wows and ceremonies and feasts and other gatherings together. Before we have a meeting, we have to have a relationship. We also must build shared experiences between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous tourism communities.

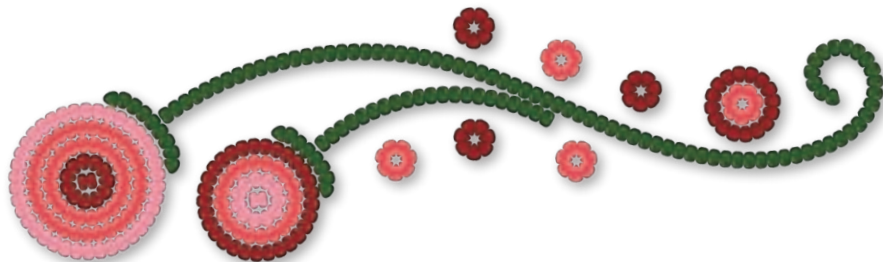
And let's not forget that we need relationships with the land, including earth, air and water, plants, animals, insects and birds. This is not something many non-Indigenous people understand, but it is critical. We want more allies of all kinds.

This work is bigger than us.





**DRAGONFLIES GO INTO ADVERSITY AND THEY GO INTO A RAINSTORM AND STILL HANG ON. I HOPE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPLORE EDMONTON AND INDIGENOUS TOURISM CONTINUES TO HANG ON AND FLY TOGETHER IF WE FACE ANY KIND OF ADVERSITY.**





## ÂCIMOSTAKÊWIN: STORYTELLING

I remember on the cold winter nights listening to my Uncle Rodney tell stories about wîsahkecâhk. He was so funny and got into so many troubles, but I always learned something. That is the power of storytelling. To be able to teach something important without even realizing you are being taught. If only school could have been so much fun.

Tourism is like storytelling. When we share our culture, when we share our experiences, we teach people something they need to know.

That is also how we can inspire people to visit. By telling our stories so that they want to experience them in person. The best stories capture your imagination with words and pictures and sounds. We will gather the ingredients to create great stories for our community.

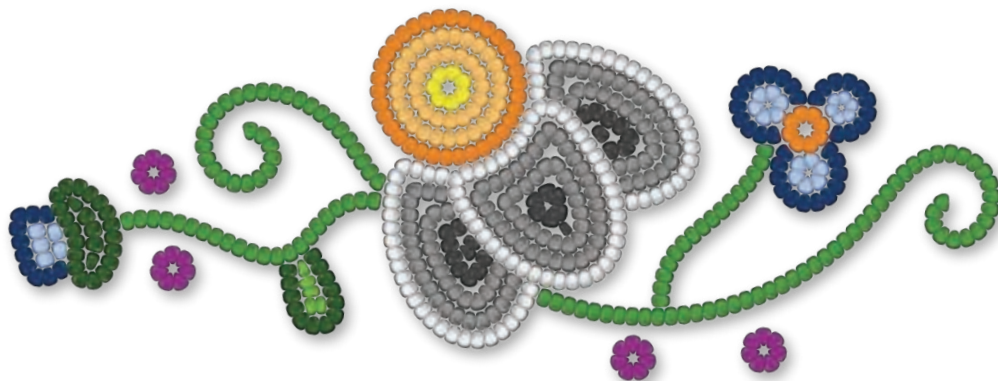
We also will make sure the stories we tell for marketing are respectful and authentic. And our partners are committed to helping us share these stories with visitors.

Stories are one of the magical elements of our culture and no one told a story better than Uncle Rodney. We can use storytelling to bring our tourism community together and to share our tourism experiences with the world.





**I LEARNED THAT THE GOOSE HAS A LIFELONG MATE AND SIMILARLY, I WOULD LIKE THERE TO BE A LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN US AND EXPLORE EDMONTON.**





## ONÎKÂNÊW: ONE WHO LEADS

Aunty Kathy was a Jingle Dancer back in the day. I didn't know this for a long while because she is so humble, but the way she encourages and supports all her family to dance has made her a mentor and role model for our family and our community.

In tourism, we need Aunty Kathies. We need mentors, role models and leaders. People that have a vision and who can inspire people to follow. And people who are selfless in their support of others. We all know these people in our community. We probably have no idea how they get everything done that they do - they are our champions.

Shared leadership will start with the Advisory Circle we gathered to develop the first tourism strategy. We will welcome more people to join, meet regularly and work closely with Explore Edmonton to provide guidance on everything they do. If you want to get involved, let us know. We always want to find more leaders.

Our next great tourism business leaders are probably in high school right now. Finding and supporting these youth will ensure that we thrive as a tourism community. We need to find opportunities for these youth to prosper.

We also want to make sure that our relationship isn't restricted to just one or two people at Explore Edmonton. We want the entire organization to know us, our culture and our history - personally - so that our relationships endure and thrive.







