

# ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018

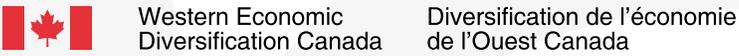


#IndigenousBC

[IndigenousBC.com](http://IndigenousBC.com)



**INDIGENOUS  
TOURISM BC**



The Indigenous Tourism Association of BC acknowledges the funding contribution from Destination BC, Indigenous Services Canada and Western Economic Diversification Canada.



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# Chair's Message

On behalf of my fellow Board of Directors, it's my great honour and privilege to present the Indigenous Tourism BC (ITBC) Annual Report for 2017/18.

Given the unprecedented and continued growth of Indigenous tourism, those of us who make it our life's work to promote a healthy and vibrant Indigenous tourism industry find ourselves busy with the task at hand and planning for the future. For this reason, I always appreciate the ITBC team's efforts to compile our annual report and remind us all that there is great reason to celebrate.

In particular, I would like to once again thank our federal and provincial partners, who thanks to their ongoing and new investments, ITBC funding was replenished giving the organization new wings and put into motion the foundation of some big plans to reshape how we build, market and grow Indigenous tourism businesses.

This is the first report on results coming out of our new results-based approach to running the business of building a prosperous Indigenous tourism industry. Inside, you'll read how our renewed focus on measurable results and continuous improvement are challenging us to do better.

We made great strides this year in how we tell and share our Indigenous story. This past year was a testing ground for new digital content marketing investments and approaches that engaged our target travellers more fully than ever before. We also put significant effort into making sure Indigenous voices were at the planning table to help our partners Destination BC develop a new focus for the future.

While more needs to be done and difficult decisions still lie on the road ahead, our core team of professionals at ITBC has never been stronger and more determined to make a difference.



*Lim Lmt (Thank you)  
for your ongoing support,*  
Brenda Baptiste, Chair  
Indigenous Tourism Association  
of British Columbia

## Who We Are

The Indigenous Tourism Association of British Columbia (ITBC) is a non-profit, Stakeholder-based organization that is committed to growing and promoting a sustainable, culturally rich Indigenous tourism industry. ITBC is an Indigenous tourism organization recognized by the BC's Indigenous Leadership as the official representative of the Indigenous tourism sector.

ITBC is a one-stop resource for Indigenous entrepreneurs and communities in British Columbia who are operating or looking to start a tourism business. ITBC partners with the tourism industry, businesses, education and government organizations to assist B.C.'s Indigenous tourism businesses to offer quality experiences and actively promotes these experiences to visitors and local residents.

Our **VISION** is a prosperous Indigenous tourism industry sharing authentic products that exceed visitor expectations.

Our **MISSION** is to provide training, awareness, product development and marketing to support a sustainable authentic Indigenous cultural tourism industry in British Columbia while contributing to cultural preservation and economic development.



# Indigenous Tourism in BC

A STORY OF EPIC PROPORTIONS

**36% of travellers** surveyed indicated they **had visited Indigenous sites, attractions or events** on previous trips to BC



**Indigenous businesses generated \$705 million** in GDP (2016)

**7.2 million** visitors are **expected** to engage in **Indigenous tourism experiences** over the next two years from the top five markets for Indigenous tourism in Canada (Canada, Germany, UK, US and China)



There were **401 Indigenous tourism-related businesses** in BC in 2016/17 – a **33% increase** over 2014

**89% of tour operators** indicated they **would consider offering or expanding Indigenous experiences** as part of their travel packages



**1 in 3 Travelers** to BC is **seeking** an authentic **Indigenous experience**

Indigenous tourism businesses in BC **created 7,400 direct full-time jobs**

Source: ITBC "The Next Phase" Tourism Performance Audit Report 2012-2017, O'Neil Marketing & Consulting, March 2018

# Executive Summary

ITBC management is pleased to provide the following 2017– 2018 Indigenous Tourism Report based on the Action Plan that was approved by the Board of Directors for implementation April 1st, 2017 to March 31st, 2018.

This is the first report on annual outcomes following the release of ITBC's results-based corporate plan entitled: "Pulling Together 2017–2022", available online at: <https://www.Indigenousbc.com/corporate/info/operational-plans-and-reports>.

Keeping this operating environment in mind, ITBC used the PuMP® Performance Measure Blueprint method to focus its efforts over the next five years on the results that will see the organization achieve its vision for visitor arrivals and spending.

