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NATIVE AMERICAN TOURISM IN MONTANA

By

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Professional Paper

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Native American Tourism in Montana

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This professional project is composed of three magazine articles on the topic of Native American tourism in Montana. The first article is about Blackfeet artist Leonda Fast Buffalo Horse, a successful porcupine quill artist over the past 15 years, and the prospect of cultural tourism in Browning. The second article explores three Native American groups and how they are using tourism to create changes on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations. The third article examines German tourists, the largest group of overseas visitors to Montana, and the irony as to why several groups are making a profit from the German tourists' interests in the Indian culture except for the Montana tribes.

# Table of Contents

## Article One

Prickly Perseverance .....Page 2

## Article Two

Montana Native American Tourism as Cultural Preservation .....Page 19

## Article Three

German Tourists and Montana Tribes .....Page 32

## Prickly Perseverance

Blackfeet artist Leonda Fast Buffalo Horse uses roadkill to make a living. Her medium is porcupine quills, but she's not scouring U.S. Highway 2 to find unlucky porcupines.

Acquaintances on the reservation know of her need and make sure she is well supplied.

A fellow artist used part of the porcupine to make roaches, the headpieces worn by fancy dancers, but didn't need the quills – or the rest of the animal. “He'd lay the porcupine by the front gate,” Leonda says. “Most of the time, I didn't expect it, and I'd come home and find this big, old porcupine out there. It was cool.”

Leonda has been a successful artist over the past 15 years and attributes her success to faith, hard work, perseverance, patience and education. She feels just as knowledgeable and comfortable in the business world as she does in the creative world and has succeeded in art competitions. She lives contentedly and solely on her art proceeds of \$15,000 a year, and she measures her wealth in the freedom she enjoys by living life on her own terms, inspired, on her homeland.

There are enough artists like Leonda in Browning to make cultural tourism an economy because the same highway that provides Leonda's quills provides the town with another much-needed commodity, tourists. Nearly two million of them, in fact, visited adjacent Glacier National Park last year, a place of many Blackfeet spiritual sites and majestic 12,000-foot peaks that provide a backdrop through Leonda's living room picture window.

Leonda's brown hair is long and matches the color of the tobacco she rolls into small, thin cigarettes by the hour. She is seasoned, but coy about disclosing her age. Her skin is leathery soft, refined perhaps in part by the 100 mph winds that barrel off the Rocky Mountain Front and into her town. Her long teeth are white as the snow on the nearby mountains, and draw attention in a town known for few dental options.

Blackfeet elders granted Leonda the traditional rights to quill in a ceremony that she keeps secret out of respect. She says that being given the rights is sacred passage. It means a member of the tribe has been recognized to be a keeper of a traditional task important to the tribe, one that predates the arrival of people from the Old World (Europeans). Quillwork is a sacred craft and the first tribal art practiced by Native Plains Indians to mark everything from their dress regalia to their utensils. The women in the villages gathered in quillwork societies and were revered because of the skill and time required to prepare and weave the quills. The society initiated women who wanted to learn quillwork with a ceremony. Typically, in part of the initiation, elders smudge her hands in the quills, and bless her with a prayer to go forth and make great things. The quillworker's first creation must be an offering to the sun, something given away.

Leonda left her first piece in a tree. "Our artwork comes through us by way of our history, our families, and our communities," says Leonda. "The spirit within the art is a result of the inner vision, growth and transformation of the artist."

In her 4-by-6-foot studio she stands against a high, square table to create her art. There is not room for a chair, but also Leonda likes to face the windows on the south wall. She

measures time by the sun, staying true to the tradition of working with quills only until the sun sets and the natural light fades to dusk. In the summer that can make for long, glorious days, and in the winter, her work comes to a standstill by 4 p.m. A color wheel notated in the Blackfeet language hangs above her on the west wall. Some of her early charcoal drawings, award ribbons and pictures that inspire her, like her simple sketch of her young daughter's shoes, are pinned above the windows. Quill tools, reference books and patterns, odd-sized pieces of stained glass, unused boxes of dyes and a shelf of pickle jars filled with dyed quills stand as if at attention against the east wall of her studio. A soldering station and grinder and a jeweler's saw sit at the ready.