**THE PILEATED WOODPECKER IS ONE OF MY FAVOURITE BIRDS -  
THEY CONTRIBUTE TO THE HEALTH OF THE FOREST. THIS IS HOW  
I HOPE TO RUN MY BUSINESS IN OUR TOURISM ECOSYSTEM.**





## MACIKISKĒYITAM: LEARNING

When I started my tourism business, there was so much I didn't know. I was lucky that some of my relations had tried a similar thing and they could point me in the right direction. And I still have lots to learn. It's almost overwhelming sometimes.

We can start by sharing knowledge about visitors to our community. There is lots of information that can help us make better decisions. To be more efficient in how we market and present ourselves. To find the kind of visitors we want to have to visit.

Explore Edmonton has an amazing amount of information that can be shared with the Indigenous tourism community. We can work together to make sure the information is easy to access and easy to understand.

There also is an opportunity to help start-up businesses grow quickly. We can provide them with support on business management, regulations, government relations (such as getting grants) and marketing. Like a warm blanket, we can surround new businesses with the support and information they need to be successful.





**EDMONTON MEANS BEAVER HILL HOUSE. FOR ME, IT'S BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION AND WORKING TOGETHER; BEING THAT FOUNDATION SO THAT WE CAN MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER.**





## MÂWACIHITOWIN: A GATHERING OF PEOPLE

Last summer we had over 100 family members gather. There were so many children running around we never got a solid count. It was chaos.

Pure, lovely, fun and spiritually uplifting chaos.

That is what gathering means. Bringing people together to connect and celebrate. We want to use gatherings to bring our Indigenous Tourism community together, and to welcome visitors into our hearts.

We'll start by reaching out to anyone in Indigenous tourism and bringing them into the community. Let them know they are welcomed and supported.

We'll find new opportunities to gather with our partners and allies. A way for them to get to know us better and to create stories we share.

We will also find ways to bring Indigenous culture into more events, reaching as many people as possible in the places they already gather.

When you go to a Pow Wow, the drums strike you to the core and your soul is uplifted. This is the power of gathering that supports our entire Strategy.









As my younger brother, River, likes to remind me, I like to talk.  
Thank you for listening to what I have shared today.

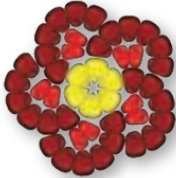
I believe in the power of Indigenous tourism to help our communities, culture and traditions thrive. I believe we will do this best by starting with relationships, sharing our stories, nurturing leaders, constantly learning – all the while coming together as a tourism community. It is a bit like berry picking - where I know that I am part of the land and the land is part of me. Tourism brings people together and develops interconnectedness. And when the conditions are right, tourism can flourish like the best berry patch (although we don't want to keep tourism a family secret).

Thank you to the tourism community for getting involved in this journey to develop an Indigenous Tourism Strategy. Thank you to the Advisory Circle for their time and wisdom. Thank you to Explore Edmonton for coming to this relationship with good intentions, open hearts and open minds. Thank you to our families and communities for their support.

And thank you to our future visitors. We look forward to sharing our beautiful culture with you.

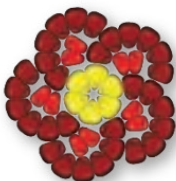
**AHAW**





Indigenous tourism sheds light on the path towards healing and revitalization. If you are interested in joining us on our journey, please reach out to my friend Shannon at Explore Edmonton to find out more about the opportunities Indigenous tourism can provide.

Shannon McEwen  
Indigenous Tourism Development Specialist  
[smcewen@exploreedmonton.com](mailto:smcewen@exploreedmonton.com)  
780-902-6592

