

## **Canada's trappers and artisans call on Etsy to reconsider misguided ban on fur and attempts to divide Indigenous people**

*By Jenny Brake, Chief of Qalipu First Nation, and Doug Chiasson, Executive Director, Fur Institute of Canada*

In April, e-commerce giant Etsy announced plans to [ban natural fur from its platform. The ban comes into effect](#) on August 11th. Like others with a stake in the fur trade and the natural world from which it originates, we have carefully reviewed the new policy and, finding fault with it, have reached out to Etsy to ask them to reconsider their decision. We have yet to receive a response. What we have seen, however, is the company quietly updating its policy to exempt “fur products from sellers registered with the Indian Arts and Crafts Board.” [The Indian Arts and Crafts Board](#) is an agency of the American government which certifies the legitimacy of products by Indigenous artisans in the US.

While the move appears well-intentioned, it divides American Indigenous artisans from Indigenous artisans in the rest of the world and divides artisans from trappers who have no such exemption. Perhaps Etsy leaders believe they can now honestly say they have listened to concerns and are working closely with Indigenous partners. But all they have done is reduce the overall number of vendors who will complain the next time they inevitably impose further restrictions on animal products on their platform.

Etsy needs to reconsider the impacts of its decision, which only stigmatizes fur and the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who make up the industry - from trappers to artisans, and the many other organizations and people who seek out a portion of their livelihoods through our trade. Etsy originally presented this decision as a biodiversity conservation measure, but they must know by now that this new policy will harm the people at the forefront of conservation efforts.

Tens of thousands of trappers across Canada, approximately half of whom are Indigenous, maintain traditions rooted in the country's diverse landscapes, from wetlands to Prairie grasslands to the boreal forest and the open tundra of the North. For generations, these traditions have provided warm, durable clothing for people living through harsh Canadian winters while supporting the skilled craftsmanship seen in haute couture fur garments and accessories of today's fashion runways. They also extend to Canada's sealers who risk their lives on heaving ice pans across Eastern and Northern Canada.

Canada's trapping and sealing activities are guided by government regulation, wildlife science, and the knowledge passed down through generations of trappers who know these animals and the environments they live in. People wearing Canadian fur can rest assured that harvest methods are governed by the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards, negotiated by Canada and the European Union. These systems help ensure that wildlife is harvested responsibly and humanely, with regard for the long-term health of animal populations and their habitats.

We call on Etsy to stop dividing our communities and to take time to consult directly with Indigenous leaders, experts in biodiversity conservation and fur trade communities, artisans, trappers, and hunters to design a new Animal Use Policy. Any new policy must take into account the knowledge and heritage of communities that are equally committed to the land, conservation efforts and biodiversity. This policy must be developed in collaboration with the very communities it impacts and ensure that both Etsy customers and vendors can be confident that products for sale on the platform are both ethical and sustainable. Etsy's policy comes into effect on August 11th. There is still time to get this right.