

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF HARVEY PRATT
CHEYENNE-ARAPAHO MASTER ARTIST
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO, FIELD HEARING
JULY 7, 2017

Good Morning Vice Chairman Udall and Senator Heinrich. My name is Harvey Pratt and I am pleased to testify before you today.

I am a Cheyenne-Arapaho master artist, a traditional Peace Chief of the Southern Cheyenne Chief's Lodge, and on the Board of the Red Earth Inc., which runs a large annual Indian art market in Oklahoma City. I recently retired following over 50 years in law enforcement with the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation.

I come from a long line of Indian artists. My brother is internationally known Cheyenne-Arapaho sculptor and New Mexico resident, Charlie Pratt, and my mother, Cheyenne storyteller and educator Ann Pratt Shadlow, received the honor of Native American Woman of the Year in 1987.

While I am also the Indian Arts and Crafts Board Chairman, I am testifying today solely in my capacity as a private citizen, and my comments are my own and do not in any way reflect the official position of the Board or the Department of the Interior.

Indian art is not just a commodity. Indian art reflects who we are, where we came from, and where we are going. It reflects our beliefs, religions, legends, and life ways. You can see these connections in our kachina carvings, paintings of Green Corn Dances, Native American Church fans and rattles, and in Spider Woman's role in weavings, to name a few.

Indian art is also about healing. For example, I had the great pleasure of participating in a three-day event sponsored by the Board's Southern Plains Indian Museum in Anadarko, Oklahoma. This event, supported by the surrounding Indian tribes, was held to help address an alarming number of Indian youth suicides affecting every member of the community. I spoke to the children and their families about the importance of the arts in the healing process, and provided a painting workshop to engage the children and encourage them to constructively cope with the tragedies of losing family members and friends.

Indian art is also about being able to provide important income for our families and to carry on traditions of our ancestors in a contemporary and challenging world.

I know from first-hand experience about the importance of promoting and protecting Indian artists and their creative work, and about the importance of Indian Arts and Crafts Act enforcement.

When Indian artists are undercut by the sale of fake Indian art, the integrity of authentic Indian art and artists suffer. We are being robbed economically, culturally, and spiritually. These unscrupulous businesses are also ripping off consumers and the viability of the Indian market.

Time and time again, I hear from my fellow Indian artists about their art and craftwork being knocked off by nonIndians and sold as Indian made. In fact, my brother Charles Pratt made and sold a bronze chess set featuring cowboy and Indian chess pieces. Later, Charles discovered that the purchaser had reproduced that chess set in silver without his approval, and was selling the reproductions to galleries as Charles' work. Many Indian artists do not have the resources to pursue these cases. Fortunately, Charles was able to take the man to court, stop the reproduction, and was compensated for the sales. The purchaser later told Charles that he had been knocking off others work for over 30 years, and no one had previously challenged him.

As the title of this hearing conveys, I too believe that "modernizing", in other words strengthening, the Act would greatly benefit Indian artists and the Indian art industry.

I support removing any obstacles or unintended loopholes that have hindered Act investigations and enforcement. For example, as an Indian artist I believe the statute's current definition of State recognized tribe should be reexamined and revised.

Although the State of Oklahoma does not provide State tribal recognition status, State recognized tribes have been a significant issue in Oklahoma. This is due to the fact that, unlike the federal tribal recognition process, there is no such standard for official State tribal recognition, and State tribal recognition requirements dramatically vary among those states that provide such recognition.

Inconsistency in recognition criteria also affects New Mexico Indian artists, as well as Indian artists nationwide. Artists from federally recognized tribes often are selling their art next to artists from tribes that may, or may not, be officially recognized by a State. Those artists may also consider their tribe officially recognized by a State, even if the State does not. A clear, easily verifiable standard within the statute would benefit all Indian artists.

As an Indian artist, I also firmly support any efforts to expand the Act investigative program conducted by the Board through their agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement on behalf of Indian artists, businesses, and tribes, as well as consumers.

In addition, I support educating all appropriate federal law enforcement about the Act and the need to protect Indian artists and the collectors from fraudulent activity.

Here in New Mexico, where the State's tourism and economy are so dependent on Indian art, artists, and culture, and here where such a high percentage of Indian art is distributed to businesses and consumers nationwide, I believe that strengthening the Act would not only benefit your constituents, but consumers nationwide.

Senators Udall and Heinrich, thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and concerns with you today.