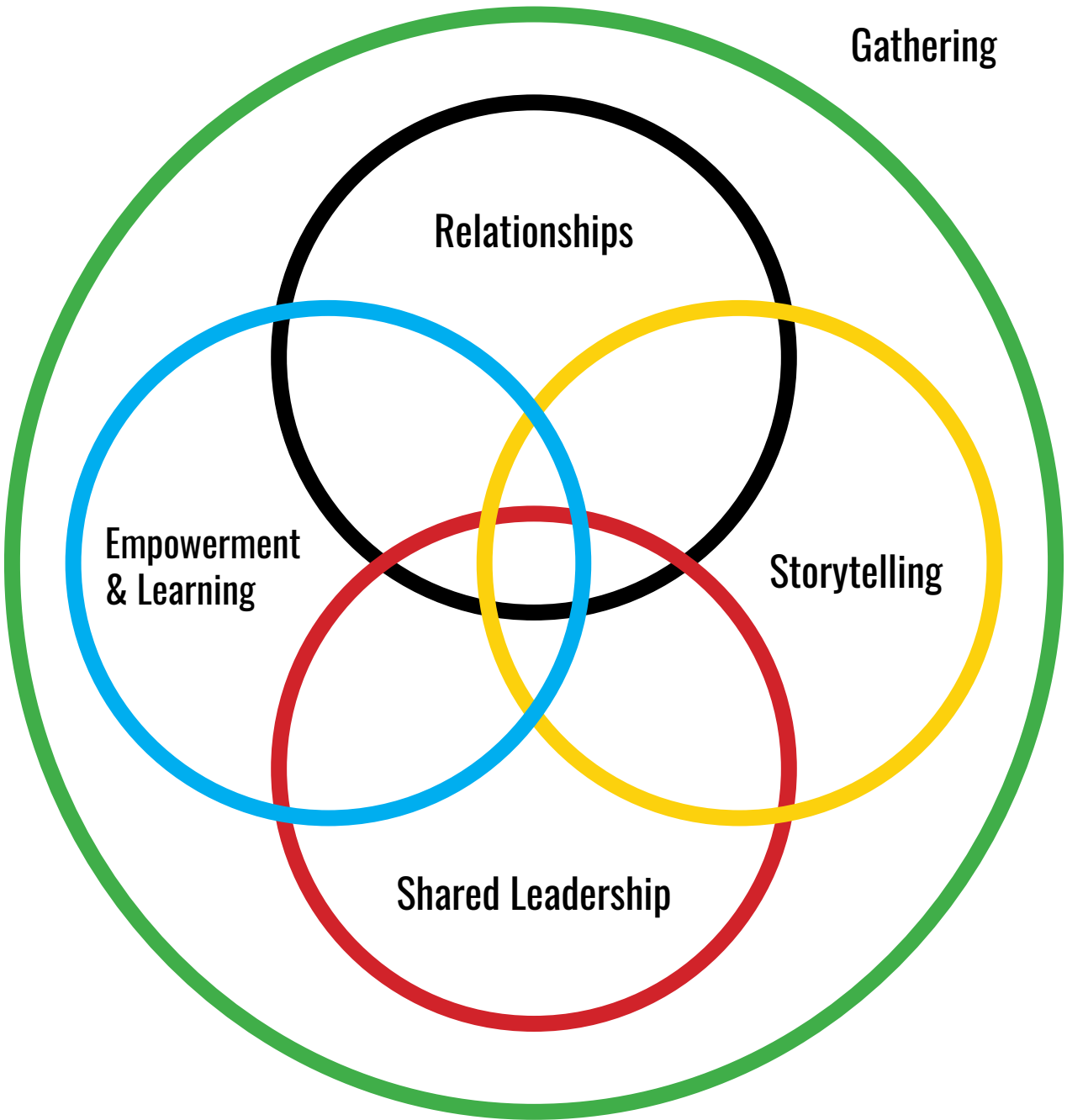






# STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

**A THRIVING COMMUNITY OF INDIGENOUS TOURISM OPERATORS, ENTREPRENEURS AND EVENTS.**





## RELATIONSHIPS

## RELATIONSHIPS

- Sustain a long-term Explore Edmonton commitment. This is not just a project.
- Build a strong Indigenous tourism community.
- Develop sincere and personal relationships between Explore Edmonton and the Indigenous Tourism Community.
- Connect the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.
- Leverage the existing network of allies.

When the people are in harmony with each other, the land can thrive and sustain itself.



## STORYTELLING

- Have a presence in Explore Edmonton marketing.
- Build understanding by sharing modern and traditional Indigenous stories.
- Create itineraries, self-drive/guided.
- Develop Indigenous tourism wayfinding.
- Encourage the development of more immersive and land-based experiences.

The great bear and the seven birds, a traditional star story of the Cree, where even the smallest of creatures can do great things.

A woman on the left is wearing a traditional Indigenous headband with a pink flower and a colorful, sequined top. She is looking down at a book. A woman on the right, wearing a blue top, is smiling and looking at the same book. In the background, there are shelves with various bottles and jars, suggesting a shop or a workshop. A large blue circle is overlaid on the image, containing the text "EMPOWERMENT & LEARNING".

## EMPOWERMENT & LEARNING

### EMPOWERMENT & LEARNING

- Support youth entering the tourism community.
- Introduce Communities, Operators and Entrepreneurs to resources and networks.
- Build marketing expertise in the Indigenous tourism community.
- Help operators reach market and/or export readiness.
- Build an Indigenous Tourism Incubator.

We learn from our matriarchs and our elders, and we must think 7 generations ahead.



## SHARED LEADERSHIP

### SHARED LEADERSHIP

- Operate with Indigenous values.
- Let the Indigenous Community lead the tourism conversation.
- Find tourism leaders in the Indigenous tourism community.
- Support and sustain the Advisory Circle.
- Help Explore Edmonton make Indigenous-values-aligned decisions.
- Identify relevant (Indigenous) measures of success.
- Leverage the existing network of allies.



## GATHERING

### GATHERING

- Bring people into the community who don't realize they are a part of it.
- Bring the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community together regularly.
- Create a catalyst event.
- Promote Indigenous tourism Industry events.
- Engage Edmonton through Indigenous events.





