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May 11, 2026

Dear Honourable Minister Rechie Valdez,

I am writing on behalf of Great River Fishing Adventures, one of British Columbia's leading freshwater fishing tourism operators, to express our strong support for the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) and the critical importance of sustained federal investment in Indigenous tourism across Canada.

For businesses like ours, tourism is not simply seasonal recreation. It is a major economic driver that supports guides, accommodations, restaurants, transportation providers, Indigenous partnerships, local suppliers, and entire rural communities throughout British Columbia and the Fraser Valley region. International and domestic visitors travel to Canada specifically for authentic outdoor and cultural experiences, and Indigenous tourism has become one of the fastest-growing and most meaningful sectors within the Canadian tourism economy.

ITAC has played an instrumental role in strengthening Indigenous tourism businesses and supporting operators across the country through marketing, advocacy, training, industry partnerships, and national visibility. Their leadership has helped elevate Indigenous tourism experiences to the world stage while supporting economic reconciliation and long-term community sustainability.

During the two extremely difficult years of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations like ITAC became absolutely essential to the survival of many tourism operators, including our own business. The tourism sector was among the hardest hit industries in Canada. International travel restrictions, cancellations, uncertainty, and economic instability created unprecedented challenges for operators dependent on tourism activity. ITAC provided critical support, leadership, communication, and advocacy during that period, helping businesses navigate uncertainty and remain viable during one of the most difficult chapters our industry has ever faced.

The value of ITAC extends far beyond one organization. Its work supports thousands of tourism jobs, Indigenous entrepreneurs, rural economies, cultural experiences, and international tourism opportunities that directly contribute to Canada's economy and global reputation. The growth of Indigenous tourism in Canada has become a powerful example of economic reconciliation in action.

It is also deeply concerning to see reports that federal funding support for Indigenous tourism initiatives through ITAC has been reduced by approximately 87% over the past year. Such a dramatic reduction threatens not only the operational stability of ITAC itself, but also the many Indigenous tourism operators,

Great River Fishing Adventures  
9839 Candow Street  
Chilliwack, BC, V2P 4K5  
604-792-3544



partnerships, and rural businesses that rely on its leadership and support network. These reductions create uncertainty across an industry that has worked tirelessly to rebuild following the devastating impacts of COVID-19. For many operators, especially those in remote and Indigenous communities, ITAC has been one of the only national organizations providing meaningful advocacy, collaboration opportunities, training, and tourism development support. A reduction of this magnitude risks undermining years of progress in Indigenous tourism growth, economic reconciliation, and sustainable tourism development throughout Canada.

At a time when Canada continues to promote reconciliation, economic growth, and tourism development as national priorities, it is vital that Indigenous tourism organizations receive stable and meaningful support to continue this important work.

We respectfully encourage your office and the Government of Canada to continue championing ITAC and investing in Indigenous tourism infrastructure, partnerships, and long-term sustainability. The return on these investments extends far beyond tourism alone, they strengthen communities, create employment, preserve culture, and support Canada's reputation as a world-class tourism destination.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dean Werk'.

Dean Werk - President and Owner  
Great River Fishing Adventures (est.1988)