She picks up a thick blue-covered, spiral-bound notebook from the table. Inside are pages of pencil sketches – intermingled with birth dates and anniversaries, prayers and inspirational sayings – on a napkin or what looks like the closest piece of paper she could find at the time of her inspiration. Each design has its own page, and if it has been brought to life, and there is a date on every page. It's a record of her life since she moved back to Browning in 1992 after years in Seattle raising three daughters as a single mom working in a supermarket headquarters advertising job.

The calm of Browning, her birthplace, and the sense of belonging she found only there during short visits, beckoned her home to live. She loves painting but realized so many talented painters already worked in Browning; she carved herself a niche of quillworking.

Quill artists can gather quills in two ways, one that works for the animal, the other for the artist. One option is using dead animals, which is why roadkill provides her supply. The other option is to throw a burlap or a blanket over a live porcupine and hold its head down with a forked stick. Once you pull off the cover all the quills come off. “That is an option,” Leonda says, “but it leaves you with the big guard quills and quill workers prefer finer ones.”

Porcupines have three kinds of hair: the quills, guard hair and underfur. The guard hairs can get 4 inches long and form a coating to protect the underfur, which keeps the animal warm. The quills, all 30,000 of them, have small barbs along their length which, burrow deeper into a victim as they are removed. A porcupine turns its rump to the attacker and puts its head down when it feels challenged. It doesn't throw quills like many people think, but swings its tail as a weapon and the quills stick on contact. The quills of a frightened porcupine detach more easily, and grow back at about the same rate as normal hair.

Leonda carefully plucks the dead porcupine, and store the quills still laden with guard hair into Ziploc sandwich bags until she has time to clean them. The distinct, pungent stench from the dirty quills is pervasive when she opens the bag. As a project requires, Leonda sorts the guard hair from the quills and removes any quills that are marked, broken or cracked. Like a mad scientist, she boils them in vinegar and water and a drop of dish soap, dyes them myriad colors by soaking them in water again with a color she chooses from natural-based or Rit box dyes. Then she pops them in her mouth.



“You keep them wet in your mouth and take one out as you are using it,” Leonda says. It’s the only way to keep the quills pliable enough to weave them like the sewing on of a button. The plaiting technique, her favorite, uses very thin quills in a continual weave over and under with the stitch, changing quill colors as she creates the design. She displays an imitation eagle feather on which she has applied the plaiting technique, a design that earned her first place, and \$375, at the Northern Plains Tribal Arts Market in Sioux Falls, S.D., last year.

She has quilled smoked buckskin and once, because of supply and costs, she tanned three deer hides herself. Quilling on buckskin requires that the stitches never penetrate the material; the weave must all be done on the surface of the hide.

Her repertoire has broadened to include stained glass and other media, too. She transforms small pieces of salvaged shower door into an opaque dragonfly to adorn a bathroom-sized mirror. She crafts sterling silver bracelets patterned to perfectly showcase the integrity of her under-stitches, which are as important to a quillworker as a knot is to a sailor. She waited for two years and for several silver workers to deliver her bracelet design, until she taught herself how to cut the silver and solder the bracelet with a propane torch.

Leonda says that Blackfeet people survive because of their acceptance of change and their ability to adapt. She has survived because the same malleability she uses to mold

the silver, and the same tenacity she applies to tan the hides has refined her into a Blackfeet artist.

Leonda convinced herself that once back in Browning, she could combine her stubbornness, her knowledge from a two-year community college art degree, and her life-long interest in colors, painting, drawing and design to make a go of it as a full-time artist. She planted her 1978 mobile home on a small city lot which was willed to her by her mom, hung her shingle, and placed listings as a notable Browning cultural stop in statewide tourist publications, which is one reason she boasts an address number on her trailer.

Having an assigned address in Browning is rare because there is no established address system for the community. It's coming, says Stuart Miller, acting planning director of the Blackfeet Planning office. "We just recently had the reservation as a whole mapped and laid out and we're assigning addresses," he says. Leonda's reason for securing one was practical. "I went to City Hall and asked them if I had an address because UPS wanted to deliver," she says. "They said go look on the map and they gave me a number."

The toughest part about getting supplies isn't the lack of an address, it's the lack of businesses in Browning that sell supplies. Leonda used to buy some materials at Ben Franklin, like tubes of paint, but the store recently closed. Otherwise, it means driving in her run-down Subaru to Great Falls, a 300-mile round trip, for supplies. If Great Falls

doesn't have the stock, Leonda sends away to a supplier and waits five days to receive the shipment.

