

Annual Report

2021

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

It has been an honour to serve as Board Chair for Tourism Lethbridge. While the global pandemic continued through 2021, creating our four-year strategic plan positioned us well to navigate the challenges thrown our way by COVID 19.

Our four-year strategy is to cultivate conditions for a prosperous tourism economy. The plan is broken into four goals — tourism economy growth, tourism brand development, stakeholder engagement, and organizational sustainability. We saw success in each of these categories in 2021, and we are happy to share them with you in this annual report.

The board also welcomed a new CEO following the departure of Jasmine Sangria in late 2021. After a robust search process, we announced in December that Erin Crane would lead the organization. Erin arrives at Tourism Lethbridge with a work history rich in tourism and economic development. It is this latter expertise, as well as her deep connection to critical stakeholders in Lethbridge and Southern Alberta, that promises to take Tourism Lethbridge and tourism in our city to the next level.

As we begin to come out of the travel restrictions associated with the pandemic, we will continue to grow our tourism economy by presenting Lethbridge as an attractive year-round destination with unique experiences.



Suzanne Lint

Chair, Board of Directors



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

I'm thrilled to be the new CEO of Tourism Lethbridge and am very excited about the work ahead as we build on our pillars of good!

Just as 2020 delivered the most challenging year for tourism in a generation, 2021 continued to test our communities' adaptability. While many travel and business restrictions were relaxed in July, September saw them reinstated along with further rules. Regardless of these challenges, tourism in our city is well-positioned to recover, and the Tourism Lethbridge team is working hard to put plans in place to welcome visitors back to the city.

Lethbridge is home to unique attractions, a vibrant arts scene, and we are a centre for dining, shopping and accommodation. With a thriving regional agri-food sector, ubiquitous natural resources, and four UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Southern Alberta, Lethbridge is literally at the centre of it all.

We've aligned the work we do around the strategic plan and actioned them into four pillars of good — being a good ally and a good host, telling a good story and doing good work. In 2021, the team was able to leverage funding and streamline our website, which will now provide us with reporting around the impacts and effectiveness of future campaigns.

Through the good work of the board, staff, volunteers, and community partners, we can reach our goals and cultivate conditions for a prosperous tourism economy. I'm happy to be part of the team and look forward to working with the community to champion tourism in our city!



Erin Crane

CEO



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN AND FOUR PILLARS OF GOOD

Strategic Plan

Our four-year strategy is to cultivate conditions for a prosperous tourism economy. Our plan outlines four goals with strategic directives for each. We will grow our tourism economy by presenting Lethbridge as an attractive year-round destination with unique experiences.

Vision

To be the tourism leader in Lethbridge showcasing our unique sense of spaces, culture and people.

Mission

To increase visitation and Lethbridge's tourism market share, grow Lethbridge's economy and showcase Lethbridge and our region across the nation.

Core Values

- Love Lethbridge
- Celebrate our arts, culture, sports and history
- Develop partnerships
- Cultivate a prosperous tourism sector



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
Be a Good Ally



BRAND DEVELOPMENT
Tell a Good Story



ECONOMIC GROWTH
Be a Good Host



ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY
Do Good Work

Pillars of Good

To accompany our current four-year strategic plan, Tourism Lethbridge is aligning its focus and ambitions to 4 Key Pillars or, as we see them, our 4 pillars of good.

For every project we begin, every partnership we form, every piece of work we take on, we will ask ourselves how our work connects back to these 4 Pillars of Good. What we do will be given context and tied to our strategic plan by these pillars.





BE A GOOD ALLY — STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

UNESCO Hub

Lethbridge — full of amazing attractions, unique shopping opportunities and a restaurant scene that punches well above its weight — is an incredible city, but it is not an island. Our city is blessed to be surrounded by epic wilderness, farmland supporting a thriving agri-tech sector, and **4 UNESCO World Heritage Sites**, all of which are culturally significant to Indigenous tourism. To harness these assets in our goal to cultivate conditions for a prosperous tourism economy, we need to work closely with regional partners. In this way, stakeholder engagement becomes a synonym for being a Good Ally, the first of our four pillars of good.

