

The Honourable Rechie Valdez, Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism)

Minister Valdez,

Oki, My name is Dion F. Redgun. I am a Siksika Nation member, Elder, and Indigenous tourism entrepreneur from Siksika Nation, Alberta, Treaty 7.

I am writing as part of the *ITAC Members Network* to express deep concern and to demand immediate action regarding Canada's decision to cut funding to the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada — *87% since 2023-2024, and 100% eliminated for 2026-2027*.

This is not a budget adjustment. This is abandonment.

For 11+ years, ITAC has been the global leader in Indigenous tourism. They've helped entrepreneurs like me build businesses, create jobs for our youth, and share Blackfoot culture on our own terms. ITAC put Canada on the map as a world leader in Indigenous-led tourism.

On the ground in Siksika, Alberta and across Canada, ITAC's support meant:

1. Marketing reach we could never afford alone — bringing visitors to tipis camps overlooking the Bow River and Little Chicago Siksika Nation and Indigenous tourism businesses and entrepreneurs throughout Alberta and Canada
2. Development training so our businesses meet global standards while staying culturally authentic.
3. Partnerships with international tour operators who now seek out Indigenous experiences specifically.
4. Youth employment — my business and others hire Siksika and Alberta youth first. Those jobs are now at risk.

Minister, we need answers:

1. *Why was Indigenous tourism cut 87% when the broader tourism sector saw far smaller reductions?* Treasury Board data shows this is disproportionate.
2. *Why is ITAC funding 100% gone in 2026-2027?* What is Canada's plan to support 1,900+ Indigenous tourism businesses if ITAC becomes insolvent?
3. *Where is Canada's commitment to economic reconciliation?* Call to Action #92 calls for the corporate sector and government to ensure Indigenous peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and economic opportunities. Cutting ITAC violates the spirit of #92.

The impacts are real and immediate:

1. Siksika, Alberta Indigenous tourism businesses and across Canada lose marketing, development, and partnership support overnight.

2. Our youth lose jobs. Our communities lose revenue that stays on-Reserve — dollars that pay for food, housing, and ceremonies.
3. Canada loses its competitive advantage. Global travelers don't come here for chain hotels. They come for authentic Indigenous experiences on the land. ITAC made that possible.
4. Lateral violence and political games were allowed to undermine ITAC while federal reps and non-Indigenous partners stayed silent. That is unethical and goes against UNDRIP Article 3 — our right to self-determination.
5. *Precedent matters:* If Canada can zero out the world's leading Indigenous tourism body after 11 years of success, what message does that send to every other Indigenous sector?

Our ask is clear:

1. *Immediately restore stable, multi-year core funding to ITAC* at 2023 levels so they can continue marketing, development, leadership, and partnership work.
2. *Publicly affirm Canada's commitment to Indigenous-led tourism* as essential to national tourism strategy and reconciliation.
3. *Investigate why ITAC faced disproportionate cuts* compared to the wider tourism sector and release those findings to ITAC members by June 2026.
4. *Meet with ITAC leadership and a delegation of Indigenous entrepreneurs*, including from Siksika, within 30 days.

ITAC has tried every angle — Indigenous Tourism Destination Fund, new marketing campaigns, Reconciliation Training for Tourism, own-source revenue. They've done the work. Canada has not. The Destination Marketing Organizations and industry associations that use our images in their ads have not made a single call to help.

If ITAC fails, every Indigenous tourism business fails with it. That is a major setback for Canada, for reconciliation, and for Treaty relationships. We cannot let that happen quietly.

I, along with other Siksika and Alberta Indigenous and Metis entrepreneurs, stand with ITAC. We ask you to meet with ITAC leadership urgently and to reverse this decision before 2026.

I look forward to your response and to seeing real action within 14 days.

Siksikaitsitapi. All my relations.

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Siksika Nation, Treaty 7 Territory