# OUR TARGET AUDIENCE

## KEY AUDIENCES

The following audiences approach Indigenous experiences differently, but there are a few key values in common:

Want learning about Indigenous culture to be led by Indigenous people.

Want to know that the Indigenous community will benefit from the money spent on Indigenous tourism.

Enjoy immersive and hands-on experiences, including Indigenous food, crafting, storytelling or tours led by an Indigenous guide.

## YOUNG CANADIANS

Most receptive to Indigenous experiences, valuing Indigenous owned and operated experiences. This group currently participates in the more popular activities such as festivals, events, crafts and cuisine.

**Values:** Socializing. Immersive experiences.

**Age:** 18-34

**Annual household income:** \$40,000-\$100,000

**Education:** Mixed

**Arriving from:** Edmonton and elsewhere in Alberta (primarily short-haul)

## CANADIAN FAMILIES

Seeking educational experiences to do together and are already participating in common, existing experiences such as Indigenous events and festival, arts and crafts, and learning about residential schools.

**Values:** Immersive experiences, Indigenous culture and ceremony.

**Age:** 30-50

**Annual household income:** \$60,000-\$140,000

**Education:** Mostly College / University

**Arriving from:** Edmonton and surrounding communities (primarily short-haul, with some long-haul families visiting friends and family)

## HIGH VALUE TRAVELLERS

Affluent US and international long-haul travellers that are compelled by Canadian history, seeking a culturally unique experience. Indigenous experiences are often an element of the trip rather than the purpose of the travel. Women are interested in immersive experiences with deep connection, men seek outdoor experiences.

This group can be a sustainable market attracted to experiences that are Indigenous-guided, highly immersive and unique.

**Values:** Intimate, immersive, land-based experiences. Highly polished presentation.

**Age:** 50-65

**Annual household income:** \$200,000+

**Education:** College/University and above

**Arriving from:** Texas, California, New York, UK, Germany

## CORPORATE MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

To enhance conventional corporate meetings (e.g., board meetings, executive retreats), Indigenous-run venues can offer education on Indigenous culture and practice as part of the agenda. This primarily Edmonton-based clientele will expect the conventional conveniences of meeting spaces (snacks, Wifi, projectors, outlets, etc.), enriched by Indigenous-led education.

A second category of opportunities in corporate meetings and conferences is for attendees of conferences primarily hosted in non-Indigenous venues (e.g., hotels, Edmonton Convention Centre). For this audience, Indigenous tourism will be an add-on to their primary reason for visiting Edmonton. For the conference organizers, Indigenous tourism will be an incentive for attendees and a differentiator from other destinations. Conference organizers will value visually compelling, participative experiences that are easily explained to attendees.

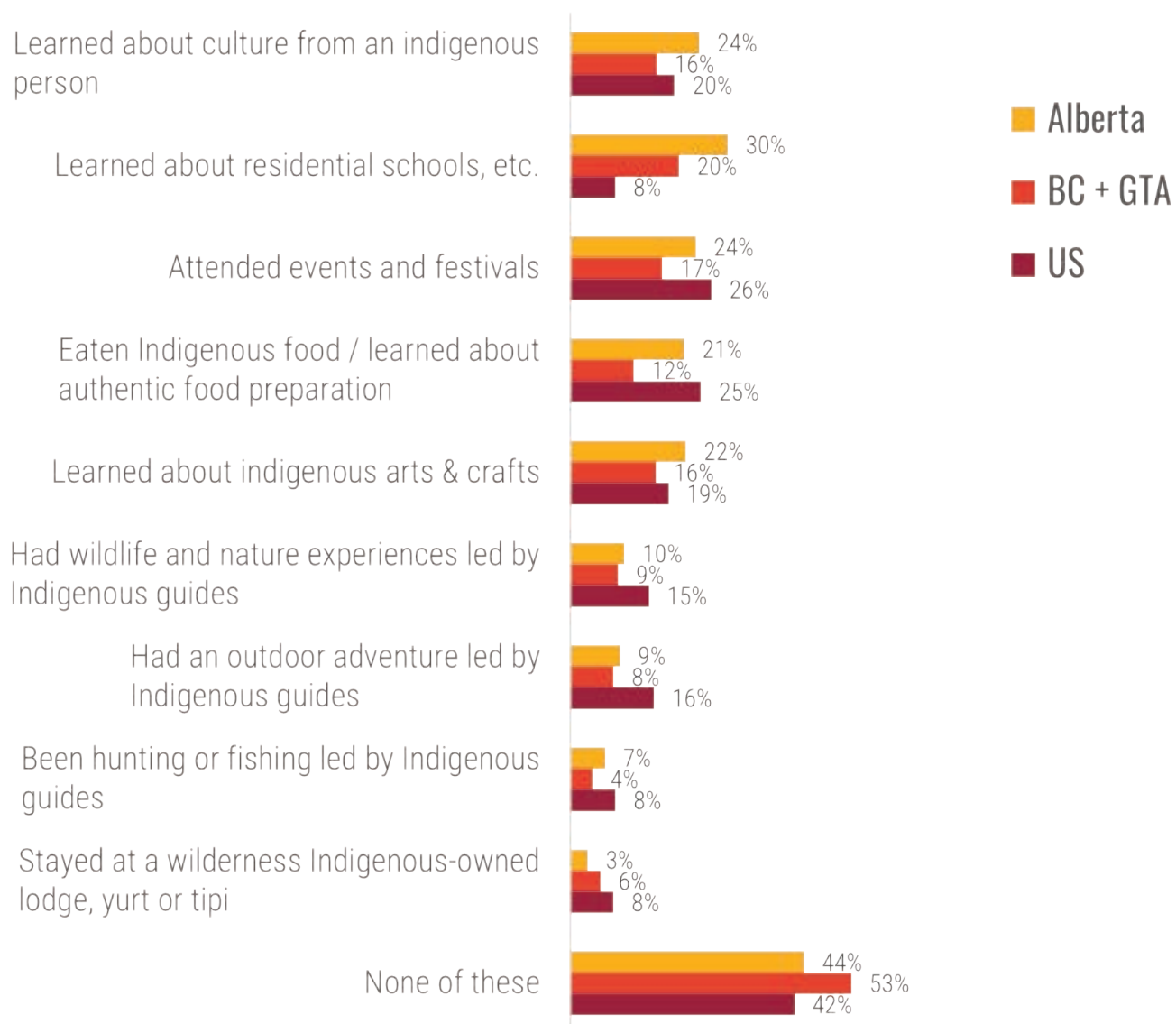
**Values:** Indigenous cultural practices and EDI training. Conventional conveniences and comforts of meeting spaces. Charismatic, visually compelling experiences.

