

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Canadian Brewhouse Inukshuk

To the Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Oppression Advisory Committee,

I want to thank you for your leadership at this time. It's been quite a year in all regards, especially for Indigenous Peoples across what we now call Canada. I do not want to add to your workload, but I do want to share my concern and disheartenment over the past few days as an Indigenous person living in London.

My concern began with the torching of Atloh's Indigenous shelter for unhoused people and hearing the City employee charged has been put on leave from work with full pay. For a community struggling so immensely with an unhoused and housing precarious population, surely these allegations should result in a stronger penalty than that while the investigation continues? Now with the hypocritical slash of funding that was to support the unhoused population of London, I am greatly upset. Personally, I had a white man screaming at me in downtown London this past Saturday night over the issue of Indigenous people in London always receiving "special treatment," how Indigenous spaces are only "racial segregation," and that we don't deserve to have such safe places. I can only assume that this downtown incident was based on the same ideology that led to the Atloh shelter being burned down. While I wanted to share this horrible experience I had for simply saying "I'm Indigenous" when asked about a tattoo on my arm, this is not the main reason for my email.

Just yesterday I went to the North London Loblaws for groceries and was confronted by the massive Inukshuk now standing outside the Westdell Development in Calamity Corners. It appears to be used as a "mascot" for the Canadian Brewhouse going in, a **non-Indigenous** franchise.

Inuksuit are sacred to Arctic Indigenous cultures, but are commonly misappropriated as cute landscaping "design features" without anyone batting an eye. Inuksuit are meant to represent sacred locations of the land, traditional hunting grounds, Inuit settlements, spiritual trails, and many more aspects which are foundational to Inuit cultures. Inuksuit are not meant to be co-opted by non-Indigenous, white Canadians to identify where cheap beer and sports bars are found – it is incredibly disrespectful. Fake Inuksuit are commodifying Indigenous culture as symbols of Canadian nationalistic pride, when in reality the nation of Canada tried to eradicate Indigenous Peoples from this land through multiple forms of genocide. The Canadian Brewhouse even goes so far on their website to claim that before them, no bar/pub "truly honoured the rich heritage of Canada." The only heritage Indigenous Peoples will see when looking at this knock-off Inukshuk is the genocide faced by our families and the everyday racism we are faced with as individuals, especially in the City of London. I am upset that this was approved to stand so blatantly in our city. If it was created by an Indigenous craftsman with credit openly given to them and sharing the contextualized history of Inuksuit of "Canadian" land, then it would be of a different story. I have to only assume that this is not the case – as I see no sign of such.

If the City is truly looking to make moves towards Truth and Reconciliation, this Inukshuk must be taken down or replaced with an Indigenous-made and honoured replacement. All it represents is the racist legacy of Canada and projects this poor reality onto the City of London.

Lauren September Poeta