These results are grouped into four distinct strategic performance areas:

- Marketing
- Experience Development
- Partnerships and Special Projects
- Leadership and Organizational Excellence

For each of these performance areas, ITBC has clearly defined its role, the strategies and actions that will drive results. Rebuilding ITBC into a results-based organization will take time, so while some performance targets were set and measured against, others will require more work in building and testing before they can be implemented.



# Marketing

Advances in market research and technology give us the opportunity to learn more about our 'best customers' including what they want, how to speak to them and where to reach them. Right now, ITBC (and by consequence our marketing partners) has gaps in its knowledge and as a result, can't properly focus its marketing or experience development efforts.

## 1.0 STRATEGY: TOURISM RESEARCH

Identify highest priority markets, target audiences and channels using insights from best available data sources and partners so that ITBC, marketing stakeholders and marketing partners can inspire more of our consumer target market.

### RESULT

Worked with The Modern Craft, Destination Canada's digital strategy agency of record, to develop a 'Marketing Roadmap' that will inform the development of a new 5-year marketing and sales strategy for ITBC. The roadmap was presented to members and Destination BC, and ITBC is making plans for a full rollout of its new marketing strategy in early 2019.

**In 2016-17, an estimated 401 Indigenous tourism related businesses operated in BC.** Located across the province, the largest shares of them were engaged in retail, outdoor adventure, and accommodations.

**34%** Retail



**19%** Outdoor Adventure



**12%** Accommodations



## 2.0 STRATEGY: CONSUMER POSITION

Develop and promote a compelling consumer position using social listening, guest feedback and market research to inform ITBC content creation and curation so we inspire more of our consumer target market.

### RESULT

Worked with Destination THINK! to engage in social listening, to interview ITBC marketing Stakeholders, and review DBC consumer brand insights to inform a new consumer position. ITBC will work with Destination BC in 2019 to look at the possibility of leveraging the DBC consumer brand to develop a refreshed Indigenous consumer brand position and personality, and eventually trial this in a near-term marketing campaign.

## 3.0 STRATEGY: MARKETING CAMPAIGN APPROACH

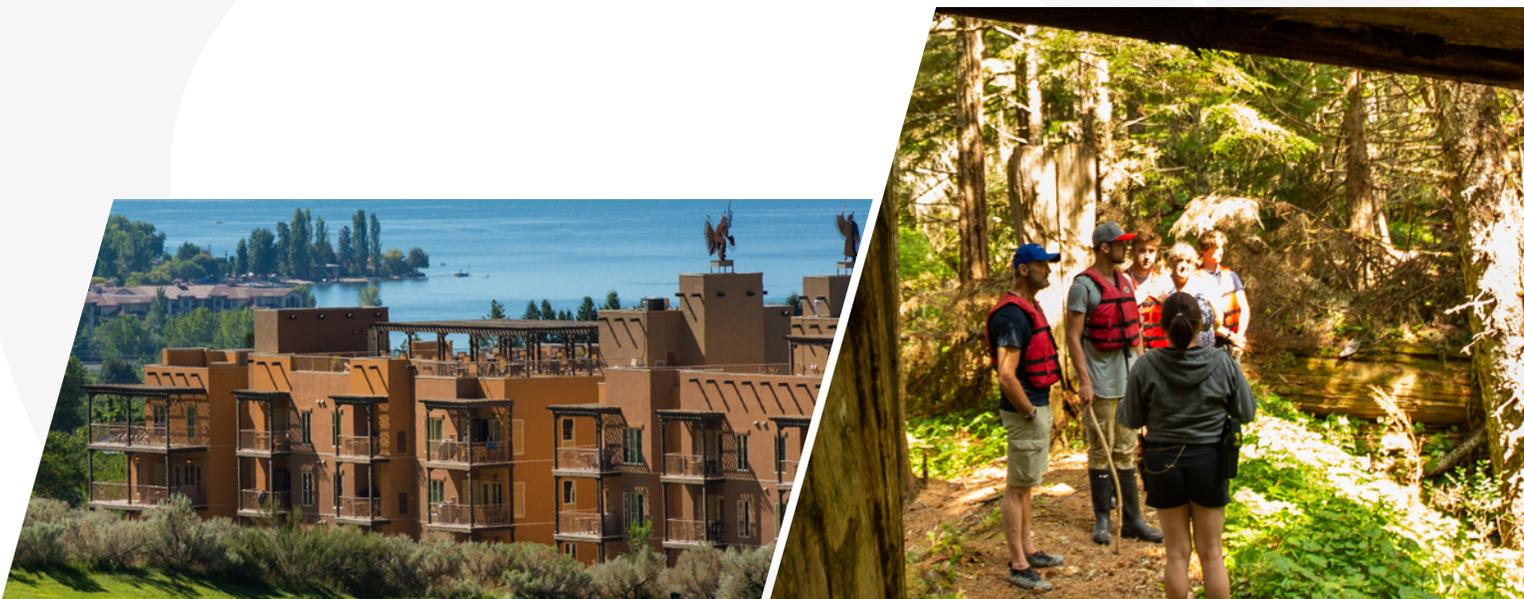
Deliver a customized marketing approach that is more tailored to ITBC's different marketing Stakeholder experiences by delivering two (2) different marketing programs that target consumers looking for Indigenous experiences OR are pursuing specific interests.

