

COVER: Sidney Whale Watching

INDIGENOUS TOURISM BC

Member Guide

Your connection to a growing Indigenous tourism community in British Columbia

INDIGENOUS TOURISM BC
CORPORATE
Everything is Connected

WELCOME

We're glad you're here.

WHO WE ARE

Indigenous Tourism BC (ITBC) is a non-profit, Member-based organization committed to growing a sustainable, culturally rich Indigenous tourism industry.

ITBC supports First Nations communities, Indigenous tourism operators, and entrepreneurs by connecting them to training, experience development, marketing opportunities, and research.

This guide explains who ITBC's Members are and what comes next on the Member journey.

500+
Members

250+
Indigenous Tourism Businesses

CONTENTS

Our Community 3
Who We Are 4

PART ONE · FOR MEMBERS

01 Who Can Be an ITBC Member 6
02 How ITBC Supports Your Journey 7
03 Benefits at a Glance 12

PART TWO · FOR PARTNERS

04 Partners & Friends of ITBC 13

APPENDIX

05 What's Needed at Each Stage 14
06 Designation Program 14
07 Stay Connected & First Steps 15

How to use this guide. Part One is for Members and those thinking about joining. Part Two is for funders, governments, and partners. The Appendix is a quick field reference for stage requirements, designation programs, and first steps.

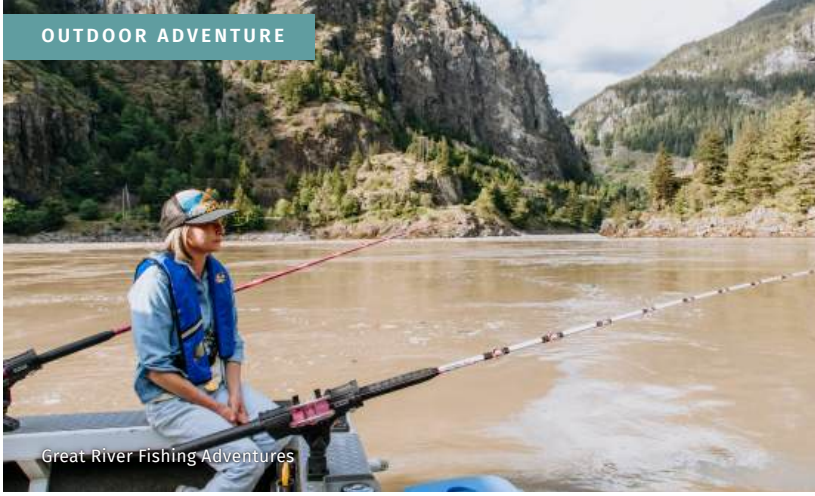


Spirit Gallery

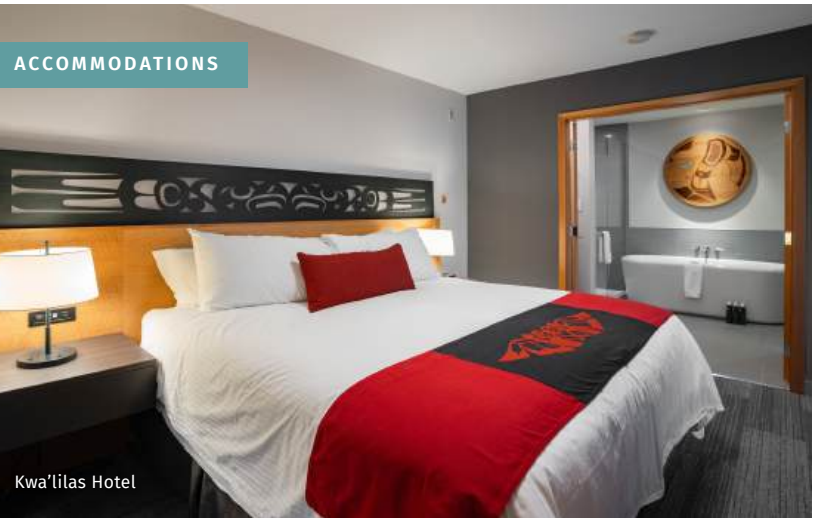
OUR COMMUNITY

Find yourself here.

Over 250 Indigenous Tourism Businesses welcome visitors across BC, on their own terms and in their own ways: guiding on the land and water, hosting guests, creating art, caring for culture, cooking, and running shops and tours.



