INDIGENOUS TOURISM SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE

How to use this guide

This section can be used as a workbook, guiding you through the necessary steps to develop your business. A thorough self-assessment using this section of the guide will help you to develop, deliver and price an authentic Indigenous tourism experience - making you more competitive and successful. It will also help you improve the quality of the visitor experience - which will result in more visitors and growth for your company.

These checklists cover everything from ITAC recommendations on maintaining authenticity to industry standards and expectations on health and safety, marketing and working with larger groups and the travel trade.

Completing an honest self-assessment can identify areas of strength and weakness as well as areas of growth and improvement if you do not yet meet these industry expectations.

Cultural authenticity and best practices

Re	ad this section if you are:
•	planning
•	visitor-ready
•	market-ready

Recommended protocols

Our ancestors have shared our culture with visitors to our traditional territories since time immemorial, closely guided by their community values of respect, honour and integrity. The only way for our industry to succeed is to continue following those guiding principles when we develop and deliver Indigenous cultural tourism experiences. It not only makes for an authentic experience for our visitors but also helps to ensure that our future generations have that same opportunity.

The below are considered "recommended protocols" for your tourism experience to be considered an AUTHENTIC Indigenous experience. ITAC supports the authority of each community, to determine their own cultural protocols and boundaries and recognizes all of the diverse values and beliefs of our First Nations, Métis and Inuit members.

If your experience is an Indigenous tourism business or Indigenous cultural tourism business, is it at least 51% owned by Indigenous individuals OR majority owned Indigenous companies OR Indigenously controlled organizations such as Bands and Tribal Councils?	Yes	□ No	□ N/A
Is the cultural content of all interpretation tools (spoken and written materials) developed under the direction of Indigenous people who are from the culture being interpreted?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Is the cultural content approved by the appropriate "keepers of the culture"? (i.e. Elders, hereditary Chiefs, families, etc.) Who are they? How was it approved?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Are all of the cultural activities shared by Indigenous people? An exception may be when foreign languages are required, when the interpreter should still have access to an Indigenous host for questions related to the culture and community.	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Does your tourism experience provide opportunities for visitors to interact face-to-face with Indigenous people such as artisans, craftspeople, Elders, storytellers, hosts or entertainers who originate from the culture being shared?	Yes	□ No	□ N/A

Can your heritage interpreters and presenters demonstrate suitable experience, knowledge or formal training related to the local Indigenous culture that they are sharing?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Are your front line staff and heritage interpreters aware of what sites and activities are deemed inappropriate for tourism purposes by the community? Do they know what to do to ensure that guests are not exposed to these sites or activities?	Yes	□ No	□ N/A
Have you taken steps to protect and preserve the sensitive cultural activities and sites from visitors? This may be through a guest orientation program, fencing off sensitive areas, erecting signs, staff training, etc.	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Is the local Indigenous community aware of and generally supportive of the tourism initiative?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Do you invite or welcome Indigenous community input and feedback on your cultural programming?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Does your tourism experience impact the community's culture and economy in a positive way? How does the community benefit? (i.e. jobs, suppliers, support other business in the region, etc.)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
How do you reduce negative impacts on daily life for the community and environment? (i.e. visitor codes of conduct, clear signage, environmentally friendly practices etc.)			
Do you do your part to protect Mother Earth? (i.e. recycle, use recyclable and biodegradable products, package items in reusable bags etc.)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A

If the tourism experience is an event (such as a seasonal event, pow wow, etc.) for the event to be marketable, it needs to be held consistently on scheduled dates each year. Is it possible to release your event dates 12 to 18 months in advance?	Yes	□ No	□ N/A
Community support			
Are the guests provided with an outline of what to expect from their Indigenous experience and what is considered acceptable behavior while on site and in the community?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Do visitors have access to materials that give information on the host Indigenous culture and community? These materials may be guidebooks, pamphlets, brochures, videos, website, compact discs, books or other materials.	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
For an Indigenous tourism business, what percentage of the management positions are held by Indigenous people? Do they represent the majority (over 51%) of the management team?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Program delivery			
Are the majority (over 51%) of all your front line staff who greet and serve the visitors of Indigenous descent?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Are visitors exposed to local Indigenous languages? Is the Indigenous language included on items such as greetings, signage, printed materials, and other means of communication?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Whenever possible, have elements of Indigenous décor, architecture, arts and design been incorporated into the guest experience?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Do your front line workers have Indigenous themed apparel? It can be either contemporary reflection of culture or traditional apparel. If you chose to have staff wear traditional, it should be clear to visitors that this is not how your community dresses in today's society.	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A