2021 was an exciting year as we pushed our engagement out into the surrounding region to be a Good Ally.



Food Tourism Hub

In July, we welcomed Christian Pritchard to Lethbridge to assist us in developing our budding food tourism strategy. A “Gastrotainer & Culinary Adventurist,” Christian is well-known in food broadcasting circles and in homes across Canada from his appearances on TV. The FAM tours of local restaurants (and their enthusiastic chefs), regional food producers and farms resulted in a more focussed vision for our food tourism strategy.

Regional Allies

In 2021, Tourism Lethbridge attended the vital **Rendez-vous Canada** conference. We shared our unique position as a hub to 4 UNESCO world sites by suggesting visitors — “Stay in Lethbridge’s unmatched range of hotels and eat in our diverse restaurants, then explore the region” — to great success. We used funding support from **Southgrow**, a regional economic development alliance, to fund a newsletter and translations for Receptive Tour Operators (RTOs) and attendees.





During the global pandemic, businesses and attractions have had to think creatively. Two clever local examples of adaptation included a Drive-In production in the the Town of Raymond as well as a summer-long outdoor arts festival in Lethbridge. The latter was run by New West Theatre, a group greatly affected by COVID restrictions. We were able to support these experiences with in-kind media, our integrated marketing campaign, and the landing pages on our websites.

Other allyships included the attractions and businesses we were able to connect with through our tourist passport project. This included visitor favourites from Waterton to the Crowsnest Pass to Lethbridge hotels and attractions. By understanding our regional partners, we can better promote Lethbridge as the hotel hub from which to explore. The passport project and in-kind media support were funded by Cooperative Investment Funding. This generous support from Travel Alberta was also used to support the summer marketing plans of the Lethbridge Lodging Association.

Finally, we were proud to sponsor the Winter Light Festival at Nikka Yuko Japanese Garden. The festival is the premiere tourism product during the winter. Extending the festival run expanded Lethbridge's tourism season. We also gave in-kind support by hosting a professional photo booth at the Festival in December.

Indigenous Tourism

Indigenous Tourism is an important area for Tourism Lethbridge. We were able to financially support the **2021 Collective Wellness Virtual Pow-wow** in the Spring. In September, we hosted an event that honoured Treaty 7 Day with drumming, a teepee raising and a blessing from an elder. **Indigenous Tourism Alberta** (ITA) is a vital ally. Not only do we work with them on a committee level, but In November, we attended the **Alberta Indigenous Tourism Summit**. Through the ITA, we are connecting with businesses and important community pillars locally and provincially.



PASSPORTS
DISTRIBUTED

3750



PARTICIPATING
LOCAL BUSINESSES

27



PARTICIPATING
REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS

11



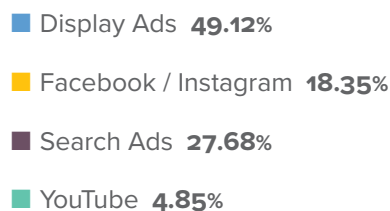
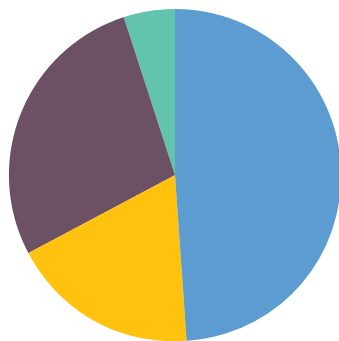


TELL A GOOD STORY — BRAND DEVELOPMENT

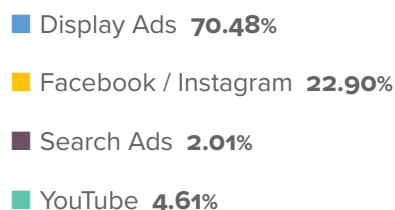
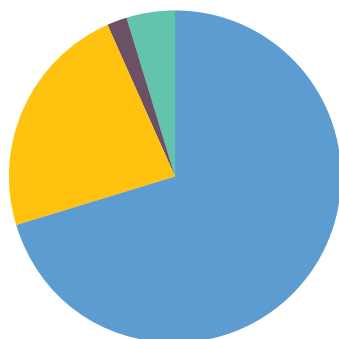
Marketing Initiatives

As a marketing-focused organization, telling a good story is central to what we do. Connecting with travellers happens one-on-one in our visitor centre but increasingly at a mass scale via social media and our website.