Leonda's business savvy is part of her success. She works debt free, paying her bills from what she makes from her art proceeds. That's rare in a culture where many small businesses are encouraged to seek grants for start up but then disappear when the grant runs out. Two grant programs she investigated encouraged participants to borrow money.

"Well, I don't want a loan," said Leonda. One program was based on a \$25,000 artist's loan fund given to the Blackfeet by a South Dakota woman. The banker responsible for the funding set the criteria for the loan, which required the artist to attend community college courses for corporate business spreadsheets instruction and recordkeeping skills. The price tag was \$25 to enroll, and refunded upon completion, so Leonda happily enrolled. She and a saddle maker were the grant "guinea pigs," she recalls. Leonda explains that, although she appreciated the training in bookkeeping, what she needed instead was instruction in advertising and promotion to earn money to put the bookkeeping skills to use.

Leonda's approach is atypical. She chooses to live within her means rather than taking funds from a loan program when she doesn't generate enough income to make a monthly payment. She believes that artist programs should provide promotional ideas, easier access to supplies, assistance getting organized, or even a barter program for supply

swaps between local artists. “We need travel expenses to get to the art show, or to pay the booth fees,” she explains.

Leonda’s success is recognized in the press, in competitions and in speaker invitations. A picture of her sunset-colored stained glass buffalos graces the Ulm Pishkun State Park visitor center walls and the cover piece an 8-page spread in Montana Magazine about Hands of Harvest, a tourism-based cooperative of more than 120 rural Montana artists. Another of her pieces led for a Hands of Harvest story in The Craft Report, a national magazine for the craft industry. Leonda has tagged first place in porcupine quillwork at the Sioux Falls, S.D., market each year since 2004; the first year, she won with a a flute quiver, which sold for \$1,400. In 2006, her woven fan handle sold for \$800 and was used as promotional poster art for a nearby college. Recently, the Montana Arts Council invited her to speak publicly about her thoughts on Native American artists for a program called Montana Artrepreneurship Preparation (MAP), designed to make Montana traditional artists market ready.

More than 300 artists in Browning sit like a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, just waiting to be found by tourists passing through to Glacier. The Montana Arts Council, in 1995, put out \$25,000 to commission an artist’s inventory in Browning and to legitimize this feeling into a cultural center to promote economic development based on the arts. They surveyed and photographed, and cataloged artists, traditionalists, historians, dancers, singers, storytellers and fluent speakers of the Blackfeet language. But, the

information was never used, the grant ran out, key people left and the cultural center was never constructed.

Many Browning artists could find success and drive cultural tourism by showing and selling their works at two established galleries and tourist destinations. The Blackfeet Heritage Center and Art Gallery is one of them and part of the Siyeh Corp., the 10-year-old independent business arm of the tribe, considered the “branch” for the advancement of economic self-sufficiency. Siyeh was awarded the “High Honors” distinction from the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development for removing political influences from tribal business decisions among their five enterprises; two casinos, commemorative coin sales, a cable and Internet service and the gallery.

Loren Bird Rattler, an au courant Blackfeet member, landed back in Browning to run the Blackfeet Heritage Center & Art Gallery after three years as a public program specialist at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. His promotion elevated the importance and value placed on traditional artists and people believed him.

Bird Rattler said that he sold a \$1,200 piece by Leonda while he was in charge. He attributed some sales to effective, consistent advertising in the American Indian Magazine, the publication of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, and the monthly Native Peoples Magazine, which emphasizes arts and history. Both

magazines target audiences interested in buying Native American art and also kept Browning on the map.

Bird Rattler collaborated with state and federal agencies, and the Montana Tribal Tourism Association, (MTTA), a non-profit intertribal organization established in 1999 to promote authentic cultural tourism amongst all Montana tribes. The MTTA is creating a travel guide titled “Seven Lodges ~ A Visitors Guide to Montana’s Indian Country to promote and market Indian-owned tourism businesses on the seven Indian reservations.

Bird Rattler believes that art is something on which the tribe can build an economy, attract tourists and restore a culture. “Absolutely,” says Bird Rattler, “a tourism industry based on culture and art is a real possibility in Browning.” He cites cultural tourism as the most popular form of tourism and says it can play a huge role in maintaining the natural and cultural identity of the Blackfeet people and places. The point is to capture and preserve the language, the stories and the traditions to teach travelers, he says.

