

b.YELLOWTAIL

June 6, 2022

Dear Collective Artists & former collaborators,

It is with a broken heart that I have some unfortunate news for you. Due to the state of the global economy, and most notably the felt implications surrounding the false allegations by Wakeah Jhane & the social media smear campaign she's led. We have come to the unfortunate decision to dissolve The Collective platform due to the financial duress our company has been placed under.

I have done my best to mediate with Ms. Jhane. I have spent the majority of this year in communication with her, well before the false allegations around the Indigenous Activist tee. Prior to, we had been working on a red version of the Protect her tee to release for a May 5th fundraiser to support grassroots organizations at the frontlines of MMIW advocacy. During the pre-production phase, I requested to see her former licensing contract from 2017 and communicated that I'd like to reevaluate our prior work together and ensure she got more compensation. In fact, right now we have partially printed red t-shirts boxed up in our office waiting to be disposed of or donated. Before she took to social media, she expressed her excitement to move forward with us and agreed to more compensation beyond the original license agreement. I offered her this out of courtesy although her compensation agreement was fulfilled and she had been given \$4200+ worth of product already. She also knew I was actively working with my legal team to rework her original license agreement. I had expressed to her many times that I wanted to ensure she felt good about our work together and that I never saw the final version she signed. It was made by my former partner Kim Meraz who was terminated from her role here at B.Yellowtail for financial misconduct. All of these things were told to Wakeah Jhane in February and early March of this year.

The truth of the matter is, Wakeah Jhane knows me personally and has seen parts of my private life not many have, as I have always remained in close contact with her. Our collaboration together began when I was just 27 years old, when her and I both were young and starting out as entrepreneurs in the art market circles. I have always had the utmost respect and care for her as an artist, friend, and later on a mother. And as for me, she has known parts of my personal life that I have never publicly disclosed. This year she witnessed me in deep grief from losing the love of my life Wolfy Real Bird on January 1, 2022. She knows I've privately been in mourning, but she still chose to take things to the court of public opinion and manipulate her false narratives instead of resolving directly with me.

On March 22, 2022 Wakeah saw the behind the scenes of our Indigenous Activist tee photoshoot from my close friends list on my personal instagram. She knew well in advance our plans to release our new product and I even told her our plans to launch on Earth day.

When she came to me with concerns afterwards, I was transparent and shared openly. However, instead of communicating with me more directly, she proceeded to block my phone calls and refused to meet with me virtually. I tried my best to reach her in person to avoid any miscommunication but she refused and proceeded to send emails with her same accusations and demands. So, I engaged my legal team to try and mediate with her and attempt to come to common ground. She met with them numerous times over email and even had a phone call with her own advisor and my team at Pipestem Law. I also prepared all the financials and numbers of our former work together and was willing to share them with her pending an NDA signature to keep things private and professional.

It is standard business practice to sign NDAs. I've done it many times when I collaborate with other brands. It was also a safety measure for us, as I knew her support system might encourage her to blast us on social media. They did this two years ago when Elias Not Afraid made his "Pawn Shop Bearer" shirts out of the drama he created online about me too. I am not surprised she used the same tactic. She knew ours was coming and quickly put her own sample out in front of the public ahead of ours, then she launched it on her own website for Earth day April 22, 2022. I saw this dragging coming, it was always orchestrated and I knew this was the communication and problem solving method of choice by Jamie Okuma, Elias Not Afraid and Peshawn Bread. It's not new and I was not surprised, but they took it too far.

What they have done is absolutely despicable and I will never understand why this group of Native artists would go to these lengths to try to destroy our business and attack the collective which was solely created to benefit Native Artists first. What we make off of all the B.Yellowtail brand apparel, goes right back into our ability to grow, into our overhead, it helps us to create more opportunities, re-invest in our communities, share resources, and to ensure we could provide the support for the Collective Artists. We have not ever made any money off of The Collective, and the 30% commission we take from Collective sales does not even cover the salary for our full-time Collective Manager Andrea Preston: who is also a Native woman and mother.

For the past two months, we've received daily threats, slander, and lies sent to all our business accounts, employee emails, customer service accounts, and they've even tanked our business ratings on facebook. We have been treated like we are an exploitative corporation profiting off the backs of Native people. When the reality is we are a small Native Woman owned business that provides a total of five full time jobs for an all women team of Native, Indigenous, and Black. Now, their jobs are in jeopardy from the financial strain.

This never had to go public and it would have been resolved in a good way as I was who brought it to her, and it was me who wanted to give her more compensation for our former collaboration. Now, I can not ignore the real life implication, the financial aftermath, canceled orders, and the onslaught of returns, even from our most loyal customers over her false accusations. She put my entire company at stake and we have spent three months of our limited financial resources, time, and overhead on this issue while she continues to lie, manipulate and gaslight our shared virtual Native community.