Great River Fishing Adventures



Kwa'lilas Hotel



Takaya Tours



Nk'mip Desert Cultural Centre - C. Isberg



Salmon n' Bannock



Haida Gwaii Museum Gift Shop



U'mista Cultural Centre

WHO WE ARE

ROOTED IN RELATIONSHIPS

OUR VISION

To be a leading advocate for Indigenous tourism in BC, working together to build a thriving industry that supports Indigenous sovereignty, prosperity, and community well-being, while reframing perceptions of BC and creating local and global appreciation for Indigenous worldviews.

OUR MISSION

To partner with Indigenous tourism businesses and First Nations communities to create meaningful tourism experiences that share histories, cultures, and lands on their terms. Through training, product development, and marketing, we help elevate offerings, broaden the reach of Indigenous tourism, and amplify Indigenous voices for international recognition and appreciation.

The strategies that guide us as we paddle forward

LEAD GLOBALLY

Advance ITBC's position as a global leader in Indigenous tourism development.

BUILD CAPACITY TOGETHER

Deepen relationships with Indigenous communities and deliver partnerships that build capacity and resilience. Support reconciliation and stewardship.

BUILD YOUR TOURISM BUSINESS

Support communities, businesses, and entrepreneurs in building, enhancing, and enriching Indigenous tourism experiences.

REACH MORE VISITORS

Amplify Indigenous voices, values, and presence in marketing throughout the tourism industry in BC.



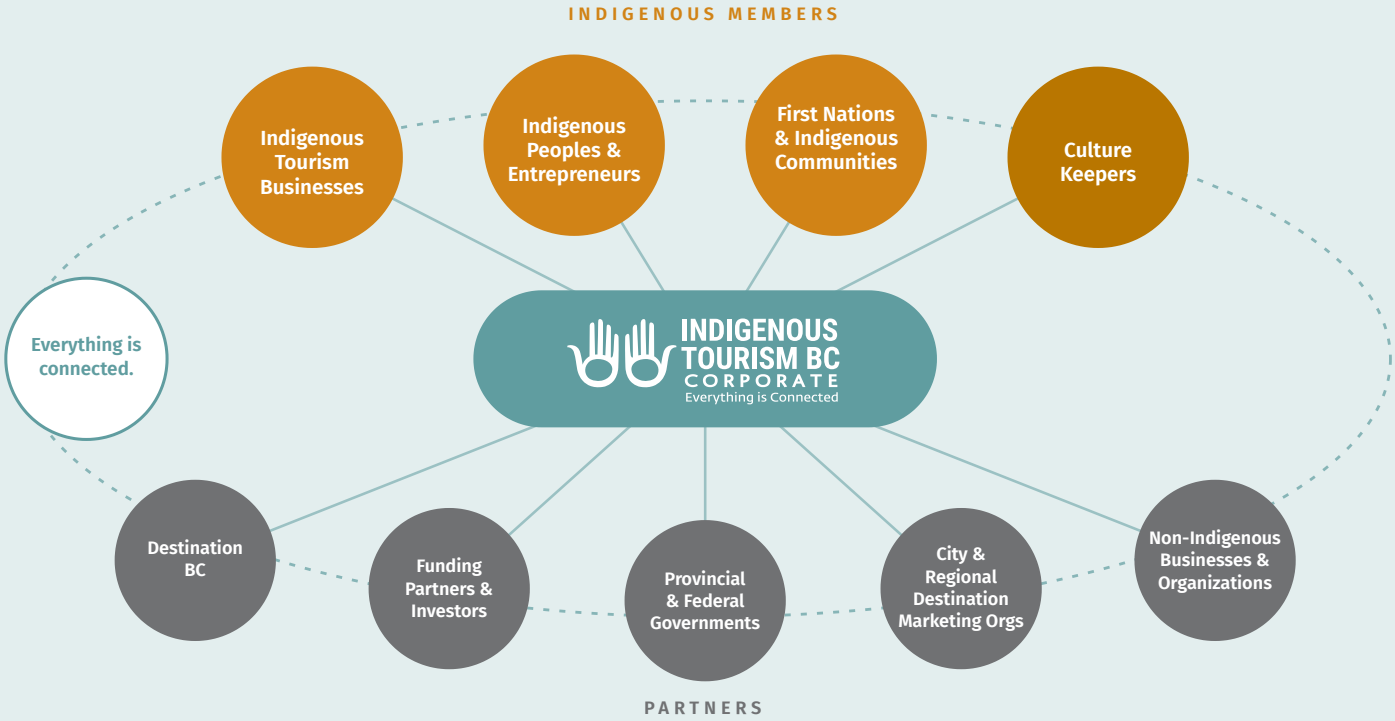
St. Eugene Hotel & Resort



Sea Wolf Adventures

A Connected Ecosystem. Greater Opportunities.