### RESULTS

Developed a digital marketing program targeting North American and international markets that have a general interest in Indigenous experiences. Aimed at helping jumpstart early and late shoulder season bookings, ITBC launched its most comprehensive and digitally integrated content marketing campaign yet this past spring and fall.

#### Spring Marketing Campaign

ITBC commissioned eight original travel articles distributed through Daily Hive, Vacay.ca, Destination BC and ITBC's own social media channels. Social posts were shared nearly 900 times, while links sent nearly 420 sales leads directly to the almost 40 ITBC member experiences, big and small. The campaign used new digital techniques to not only target consumers, but also profile them to improve future marketing efforts.



### Fall Marketing Campaign

Building on key learnings from the spring campaign, a similar digital content marketing approach saw social content shared over 1,006 times, while digital advertising and sponsored content drove 16,548 people to the ITBC consumer Website who stayed on average more than two minutes on the site (a very strong signal that ITBC content is engaging). Most important, the campaign sent 845 sales leads to ITBC member Websites.

## Spring and Fall Marketing Campaign Highlights

**2,000 Shares**  
on Facebook.



**17,000 Unique Website visits**  
Who Stayed **More than 2 minutes on site**



**1,300 Leads Sent** Directly to Indigenous Businesses.



## 4.0 STRATEGY: CONTENT SOURCING AND DISTRIBUTION

Convey the power of the BC Indigenous tourism experience by creating and curating emotional stories that get packaged in preferred formats and distributed through content networks and event platforms, such as DBC, that provide the greatest reach or impact.

### RESULTS

- Hired Elevation Media led by award-winning travel journalist Adrian Brijbassi to train and work with ITBC staff on a social media editorial calendar that created, sourced from members and pushed out engaging content regularly on Facebook, Instagram and Destination BC's blog. Editorial is synced with Destination BC who were very pleased with quality of content and collaboration with them.
- Shifting to a more focused media relations approach resulted in more than 16,069,825 impressions throughout Canada and the US. For example, Tribal Canoe Journeys Festival in early August saw Indigenous cultures and ITBC marketing stakeholders promoted to a potential 11 million online readers and viewers. Nearly forty print, Web and broadcast outlets lined up for interviews including the CBC and WestJet Magazine. The Weather Network delivered the biggest win with a broadcast story posted for its over 5.5 million monthly Website visitors to view..
- An Indigenous culinary fam trip through the Thompson Okanagan in September toured top media through Quaaout Lodge, Indigenous World Winery, Kekuli Café and NK'MIP Cellars. From September to October 2017, coverage was posted in Montecristo (online), The Province (print and online) and on @viranlly (online) for a total of 1,952,816 impressions.

- Produced an episodic video content series that tells an emotionally engaging story connected to a priority tourism corridor. A wholly owned media property of ITBC, the *Indigenous BC* video series delivers a unique storytelling format that empowers First Nation's people to tell their own story. Marketing partners have praised the series for its emotional power and quality of storytelling, resulting in Destination BC and Destination Canada distributing the episodes through their marketing channels. The four episodes launched over the 2017-18 period earned more than 75K views between Facebook and You Tube.
- Attended GoMedia 2017 and Canada Media Marketplace 2017 to promote BC Indigenous stories through high value media and key influencers in target markets.
- Trained an ITBC staff person to handle distribution and monitoring of ITBC social channels, Websites and CRM, which resulted in more engaging content and saved ITBC \$50-\$70K/year in agency fees.