The narratives that have been spread on social media are disingenuous at best and have been orchestrated by former collaborators from my beginning stages in business; including Jamie Okuma and Elias Not Afraid - a former collective artist and also a direct Crow relative of mine whether he likes it or not. What we've all witnessed is their favorite tactic: to use social media as a weapon to promote their own businesses sales over their personal issues with me. It works well for them. Many people believe them and even some of our former Collective artists have engaged in their public attempts to cancel us. Some of you are cc'd here and I witnessed you participate.

As for Jamie Okuma, she provided support with her own business figures to help Wakeah come up with a guesstimate of \$150,000. She used J.Okuma numbers instead of working with us in a professional manner to receive the actual details of our costs and overhead when our companies are 100% not the same by any means. Wakeah also ignored contact from my legal counsel to move forward and instead sent me an email the morning of the Indigenous Activist tee launch with an invoice for \$32,000 demanding back pay. Shortly after, she proceeded with her smear campaign pretending she was surprised and shocked "and didn't know what to think about B.Yellowtail's new Indigenous Activist tee."

I share this with you because we have been forced to. I have quietly dealt with the public lynchings from Indian country over the past two years lead by these same people, and I have done my best to reconcile with them. They have all refused to answer my calls, texts, and have blocked my numbers. They only use social media to spew their hate and false accusations. I've also watched their mentor Jamie Okuma strategically play puppet master, using her platform to get both Wakeah and Elias's t-shirts out in front and set us up for the public draggings. It is pitiful and tragic for them all because at the end of the day, this benefits nobody.

I am not afraid to admit that I have made missteps, and yet the things I've been publicly accused of taking from Wakeah are 100% false. I have never stolen, never exploited and absolutely never taken advantage of her youth as she boldly claims. I am young myself and still have a lot to learn, but I will always take responsibility for myself and hold myself accountable first. I will always find a solution to move forward and I will always be available for a direct in person conversation to find a good way forward. It was never my intention to exploit anyone, and if you feel this way and have not spoken up to me yet, I am still here to find common ground with you. In my heart of hearts it is always to see Native people win and be successful in their endeavors. Even for those three individuals Wakeah Jhane, Elias Not Afraid and their mentor Jamie Okuma, I hope they are fulfilled and that they receive all the things they deserve for their life pursuits.

With all of this, I do take ownership for my part in the matter. I have absolutely made many mistakes in being a business owner. I am figuring it out as I go. I did not have much to offer in my early beginnings and there were many creatives, artists, native photographers, aspiring models, makeup artists and friends who contributed to my vision. Yes many people helped me along the way with little to no pay. I wish I had more I could have offered back then. For that I am sorry.

Everything that I create here at B.Yellowtail LLC I try my best to think of the greater impact on our people. I try to center my personal and professional values with the teachings of my ancestors and stay grounded by the Apsaalooke and Northern Cheyenne people who've raised me to be the woman that I am. I have a big vision for what I know our communities and people are capable of. Our business model is cyclical, what we make goes right back in. We re-invest in resources to keep growing, and we use what we have to find creative ways to carve positive spaces, open new opportunities, create change in our communities, and especially provide new pathways forward for our young people.

We are not a corporation by any means and my vision for B.Yellowtail LLC has always been to find ways our people can benefit. The Collective was my way of offering a space that could prioritize and benefit artists from the center of our tribal communities. It came from a place in my heart that only wanted to help our people. I wanted to create space where there was none, and to ensure artists had sustainable ways to provide for their families. As I grew this company out of the center of my own heart and from my own dreams, I've done my best to share what resources I had available to me. We are quite literally rez made, and my company has only had small lines of credit to start and a whole lot of prayer, passion, and heart to create our own possibilities.

With our 70/30 consignment model, we've supported 50+ artists from every direction of Turtle Island and we've put back over \$800,000+ as of today back into the homes of Native artists since the launch of the Collective in 2016. I am so proud of what we have accomplished in the past six years. We've helped take Native Fashion and entrepreneurs to brand new heights, and I know we've impacted our communities in meaningful and powerful ways. That can never ever be taken away from us, but now it's time to let go. We can no longer sustain ourselves in this way.

In the immediate future we will be scaling down B.Yellowtail to stabilize and recover our path forward. I will be making a public announcement to dissolve the collective platform soon, and we have closed out all of our Native artists collaborations with no plans to bring them into the future. For those of you who are currently active on our site, our Collective Manager Andrea Preston has set up individual meetings to discuss a transition plan with you. I will be there as well and look forward to speaking with you directly. Thank you for your time.

Nea'ese,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bethany Yellowtail', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bethany Yellowtail