



Feb. 7, 2018

Josh Silverman
CEO, Etsy, Inc.
117 Adams Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Mr. Silverman:

I am writing to express my concern about Etsy's new policy prohibiting artists from selling art and handicraft made of ivory and marine mammal products. Alaska Native artists have contacted us this week expressing alarm that their Etsy products were banned because they used such materials in their work.

The sale of Native arts and handicraft arises from ancient traditions of creating and exchanging Native handicrafts and has been a cornerstone of Native culture and societies for thousands of years. Today Native artists are dependent on the sale of arts and handicraft for their basic livelihood. Many Native artists live in communities where their economies are severely depressed or non-existent and the sale of handicraft is the only source of generating revenues.

Etsy's policy restricting the sale of ivory and marine mammal products through its website is based on erroneous assumptions that marine mammal populations are endangered and that the sale of products made from ivory and marine mammals are illegal. SHI has been working with U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan to reverse this policy noting that the sale of these items is legal under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and that the marine mammal populations are not endangered. In fact, Alaska has an over-abundance of sea otters that are feasting on our fisheries and shellfish and greatly endangering our subsistence and commercial economies.

Sealaska Heritage supports the protection of elephant populations and the restrictions on the sale of elephant ivory, but these well-meaning policies and efforts should not be at the expense of destroying Native cultures and livelihoods.

Sealaska Heritage Institute is a private nonprofit founded in 1980 to perpetuate and enhance Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian cultures of Southeast Alaska. Its goal is to promote cultural diversity and cross-cultural understanding through public services and events. SHI also conducts social scientific and public policy research and advocacy that promotes Alaska Native arts, cultures, history and education statewide. The institute is governed by a Board of

Trustees and guided by a Council of Traditional Scholars, a Native Artist Committee and a Southeast Regional Language Committee.

As part of our work, we advocate on behalf of Alaska Native artists on issues such as this, and we have issued a [public statement](#). I respectfully ask you to reconsider your policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosita Worl". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rosita Worl, Ph.D.
President

