

Expansion of Aboriginal tourism industry is the goal of Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada

With the official opening of Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada (ATTC) offices in Ottawa, a unique partnership has been launched which will help to develop and expand the Aboriginal tourism industry in Canada.

ATTC will create a forum where industry and government can coordinate their activities in developing and implementing a national Aboriginal tourism strategy. They will pursue opportunities for research, capacity building, development of tourism product and marketing in-

frastructure and for introducing technology. Members will also produce an inventory of Aboriginal tourism businesses in Canada, develop accreditation standards for Aboriginal cultural products, develop and disseminate information and training materials, convene national workshops and work with regional Aboriginal tourism associations. Financial and non-funded support for the initiative will be shared among several departments and industry partners.

"As an industry-led, non-profit

organization, Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada will support the growth of Aboriginal tourism businesses and contribute to Canada's overall tourism performance," said Ron Duhamel, Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development and Western Economic Diversification), on behalf of Industry Minister John Manley. "Moreover, in the past 18 months, important working partnerships have been created between many private and public sector participants in advancing these objectives. This will be the key to

the organizations success."

The joint initiative is consistent with Gathering Strength, Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan announced by the Government of Canada on January 7, 1998.

"Gathering Strength identified investing in people, communities and economies as a central part of this government's mandate," said Jane Stewart, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. "This initiative will benefit thousands of Aboriginal

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people in all parts of Canada. It is a shining example of how we can work in partnership to increase expertise and capacity and to foster economic development."

"The launch of Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada represents a major step forward for the Aboriginal tourism sector," said Albert Diamond, Cree

business leader and member of the ATTC founding board. "There is a potential billion-dollar industry to develop over the next 10 years which can build on the excellent Aboriginal tourism businesses and services which already exist in Canada.

"By creating a national strategy, I am confident that ATTC would help us compete in world markets."