

To the Honorable Rechie Valdez, P.C., M.P.

House of Commons

Subject: Concerns Regarding the Decision Not to Fund the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada

Dear Minister Valdez,

I write this letter with great disappointment regarding the decision not to provide funding for ITAC. As an indigenous tourism operator who knows the benefits of indigenous tourism and understands the value of how our industry adds to the economy, I believe indigenous tourism deserves meaningful support and a firm commitment from the federal government.

Indigenous tourism offers far more than economic benefits. It creates opportunities for indigenous communities and individual operators to share history, traditions and culture from our own perspective and terms. These experiences foster greater understanding between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians while also attracting visitors seeking authentic cultural experience.

The indigenous tourism industry has demonstrated its ability to create jobs, support local businesses, and generate revenue in communities that may have limited economic opportunities. Investment in this sector can contribute to long-term economic self-determination and community well-being. Conversely, a lack of funding may hinder growth, limit employment opportunities, and undermine efforts to strengthen indigenous led cultural enterprises.

Canada has made commitments toward advancing reconciliation and supporting indigenous development. Many Canadians view indigenous tourism as a practical and effective way to advance those goals. For that reason, I respectfully urge you to reconsider this funding decision or explore alternative measures that would allow indigenous tourism operators and organizations to continue developing and expanding their offerings.

I would appreciate greater clarity regarding the rationale behind this decision. To build the narrative that our industry is best managed by a non-indigenous organization such as Destination Canada is putting us back into the dark ages, and it feels like that is the direction this government is heading towards. ITAC has worked hard to gain global recognition and the world is watching us and decisions being made by your government that ultimately do affect our industry. I believe that continued Dialogue and collaboration with indigenous operators and industry leaders are essential to ensuring that this important sector survives.

I sign off respectfully but with great disappointment in how this has been handled

Tim Mearns/Owner operator of Painted Warriors