

Dear Honourable Rechie Valdez,

I am writing today on behalf of Kisisam Patisserie, an Indigenous-owned business deeply connected to the Indigenous tourism community and to the ongoing work of reconciliation across Canada.

The recent announcement regarding the crisis facing the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) is heartbreaking and deeply concerning. The loss of federal operational support for ITAC represents far more than funding cuts to an organization — it represents a weakening of the national Indigenous tourism movement and a setback to the reconciliation journey many of us believed Canada was finally beginning to take seriously.

Kisisam Patisserie has proudly participated in and supported Indigenous initiatives at both national and international levels. We have provided Indigenous-inspired catering for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, serving Elders and Survivors of the residential school system with dignity, care, and respect. We have also contributed to G7-related initiatives in Ottawa connected to the Kananaskis Summit and participated in Indigenous reconciliation gatherings initiated through the House of Commons.

These opportunities were not simply business milestones. They represented Indigenous voices finally being welcomed into spaces where we were historically excluded.

As the only Indigenous storefront business in a small community of approximately 2,500 people, we have worked tirelessly to prove that Indigenous entrepreneurship is not only possible, but sustainable, impactful, and worthy of national recognition and investment. Despite operating from a small rural community, our work has reached national and international audiences. That alone reflects the resilience Indigenous people continue to carry after generations of hardship.

However, resilience should not be mistaken for limitless endurance.

Over the past several years, we have watched too many Indigenous programs, supports, and initiatives disappear or stand on the brink of collapse. It has been deeply discouraging for many within our communities who believed we were finally entering a new era of healing, partnership, and progress with the Government of Canada.

Seeing Indigenous initiative support withdrawn under new government leadership creates uncertainty and damages trust within Indigenous communities. It feels less like progress and more like a painful setback to the work that so many people — Elders, Survivors, entrepreneurs, artists, youth, and community leaders — have fought for over generations.

Organizations like ITAC are essential because they provide the infrastructure, advocacy, visibility, and support needed for Indigenous businesses and communities to

thrive. Indigenous tourism is not only an economic sector; it is a living expression of culture, truth-sharing, healing, education, and reconciliation.

We want future generations of Indigenous entrepreneurs to believe they can build sustainable businesses while remaining deeply connected to their identity, culture, and traditional lands. We want Indigenous youth to see possibility instead of barriers. We want our voices and communities to continue being heard at national and international levels.

But this cannot happen if Indigenous-led organizations are left without support.

I respectfully ask that your office and the federal government take immediate action to restore operational funding and long-term support for ITAC and for Indigenous tourism initiatives across Canada.

Please help us maintain the connection we have carried with our lands, cultures, languages, and communities for centuries. Please help us continue the healing journey that so many have sacrificed to begin. Indigenous peoples have fought for far longer than many realize, and we are still here — building, leading, contributing, and creating pathways for future generations despite every challenge placed before us.

We are asking not for sympathy, but for meaningful partnership, commitment, and action.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dominique Lalonde

Chi Miigwetch !

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