2021 Clicks to Website



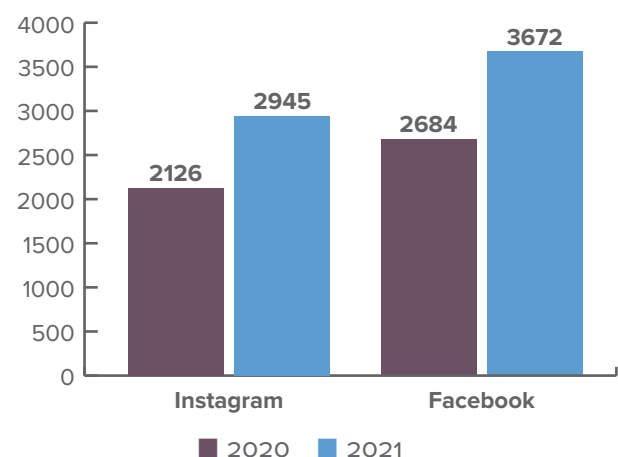
2021 Impressions per Source



Media and influencer FAMs have also been integral to sharing “destination Lethbridge” with our region and country. As we built up our Food Tourism project, we were able to bring in Christian Pritchard, Sondra Baker (the Beer Maven) and Adrian Brijbassi, managing editor of *vacay.ca*. All three told our story to their followers. While Christian and Sondra have a food focus, *vacay.ca* is a leading source of Canadian travel, delivering information on the best places to see, sleep, eat and drink in Canada. This FAM included visits to Nikka Yuko Japanese Garden, Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump and multiple local restaurants. As a result, Lethbridge was rewarded with a food-focussed article (*In Alberta's Agricultural Hub, Food Tourism Takes Root in Lethbridge*) as well as inclusion on the list *20 Best Places to Travel in Canada for 2022: Time for Indigenous Tourism*.



2020 & 2021 Instagram Followers & Facebook Likes





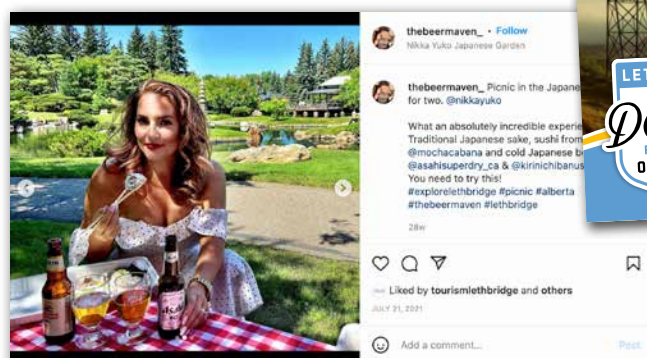
Our Food Tourism project began in 2021 and will continue in 2022 with the launch of Food Trails and continued FAMs. Planning stages included visits in the city to local restaurants, in Lethbridge County to agri-food businesses and regional destinations, and with consultations with Christian Pritchard.

Paid media was another media used to spread the word about Lethbridge. Both Family Fun Canada and Curiocity channels on social media were tapped to reach targeted audiences in Calgary and Edmonton. With COVID continuing to wreak havoc on travel plans, we continued to focus our advertising within a regional scope. If 2020 was focussed on hyper-local travel, 2021 allowed us to broaden our reach to the short-distance drive audiences. Lethbridge is fortunate to have the two major metropolitan centres of Calgary and Edmonton within a five-hour drive.