**By the end of 2016, overnight visitors who bought an Indigenous tourism experience in BC had grown to 3.6 million (+27%) in three short years. Asia Pacific (+58%) and US markets (+32%) grew the most.\***

## 5.0 STRATEGY: TRAVEL TRADE STRATEGY

Provide Tier 3 (Market-Ready) experiences with training to meet Tier 4 (Export-Ready) criteria by working in partnership with key receptive tour operators to inform market-ready businesses about the benefits and requirements of working with travel trade to have more export-ready experiences contract with receptive tour operators.

### RESULTS

- In November, presented on panel with National Geographic at City Nations Place Global Conference in London, UK, to promote ITBC leadership in Indigenous-led tourism development.
- Met with hundreds of the world's top tour operators to educate them about BC First Nations culture and Indigenous tourism experiences:
  - Haida Gwaii Trade Fam (September)
  - Rendezvous Canada, Calgary (May)

\*Source: ITBC "The Next Phase" Tourism Performance Audit Report 2012 - 2017, March 2018.

- Showcase Canada Asia, Beijing (October)
- World Travel Mart, London (November)
- In May, ITBC attended Rendez-vous Canada in Calgary, meeting with over 65 separate travel retailers from markets like China, UK and Germany who are hungry to sell more Indigenous experiences which has wholesalers across Canada hopping to meet demand. ITBC was joined by nine of its marketing stakeholders.
- At the premier Destination BC hosted Explore BC event in November, ITBC presented full-range of Indigenous trade-ready experiences to 48 travel trade representatives and over 100 Jonview staff in Toronto.
- Sponsored a breakfast at Canada's West Marketplace in November, the premier event to sell the best of BC and Alberta tourism product to the world. The event provided ITBC with a captive audience of over 100 international travel trade who received an inspiring traditional welcome and presentation about all the trade-ready experiences available to contract through their receptive.
- Destination BC hosted its annual Explore BC event on August 16th at the River Rock Casino and ITBC was there to present to the over 120 mostly Asian receptive tour operators in attendance about the Indigenous experiences that are ready for wholesale to tour operators and travel agencies around the world.
- ITBC and travel retailer Canada by Design (CBD) participated in a Destination Canada co-op marketing campaign targeting California and Washington. The campaign generated \$15K in sales of Indigenous experiences (121% increase over 2016). The Spring-Summer campaign featured two brand new itineraries covering Vancouver Island and the Thompson Okanagan, an exclusive landing page on the CBD website, a top You Tube influencer, and a content partnership with AFAR, the world's top promoter of unique experiences.

Indigenous tourism operators say **business is booming** with many staying **open more days** a year, **employing more people**, and feeling like their marketing and know-how is **helping them to be more competitive.**



Source: Indigenous Tourism Operator Survey 2017

## 6.0 STRATEGY: LEISURE AND CORPORATE TRAVEL SERVICES STRATEGY

Operate Aboriginal Travel Services (ATS), a wholly-owned subsidiary of ITBC, so it can provide leisure and corporate travel services to target consumers and business travelers in order to diversify the ITBC funding base and reinvest profits into its Indigenous tourism programs and services.

### RESULTS

- \$665,000 in sales translating into \$53,000 in commissions for ITBC
- Lead generation resulted in 60 meeting and conference commitments and 30 supplier agreements

RESULTS 2017-2018			
Measure Name	Measure Description	Target	Results
Shares	1# of incidences that post is shared to network of friends or followers	1,100/month	577/month
Inspired users	# of unique users who view 2+ pages/ session on the ITBC consumer Website	10,000/month	14,388/month
Landing Page Organic Visits	ITBC landing page visits from organic search	5,400/month	5,470/month
Pay-per-Click Cost Per Conversion	Cost of paid search divided by # of visits to a member's experience page found thru either the "Things to Do" or "Places to Go" section of the ITBC website.	\$3.20/conversion	\$3.14/conversion
Sales Volume	Sales Volume	1.6M	\$665,000
Commissions	Aboriginal Travel Services (ATS) sales commissions	\$128,000	Exceeded
Meeting and Conference Commitments	Number of meeting and conference commitments	55 commitments	60
Supplier agreements	Number of supplier agreements	28 Suppliers	30



# Experience Development

Indigenous cultural tourism plays a significant role in attracting international and domestic markets to destinations. Currently, international markets don't believe that Canada (and consequently British Columbia) has the quantity or breadth of Indigenous cultural experiences that they're looking for. Even at home, Canadians are not inclined to experience Indigenous tourism products despite knowing they exist. This is more than an awareness issue. Helping committed ITBC marketing Stakeholders improve the experiences they provide will help BC stand out in the marketplace and leave visitors feeling emotionally fulfilled in ways that few experiences can. Given that global demand for Indigenous cultural tourism products is outpacing supply, it is paramount that Indigenous communities become more engaged in fostering the growth of authentic Indigenous tourism experiences in their territories. In response, the Indigenous Cultural Journey Initiative was developed to create Remarkable Indigenous Experiences, develop Indigenous Cultural Corridors and promote Indigenous destinations.

