



The Honourable Rechie Valdez
Secretary of State for Small Business and Tourism
Government of Canada

Dear Minister Valdez,

Re: Indigenous Tourism in Canada Must Be Protected, Prioritized, and Properly Supported

We write to you today as partners in Kitchiota Indigenous Destinations — “Travel the Path of our People” — a first-of-its-kind in Canada Indigenous Tourism Corridor experience comprised of Pêmisica Tourism, Dakota Dunes Resort, and Wanuskewin Heritage Park in Saskatchewan.

Together, our organizations represent a powerful Indigenous-led tourism collaboration rooted in culture, language, history, land, and reconciliation. Through Kitchiota, visitors are invited to experience the stories of our Nations across multiple territories and cultures — Cree, Dakota, and Plains Indigenous Peoples — through immersive, authentic experiences that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the world.

We are concerned about the significant financial challenges currently facing the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), and we believe this presents an important opportunity for the Government of Canada to reaffirm the vital national role ITAC plays in strengthening and supporting Indigenous tourism operators and communities across Canada.

Without ITAC, many Indigenous tourism experiences simply would not exist.

Small and emerging Indigenous tourism operators do not have the luxury of large marketing budgets, national industry connections, export development expertise, or access to international travel trade networks. We rely on ITAC’s advocacy, mentorship, training, certification pathways, market readiness development, partnership facilitation, and global marketing reach to compete in a tourism industry that has historically excluded Indigenous Peoples from meaningful participation.

ITAC has helped Indigenous tourism become one of the most powerful economic reconciliation success stories in Canada.

At Pêmisika Tourism, ITAC helped support our journey from a concept into an award-winning, export-ready Indigenous tourism destination attracting national, and international media attention and international interest. Through Kitchiota Indigenous Destinations, we are now building a transformational, multi-day Indigenous tourism experience that connects visitors to the living cultures, histories, and lands of our Nations in meaningful and unforgettable ways.

Dakota Dunes Resort represents a powerful example of Indigenous economic success and self-determination in action. As a premier Indigenous-owned resort destination on Whitecap Dakota First Nation, Dakota Dunes has demonstrated how Indigenous tourism can compete at the highest levels of the hospitality industry while remaining deeply connected to culture, language, community, and Dakota identity. The resort welcomes visitors from across Canada and internationally, creating meaningful economic opportunities for Indigenous Peoples while showcasing Indigenous excellence in tourism, hospitality, and destination development.

Wanuskewin Heritage Park stands as one of the most significant Indigenous cultural and archaeological destinations in North America. For thousands of years, the lands at Wanuskewin have served as a gathering place for the Peoples of the Northern Plains, and today the park continues to educate, inspire, and reconnect visitors with the histories, cultures, and living traditions of Indigenous Peoples. Through its national and international reputation, educational programming, cultural revitalization efforts, and global recognition efforts including its pursuit of UNESCO World Heritage designation, Wanuskewin demonstrates the profound cultural, educational, and reconciliation value Indigenous tourism brings to Canada and the world.

This work matters.

It matters economically — creating jobs, supporting entrepreneurs, generating own-source revenue, and driving rural and Indigenous economic development.

It matters culturally — revitalizing language, storytelling, ceremony, traditional knowledge, and intergenerational learning.

And it matters nationally — because Indigenous tourism is *reconciliation in action*.

Canada promotes Indigenous tourism internationally as part of its national identity and visitor experience. Yet the very organization responsible for building and sustaining that success is now facing uncertainty and instability. That contradiction is difficult to understand and deeply concerning to Indigenous tourism operators across this country.

Kitchiota Indigenous Destinations represents what the future of tourism in Canada can look like:

- Indigenous-led
- Collaborative
- Sustainable
- Culturally grounded
- Economically transformative
- Internationally marketable

But these successes do not happen in isolation. They happen because organizations like ITAC exist to support, mentor, advocate for, and elevate Indigenous tourism businesses large and small.

We respectfully call on the Government of Canada to:

- Provide stable, long-term operational funding for ITAC;
- Recognize ITAC as a permanent national partner in Canada's tourism economy;
- Invest meaningfully in Indigenous tourism growth and export development;
- Ensure Indigenous tourism operators continue to have access to national support systems, training, and market opportunities; and
- Treat Indigenous tourism not as a seasonal initiative, but as a vital component of Canada's economic and reconciliation framework.

The success of Indigenous tourism in Canada is not accidental. It is the result of years of relationship-building, community investment, cultural revitalization, and tireless advocacy led by Indigenous tourism operators and ITAC alike.

Now is not the time to weaken that work. Now is the time to strengthen it.

Respectfully, for Kitchiota Indigenous Destinations



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