Bird Rattler has nearly doubled the sales of the gallery by creating a market for traditional Blackfeet artists and artwork to mostly out-of-towners, either via the Internet or walk-ins.

Terry Welmann thinks like Bird Rattler and is another agent of change in town. He has big plans to use the Internet to sell Native American art. He owns the Warbonnet Lodge, one of only two motels in Browning, and he used to operate the adjoining restaurant. But

he gutted it, after tiring of not getting good help to make room for an art gallery full of paintings by Blackfeet artist Jon Cadotte. He expects some walk-ins, but Welmann's intention is to sell Cadotte's art over the Internet, \$10,000 per painting and \$1,000 for signed and numbered prints.

The Internet is another viable option for art sales, and The Blackfeet Heritage Center and Art Gallery has enjoyed success selling art online, according to Bird Rattler. But selling Indian art online takes time and required the business to build a reputation of legitimacy and authenticity. Even though the passage of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 helped to quell the sale of fraudulent Indian art, Bird Rattler found a counterfeit quill pipe bag made in Czechoslovakia when he first went to work at the gallery. He stopped allowing cameras in the gallery after that to prevent duplication of his inventory.

Violations of the act bring stiff fines. A first time offense can mean penalties up to \$250,000 or a 5-year prison term, or both. If a business violates the act, it can face civil penalties or can be prosecuted and fined up to \$1 million according to provisions of the act.

The Museum of the Plains Indians is the other established gallery and attracted about 15,000 tourists last year, according to David Dragonfly, a local artist who specializes in print making and is acting curator and museum technician. Built in 1941, it is one of only three museums in the country to support Indian creative work. The museum sponsored an exhibit of Leonda's work, and she sells some pieces in the Pikuni Gift Shop run by Darnell Rides At The Door, a local traditionalist and independent consultant for

art, history and culture.

Rides At The Door has an artist's registry of more than 200 names; the majority are Blackfeet from whom she buys art to sell in the gift shop. The prices in the shop range from a \$2.50 friendship bracelet made by a Blackfeet boy to a \$5,000 beadwork piece. Rides At The Door estimated that \$75,000 to \$100,000 in sales went to the artists last summer. Leonda's small hanging stained glass ornaments, which sold for \$20, were one of the best sellers to tourists last season. She sells to gift shops because they are her bread and butter.

Just twenty miles away from Browning, the East Glacier Lodge gift shop sells imported cheap arts and crafts, according to Leonda. The shop agreed to sell Blackfeet art, but will not pay the artists until the end of the season. There is good reason for this practice, according to Beverly Southard, retail operations manager for Glacier Park International, the concessionaire at Glacier National Park. The company cannot afford to carry over inventory since the National Park Service, for the past three years, has contracted with GPI on a year-to-year basis. According to Southard, who has worked for the company for twenty-one years, GPI had once enjoyed a 25-year contract, but that is no longer the reality.

Other states, like Arizona, have determined that the real travel jackpot is the wealth of tribal culture. The Arizona Office of Tourism hired a Native American tourism development manager to oversee tribal member participation in their tourism strategy.



This relatively new commitment to actually have tribal representatives attend trade shows, for example, was a huge success at the New York Media Marketplace where they held a demonstration of traditional basket weaving and food preparation. And in Portland, Oregon, tribal members met with international tour operators who are fascinated by Native American culture.

Browning has been the recipient of tourism grants from the Montana Department of Commerce, the tourism arm of the state. The town got \$10,000, for example, for development of the visitor information center facility in the parking lot next to the Museum of the Plains Indians and the North American Indian Days Powwow grounds, says Victor Bjornberg, tourism development coordinator. He also noted the Montana state film office has done considerable work with the Blackfeet tribe and tribal members regarding feature movies, TV and print commercial shoots using reservation land.

The nine-member tribal council is also trying to attract more tourists. It invested \$7 million to build the Glacier Peaks Casino to foster economic development. But it has been an uphill struggle. Its 33,000 square feet carries with it costly operational expenses. Depending on the year, the summer months in Browning are only July, August and into September. The casino doesn't have the volume of visitors that it expected during the seasonal months. According to Indianz.com, "since late September, the Glacier Peaks Casino has made across-the-board salary cuts, laid off some employees, obtained a short-term loan and has missed some vendor payments. But tribal officials say that's to be expected with any startup venture."

