

News Release

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and
Indian Arts and Crafts Board
Joint Press Release



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Anchorage Man Sentenced for Falsely Marketing Goods as Alaska Native-Made

On March 10, 2021, U.S. District Judge Sharon Gleason of the District of Alaska sentenced Lee Screnock, 60, for misrepresenting hundreds of his own carvings as being made by an Alaska Native artist. This action is a felony violation of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 (IACA), which prohibits false marketing of arts and crafts products as Alaska Native, American Indian, or as the product of a particular Indian tribe within the United States.

Screnock was first charged with a felony violation of the IACA and a misdemeanor violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act in 2018. These charges stem from Screnock's time as the owner of the Arctic Treasures gift shop in downtown Anchorage. Screnock was sentenced to pay \$2,500 in restitution to the Indian Arts and Crafts Board (IACB), perform 100 hours of community service, forfeit seized retail products that were valued at \$125,000 and serve five years of probation, during which time he may not work with any wildlife products.

Federal investigation into Screnock began in 2015 when he sold a polar bear skull to an undercover U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) special agent, in violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Undercover agents visited Screnock's store again in 2017, and asked about carvings made by "Savuk," Screnock's nickname. Screnock told the agents Savuk is an Alaska Native artist from Point Hope, but the carvings were actually made by Screnock, which violates the IACA.

The charges, convictions and sentencings are a result of a multi-year, multi-agency investigation led by special agents from the Service's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) and with the assistance from federal wildlife officers of the Service's National Wildlife Refuge System, and officers and officials from the IACB, the Alaska District U.S. Attorney's Office, the Alaska State Troopers' Wildlife Investigations Unit, the National Park Service's Investigative Services Branch and the Chief Ranger of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

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In March 2012, the Service entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the IACB to conduct criminal investigations of alleged violations of the IACA. The IACB is a federal agency

within the U.S. Department of the Interior created by Congress in 1935 to promote the economic development of federally recognized tribes through the expansion of the American Indian and Alaska Native arts and crafts market. A top priority of the IACB is the implementation and enforcement of the IACA. This legislation was passed by Congress to counteract the growing sales of counterfeit American Indian art. The IACA is a truth-in-advertising law that provides criminal and civil penalties for marketing products misrepresented as American Indian and Alaska Native-made. The MOA's mission is to conserve, protect and enhance the cultural tradition for all American Indian and Alaska Natives.

To learn more about the Service's Office of Law Enforcement visit: <https://www.fws.gov/le>.

To report a wildlife crime email fws_tips@fws.gov or call 1-844-397-8477.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.

Previous news on this case:

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ak/pr/owner-arctic-treasures-indicted-misrepresentation-goods-and-violations-marine-mammal>

FWS OLE: <https://www.fws.gov/le>

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The IACB's website posts a [Source Directory](#) of federally recognized Indian artists and arts businesses, and you can also report a suspected IACA crime [here](#).

Photo: Evidence photo of a tagged polar bear skull, which Lee Screnock, 60, of Anchorage, Alaska sold to an undercover U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special agent in 2018, which is a misdemeanor violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Agents investigated Screnock further, and on March 10, 2021, he was sentenced for misrepresenting hundreds of his own carvings as being made by an Alaska Native artist, a felony violation of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 (IACA), which prohibits false marketing of American Indian arts and crafts products within the United States. Credit: USFWS.