Indigenous Tourism BC is the connector, bringing people, communities, and opportunities together to build a stronger Indigenous tourism sector in BC.



Members bring businesses, experiences, cultural knowledge, and community priorities, on Indigenous terms.

ITBC connects development support, training, marketing, research, advocacy, and the relationships that link Members to opportunity.

Partners bring investment, market access, destination marketing, policy, and procurement.

The result: more market-ready and export-ready Indigenous tourism businesses.

A stronger sector that creates jobs, revenue, and opportunity for Indigenous communities and future generations.



ITBC AGM 2025

01



Bob's on the Rocks

PART ONE · FOR MEMBERS

WHO CAN BE AN ITBC MEMBER

ITBC welcomes First Nations communities, Indigenous tourism operators, and entrepreneurs who want to contribute to a strong, authentic, and sustainable Indigenous tourism industry in BC.

ITBC's tiered system connects First Nations communities, Indigenous tourism operators, and entrepreneurs to tailored resources and networks that support their growth toward market- and export-ready standards.

WHAT CONNECTS US · WELL-BEING FOR ALL

> "Tourism breathes life into our culture and community."
>
> **CHIEF JOHNATHON PREST**
> Skwah First Nation

TIER 1 · COMMUNITIES AND ENTREPRENEURS
First Nations communities and entrepreneurs who are considering Indigenous cultural tourism to create economic opportunities.

TIER 2 · VISITOR-READY TOURISM BUSINESSES
Tourism businesses confirmed to be at least 51% Indigenous-owned, already open to visitors, and building toward market-ready standards.

TIER 3 · MARKET-READY TOURISM BUSINESSES*
Indigenous-owned tourism businesses whose experiences meet market-ready standards and are ready to enter local, domestic, and provincial markets.

TIER 4 · EXPORT-READY TOURISM BUSINESSES*
Indigenous-owned, market-ready tourism businesses whose experiences meet export-ready standards and are ready to enter international markets.

CULTURE KEEPERS & SERVICE PROVIDERS
Indigenous people and businesses whose knowledge, skills, and services ground tourism experiences in Indigenous culture.

Culture Keepers: Elders, Knowledge Keepers, artists, and storytellers.

Service Providers: Indigenous food and beverage providers, vendors and suppliers, and consultants.

*Requirements are listed in the Appendix on page 14.

Indigenous values remain at the centre of the work: connection to culture and place, respect for Indigenous knowledge, and benefit for Indigenous people and communities today and for the generations ahead.

NOT SURE WHERE YOU FIT?
Email **info@indigenousbc.com** to start a conversation. An Indigenous Tourism Specialist will work with you to understand what your next step could be.

HOW CAN ITBC HELP SOMEONE LIKE ME?

Start with what you want to achieve

Want to welcome more visitors?

We can help promote your business through campaigns, social media, media opportunities, and industry partnerships.

Looking to strengthen your experience?

Access training, development programs, and resources that help you build visitor experiences on your terms.

Interested in building connections?

Meet other operators, Nations and communities, tourism organizations, and industry partners.

Need help finding your way in the tourism industry?

Our team can connect you with the programs, people, and opportunities that fit your goals.

Want to share your story?

We are always looking for ways to celebrate Indigenous tourism businesses and communities across BC.



Prince Rupert Round Table

PART ONE · FOR MEMBERS

HOW ITBC SUPPORTS YOUR JOURNEY

Start where you are. Every relationship with ITBC begins with a conversation, and support is matched to where you are today.



*Requirements are listed in the Appendix on page 14.

MEET THE ITBC STAFF

WE WORK TOGETHER, FOR YOU

Three teams, one relationship

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

Your first point of contact. An Indigenous Tourism Specialist takes the time to understand each business or community, then connects you to the training, funding programs, and peer and industry networks best suited to your goals. This team keeps you informed about the ITBC Annual General Meeting & Indigenous Tourism Gathering, regional roundtables, and workshops and events throughout the year. The team also leads conversations with government ministries, partners, and the ITBC Board, and shares information about Board elections and governance.