We were able to reach these audiences thanks to a generous Cooperative Investment Grant from Travel Alberta. This allowed us to contribute more than \$65,000 towards direct mail and integrated digital advertising.

The regional tourist passport program was one segment of our marketing campaign. Visitors were encouraged to stay at Lethbridge Lodging Association hotels to receive their passports. Each stamp from various attractions would be counted as an entry into our ammolite gem prize package. KORITE Ammolite partnered with us, allowing us to give away a valuable example of the official gemstone of Lethbridge as our grand prize.

Direct Mail is a valuable tool to target postal codes and neighbourhoods whose demographic makeup matches our target audience. Postcards featured imagery of Lethbridge, our 4 UNESCO sites and the ammolite prize. The postcard directed recipients to our website, where they could find up-to-date information about the city.



Creative Initiatives

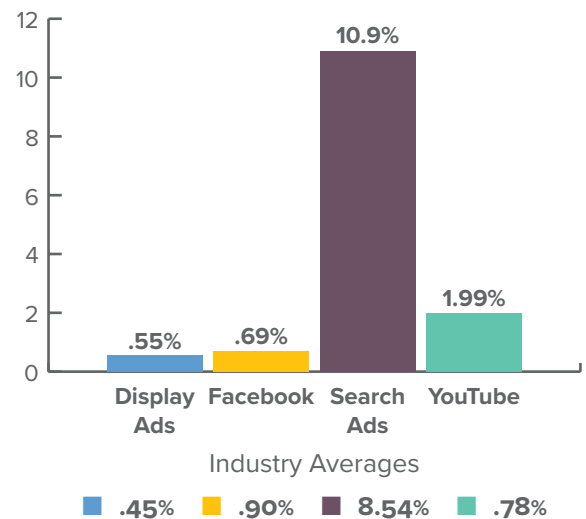
The marketing department of Tourism Lethbridge provides in-kind media support to local events. This year, we captured video at Arts Days, Arts in the Parks, Casa Upside Downtown concerts and more. All of these endeavours help Tourism Lethbridge tell a good story. Lethbridge is unique in Canada with its 4 UNESCO World Heritage Sites reachable as daytrips. Sharing this message will increase the number of visitors to our city, especially as the pandemic has severely curtailed indoor entertainment. These UNESCO sites all have major outdoor components, making them safe to explore at any time. Lethbridge is the only centre in the region with a significant supply of hotels, shops and restaurants to cater to a wide range of visitors looking to explore this region.

Top Three Exit Points from Our Website in 2021



We connect with travellers through marketing campaigns featuring messaging and visuals developed by our team. We let our epic scenery and attractions power our marketing campaigns — Search Engine Marketing (SEM), display ads, Facebook carousel ads and YouTube ads. Our click-through rates (CTR) reflect our destination promise — Lethbridge has what travellers are looking for.

2021 Marketing Campaign Click Through Rate



Destination Brand Identity

Along with marketing campaigns, Tourism Lethbridge continued to hone its brand and that of the destination. We are not on the Trans-Canada Highway, nor is the tourist magnet of Banff a day trip. So in our branding, we leaned into our off-the-beaten-track message with “**Detour from the Ordinary.**”