Authenticity checklist

Do you offer traditional Indigenous foods on site?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Are there displays, signs or exhibits that share about Indigenous people and their cultures?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Is the cultural content approved by the appropriate "keepers of the culture"? (i.e. Elders, hereditary Chiefs, families, etc.) Who are they? How was it approved?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
What have you included to share Indigenous culture with your visitor that will create a memorable experience?			
Cultural displays or exhibits	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Informational signage	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Guided tours	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Self guided tours (with audio or written support)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Storytelling	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Audio/visual presentations	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Pre-tour briefings	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Lectures	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Teaching circles	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Printed documents	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Cultural performances	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Arts/crafts workshops	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Interactive opportunities with hosts (discussions/Q & A)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Cultural demonstrations	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Sampling of traditional foods	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A

Sampling of traditional foods	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Cultural themed accommodations	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Opportunity to visit contemporary community	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Others (list):			
It is very important to engage your visitor with all of their senses. Have you considered			
What will the visitor see?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
How can scent or smell be included?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Are they able to taste any food or drink?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Will they be able to touch & interact with this activity?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
How will they feel?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Do you support your community by			
Buying Indigenous?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Hiring Indigenous?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A

Market readiness and best practices

Read this section if you are:

planning

visitor-ready

Industry expectations

Our ancestors have shared our culture with visitors to our traditional territories since time immemorial, closely guided by their community values of respect, honour and integrity. The only way for our industry to succeed is to continue following those guiding principles when we develop and deliver Indigenous cultural tourism experiences. It not only makes for an authentic experience for our visitors but also helps to ensure that our future generations have that same opportunity.

While you do not necessarily need to answer all questions below positively to be considered "market-ready" you should at least consider each of the points to determine if that is something that your potential trade partners and visitors will be expecting. This Best Practices checklist will help to create a realistic picture for your trade partners.

Business operations

Have you been in business/operation for a minimum of two years?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Can your business/operation be reached 24-hours a day, 365 days a year by website, phone, fax or e-mail? (Not to directly speak to someone but to have access to information and able to leave messages, send bookings, etc.)	Yes	□ No	□ N/A
Do you return messages within 24 hours during standard business hours?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Do you have a website where visitors can obtain information? This website should have all key information on operating hours, location and how to get there (i.e. Google Maps links)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Do you offer a quality experience to visitors?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A

How do you know that you offer a quality experience?			
Increase in visitors	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
High repeat visitation	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Direct feedback (calls, emails, etc.)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Guestbook (comments)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Visitor feedback forms	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Visitor/customer surveys	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
External/independent review	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Industry accreditation and standards	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Industry support and partnerships Industry awards and recognition	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Other:			
Do you have alternate plans if there is bad weather? Or a community emergency? This is very important for outdoor, adventure and winter-based experiences. What are those plans?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
If your tourism experience requires special equipment or training do you provide it? (i.e. safety equipment, life jackets, camping equipment, hats, gloves, etc.)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Have you confirmed with government sources if HST does or does not apply to your operation? If it does, you must register to qualify as a market-ready operation.	Yes	□ No	□ N/A

Are you in good standing/compliance with the health and safety regulating agency in your region and industry sector? This includes Canadian Occupational Health & Safety, food and safety councils, Workplace Hazardous Material Information System (WHMIS), Workman's Safety Insurance Board (WSIB), etc? Please list the licenses and permits you hold:	Yes	□ No	□ N/A
Have you ensured that you have all other operating licenses and permits required to operate this type of tourism experience? Please list the licenses and permits you hold:			
Are you prepared for accidents? A well stocked first aid kit and staff trained in first aid at minimum.	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Liability Insurance is a must in this industry and is a mandatory requirement of most travel trade partners. A minimum of \$2 million liability is standard, with some sectors, like adventure tourism requiring \$3 million. Do you carry adequate liability and related insurance?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Are your operating hours clearly posted for visitors on site and for trade on your website and materials? Do you follow those operating hours consistently?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Are there directional signs that help visitors to easily find your location?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Are you tracking, measuring and evaluating results to ensure a consistent level of customer satisfaction? Tracking & evaluation can help identify who your visitors are, their level of satisfaction and the economic impact in the community.	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A

Pricing

Are the majority (over 51%) of all your front line staff who greet and serve the visitors of Indigenous descent?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
the visitors of Indigenous descent?				

Export-readiness and best practices

Ready for group tours

Indigenous cultural tourism experiences are in great demand. It can be tempting to export your tourism experience before you are fully prepared to meet the demand, but if international visitors are a long term or current goal, it's important to understand how the travel trade works when first creating and pricing your tourism product.