**Arriving from:** Edmonton, conferences hosted in Edmonton

# PARTICIPATION IN INDIGENOUS TOURISM EXPERIENCES, LAST 2 YEARS

Across several categories Americans are 1.5 - 2 times more likely to have participated in Indigenous guided tourism experiences.

Americans who have participated in indigenous guided experiences have higher intent to visit Alberta.



# GETTING IT DONE

## RELATIONSHIPS

### CREATE A NETWORK OF INDIGENOUS TOURISM OPERATORS AND ENTREPRENEURS

- Reach out to all existing businesses to garner support and ideas for developing a network.
- Connect the existing Indigenous tourism community online and offline through digital forums and gathering events.
- Leverage the existing tourism community to help identify operators and entrepreneurs to invite in.
- Find opportunities to talk about Indigenous tourism, the Indigenous tourism vision, and the role of Explore Edmonton.
- Add all operators and entrepreneurs to the existing Explore Edmonton Newsletter mailing list.
- Issue an Indigenous Tourism update quarterly, after the Advisory Circle meetings, to keep the industry current (this can be included in the Newsletter or sent as a separate industry update).
- Promote Indigenous tourism to non-Indigenous tourism members.

# RELATIONSHIPS

## BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

- Develop a plan in partnership with the Advisory Circle to share the Strategy with Indigenous businesses and communities.
- Attend Indigenous community events and gatherings.
- Visit and support Indigenous businesses.
- Visit other local and regional Band offices. Share the strategy. Begin building relationships, discuss their perspectives and/or existing plans for tourism.

## CREATE SHARED EXPERIENCES BETWEEN EXPLORE EDMONTON AND THE INDIGENOUS TOURISM COMMUNITY

- Find opportunities to have shared experiences – in communities, on the land, during events, through existing tourism experiences, etc. Visit all businesses that have a location and experience their products.

## CREATE SHARED EXPERIENCES BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS TOURISM COMMUNITIES

- Create an annual tourism networking event. Use this as an opportunity to get to know each other, build relationships, and share skills and knowledge.
- Bring in a keynote speaker with Indigenous Tourism experience from another region.
- Host Indigenous and non-Indigenous Tourism operators.

# STORYTELLING

## BUILD THE PRESENCE OF INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN MARKETING

- Promote the final draft of the tourism strategy over digital media.
- Engage with existing operators and entrepreneurs to understand the purpose of their experiences and how they want to be represented.
- Use a story-telling approach in marketing that authentically represents the Industry and the individuals and businesses being promoted.
- Develop an asset library of Indigenous operators and entrepreneurs. Create new assets and obtain existing ones from Travel Alberta (TA) and Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA).
- Work with Indigenous artists and businesses to incorporate Indigenous visuals and language in marketing materials and presentations.
- Create opportunities to stand together and tell the Edmonton story – For example, Indigenous tourism and Explore Edmonton together on the stage.
- Promote via digital and social media outlets.
- Work with TA & ITA to promote the industry.



