



# NEWS RELEASE

**KAREN L. LOEFFLER  
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
DISTRICT OF ALASKA**

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James F. Fitzgerald Federal Building & U.S. Courthouse • 222 W. 7th Avenue • Room 253 •  
Anchorage, AK 99513-7567 • (907) 271-5071

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Thursday, March 3, 2016**

**Contact: Jack S. Schmidt**  
**Assistant U.S. Attorney**  
**907-796-0400**

**INVESTIGATION RESULTS IN CHARGES AGAINST FOUR BUSINESS OWNERS AND AN  
EMPLOYEE FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE INDIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS ACT**

Juneau, Alaska – U.S. Attorney Karen L. Loeffler announced today that an investigation conducted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has resulted in the filing of charges against four Southeast Alaska business owners and an employee for violations of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act (IACA).

The United States filed charges against Juneau resident and business operator Vinod “Vinny” L. Sippy, 38, d.b.a. Diamond Island, Icy Strait, and Gemstone Heaven; Juneau resident and business operator Norma M. Carandang, 60, d.b.a. Northstar Gift Shop; Puerto Rican resident and Ketchikan business owner Gabriel T. Karim, 33, d.b.a. Alaskan Heritage; Skagway resident and business owner Rosemary V. Libert, 56, d.b.a. Lynch and Kennedy Dry Goods, Inc.; and Libert’s seasonal employee, a resident of Huntington Beach, California, Judy M. Gengler, 65, for the illegal misrepresentation of bone art carvings as made by Alaska Natives or Indians, when in fact they were made by local non-native carvers.

The charges were filed as a result of an investigation conducted by USFWS based on complaints by summer tourists who were told that bone carvings that they purchased from Alaska shops in Southeast Alaska were authentic bone carvings made by Alaska Natives or Indians, when they were not. As a result of these complaints, the USFWS started an investigation looking into local Southeast businesses misrepresenting non-native bone carvings as made by Alaska Natives or Indians in May 2014.

The maximum penalty for violating the IACA as charged is one year in prison and \$100,000 fine. Arraignment dates have not been set.

Ms. Loeffler commends the USFWS for their investigation of these cases with the assistance of Indian Arts and Crafts Board in Washington D.C. and the Alaska Attorney General’s Office – Consumer Protection Unit.

An Information is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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Prepared by: Chloe Martin, 907-271-5071, USAAK.PressRelease@usdoj.gov