It is difficult to get tourists to stop. Jody Running Fisher, media and tourism coordinator for the tribe, says some tourists have told her that they had been advised not to stop at the stoplight in downtown Browning even if it turns red, or spend the night in nearby East Glacier or Cut Bank, but not to stay in Browning. Fisher reports that the Browning visitor center last year recorded 2,500 visitors between Memorial Day to Labor Day. Over half were Montana travelers; the majority of others came from Washington, California, Oregon and Canada. For the annual Browning Native American Indian Days, the center had 93 visitors, who stated in the surveys that their destination was not the casino, but Glacier National Park.

Cultural tourism in Browning has unusual and complicated realities. For example, Leonda built a brand new front porch to attract tourists to her home/studio to generate revenue through art sales. She was awarded an artist's grant to do it, but no tourists have visited. This mirrors the tribal council's building of a brand new casino to attract tourists and generate revenue with similarly disappointing results.

Some of the tourists who have stopped have been disappointed, according to Dave Eglsaer, transportation manager of Glacier Park International. Eglsaer oversees the red "jammer" bus tours, including the three daily tours emanating from the historic East Glacier Lodge just 20 miles from Browning. In the summer of 2007, GPI dedicated a tour to the Museum of the Plains Indians in Browning. The bus would stop in the Museum parking lot and the tourists were given about an hour to explore. They were

within walking distance from the casino, the Museum of the Plains Indians and the Blackfeet Heritage Center and Art Gallery.

Based upon the consistency of the numbers and customer comments, GPI discontinued the red bus tours into Browning after one season. Tourists reported they were disappointed in the upkeep of the museum. Others commented that it didn't look like a professional museum. Eglasaer said that GPI had even sent volunteers to the museum to pull weeds and mow periodically to help with the upkeep. GPI offered free shuttles for employees and guests to attend the Native American Indian Days celebration, all in a good faith effort to keep up visitation in Browning, he says. Despite these efforts, the collaboration didn't work.

The tourists aren't stopping because there is a caveat to generating tourism in Browning. The town has some eyesores that can be sobering. Along the highway that runs eight blocks through the middle of town, street people live with a bottle as a constant companion. Browning's population of 1,065 has 70 percent unemployment rate, according to U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. The 2000 census reports that about 29.2 percent of the people live below the poverty line. The median income for a household in the town was \$23,879, and the median income for a family was \$25,000.

There are packs of dogs running loose in Browning that are hungry and disheveled. The tribal council used to oversee animal control, but for the last three years it has been the responsibility of the town of Browning. Juan Valdovino was hired in February as the dog

catcher. In the first three months, he caught 300 dogs; 90 were adopted and the remainder was euthanized.

Skeletal remains of the Glacier Motel burned by fire at the south end of town, and a shell of the furniture store that also burned, line the main highway. The bureaucratic nightmare, the conflict between government authorities and the jurisdictional quagmire that exists between the tribal, city, federal and reservation authorities makes it nearly impossible to clear these structures in a timely manner. The boundary for the town of Browning only includes one-third of the existing homes and businesses. The Glacier Motel is outside the town limits so the town council has no jurisdiction. It is owned by a non-member, so the tribe lacks jurisdiction. The structure is battered further by incessant winds and remains an eyesore to passing tourists.

Artists must live with one foot inside the cultural circle and one foot out to make it in art, according to Bird Rattler. They must gain the skills necessary to understand marketing and taxes and must treat their art as a micro business. For an artist, that means determining what will make your work sell in the market, which is exactly why Leonda avoided becoming a painter and created her own niche and has succeeded.

Cultural tourism creates a sustainable economy. And, in Browning the ingredients are in place without any capital investment required. The large pool of practicing artists, two established tourist stops, and the Internet are in place for this economy to succeed. Their

success may be measured differently, too, not by the number of tourists who stop, but whether the Blackfeet culture will thrive.

## Montana Native American Tourism as Cultural Preservation

Lyndon Conroy and his wife, Sandi, were invited to a private ranch tour above the Tongue River, near Birney, Montana, to see several native graves; some were pine boxes sitting on top of a ridge, not buried in the ground. Some boxes had been placed under cliffs with rocks piled around them. “When we went into that area,” Conroy says, “you could see bodies and all their possessions, mostly dated around the WWI time period. Nothing looked older than that.” Sandi found a couple buttons from a jacket lying on the ground and slid them in her pocket and they headed home.

