



INDIGENOUS
TOURISM ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

ASSOCIATION TOURISTIQUE
AUTOCHTONE
DU CANADA

Budget 2022 announced \$20 million over two years in support of a new Indigenous Tourism Fund to help the Indigenous tourism industry recover from the pandemic and position itself for long-term, sustainable growth. The Indigenous Tourism Fund is delivered through two \$10 million streams: This investment is from the Stream 2-Micro and Small Business Stream to build capacity of Indigenous tourism micro and small businesses to recover from the impact of COVID-19 and grow. ITAC will deliver the Indigenous Tourism Fund Micro and Small Business Stream with support from Provincial and Territorial Indigenous Tourism Associations.

ITAC acknowledges the inquiries and concerns from Ontario Indigenous tourism applicants regarding the Indigenous Tourism Fund Micro and Small Business Stream process. We understand the urgency surrounding the timing and approval process, particularly with the current need for clarity on the role of Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) and the ongoing finalization of the contribution agreement. To date, ITO is still negotiating their role with Innovation, Science, and Economic Development (ISED), a department of the Government of Canada.

To ensure eligible Indigenous tourism businesses in Ontario are not disadvantaged by delays, ITAC will advance an interim approval process for Ontario applicants without confirmation of a finalized agreement between ISED and ITO. This aims to prevent unnecessary delays and support eligible Indigenous tourism businesses. ITAC recognizes the significance of the Indigenous tourism industry in Ontario and is eager to support businesses that align with the national accreditation standards outlined in The Original Original Accreditation Program, supported with funds from the Indigenous Tourism Fund Micro and Small Business Stream announced by the Government of Canada on November 17th, 2023.

As we await further clarification and guidance from ISED if ITO will support this process, the ITAC Board of Directors made the following motion:

MOTION20231213 – 03 – *Ensure all Indigenous tourism businesses in Ontario applying for MSBS are provided timely equitable access as per the agreement.*

Moved by Dave Daley

Seconded by James McPherson

Recused Jason W Johnston

Question called, all in favour

Motion carried

**Please note the ITAC Ontario rep has declared a conflict of interest, left the room*

MOTION20231213 – 04 – *ITAC utilize the Ontario board rep to complete final review in the absence of ITO agreement in the interim basis for MSBS applications.*

Moved by Dave Daley

Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada

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Seconded by James McPherson

Recused Jason W Johnston

Question called, all in favour

Motion carried

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ITAC remains committed to advocating and supporting Indigenous tourism businesses in Ontario and ensuring fair and equal access to resources from the Indigenous Tourism Fund Micro and Small Business Stream for all eligible applicants. ITAC will lead with transparency to businesses about how we continue to support you in the program.

The association remains committed to creating a new relationship with ITO, acknowledging the importance of collaboration in supporting Indigenous tourism businesses in Ontario. ITAC has made incredible efforts to provide ITO with an olive branch to try to rebuild the relationship throughout 2023. This included the following steps:

1. ITAC email message to Trina Mather Simard February 14th, 2023

From: Keith Henry <keith@indigenoustourism.ca>

Date: February 14, 2023 at 3:16:43 PM PST

To: trina@aboriginalexperiences.com

Subject: Indigenous Tourism Ontario Relationship\

Afternoon Trina

I hope you can share this message to ITO in an effort to try to move forward in a new way.

1. Stay positive - no talk about the past issues
2. ITAC wants to ensure the International Indigenous Tourism Conference being hosted in Ottawa in 2024 positions ITO as the co-host. We have not yet announced but ideally we state this at the IITC in March in Winnipeg
3. If ITO agrees to working with the 2024 announcement in Winnipeg, ITAC will cover the costs to support 4 ITO representatives attend the IITC in Winnipeg. The full conference plus travel plus expenses.
4. ITAC has negotiated new Federal resources for 2023-2024 and wants to assist ITO with capacity and business support program with no less than 1.3 million for ITO to administer under the program design of ITAC.

I really want ITAC/ITO to stop communicating through lawyers and get back to a good working relationship. We want ITO to be successful and working together is the only way forward.

I am sending this in good faith to see if we can find a way forward and be leaders to correct the relationship.



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Thank you
Keith Henry
President and CEO
Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada
NO RESPONSE

2. ITAC legal correspondence to request to meet February 16th, 2023

NO RESPONSE

3. ITAC text message to Kevin directly February 24th, 2023

Sent from Keith Henry to Kevin Eshkawkogan, February 23, 2023

Morning Kevin,

I am going to take this important step today as I want a better future between ITAC and ITO.

I hope we can find a way to communicate either here by text, phone or in person and see how we can move forward.

I sent Trina some ideas to try to move forward. Time is limited on some of the items as IITC in Winnipeg is sold out but I want to have ITO there as our guest with 4 seats. But I need to know if you will agree and bring some people.

I hope you are well, I don't want to see any more conflict or issues. We don't need to talk about the past. We can just stay positive and try to make a better path forward.

I hope you will meet me half way to start to rebuild.

Take care Kevin
Sent from my iPhone

NO RESPONSE

4. ITAC Letter to ITO May 5th, 2023, Follow up to February Correspondence in #1.

Added the idea of mediation to create new opportunity to address the relationship issues

5. ITO Lawyer Letter Responding to February ITAC letter #1 June 2nd, 2023.

ITO Responded to #4 - However despite the ITO legal representative's commitment to advise ITAC that ITO would provide a response later in June or July, it is now December, over 6 months later, and ITO has not made any response to ITAC's request for mediation.



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6. I also reached out to ITO reps and had two conversations in person in Ottawa to continue to offer an olive branch in September and October.

No response

Unfortunately, ITO and Kevin E. have made no attempts to try to resolve the situation despite the significant efforts of ITAC in 2023. There has been no communication, no respectful responses, and no effort to look past ITO self-interest for the betterment of all Indigenous tourism businesses in Ontario. Worse, Kevin E. is going to ITAC's funding partners, such as ISED, to undermine ITAC's ability to administer the new Indigenous Tourism Fund for the industry in Canada. ITO has been engaged with ISED since June 2023, creating an unorthodox and clumsy Indigenous Tourism Fund proposed delivery model. ITO's refusal to work with ITAC and communicate directly to ISED, has led to months of unreasonable delays. Indigenous tourism businesses in Canada are demanding support, including capacity for the other nine Provincial and Territorial Indigenous Tourism Associations.

What remains even more concerning is that we have collected several examples of how ITO (Kevin E.) has been misinforming Indigenous tourism members and partners in Ontario about ITAC and our programs and even worked to try to stop attendance at the 11th International Indigenous Tourism Conference in February in Ottawa. I am sure you were also told not to apply directly to the Indigenous Tourism Fund Micro and Small Business Stream.

Despite the past challenges, ITAC remains open to engaging with ITO in the future to foster a positive and constructive working relationship to support marketing, development, and key Indigenous tourism initiatives such as the upcoming International Indigenous Tourism Conference in Ottawa February 26th - 28th, [click here](#).

To learn more about The Original Original Accreditation Program click [here](#).

To learn more about the Indigenous Tourism Fund Micro and Small Business Stream funding program and Ontario's allocation of funds, click [here](#).

To express concern or comment about the Indigenous Tourism Fund Micro and Small Business Stream program, please send your email [here](#).