## 1.0 STRATEGY: REGIONAL APPROACH STRATEGY

Accelerate regional Indigenous tourism development in key corridors by embedding regional tourism specialists into high potential tourism regions to improve Indigenous community collaboration/support to increase the number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Stakeholders.

### RESULTS

- On March 15, 2018, ITBC and Northern British Columbia Tourism Association announced the hiring of a Regional Indigenous Tourism Specialist dedicated to northern British Columbia. After an extensive search Lucy Martin was hired for the new role which is a partnership between the two tourism organizations. Ms. Martin is a member and past councilor of the McLeod Lake Indian Band and was a successful Economic Development Manager for the Tse'khene Community Development Corporation before taking on this role. Martin's strong relationships, past committee work in tourism destination development, and certification in Technical Indigenous Economic Development uniquely qualify her for the position.
- Regional Specialist for the Thompson Okanagan focused on aligning Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) and ITBC strategic plans and laying groundwork for increased collaboration with Indigenous communities in region. Work included important outreach, consultations, marketing, ensuring First Nations participation at DBC Destination Development and Remarkable Experiences sessions, and creating useful tools like the Youth Entrepreneurship Business Booklet.



## 2.0 STRATEGY: TRAINING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Assist in development of Tier 1 (Start-Up) businesses to move them towards Tier 2 (Visitor-Ready) by utilizing ITBC programs to build capacity and understanding about the tourism industry.

### RESULTS

- Hosted 4 Cultural Interpretation Training sessions
- Delivered 5 sessions on Value of Tourism and First Host Training
- Reviewed ITBC training programs

## 3.0 STRATEGY: PUSH FOR MARKET-READINESS

Provide Tier 2 (Visitor Ready) experiences with training to meet Tier 3 (Market Ready) criteria by partnering with RDMO's and tourism industry providers to build remarkable experiences with Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs to increase the number of businesses that transition as Market-Ready products.

### RESULTS

- New Indigenous BC tourism engagement program began connecting Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs to stimulate a conversation about a shared vision for developing market-ready experiences and world class destinations. In early 2018, ITBC hosted four sessions:
  - Kootenay Rockies – February 19, 2018
  - Vancouver Island – March 26, 2018
  - Northern BC – March 20, 2018
  - Vancouver Coast and Mountain – March 24, 2018
- Partnering with Destination BC (DBC) to support ITBC Stakeholder participation in DBC's Remarkable Experiences program. The program was offered in five tourism regions over the Fall 2017 and Winter 2018 period. A discount was negotiated for ITBC members resulting in Indigenous tourism businesses participating in one of six different sessions. Those who attended learned how to increase their revenue potential, leverage regional connection opportunities, access expert advice and enhance their online presence.



## 4.0 STRATEGY: DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Support DBC's Destination Development process to ensure that ITBC and Indigenous communities are participating in planning area sessions so that Indigenous economic development opportunities and needs are fully considered in DBC's long-term destination development strategy.

### RESULTS

ITBC Stakeholders, Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs participated in 15 Destination Development sessions across BC. The Destination Development program brought together experienced facilitators to work with various stakeholders to develop a long-term strategic direction for destination development in BC. Thanks to Indigenous points-of-view shared at these sessions, Destination BC is better equipped to develop approaches that will generate and sustain long-term demand for BC's tourism industry inclusive of authentic Indigenous experiences and products.

