Backgrounder

The Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia (AtBC) is a non-profit, stakeholder-based organization that is committed to growing and promoting a sustainable and culturally rich Aboriginal tourism industry. The businesses and operators with AtBC range from gallery curators to jet boat guides, wineries and cultural interpretative experiences and are located in every corner of the province.

What is Aboriginal cultural tourism?
Trends in tourism indicate a strong and increasing demand for cultural tourism attractions. Put simply, more and more visitors are looking for experiences that immerse them in a foreign culture and allow them to experience customs and traditions firsthand. British Columbia’s Aboriginal cultural tourism industry has some of the most diverse and best developed operators in the world.

How is Aboriginal tourism revitalizing culture?
The demand for cultural tourism products has given Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia an unprecedented opportunity to develop businesses that showcase their traditions, histories and cultures. Tourism is helping create sustainable and meaningful employment for Aboriginal communities, and providing the impetus for elders to pass down culture, history and tradition to youth. Thanks in part to cultural tourism, Aboriginal traditions and customs are being revitalized for the benefit of communities across British Columbia.

Working to add to visitor experiences through Plus Aboriginal BC
It’s now easier for visitors to add at least one Aboriginal tourism experience during their trip to British Columbia. Plus Aboriginal BC helps visitors explore the myriad of culinary, cultural and outdoor adventure opportunities throughout British Columbia that offer Aboriginal experiences. AtBC’s website, www.AboriginalBC.com, includes suggestions for individual experiences as well as recommended itineraries for exploring the province, allowing visitors to custom plan their trip.

Aboriginal Travel Services (ATS): BC’s First Aboriginal-owned travel agency
Developed as a social enterprise, Aboriginal Travel Services’ mandate is to work with Aboriginal bands and corporations within British Columbia, Canada. Working with an established host agency, ATS uses the latest technology including a comprehensive online booking platform, which allows ATS to provide the best rates with airlines, hotels and car rental companies. Completing the full spectrum of services, it also offers full meeting and event planning. With an extensive knowledge of local, authentic Aboriginal experiences, ATS is also able to provide unique packages to interested leisure and corporate travellers. For information about the Aboriginal Travel Services, visit www.AboriginalTravelServices.com.

Aboriginal Tourism by the numbers:
- Today, British Columbia’s Aboriginal tourism industry contributes $35 M to the provincial economy. By 2017, that number is expected to increase to $68 M.
- Adventure Tourism (31%), Tourism Services (22%) and Accommodation (21%) collectively comprise almost three quarters (74%) of existing Aboriginal tourism businesses in BC
- Tour operators are seeing growing consumer demand for authentic cultural experiences, with 89% indicating in a recent Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC (AtBC) survey that they would consider offering or expanding Aboriginal experiences as part of their packages.
- Over a third (36%) of travellers surveyed in a study commissioned by AtBC for the Blueprint Strategy indicated that they had visited Aboriginal sites/attractions and events on previous trips to BC On average, they had included such experiences on four trips in the past three years.
- Two-thirds (63%) of Aboriginal cultural tourists indicated that they planned to return to BC for Aboriginal tourism within in the next three years.
Travellers taking part in Aboriginal tourism in BC tend to be:
  o Well-educated, upper middle-income wage earners, female baby boomers.
  o Visiting from primarily North American and European destinations.
  o Including Aboriginal tourism in their BC travels for the first time (65%).
  o Taking part in Aboriginal tourism in places beyond BC(64%).
  o Spending more money per trip than other tourists.

Compared to other BC travellers these Aboriginal tourists are more apt to:
  o Spend more trip days in BC (average of 13 days).
  o Include Aboriginal experiences on more of those trip days (average of 3 days).
  o Visit more than one Aboriginal location on BC trip (average of 2.2 sites).
  o Visit Aboriginal interpretive centres (24%), attractions (22%), museums (21%).
  o Travel in larger parties (average of 3.6 persons).

Contact information
Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia
Suite 707 - 100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC  V7T 1A2

Tel: 604-921-1070
Toll-Free: 1-877-266-2822
info@AboriginalBC.com

About Aboriginal Tourism BC (AtBC)
The Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia (AtBC) is a non-profit, stakeholder-based organization that is committed to growing and promoting a sustainable, culturally rich Aboriginal tourism industry. Through training, information resources, networking opportunities and co-operative marketing programs, AtBC is a one-stop resource for Aboriginal entrepreneurs and communities in British Columbia who are operating or looking to start a tourism business. AtBC works closely with tourism, business, education and government organizations to help B.C.’s Aboriginal tourism businesses offer quality experiences and actively promotes these experiences to visitors and local residents.


-30-

Media Contacts:
Dana Schoahs, AtBC: 604-905-9097 or dana.schoahs@AboriginalBC.com
Kate Rogers, Tartan Group: 604-880-1494 or kate@tartangroup.ca
Brian Cant, Tartan Group: 250-592-3838 or brian@tartangroup.ca