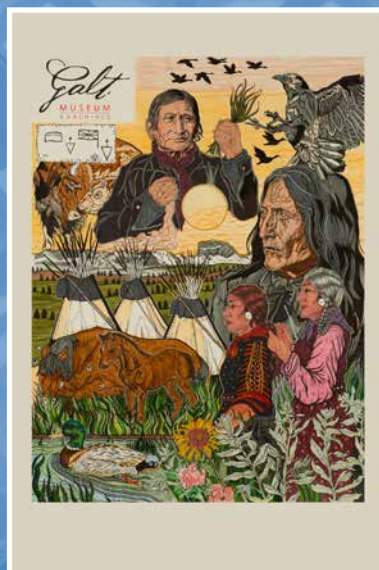
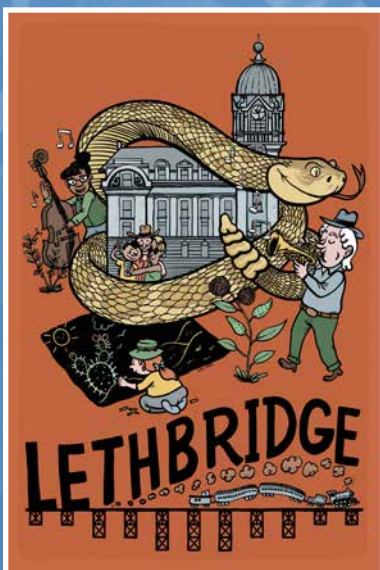
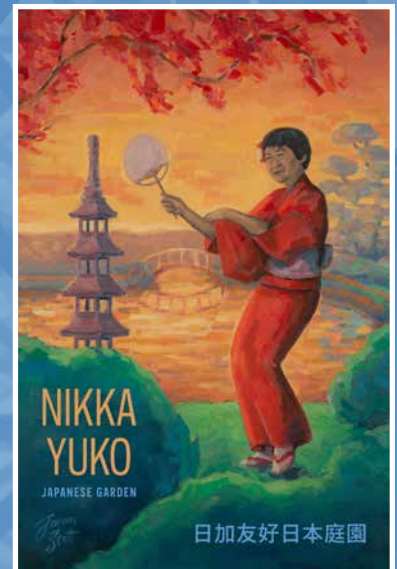
Lethbridge is a hotbed of the arts in Alberta. Tourism Lethbridge captured that spirit with videos of local art exhibitions and interviews and with its **travel poster project**. Recruiting local artists, we released a series of posters reflecting our local attractions in a variety of styles. These are on display in our recently renovated visitor information centre (VIC). The renovations allowed us to tell the story of Lethbridge to visitors in a fun and interactive way. The announcement of the posters generated media coverage in print, online and on television. They are now for sale to the public in our VIC as well as at local attractions.





Tourism
LETHBRIDGE.com

Explore
↳ **LETHBRIDGE**



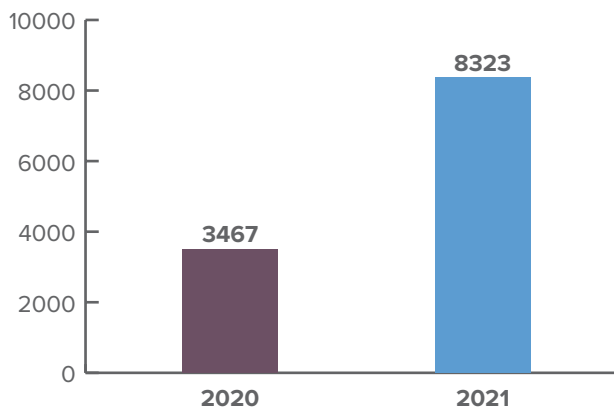


BE A GOOD HOST — ECONOMIC GROWTH

Visitor Interactions

The year 2021 marked an improvement in visitor interactions as compared to 2020. This had much to do with changes in travel restrictions related to the global pandemic.

2020 & 2021 Visitor's Served in Visitor Info Centre



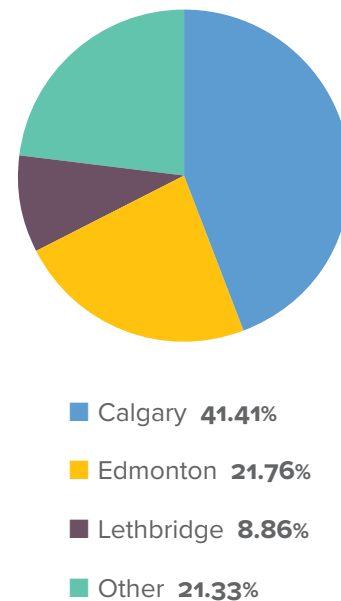
Over the course of the year, Tourism Lethbridge staff attended 34 events at events across the City of Lethbridge. This was a dramatic bounce back from the eight events attended in 2020 while negotiating the advent of the pandemic.