# EMPOWERMENT & LEARNING

## HOST A TOURISM INCUBATOR TO DISCUSS INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN EDMONTON AND CO-CREATE PRODUCTS/ITINERARIES/ PROGRAMS/EVENTS

- Create a Tourism Incubator workshop.
- Assemble content experts including social media marketing, trade relationships, entrepreneurship supports.

## SHARE TOURISM RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS WITH THE TOURISM COMMUNITY

- Develop an accessible hub of resources and supports on the Explore Edmonton website for operators and entrepreneurs. Be visual and avoid jargon. Include areas for business development, funding, marketing, market readiness, guest services, experience development, etc. Provide information on the role and resources of Travel Alberta and Indigenous Tourism Alberta.
- Dedicate a space in the existing Explore Edmonton Newsletter to share industry training, capacity building, funding opportunities, industry events, etc.
- Host educational tourism gatherings in partnership with Indigenous businesses to support training and capacity building. Have these events be social as well as educational.
- Support businesses to attain the ITAC Original Mark of Excellence accreditation.

## TOURISM PROFILING AND TRENDING

- Create target audience profiles of the best visitor for Indigenous experiences and share these with the Indigenous tourism community.
- Update the Indigenous tourism community with emerging tourism market analyses and trends. Identify who our visitors are today and tomorrow. Include this information in Explore Edmonton communications and/or through training workshops.





# SHARED LEADERSHIP

## SUPPORT AND SUSTAIN THE ADVISORY CIRCLE

- Bring Explore Edmonton and the Advisory Circle together to discuss and determine the role.
- Confirm the commitment of current members and collectively identify new Circle members as needed.
- Meet quarterly.
- Create shared experiences and engagement opportunities between Advisory Circle members and Explore Edmonton staff to build relationships.
- Document the story of the Advisory Circle and membership on the Explore Edmonton website.
- Use the Advisory Circle as the leadership voice of the Indigenous Tourism community. Monitor the implementation of the strategy together and receive guidance from the Advisory Circle

## ENGAGE INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN TOURISM

- Work with the Advisory Circle to find creative ways of engaging youth.
- Identify partners to support a youth tourism scholarship program.
- Ensure there is always a youth voice in the Advisory Circle

## ELEVATE THE INDIGENOUS TOURISM KNOWLEDGE OF EXPLORE EDMONTON

- Have all staff go through Cultural Awareness Training.
- Support Indigenous markets and artisan showcases in the Edmonton region.
- Support and attend Indigenous events such as Enoch Cree nation's Pow Wow in second week of July.
- Hire Indigenous staff for non-Indigenous positions.
- Find an Elder advisor for the executive team.



# GATHERING

## LAUNCH THE PLAN

- Find a local Indigenous artist or company to re-design the document for publishing.
- Share and discuss the plan with Indigenous Tourism Alberta and Travel Alberta. Identify areas for collaboration and support.
- Share a copy of the final strategy to all participants from the engagement process.
- Develop a catalyst event in partnership with the Indigenous tourism community to symbolize the beginning of this new relationship, announce the kickoff of this strategy, and celebrate Indigenous tourism and communities in Edmonton.

## BRING INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCE INTO EXISTING EXPLORE EDMONTON TOURISM EVENTS

- Provide the Indigenous communities opportunities to share their culture at Explore Edmonton events.

## JOINT BIDS FOR MAJOR INDIGENOUS EVENTS

- Identify opportunities for joint bids to host major Indigenous events in Edmonton. For example, the International Indigenous Tourism Conference 2025



# REACHING SUCCESS

## IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

### SECURE FUNDING FOR

#### ANNUAL:

- Events (strategy catalyst event, other gatherings)
- Elder honorariums
- Advisory Circle engagement
- Supporting Indigenous representation at Industry events (i.e. Rendezvous)
- Youth scholarship program funding
- Education and training workshops

#### INITIALLY + AS NEEDED:

- Indigenous artists for Strategy design and marketing materials support
- Marketing and media asset library development
- Explore Edmonton cultural awareness training

### HUMAN RESOURCES

#### AN INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST WHO WILL SUPPORT:

- Deeper engagement with the Edmonton region Indigenous communities
- Leading the strategy implementation
- Engagement with Advisory Council
- Engagement with industry
- Engagement with Indigenous operators/entrepreneurs
- Systems to share information and resources

### PARTNERSHIPS

#### BUILD SUPPORTIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR:

- The youth scholarship program
- Product and itinerary collaborations
- Workshops and event hosting
- Marketing support and resources
- With Indigenous businesses to tell their stories in marketing