MARKETING

Your connection for promotion and visibility. Marketing training, Indigenous-led storytelling about eligible market- and export-ready experiences on ITBC's consumer and corporate channels, and connections with tourism and media organizations for marketing and event opportunities. The team also keeps consumers educated and informed, amplifying the value of Indigenous tourism by celebrating Indigenous success and inspiring well-being for all.

PARTNERSHIPS

Your link to networking and industry connections. Relationships with peer and industry organizations that provide resources, lower barriers to participation, open doors to marketing, networking, data, and research, and build a stronger collective voice for Indigenous tourism with government and industry.


ITBC staff

> "Everyone on ITBC's team is collaborative, supportive and truly wants the best for their Members."
>
> **CHYANNE TRENHOLM**
> Homalco Wildlife & Cultural Tours

WHERE YOU ARE TODAY

1 · COMMUNITIES AND ENTREPRENEURS

Turning an idea into something visitors can experience

You may be developing a new business or experience, establishing operations, building partnerships, gathering community support, or preparing for visitors.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- Relationship building and 1:1 support
- Education and information sharing
- Developing connection to the value of tourism

IN THEIR WORDS

> The attentiveness that ITBC provides wherever you are at continues. It doesn't stop just as the seed sprouts, it continues and I think that is something that is really powerful.

CASS DUNCAN
Spirit Bear Lodge

> I had contacted ITBC with the hope of some guidance and support. As of today, I am working on my immediate and 3–5 year business plan.

ELAINA BRAY
Entrepreneur, Cree-ation Nation


Ainsworth Hot Springs Resort

KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR INBOX
Many opportunities are time-sensitive. The newsletter is the best way to hear about them.


Crest Hotel

2 · VISITOR-READY TOURISM BUSINESSES

Welcoming visitors

Your business or experience is operating and welcoming visitors. The focus is on strengthening your experience, operations, service, and systems while building a strong foundation for future opportunities.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Benefits of Tier 1, plus:

- Formal onboarding to ITBC
- Business needs assessment
- Introduction to programs suited to your business
- Indigenous-Owned Designation Program

> ITBC support has been enormous! From financial to promotional, their support has been a godsend.

TK GLAMPING AND WELLNESS RESORT


Homalco Wildlife & Cultural Tours

MEMBER STORY · HOMALCO WILDLIFE & CULTURAL TOURS · CAMPBELL RIVER

From a 2.5-month season to a thriving social enterprise

2.5
WHERE THEY STARTED
Grizzly bear tours for 15 years in partnership with outside operators. A 2.5-month season, 12 seasonal and two full-time staff.

100%
THE CHALLENGE
"The business model in itself was not sustainable and as a 100% Nation owned business we needed a new structure."

2018
HOW ITBC HELPED
Marketing support and travel trade opportunities from around 2018, working alongside a new team toward export readiness and a trusted, authentic brand.

7 months
WHAT CHANGED
Four custom-built covered tour boats, five-plus full-time and 30-plus seasonal staff, a seven-month season with 10 tours.

> We are financially independent and contribute to our Nation's membership through employment opportunities and connecting back to our lands and waters.
>
> HOMALCO WILDLIFE & CULTURAL TOURS

3 · MARKET-READY TOURISM BUSINESSES

Ready to reach more visitors

Your business is established and meets the requirements for broader marketing and industry participation. Opportunities may include marketing, media, and travel trade activities at the local, provincial, and national level.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Benefits of Tiers 1 and 2, plus:

- Routine touchpoints with the ITBC team
- Content collaboration and creation, and marketing support
- Internal and external collaboration and visibility
- Networking opportunities

> During the pandemic, ITBC was the first one to offer financial help. It was so meaningful in that time of uncertainty and stress.
>
> **INEZ COOK**
> Owner, Salmon n' Bannock Bistro

4 · EXPORT-READY TOURISM BUSINESSES

Connecting with international travel trade

Your business is prepared to work with international travel trade partners and welcome visitors from global markets. Opportunities may include international marketing, media hosting, travel trade relationships, and global promotion.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Benefits of Tiers 1, 2, and 3, plus:

- Marketing, trade, and media opportunities, and training
- Authentic Indigenous Designation Program
- Continuous growth and evolution

> By working together, we've been able to effectively amplify our cultural offerings, share our story, and connect with travellers who truly appreciate our values.
>
> **RACHEL LEGHISSA**
> Tin Wis Resort



Culture Shock Interactive Gallery

CULTURE KEEPERS & SERVICE PROVIDERS

Sharing knowledge, skills, and culture

ITBC can help you connect with opportunities, build relationships, and understand how your knowledge or services may contribute to visitor experiences.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- Indigenous Tourism Specialist support
- ITBC e-newsletter
- AGM, Member forums, and roundtables
- Industry research, insights, and workshops
- ITBC training initiatives

> These connections would never have happened without this placement of ITBC... my business has expanded at an incredible rate in a short time span.