Albertans explored their own province in 2021, making up 96% of our visitors, with the majority coming from Calgary, Edmonton and locals getting information for visiting friends and relatives. This aligns with our marketing campaigns, which targeted these audiences.

Although we only interacted with 100 international visitors in 2021, due to ever-changing border restrictions, this is an upwards trend from the 62 international visitors in 2020.

The top five items discussed with visitors included: City of Lethbridge maps, local attractions, trail maps for biking and walking, upcoming events, and where to find souvenirs related to Lethbridge.

2021 Website Visitor Location



Events

Being a good host sometimes means holding events to bring together the community. The event we organized to honour Treaty 7 Day is one such example. This event featured drumming, a teepee raising and an elder's blessing. We welcomed a variety of VIPs, including the mayor, as well as locals and visitors alike, to the grounds outside of our VIC.

Other events hosted by Tourism Lethbridge in 2021 included Food Truck Fridays as well as a larger Food Truck Fiesta. Both helped connect us to locals who can influence visiting friends and relatives. This was important as for much of the year access to the interior of the visitor information centre was either closed or open with restricted access. Provincial health regulations limited the services we were able to provide inside. By moving contact points outside, we were able to assist visitors safely and in an entertaining venue.

Sport Tourism

Sport Tourism is a component of the work Tourism Lethbridge does to be a good host. Along with Lethbridge Sport Council, Tourism Lethbridge supported Sport Event Congress. To bring the community together, which is one of the selling points of sport tourism, we created a crowd-sourced video of local sports organizations and individuals. We shared this video to the Sport Event Congress and then publicly on our social channels. Lethbridge is a vibrant potential host for sporting events, and our work helped present the passionate local support Lethbridge offers to the attendees of the Congress.



