



Ted S. Warren/AP Photo

A person browses offerings in the Raven's Nest Treasure shop in Pike Place Market on Friday in Seattle.

## Artists charged with faking Native American heritage

By GENE JOHNSON  
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Two artists are facing federal charges that they faked Native American heritage to sell works at downtown Seattle galleries.

Lewis Anthony Rath, 52, of Maple Falls, and Jerry Chris Van Dyke, 67, also known as Jerry Witten, of Seattle, have been charged separately with violating the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, which prohibits misrepresentation in marketing American Indian or Alaska Native arts and crafts.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said Rath falsely claimed to be a member of the San Carlos Apache Tribe, and Van Dyke falsely claimed membership in the Nez Perce Tribe. The goods included masks, totem poles and pendants sold in 2019 at Raven's Nest Treasure in Pike Place Market and at Ye Olde Curiosity Shop on the waterfront.

"By flooding the market with counterfeit Native American art and craftwork, these crimes cheat the consumer, undermine the economic livelihood of Native American artists, and impair Indian culture," Edward Grace, assistant director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement, said in a news release.

Rath and Van Dyke were due to appear in U.S. District Court on Friday afternoon. Their attorneys, federal public defenders Gregory Geist

and Vanessa Pai-Thompson, said in an email Friday they did not have any immediate comment on the charges.

Authorities said the investigation began when the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, an Interior Department agency that promotes native art, received complaints that the two were fraudulently holding themselves out as enrolled tribal members.

Rath is charged with four counts of misrepresentation of Indian-produced goods, which is punishable by up to five years in prison. Van Dyke faces two counts of the same crime.

Rath also faces one misdemeanor count of unlawfully possessing golden eagle parts, and one of unlawfully possessing migratory bird parts.

According to charging documents, an employee of Ye Olde Curiosity Shop, which has been in business for more than a century, told investigators that she wrote an artist biography of Rath based on information he provided about his tribal affiliation.

Matthew Steinbrueck, the owner of Raven's Nest Treasure, told investigators that the artists told him they were tribal members and that he believed them, according to the documents. He said he did not knowingly sell counterfeit Indian products.

"I've been doing this on good faith for many years — for more than 30 years," Steinbrueck said. "Our

whole mission is to represent authentic native art. We've had more than 100 authentic native artists. I've always just taken their word for it."

He said his family had a long appreciation for American Indian culture, dating to when his great-grandfather adopted a tribal member. Steinbrueck's father, Victor Steinbrueck, an architect credited with helping preserve Pike Place Market and Seattle's historic Pioneer Square neighborhood, brought him up to revere native culture, he said.

Van Dyke told investigators that it was Steinbrueck's idea to represent his work as Native American.

Steinbrueck denied that, saying Van Dyke appeared to be trying to lessen his own culpability. He called Van Dyke "a fabulous carver" who made art in the style of his wife's Alaska Native tribe, including pendants carved from fossilized mammoth or walrus ivory.

Neither Ye Olde Curiosity Shop nor Raven's Nest has been charged in the case.

Gabriel Galanda, an Indigenous rights attorney in Seattle who belongs to the Round Valley Tribes of Northern California, said that if shops offer products as native-produced, they should be verifying the heritage of the creators, such as by examining tribal enrollment cards or federal certificates of Indian blood.

"There has to be some diligence done by these galleries," Galanda said.

## California pushes composting to lower food waste emissions

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE  
Associated Press

DAVIS, Calif. — Banana peels, chicken bones and leftover veggies won't have a place in California trash cans under the nation's largest mandatory residential food waste recycling program that is set to take effect in January.

The effort is designed to keep landfills in the most populous U.S. state clear of food waste that damages the atmosphere as it decays. When food scraps and other organic materials break down they emit methane, a greenhouse gas more potent and damaging in the short-term than carbon emissions from fossil fuels.

To avoid those emissions, California plans to start converting residents' food waste into compost or energy, becoming the second state in the U.S. to do so after Vermont launched a similar program last year.

Most people in California will be required to toss excess food into green waste bins rather than the trash. Municipalities will then turn the food waste into compost or use it to create biogas, an energy source that is similar to natural gas.

"This is the biggest change to trash since recycling started in the 1980s," said Rachel Wagoner, director

of the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery.

She added that it "is the single easiest and fastest thing that every single person can do to affect climate change."

The push by California reflects growing recognition about the role food waste plays in damaging the environment across the United States, where up to 40% of food is wasted, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

A handful of states and nations, including France, have passed laws requiring grocery stores and other large businesses to recycle or donate excess food to charities, but California's program targets households and businesses.

The state passed a law in 2016 aimed at reducing methane emissions by significantly cutting down on discarded food. Organic material like food and yard waste makes up half of everything in California landfills and a fifth of the state's methane emissions, according to CalRecycle.

Starting in January, all cities and counties that provide trash services are supposed to have food recycling programs in place and grocery stores must donate edible food that otherwise would be thrown away to food banks or similar organizations.

"There's just no reason to

stick this material in a landfill, it just happens to be cheap and easy to do so," said Ned Spang, faculty lead for the Food Loss and Waste Collaborative at the University of California, Davis.

Vermont, home to 625,000 people compared to California's nearly 40 million, is the only other state that bans residents from throwing their food waste in the trash. Under a law that took effect in July 2020, residents can compost the waste in their yards, opt for curbside pick up or drop it at waste stations. Cities like Seattle and San Francisco have similar programs.

California's law stipulates that by 2025 the state must cut organic waste in landfills by 75% from 2014 levels, or from about 23 million tons to 5.7 million tons.

Most local governments will allow homeowners and apartment dwellers to dump excess food into yard waste bins, with some providing countertop containers to hold the scraps for a few days before taking it outside. Some areas can get exemptions for parts of the law, like rural locations where bears rummage through trash cans.

The food waste will go to facilities for composting or for turning it into energy through anaerobic digestion, a process that creates biogas that can be used like natural gas for heating and electricity.

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