"ITBC became aware of me through work that I was doing with Canoe Cultures and started offering me work doing drum making demonstrations at various conferences... I now am doing workshops, corporate team building, [and] filling orders for Indigenous gift shops around the province."

SABIAN RAWCLIFFE
Vendor & Entrepreneur, VCM Region


Gitmaxmakay Dancers

PART ONE · FOR MEMBERS

BENEFITS AT A GLANCE

BENEFIT	CULTURE KEEPERS & SERVICE PROVIDERS	COMMUNITIES & ENTREPRENEURS	VISITOR READY	MARKET READY	EXPORT READY
STAY INFORMED & CONNECTED					
ITBC e-newsletter	●	●	●	●	●
Indigenous Tourism Specialist support	●	●	●	●	●
AGM, Member forums & roundtables	●	●	●	●	●
Industry research, insights & workshops	●	●	●	●	●
GROW & BE RECOGNIZED					
ITBC training initiatives	●	●	●	●	●
Development grants*	–	●	●	●	●
Indigenous-Owned designation*	–	–	●	●	●
Authentic Indigenous designation*	–	–	–	●	●
REACH MORE VISITORS					
ITBC marketing programs*	–	–	–	●	●
Indigenous Experiences Map*	–	–	–	●	●
Indigenous BC trip-planning tools*	–	–	–	●	●
Travel trade shows & sales missions*	–	–	–	●	●
Media & travel trade familiarization tours*	–	–	–	●	●
GOVERNANCE					
Voting at the AGM	–	–	–	●	●

*Availability depends on eligibility, intake periods, and funding. Speak with your Indigenous Tourism Specialist about what applies to you.


Yaga Café


Saltwater Bakery


Fairmont Vancouver Airport, Fairmont Waterfront and ITBC partnership

PART TWO · FOR FUNDERS, GOVERNMENTS & PARTNERS

PARTNERS & FRIENDS OF ITBC

Indigenous tourism is Indigenous-led. Funders, governments, tourism organizations, businesses, and educators can contribute without taking the place of Indigenous leadership, ownership, or cultural authority. The strongest partnerships begin by listening to what First Nations communities, Indigenous tourism operators, and entrepreneurs say they need.

WHERE SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

EARLY-STAGE DEVELOPMENT
Seed early tourism ideas in communities and businesses.

BUSINESS & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
Training, mentorship, expertise, and planning that build Indigenous capacity.

CAPITAL & FUNDING
Invest in facilities, experiences, equipment, products, technology, and infrastructure.

CULTURAL REVITALIZATION
Sustain language, knowledge, storytelling, arts, and land-based learning.

MARKET ACCESS & CONNECTIONS
Open doors to travel trade, events, and procurement.

PLACE-BASED INFRASTRUCTURE
Fund transportation, digital, and visitor infrastructure.

PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION
Ground destination planning, economic development, education, workforce development, and regional tourism initiatives in Indigenous culture.

Funding partners

ITBC works with partners who respect Indigenous Peoples, cultures, and lands, and who back Indigenous-led tourism.

Our partnership with Destination BC is one example. Our shared **Guiding Principles**, signed by both Board Chairs in 2022, commit us to respect Indigenous Peoples, cultures, and lands, and to uphold the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* Action Plan.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Indigenous Tourism BC and Destination BC, signed December 1, 2022, by Board Chairs Brenda Baptiste and Scott Fraser.

Friends of ITBC Program

The Friends of ITBC Program brings together non-Indigenous businesses and organizations that want to support Indigenous tourism in a meaningful way, based on abundance, reciprocity, and respect.

DONATE TO ITBC PROJECTS
Monetary contributions enable unfunded ITBC projects that amplify Indigenous tourism and build its infrastructure.

PROVIDE IN-KIND SUPPORT
Gift time, expertise, infrastructure, access, goods, services, or space to operators, Nations, and local economies.

REDUCE BARRIERS
Identify obstacles within your organization or sector and work to reduce barriers for Indigenous Peoples.