This self-assessment will help prepare you for what lies ahead when you work with the travel trade as an export-ready business.

Rea	ad this section if you are:
•	market-ready

Do you have the capacity to host group tours? If so, what size of group?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Groups up to 15 people (pax)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Groups of 15 to 30 people (pax)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Groups of 30 to 50 people (pax)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Groups larger than 50 people (pax)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Is the site/product easily accessible for visitors?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Is there enough parking for coaches? (with turnaround room?)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Are there enough washrooms for groups (47 people - if pursuing motor coach?) You should find out capacity requirements for your sector based on the length of their stay. A short visit of 2 hours may only require two to three washrooms.	☐ Yes	□ No	□ N/A	

Products and pricing

Do you have a pricing structure with published rates that leaves room for commissions, net rates and other discounts that support industry partners at the various levels? (a minimum of 10% to 30%)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Can you guarantee both price and capacity 12 to 18 months ahead of arrival? Note that once established, prices must be consistent for the time outlined.	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Do you have high-resolution photos available for editorial and promotional use that are copyright free?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Health and safety				
Are Government/public health and sanitation standards continually satisfied?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Do you have an up-to-date Government license, if required? Although some businesses may be operating in a territory where federal, provincial, or territorial licensing does not apply, it is a good idea to ensure that your business at least meets these standards, giving visitors a level of security and comfort.	Yes	□ No	□ N/A	
Are facilities frequently and regularly cleaned?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Are you set up to generate invoices on a regular basis? Are you able to cover operating costs until paid by trade? You must be willing to accept vouchers on site as confirmation of payment upon arrival, and then bill your clients.	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Has your tourism product been successfully test-marketed by a similar group and/or industry association that understands the needs of your potential visitor?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Do you have a detailed marketing plan dedicated to the overseas markets? Does this plan support your region, province and CTC marketing efforts? (You cannot attract a new market to your destination alone!)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	

Is there a person in your organization responsible for marketing and promotions?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Do you understand your current and potential target markets? Can you offer experiences that meet their expectations? (i.e. Understanding what their cultural likes and dislikes are, types of foods, etc.)	Yes	□ No	□ N/A	
Do you support and encourage site/operation inspections by trade partners?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Are your management able to make business decisions as required to work with trade partners? (i.e. Negotiate rates, travel trade contracts, etc.)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Travel trade assumes the risk for delivering what is advertised. Are you prepared to provide exactly what was promised – lakeside rooms, four-course meal, live performances etc?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Program delivery				
Do the seasons and hours of your operation match the demand from visitors?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Do you encourage feedback to evaluate visitor satisfaction?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Is there a way for employees to share the feedback received from visitors with management on a timely basis?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Is there a system for handling visitor comments and concerns? (i.e.	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	

Comment cards, suggestion boxes and website feedback forms, etc.)

Human resources

Are ALL front line staff trained in basic hospitality and tourism skills? Ideally, from a certified training program (i.e. CTHRC, Superhost, First Host)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Do you have enough trained staff to continue offering the same level of quality if your numbers increase?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Are staff trained on any of the following? The more training they have in these fields, the better equipped they will be to respond to your guest and business needs.	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Handling visitor concerns	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Telephone/reservation etiquette	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Meeting and greeting visitors	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Visitor safety	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Indigenous arts, culture	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
First Aid	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
First Host! Superhost or Frontline Cultural sensitivity for visitors	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Others (list):			
Is management actively involved in the tourism industry? (Involvement may be through membership in regional tourism organizations, attending tourism industry functions, sponsoring industry activities, or participating in volunteer initiatives)	Yes	□ No	□ N/A
Are all of your employees encouraged to obtain training and certifications in tourism careers? (through CTHRC emerit programs)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A

Which languages are you able to provide services in?

Please check the languages that you can provide services in: French Italian Spanish Dutch Arabic Portuguese Hindi German Japanese Mandarin Cantonese Polish	Yes Yes	No No No No No No No No	N/A N/A
Italian Spanish Dutch Arabic Portuguese Hindi German Japanese Mandarin Cantonese Polish	 Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes	No No No No No No No No	N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A
Spanish Dutch Arabic Portuguese Hindi German Japanese Mandarin Cantonese Polish	☐ Yes☐ Yes☐ Yes☐ Yes☐ Yes☐ Yes	No No No No No No No No	 N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A
Dutch Arabic Portuguese Hindi German Japanese Mandarin Cantonese Polish	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes	No No No No No No	 N/A N/A N/A N/A
Arabic Portuguese Hindi German Japanese Mandarin Cantonese Polish	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes	No No No No No	□ N/A □ N/A
Portuguese Hindi German Japanese Mandarin Cantonese Polish	Yes Yes Yes	□ No □ No □ No	□ N/A
Hindi German Japanese Mandarin Cantonese Polish	Yes Yes	□ No	□ N/A
German Japanese Mandarin Cantonese Polish	Yes	□ No	
Japanese Mandarin Cantonese Polish	_	_	□ N/A
Mandarin Cantonese Polish	Yes	П	
Cantonese		140	□ N/A
Polish	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Russian	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Thai	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
None	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Dalle our			
Other:			