DO GOOD WORK — ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY



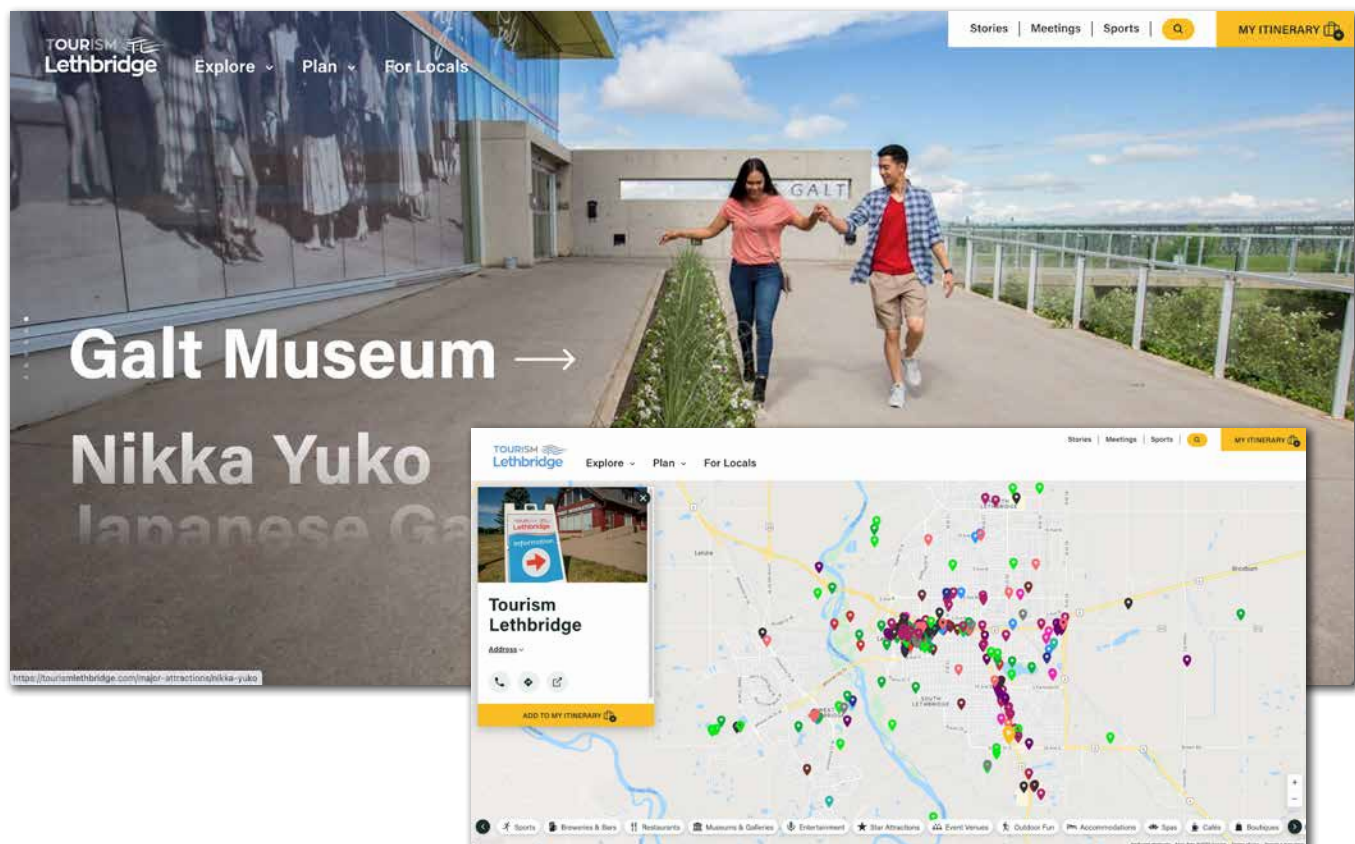
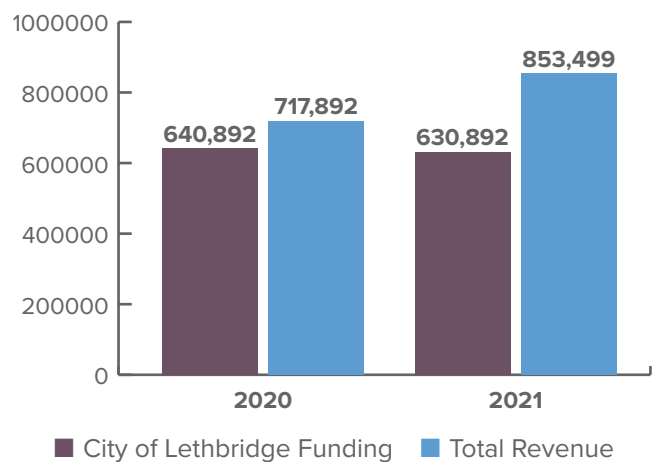
Updated Website — TourismLethbridge.com

In 2021, Tourism Lethbridge was able to update its website thanks to grant funding from Travel Alberta. The decision was made to move to a headless content management system to future-proof the site. We want our website, and any communication point with the public, to give travellers reasons to visit Lethbridge. To do this, we created a section for up-to-date articles and blogs, a more evergreen and inspirational “explore” section, as well as a map that visitors can use to plan and quickly build itineraries. These can easily be shared with families and friends.

The look of the public-facing site is clean and streamlined. The backend was also rebuilt with a new Content Management System. Once operational, a full-site search engine optimization (SEO) audit was performed.

Reaching potential travellers before they “hit the road” is vital in today’s world. By having a site that allows people to dream and then plan their trip, we can educate our audience, encourage them to visit and put money into the local economy.

2020 & 2021 Leveraged Funding



Strategic Plan

In the fall of 2020, the board and management of Tourism Lethbridge came together to formalize how the non-profit organization will move forward. From the brainstorming and working sessions, a formal Strategic Plan book was written, designed and printed in 2021.