SPONSOR EVENTS & PROGRAMS
Create capacity for provincial engagements and operations, and build industry credibility.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER
friends@indigenousbc.com
partnerships@indigenousbc.com
info@indigenousbc.com

SHARED COMMITMENTS

Investing in Indigenous-led tourism advances the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, including Call to Action 92 on business and reconciliation; the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*; the federal *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*; and the provincial *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. It also supports provincial and federal priorities for economic reconciliation, regional economic development, workforce development, and sustainable, year-round tourism.

APPENDIX · 05

WHAT'S NEEDED AT EACH STAGE

These requirements help Indigenous tourism operators enter market-ready and export-ready programs at the local, provincial, national, and international levels with confidence. Supporting Indigenous-owned businesses through ITBC directly strengthens First Nations self-determination, preserves cultural heritage, and drives sustainable local economies.

VISITOR READY

An Indigenous tourism business that is **at least 51% Indigenous-owned**, with an interest in becoming Market Ready.

MARKET READY

Visitor Ready requirements, plus:

- Operating safely and professionally for at least one year
- Liability insurance of at least $2 million
- Current business and operating licences, registrations, and permits
- A website that honestly and accurately represents an Indigenous tourism business
- Accepts credit and debit cards
- Handles reservations and inquiries by phone and email year-round
- Confirms bookings within 24 hours
- Offers a product of interest to domestic and international visitors

CULTURE KEEPERS & SERVICE PROVIDERS

Artisans, performers, storytellers, guides, designers, consultants, food and beverage and other service providers, and Indigenous tourism professionals.

EXPORT READY

Market Ready requirements, a review of the experience, plus:

- At least one year in business with a proven safe, professional track record
- An adequate budget and marketing plan
- Understands the roles of receptive tour operators, tour operators, wholesalers, and retail agents, and pricing at each level (rack, commission, net)
- Willing to include receptive tour operators and provide contracted net rates
- Provides pricing and program details at least one year before the selling season
- Ready to set up billing with tour operators, wholesalers, or receptive operators
- For group business: coach access and parking, washrooms, group size and pricing, and staff who speak target-market languages
- Adequate insurance (receptive operators can sometimes add suppliers at nominal cost)
- Supports international media and trade familiarization tours (free or reduced rates)
- Currency exchange rates consistent with industry norms

APPENDIX · 06

DESIGNATION PROGRAM

Indigenous-Owned & Authentic Indigenous

The Authentic Indigenous Program is an ITBC marketing initiative that helps travellers connect with Indigenous tourism businesses in BC. Two designation streams increase visibility and build trust.

INDIGENOUS-OWNED

For Visitor, Market, and Export Ready businesses at least 51% owned and operated by Indigenous people or organizations. Visitors know their dollars support Indigenous communities and business owners.

- Physical and digital decals and a marketing toolkit
- Decal on your ITBC listing
- Easy identification by visitors, media, travel trade, industry, and government
- Media education on what Indigenous-Owned means and why cultural protection matters

AUTHENTIC INDIGENOUS

For Market and Export Ready experiences that go above and beyond in sharing Indigenous culture, community, and sustainability. **All Indigenous-Owned benefits, plus:**

- Authentic Indigenous decals and marketing toolkit
- Media and public education on the designation
- Website and social media activities, and marketing at trade shows
- Priority promotion at media marketplaces
- Additional content creation and preference for media and FAM tours



Ruby Creek Art Gallery



Spirit Gallery


XatSull Heritage Village


Kekuli Café


Ainsworth Hot Springs Resort

APPENDIX · 07

STAY CONNECTED & FIRST STEPS

Your story is one of the most powerful ways to help visitors find Indigenous tourism in BC. The more we know, the more we can share.

YOUR FIRST STEPS

- [ ] Email **info@indigenousbc.com** to be connected to an Indigenous Tourism Specialist
- [ ] Subscribe to the ITBC newsletter for training, events, funding, and industry news, delivered to your inbox
- [ ] Follow ITBC on LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook

CONNECT WITH US

Contact us	info@indigenousbc.com
Website	indigenousbc.com/corporate
E-newsletter	indigenousbc.com/corporate/subscribe

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook	@IndigenousBC
Instagram	@IndigenousTourismBC
TikTok	@IndigenousBC
LinkedIn	@IndigenousTourismBC


Niche Wine Co.



Songhees Tours

HAVE A QUESTION?

Start with us.

Connect with ITBC to find the support that's right for you.

EMAIL
info@indigenousbc.com

WEB
indigenousbc.com/corporate

INDIGENOUS TOURISM BC
CORPORATE
Everything is Connected

Well-being for all.