Making travel trade industry partnerships

Do you have experience hosting familiarization (FAM) tours in the past two years for:			
Travel writers?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Tour operators?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Tour wholesalers?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Do you know who coordinates FAM tours for your region and are you willing to be involved? Note that the costs of the program are most often a business/marketing expense.	Yes	□ No	□ N/A
Do you encourage and collect feedback from travel trade partners?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Can you provide marketing and sales materials? (i.e. High-resolution photos in JPEG or TIFF format, detailed descriptions, lure brochures, video content, DVDs, etc.) Please list.	Yes	□ No	□ N/A

Have you already partnered at a local level by joining efforts of your local Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) or industry association (like RATAS or mainstream)?	Yes	□ No	□ N/A	
What industry organizations is your business/operation a member of?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Are you able to accept tickets/vouchers directly from the visitor and bill your client?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Are you willing to share customer surveys and evaluations with your partners?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Can you be flexible to accommodate tour operator requests?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Are you willing to provide travel trade with space/services in peak (busy) season in order to gain their support when needed in the shoulder (quiet) season?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Travel trade may take two to three years or more to bring new clients to your business/operation. Are you willing to invest in a relationship with travel trade for the long run?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Travel trade may bring their clients (travel agents and other partners) on site for a tour. Are you willing to showcase the experience whenever your travel trade partners make a request, during both peak and shoulder seasons?	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	

Working with FIT and group tours

Read this section if you are:

► market-ready

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Location is central to shopping/attractions/on the way to other sites	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Breakfast provided or available on site	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Food and beverage available or provided	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Greeting and farewell service	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Luggage and porter service (for hotels)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Comfortable basics provided/available for tipi camps, etc.	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Willingness to work with rooming lists*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Minimum of 25 rooms to accommodate one group*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Lobby space to accommodate group arrivals*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Separate check-in areas for groups*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Driver room rate*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Accessible rooms	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
One complimentary room for every 15 rooms sold* (or another comp. policy)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Retail * Feature.	s that are only app	olicable to g	group business.
Gift and/or commission available for driver/escort*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Ability to issue separate bills for individual visitors*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Refreshments and washrooms available in order to make the stop a combined coffee/shopping break	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Offering a group discount/coupon*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A

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* Features that are only applicable to group business.

Yes	☐ No	■ N/A
Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
	Yes Yes	Yes No

Food and beverage

Offer either a set menu or choice of meal to suit the needs of the visitor? (i.e. a choice of beef or chicken or other special needs/requests)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Offer meal options that can accommodate allergies	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Offer enough seating for groups up to 48*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Able to seat the group together or in a separate dining area*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Prompt service (i.e. serving lunch in less than one hour)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Sufficient washroom capacity to accommodate groups*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Parking for motor coach*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Attractive setting – view/decor	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Close to highway and other attractions	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Complimentary policy for driver and escort*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A

Transportation

* Features that are only applicable to group business.

Air conditioned if being used in summer season	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Well maintained/new equipment with no mechanical problems	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Public address system or microphone available*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Fleet size to accommodate range of needs	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Motor coach with washrooms onboard*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Flexible, patient, friendly drivers*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Transportation can accommodate visitors with disabilities	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A

Outdoor adventure

Up-to-date government licenses and appropriate liability insurance, canoe/guide training (i.e. ORCA Training - Ontario Canoe Recreational Association)	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Appropriate lifesaving, water and first aid skills/training	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Clean, recent equipment and supplies	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Boats and motors in good working order	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Appropriate food and sanitation practices for location	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Outfitting and camping equipment required is outlined and/or provided	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Packaged with appropriate transportation, accommodations and food service	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A
Emergency plan has been developed	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A

Pow wows and events

Guaranteed event dates, one year prior	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Year round contact for event	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Carry appropriate liability and event insurance	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Visitor guidelines/etiquette available	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Appropriate food and washrooms available	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Greeted by host with introduction and information	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Motor coach parking*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Group packages, pricing and programs*	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	
Location with accessibility for all visitors	Yes	☐ No	□ N/A	