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Indian Arts and Crafts Board Comments on Conviction of Anchorage Man for Falsely Advertising Products as Alaska Native-Made

Washington, D.C.—The Indian Arts and Crafts Board of the U.S. Department of the Interior today praised federal agencies for work that led to the conviction of an Anchorage resident for violations of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act. Under the Act, it is illegal to falsely display, offer for sale, or sell a product as “Alaska Native,” “American Indian,” “Native American,” or as the product of an Indian Tribe.

On August 1, 2012, Anchorage resident Edward R. Schlieff was sentenced to three years of probation and fined \$7,500 for falsely advertising seal skin bow hunting tabs as being made by Alaska Natives.

“This case provides an excellent example of cooperation to advance the rights and protections of Alaska Natives,” said Rose Fosdick, who is Vice Chairman of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and Vice President of Kawerak, Inc.’s Natural Resources Division in Nome, Alaska. “This conviction sends a strong message to all violators of the Act.”

The U.S. Attorney’s Office-District of Alaska, U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Fish and Wildlife Service worked collaboratively in this investigation to advance the rights and protections of Alaska Natives.

In 2010, President Obama signed the Indian Arts and Crafts Amendments Act to give all federal law enforcement professionals authority to conduct investigations of those who fraudulently market products as Indian-made in violation of the Act. The Indian Arts and Crafts Board at the U.S. Department of the Interior oversees enforcement of the Act.

The conviction reflected the fact that Schlieff, who owned and operated Alaska Bowhunting Supply LLC, is neither an Alaska Native nor a member of any Indian Tribe, as defined by the Act. He illegally purchased and possessed unaltered seal skin hides, and knowingly provided these unaltered hides to a non-Alaska Native to produce seal skin bow hunting tabs. These

products were then falsely advertised and sold through the Alaska Bowhunting Supply LLC website, as well as sold to retailers, as authentic Alaska Native handicrafts to enhance the value and marketability of these products. A total of more than 1,000 of the falsely represented products were sold over a period of four years for approximately \$17,000.

“The sustainable take of marine mammals for food and handicrafts by Alaska Natives is an inherent component of our culture, way of life, and economic livelihood,” added Fosdick. “For millennia Alaska Natives have used seal skin and today continue to use this valuable material for art and craftwork. Enforcement of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act is critical to the protection of long- term Alaska Native opportunities for subsistence resources and raw materials.”

For more information on the Act, and protections for Alaska Natives and American Indians under the Act, please visit the Indian Arts and Crafts Board website at www.iacb.doi.gov, or call toll free at 1-888-ART-FAKE or 1-888-278-3253.

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