

FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer and Business Education

Buying Genuine American Indian Arts and Crafts

Whether you're drawn to the beauty of turquoise and silver jewelry or the earth tones of Indian pottery, some information about American Indian arts and crafts can help you get what you pay for. Unfortunately, some unscrupulous retailers are selling imitation American Indian arts and crafts to unwary consumers.

According to the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, any item produced after 1935 that is marketed as "Indian," "Native American" or "Alaska Native" must have been made by a member of a state or federally-recognized tribe or a certified Indian artisan. That is a non-member Indian artisan who is certified by the governing body of an Indian tribe.

You can buy American Indian arts and crafts in tourist stores, gift shops and art galleries, among other outlets. To help you shop with confidence, the Federal Trade Commission and the Indian Arts and Crafts Board of the U.S. Department of the Interior offer these tips:

- Buy from an established dealer who gives a written guarantee or written verification of authenticity.
- Ask if your item comes with a certification tag. Not all authentic Indian arts and crafts carry this tag, but those



that do are certified by the Department of the Interior (DOI) to be genuine. This sample tag identifies the artisan as a member of the Oklahoma Indian Arts and Crafts Cooperative. However, you may see a different name and logo appearing in the circle on the item you buy.

- Get a receipt that includes information about the value of your purchase and any verbal representations by the salesperson. For example, if the salesperson tells you that the piece of jewelry you're buying is sterling silver and natural turquoise and was handmade by an American Indian artisan, make sure this information is documented on your receipt.
- Before buying American Indian arts and crafts at powwows, annual fairs, juried competitions, and other events, check the event requirements for information about the authenticity of the products for sale. Many events list their requirements in newspaper ads, promotional flyers and printed programs. If the event organizers don't say anything about the authenticity of the American Indian arts and crafts for sale, get written verification for any item you buy that is sold as authentic.

For more information, call the FTC toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP, and ask for the publication, **How to Buy Genuine American Indian Arts and Crafts**. 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 any of 150 consumer topics, call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357), or use the complaint form at www.ftc.gov. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, and other fraud-related complaints into **Consumer Sentinel**, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies worldwide.

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