RISK	MITIGATION
Seasonality of experiences	Encourage the development of experiences for shoulder seasons and diversify experiences to attract visitors year-round.
Organizational decision making to develop Indigenous tourism maintains a colonial lens	Leverage the Advisory Circle and the Indigenous Tourism Development Specialist for guidance in organizational decision-making.
Social media toxicity and racism	Practice creating safe spaces online through Explore Edmonton, and with new operators/entrepreneurs. Work with ITA to share guidelines and best practices.
Cultural appropriation of Indigenous experiences	Involve the communities in the development of any new Indigenous experiences. Keep an up-to-date database of all Indigenous experiences whether they are owned by an Indigenous person or not.
Economic exploitation of communities	Ensure any benefit from Indigenous events and experiences benefit the communities
Low engagement from Indigenous operators/ entrepreneurs	Be consistent in engagement with the Indigenous tourism community and have physical presence (i.e. in-person meetings, visiting businesses).
Little interest or uptake on getting businesses Market Ready	Be clear and consistent on messaging about the purpose of Market Readiness, and the supports available to get there. Ensure the Indigenous community knows there are specifically Indigenous supports, such as the Explore Edmonton Indigenous Tourism Development specialist, ITA + ITAC.
Legal and political issues from industry development	Continue building relationships to ensure proper consultation is done carefully with Indigenous communities as well as experts if any legal or political tensions arise as the industry develops (such as land rights and sovereignty)
Lack of Indigenous youth interested in tourism	Encourage businesses to invite youth to pilot new experiences and provide job opportunities. Invite youth to attend and participate in events. Celebrate rising youth in tourism in the Explore Edmonton newsletter and/or digital media for inspiration (this could be operators, entrepreneurs, influencers, and the youth who are awarded the tourism scholarship).

# KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

## RELATIONSHIPS

- 50% of the current Indigenous tourism community is subscribed to the Explore Edmonton newsletter by March 2024 (~45 businesses)
- Each Newsletter features Indigenous content
- Explore Edmonton participates in two Indigenous ceremonies per year

## STORYTELLING

- Stories from 25% of Indigenous owned and operated businesses are captured to promote via marketing and/or the EE newsletter by 2025 (~21 businesses)
- Digital assets are developed for 25% of Indigenous owned and operated businesses by 2025 (~21 businesses)

## EMPOWERMENT & LEARNING

- All Indigenous-owned and operated non-market ready Indigenous operators and entrepreneurs are engaged by March 2024
- Business and experience development support is provided for 50% of the non-market ready Indigenous owned and operated businesses
- 2-3 tourism education, training and capacity building workshops are hosted and/or partnered on annually
- 100% Explore Edmonton staff complete cultural awareness training by March 2024.
- 5 Indigenous tourism businesses obtain the ITAC Original Original accreditation by 2025

## SHARED LEADERSHIP

- An Indigenous tourism community member joins Explore Edmonton at Rendezvous Canada
- Explore Edmonton has an Indigenous tourism board member
- Quarterly meetings are held with the Advisory Circle
- Explore Edmonton and the Advisory Circle have two shared experiences annually
- The Advisory Circle is diverse in tourism sector and demographic representation
- 2-3 youth have tourism scholarships by 2027

## GATHERING

- A Strategy Launch event is hosted with support from the Advisory Circle with at least 40 attendees
- 2-3 Industry networking events are held annually with Indigenous and non-Indigenous tourism businesses, operators & entrepreneurs
- One joint bid with the Indigenous community on a major event submitted by 2025

# TOURISM COMMUNITY TODAY

**89 businesses**

- 28** artisan/retail
- 15** sector support
- 13** festivals and events
- 10** culinary
- 8** attractions
- 7** outdoor experiences
- 4** accommodation
- 4** other

65%

of Indigenous  
experiences in  
Edmonton that are  
Indigenous owned  
& operated