This four-year plan will guide the organization as it works “to grow the tourism economy by presenting Lethbridge as a year-round destination with unique experiences.”

2021 Board of Directors

Suzanne Lint - Chairperson

Michelle Day - Vice Chair

Greg Norman - Executive at Large

Ryan Parks - Treasurer

Greg Robinson - Director

Katie Rabbit-Young Pine - Director

Lane Anderson - Director

Mina Church - Director

Todd Caughlin - Director

Staff in 2021

Jasmine Sangria - CEO

Stephen Braund - Director of Marketing

Jackie Stambene - Director of Visitor Services

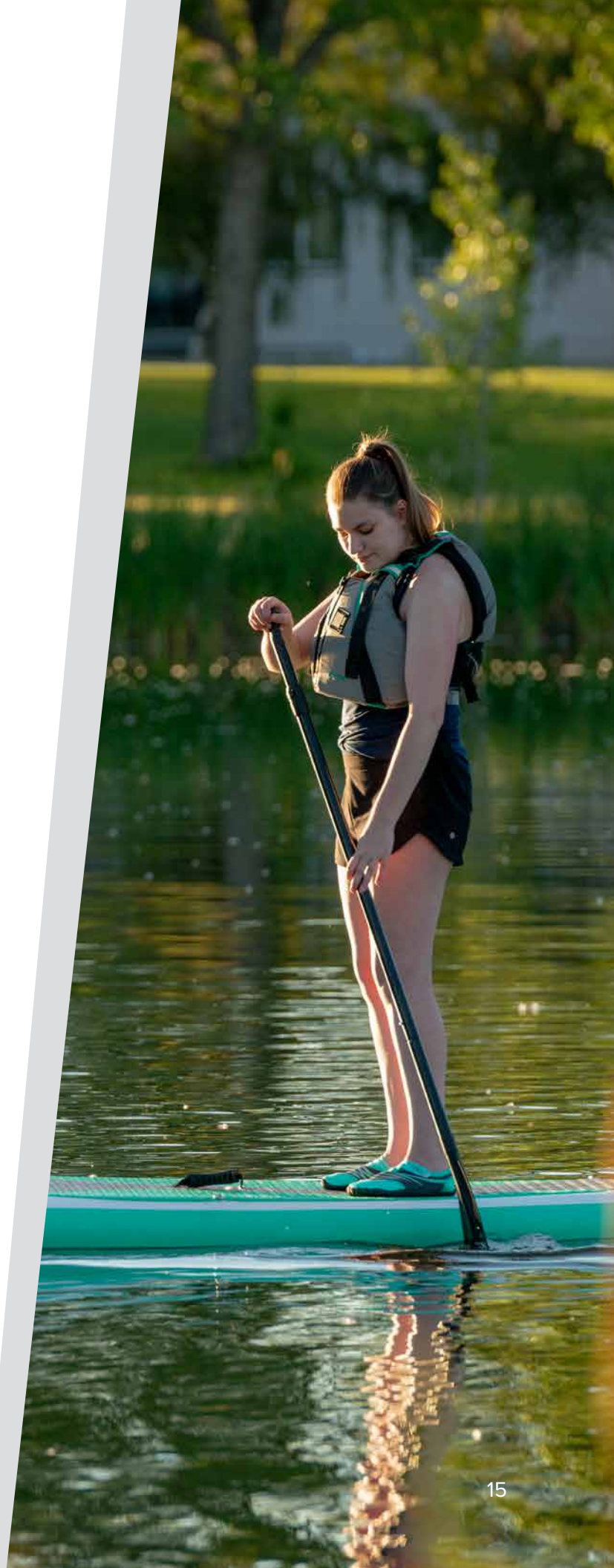
Jarom Scott - Visual Communications Specialist

Emma McPherson - Social Media & Digital Specialist

Amelia Stevenson - Executive Assistant

Madeleine Vanden Berg - Visitor Services Specialist

Shayna Ravndahl - Visitor Services Specialist



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