RESULTS 2017-2018			
Measure Name	Measure Description	Target	Results
Fresh Market Ready Stakeholders	% of new stakeholders we have recruited from all BC Indigenous businesses that meet the 10 point market ready checklist at the time of application	2 New Stakeholders	2
Market Ready Stakeholders	# of Market-Ready Stakeholders who subscribe to ITBC Marketing program as a Market Ready Stakeholder.	90 Marketing Stakeholders	90
Transitioned Stakeholders	# of Associate Stakeholders who transition to Market-Ready Stakeholders by meeting the market ready checklist.	3 Transitioned Stakeholders	3
Destination Development Sessions	Level of Indigenous participation in destination development sessions	20 Indigenous communities and/or entrepreneurs attending	40



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# Partnerships and Special Projects

Securing and maintaining win-win partnerships speeds up BC's journey to becoming the top choice in the world for Indigenous cultural experiences. The right partnerships have the potential to strengthen and diversify our funding base, grow Stakeholder confidence in our abilities, nurture Indigenous community support for tourism, expand our market power and increase the supply of Indigenous tourism experiences to meet growing demand.

## 1.0 STRATEGY: SPECIAL PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

Corporate and business events and special projects are intentional and an investment for meeting the overall organization objectives for building awareness and increasing a positive perception of ITBC to our stakeholders and partners.

### RESULTS

- The 4th Annual Victoria Indigenous Cultural Festival (VICF) brought together performance and visual artists from over 30 different First Nations. Delivered in partnership with the Esquimalt Nation; Songhees Nation; the Royal BC Museum and thirteen (13) corporate sponsors, the June 17-19 event attracted an estimated 30,000 locals and tourists over the 3-day event.
- ITBC kicked off its 20th Anniversary by hosting the welcome reception at the BC Tourism Industry Conference in Victoria on February 22, 2017. The event was a celebration with many stakeholders, industry partners and government officials. ITBC also led a concurrent session at the conference focused on Indigenous tourism development.
- Engaged in over 100 forums that provided effective two-way communication with Stakeholders and partners. This included representing member interests at the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) and Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) national conferences, speaking at regional DMO annual general meetings, advocating for the importance of Indigenous tourism as a board member of the Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC), liaising with the UBCIC, BCAFN and more, and educating the federal government funders and policy-makers at their annual Links to Learning conference.

## 2.0 STRATEGY: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Pursue partnerships that directly support ITBC core values and contribute directly to Stakeholder development. Develop sustainable tourism-related business opportunities that will generate program revenue for ITBC.

### RESULTS

- On January 22, 2018, the Honourable Bardish Chagger, then Minister of Small Business and Tourism, announced a \$2,250,000 investment from the Government of Canada to support Indigenous Tourism BC's 'Pulling Together' strategy over the next three years.
- Continued proactive negotiations with ITAC Board on MOU with a planned agreement to be announced in 2018
- Signed numerous memorandums of understanding and statements of cooperation with key Indigenous and tourism industry partners such as the BC Assembly of First Nations (BC AFN), Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA), Northern BC Tourism, and the BC Adventure Tourism Coalition representing 20 different tourism associations.

# Leadership and Organizational Excellence

The First Nations Summit, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs and the BC Assembly of First Nations – has designated the Indigenous Tourism Association of BC the official representative of Indigenous tourism in the province of BC. For the past two decades, ITBC has been providing leadership and advocacy on government policy and regulation, business issues, marketing opportunities, product development, skills training and more. Our work ensures that Indigenous values weigh heavily in tourism solutions, and that a fair share of the benefits flow to Indigenous communities and businesses invested in tourism. ITBC is committed to advancing Indigenous employment and opportunities. Ensuring that ITBC has the human and capital resources to execute on priorities ultimately depends upon hiring and retaining top professionals who are passionate about their work and about Indigenous cultural tourism. Success depends on our ability to attract the right talent, especially Indigenous talent. In order to be an employer of choice, ITBC must create a work climate that rewards high-performing teams, embraces collaboration, unleashes the innovative spirit and values constant improvement.

## 1.0 STRATEGY: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Streamline processes and implement solutions to improve Stakeholder servicing and reduce operational complexity.

### RESULTS

- Announced name change to “Indigenous Tourism BC” after consultations with Elders, Leaders and Stakeholders across the province who suggested the use of the term “Indigenous” better reflects the communities’ connection with the land and recognizes the diversity of Indigenous peoples within British Columbia.
- Improved corporate communications systems and processes to provide a wider range of Stakeholders with more timely and valuable information and updates.

RESULTS 2017-2018			
Measure Name	Measure Description	Target	Results
AGM Attendance	# of attendees at AGM & Forum	50 attendees	100
Stakeholder Survey	# ITBC stakeholder survey response rate	75% response rate	80%
Corporate Communications	# of corporate communications	12	20
Stakeholder/Partner	# of forums	6	6
Forum			