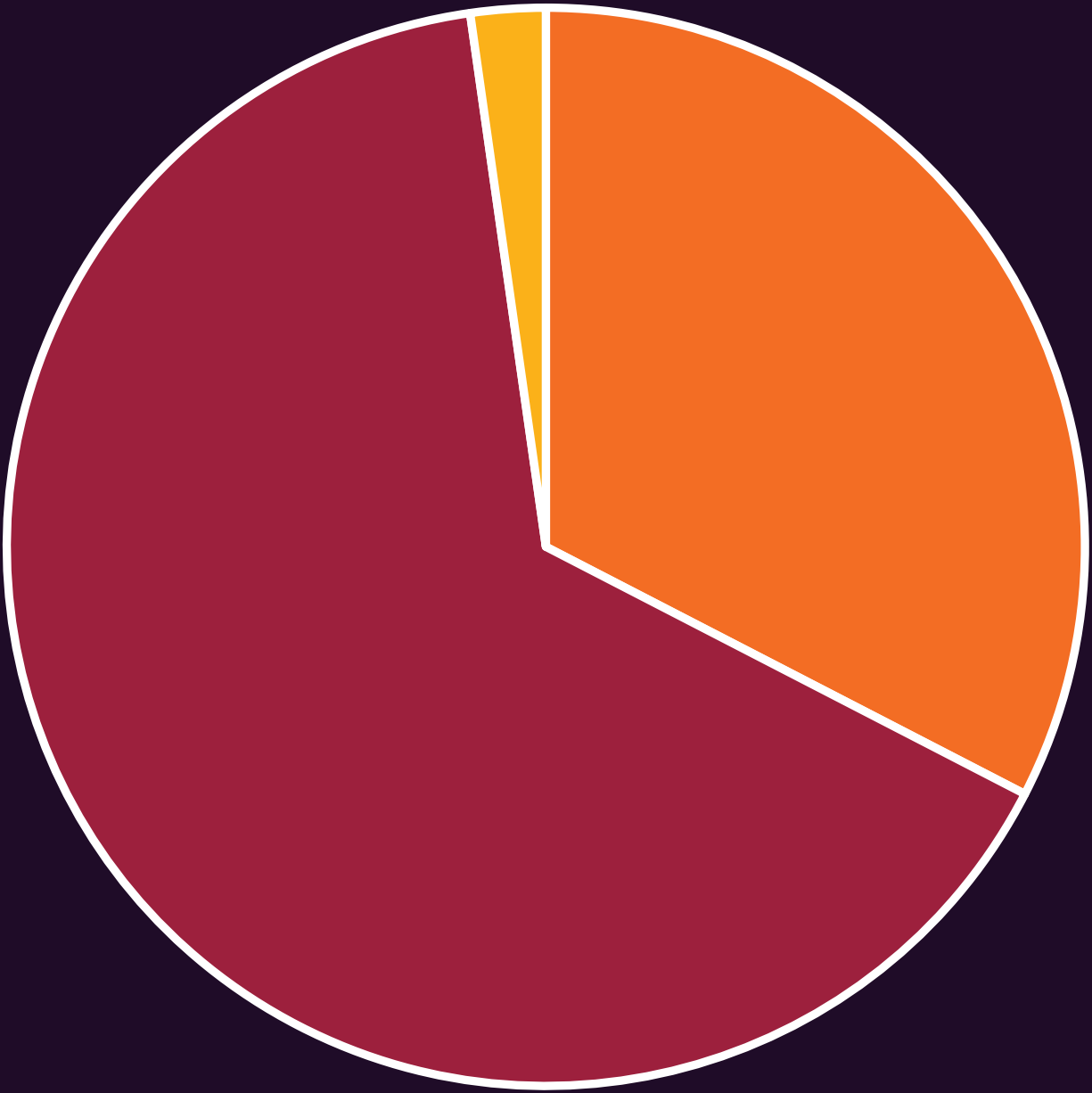
33%

non-  
Indigenous-  
owned

2%

partially  
Indigenous  
owned





Of the

**65%**

of Indigenous  
experiences in  
Edmonton that are  
Indigenous owned  
& operated

46%

are market  
ready

76%

are small  
operators

70%

are low  
engagement

Of the

**65%**

of Indigenous experiences in Edmonton that are Indigenous owned & operated

**13%**

Provide immersive or educational experiences



## UNDERGROUND ECONOMY

Many of the experiences are not considered traditional or popular tourism experiences.

They are also low profile with little tourism engagement and not noticeable to the average traveller.

With the right supports and strategy there is major potential.

# ninanâskomon, hiy hiy

## CHAMPIONS

### ADVISORY CIRCLE

**Lorraine Makokis**  
Elder  
Enoch Cree Nation

**Amberly Morrin**  
Tourism Manager  
Enoch Cree Nation

**Nathan Rainy Chief**  
49 Native Design Inc  
Kainai (Blood Tribe)

**Sean Gray**  
Student  
Enoch Cree Nation

**Carrie Armstrong**  
Owner, Mother Earth Essentials  
Michel First Nation

### EXPLORE EDMONTON

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Treaty 6 Territory

**Paul Hawes**  
VP, Destination  
Development & Marketing  
Treaty 6 Territory

**Nancy Jackson**  
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### IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

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**Stormy Lake Consulting**  
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### SPECIAL THANKS

**George Desjarlais**  
Pipe Holder  
Enoch Cree Nation  
(via. Frog Lake First Nation)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

THANK YOU TO ALL THE PARTICIPANTS WHO ENGAGED IN THIS IMPORTANT PROJECT WITH AN OPEN HEART AND AN OPEN MIND. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE TIME AND KNOWLEDGE YOU SHARED.

Philip Campiou

Dwayne Alexis

Nathan Rainy Chief

Lorraine Makokis

Erin Clyde

Nicole Boucher

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Sheldon Hughes

Carrie Armstrong

Keith Diakiw

Terry Morin

Cathy Gagne

Kim Wild

Tracy Boucher

Chelsea Boucher

Leon Hunter

Tracy Bradley

Crystal Eyo

Lori Phelps

Vicky Horn

Darcy Hunt

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Wendy Poseluzny

Delanie Bulldog

Mel Schoenberger



**MADE FROM RECYCLED PAPER**