

345 Seventh Avenue, Suite 1801  
New York, NY 10001

May 8, 2026

The Honourable Rechie Valdez  
Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism)  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Secretary of State Valdez,

On behalf of the United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA), I am writing to express our strong support for the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) and to respectfully urge the restoration of meaningful federal investment in this vital organization.

Representing \$24.4 billion in revenue and serving more than 8.4 million travelers annually, USTOA and its member companies have long recognized the importance of authentic, sustainable, and culturally meaningful travel experiences. Indigenous tourism experiences across Canada are among the most impactful and sought-after offerings available to travelers today, creating opportunities for cultural exchange, economic empowerment, community development, and reconciliation through tourism.

Through its leadership, advocacy, and industry development efforts, ITAC has played a critical role in strengthening Indigenous tourism throughout Canada and elevating these experiences on the global stage. The organization has created pathways for Indigenous tourism operators to build sustainable businesses, reach international markets, preserve cultural heritage, and compete within an increasingly global and competitive tourism economy.

We are deeply concerned to learn that ITAC has been forced to lay off its entire team due to the elimination of federal funding for fiscal year 2026–27. The loss of support for an organization identified within Canada’s own federal tourism strategy as a priority partner risks undermining years of progress, partnership-building, and momentum across the Indigenous tourism sector.

Travelers today increasingly seek meaningful, purpose-driven experiences, and Indigenous tourism fulfills that demand in powerful ways. Without a strong national organization coordinating advocacy, development, partnerships, and industry support, the long-term growth and sustainability of the sector are at risk. The relationships, infrastructure, and international visibility built over many years cannot simply be paused and restarted without significant consequence.

As a leading voice for the tour operator industry for more than 50 years, USTOA understands the importance of sustained investment in organizations that strengthen tourism economies, support local communities, and foster meaningful cultural connections between travelers and destinations. We respectfully encourage your office to work toward restoring federal support for ITAC’s core operations so it may continue its important work on behalf of Indigenous tourism operators and communities across Canada.

Thank you for considering our views on this important issue and for your continued support of the tourism industry and Indigenous communities across Canada. If you or your staff have any questions or would like



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additional perspective from the tour operator community, please do not hesitate to contact me at [tdale@ustoa.com](mailto:tdale@ustoa.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry Dale".

Terry Dale  
President & CEO  
USTOA