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# ftc consumer feature

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Bureau of Consumer Protection

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Federal Trade Commission

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## Partnership Continues to Educate Consumers Seeking Authentic Alaska Native Art

More than 1 million tourists visit Alaska each year. Many enjoy the rugged beauty and serenity of the state's mountains and coastlines. Others want to experience and learn about its rich cultural heritage. As mementos of their stay, many purchase arts and crafts items. Indeed, of the nearly \$1.4 billion that tourists spent in Alaska in 2002, \$112 million was spent on Alaska Native arts and crafts.

As the popularity of items produced by Alaska Native artisans has surged, so has the production and sale of fraudulently-labeled items. Unfortunately, not all tourists are able to distinguish between arts and crafts produced by Alaska Natives and imitations.

Longtime residents of Alaska recommend spending time learning about the processes and materials that Alaska Natives use to make their unique and beautiful objects before tourists visit shops and galleries. And now, a partnership — including the Alaska State Council on the Arts, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board of the U.S. Department of Interior, the Alaska Attorney General's Office, and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) — is distributing information to help consumers recognize genuine Alaska Native arts and crafts and avoid imitation items. A brochure, *Alaskan Native Art*; a series of photo-quality postcards; and a Web site at [www.ftc.gov/alaska](http://www.ftc.gov/alaska) provide many practical tips — mostly centered on the *Silver Hand* certification program — on how to be confident that Alaska Native art is truly Native. The Silver Hand emblem indicates that the item was handcrafted in Alaska by an Alaskan Eskimo, Aleut or Indian craftsman and was made wholly or in significant part of natural materials.

Not all authentic Alaska Native art bears a Silver Hand logo, and the art that doesn't is not necessarily any less authentic. That's why the Partnership urges consumers to get important information in writing, regardless of whether the item has a Silver Hand logo. For example, the partners suggest that consumers get written proof of any claims the seller makes for the authenticity of the item, as well as a receipt with key information about the item, including any oral representations the seller has made. The partners also note that price, materials and appearance are important clues to provenance.

The information also promotes awareness of the illegality of marketing non-Native art as Alaska Native. Any item produced after 1935 that is labeled with terms such as *Alaskan Native*, *Native American*, or *Indian* must be made by a member of a State or federally-recognized tribe or a certified Indian artisan.

For more information and to order publications from the Partnership, visit [www.ftc.gov/alaska](http://www.ftc.gov/alaska) or call toll-free 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The Partnership also wants to hear from consumers and businesses that have questions about the marketing and sale of Alaska Native arts and crafts, or

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from anyone who has information about the sale of items falsely represented as being produced by Alaska Natives. Direct questions and complaints to:

Alaska State Council on the Arts  
411 West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1E  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2343  
(907) 269-6610 Toll-free: (888) 278-7424 (inside AK)  
aksca\_info@eed.state.ak.us  
www.eed.state.ak.us/aksca

The Office of the Alaska Attorney General  
Consumer Protection Unit  
1031 West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 200  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
(907) 269-5100  
www.law.state.ak.us/consumer/

The Indian Arts and Crafts Board  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
MS 4004-M1B  
Washington, D.C. 20240  
(202) 208-3773  
www.iacb.doi.gov

Federal Trade Commission  
Consumer Response Center  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20580  
Toll-free: (877) FTC-HELP  
www.ftc.gov

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

Federal Trade Commission	Toll-free 1-877-FTC-HELP
<a href="http://www.ftc.gov">www.ftc.gov</a>	For the Consumer