



May 8, 2026

Dear Honourable Rechie Valdez,

I am writing to you not only as the Director of Community & Tourism Development for Beardy's & Okemasis' Cree Nation and the operator of Pêmiska Tourism, but as someone who has worked hard, witnessed first-hand the transformational impact Indigenous tourism can have on communities, cultures, and local economies, and someone who has relied on support and mentorship from the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada.

Indigenous tourism is not simply an economic sector. It is reconciliation in action.

Across this country, Indigenous tourism operators are creating spaces where Canadians and international visitors can learn the true histories of these lands, engage with Indigenous cultures in authentic and meaningful ways, and build understanding through lived experience, storytelling, language, food, ceremony, and land-based connection. Indigenous tourism creates employment in communities that have historically been excluded from mainstream economic development. It creates pride. It creates healing. It creates opportunity where few opportunities exist.

But none of this happens without support.

Small Indigenous tourism operators like ours do not have the luxury of major corporate partnerships, large marketing budgets, or extensive industry networks. We operate in rural and remote communities with limited resources, carrying the enormous responsibility of building sustainable tourism economies while also safeguarding culture, language, history, and community expectations.

For many of us, the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) has been the single most important national partner in our journey toward success.

Pêmiska Tourism would not be where it is today without ITAC's mentorship, advocacy, training, market development support, export readiness programming, and national leadership. ITAC has helped Indigenous operators across Canada compete in an industry that has historically left Indigenous people behind. They have built international credibility for Indigenous tourism experiences and have elevated Canada as a global leader in Indigenous tourism.

To put it plainly: without ITAC, many Indigenous tourism businesses simply would not survive.

That is why the federal government's current approach to supporting ITAC is deeply troubling and, frankly, disgraceful.

At a time when governments across Canada speak constantly about economic reconciliation, Indigenous entrepreneurship, and Indigenous-led growth, allowing the national Indigenous tourism organization to face financial instability sends the exact opposite message. Reconciliation cannot simply exist in speeches and announcements. It requires sustained investment in Indigenous institutions that are producing measurable economic, social, and cultural outcomes.

ITAC is not asking for charity. ITAC is delivering results.

The Indigenous tourism industry was one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in Canada prior to the pandemic. It contributes hundreds of millions of dollars to local economies, creates employment in communities where jobs are desperately needed, and serves as one of the most powerful – if not THE most powerful - vehicles for education and reconciliation available in this country.

If Canada is serious about reconciliation, then Indigenous tourism must be treated as a national priority.

And if Indigenous tourism is a national priority, then ITAC must be protected, strengthened, and recognized as a long-term national partner in Canada's shared economic and reconciliation journey.

The federal government cannot continue expecting Indigenous tourism operators to build world-class experiences while simultaneously starving the very organization that makes our success possible.

I urge you to act immediately to ensure stable, long-term federal funding support for the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada. The future growth and success of Indigenous tourism in this country depends on it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Kevin Seesequasis', written in a cursive style.

D. Kevin Seesequasis
Director of Community & Tourism Development
Pêmisska Tourism - Beardy's & Okemasis' Cree Nation

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