



May 29th, 2026

The Honourable Rechie Valdez
Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism)
Government of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Via email: rechie.valdez@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister,

Subject: Funding for Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada

On behalf of WestJet, Canada's second largest airline and a longstanding supporter of the national tourism industry, we write to express our concern regarding the elimination of federal funding for the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC).

Indigenous tourism has become one of the fastest-growing and most distinctive segments of Canada's visitor economy. It offers authentic cultural experiences that resonate strongly with both domestic and international travelers who seek meaningful connections to place, people, and heritage. WestJet is proud to play a vital role in this ecosystem by delivering reliable air connectivity to Indigenous tourism destinations across the country, as our network enables travelers to reach remote and culturally rich communities that contribute significantly to local economies, job creation, reconciliation, and sustainable development.

ITAC is fundamental to nurturing this sector, providing national coordination, marketing support, and business development resources that many Indigenous tourism operators would otherwise be unable to access. However, recent funding cuts to ITAC threaten to jeopardize progress that has been made in advancing Indigenous-led travel experiences, particularly during this challenging time for the tourism industry due to higher fuel prices and continued economic uncertainty due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle-East.

WestJet remains firmly committed to Indigenous tourism and to the partnerships that make these experiences possible, and we believe that continued federal investment in ITAC represents a high-impact strategy that advances economic growth, reconciliation, and the long-term strength of Canada's visitor economy. We therefore respectfully urge the Government of Canada to restore stable, multi-year funding to ITAC so that Indigenous tourism can continue to thrive and contribute to a more inclusive and resilient tourism sector for all Canadians.



We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and stand ready to support any efforts to strengthen Canada's Indigenous tourism economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "McGillivray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "J" or "M" on the left.

Jacqui McGillivray
Executive Vice-President - Chief People Officer
WestJet