Shortly thereafter, Sandi told Conroy about the buttons, and he knew they had to take them back. “It’s just the right thing to do,” he said, “because you just don’t desecrate this, you respect it.” The Conroys went back to the site and put them on the ground where she had found them. Conroy respects and believes in the sacred spaces of the Cheyenne people and he won’t return to some locations. “It’s not only the sites that deserve respect, but the stories themselves that tell of the descendants through the oral histories that are sacred,” says Conroy.

Conroy accepted the invitation to see the ranch, which is not accessible to the public, to follow in the footprints of earlier Crow and Northern Cheyenne people so he may more authentically tell the stories to his tour customers. Similarly, Jackie Yellowtail, tourism coordinator for the Crow People, ensures the preservation of her stories by telling them to college students, who, in turn, share them with tourists. Suzie Kelly and Peggy White

Wellknown Buffalo co-founders of the Center Pole Foundation located on the Crow Reservation, use tourism to build cultural understanding and create change.

Lyndon Conroy sees the world through history books. When others see a lodgepole forest, Conroy sees teepee poles harvested, skinned while they are still green, knowing he'll need sixteen for a traditional teepee. When he drives Interstate 90 near the Bighorn River, he imagines someone miles away in the Crow's Nest viewpoint lookout, a site that was critical to the strategy of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. And he knows a lookout would be able to spot him in his truck just like they spotted animals and enemies in the 1800s with the naked eye from the Crow's Nest fifteen miles away.

Although Conroy is not recognized on the rolls as a Crow member, he is a member of the Crow Greasy Mouth (Uuwuutasshe) clan, based upon the female descent line, from his maternal grandmother, who was half Crow, like each of her parents.

For twenty years, Conroy has told the stories as the Native American history and culture teacher at Colstrip High School just 23 miles off the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, and 67 miles from the Crow Agency. He reached a couple generations of students, including one-third who traveled from Lame Deer, headquarters of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. Crow students in his classroom were few because of geographic location. In 1995, when Conroy was in his mid-30s, he formed his tour company, Frontier Adventures, so when classes let out for the summer, he could further explore some of the

least-visited, least-spoiled historical sites in southeastern Montana and northern Wyoming.

Conroy keeps the groups small and leads three to four tours each summer. The tours explore the land and also float the Yellowstone River. For \$749, clients get four days and three nights, and sleep in teepees of their own construction. His wife follows the group by land in their rig, hauling supplies and food. Conroy attracts customers through his website, [www.exploremontana.com](http://www.exploremontana.com), or by word of mouth. His clients come from as far away as Portugal, and other parts of the U.S., like Hawaii, New York and Oregon.

Conroy insists on accurate storytelling and has based his business and curriculum on stories validated from going to a primary site or doing research. Often, Conroy claims to experience a sense of déjà vu upon seeing a sight for the first time, having learned about it earlier from the tribe's oral history. When he first got into the tourism industry he didn't know who to trust for accuracy, so he approaches the business from an outsider's standpoint, trying to be discerning and avoid wrong information.

Conroy preserves the authenticity of his tours by developing an extraordinary network of storytellers who share their ancestral wisdom of the Crow and Northern Cheyenne people in camps and at historical sites. Conroy's clan aunt, Alma Hogan Snell, is a regular speaker at Conroy's camps. She is recognized internationally as a Crow storyteller because of having written two important cultural books; *Grandmother's Grandchild*, about being raised by her grandmother, the legendary Crow medicine woman Pretty



Shield, and *A Taste of Heritage, Crow Indian Recipes & Herbal Medicine*. She shows native plants and teaches how for generations the Crow people used them for nutritional soups and teas, and medicinal aids. Maria Bucklew, a resident Northern Cheyenne, comes to Conroy's camps to demonstrate the art of brain-tanning hides using only the chemical naturally found in the brain of dead animals that results in a softer hide. Philip Whiteman, Jr., now the chief of the Northern Cheyenne tribe, also has met Conroy and his clients at a site. One customer recalled when Whiteman met them to pray twice for safe deliverance, and then to pray for about 15 to 20 minutes in gratitude to the four directions.

Another method he uses to preserve authenticity in his tours is having access to private land, free of restrictions that could curb his storytelling. His network of connections based upon his reputation for protecting authenticity comes through his teaching experience, his family tree or community links on or off the reservation. He has created a unique association of individuals who share a common interest in letting him be free to tell the real stories. They mutually assist him to navigate around regulations, avoid having to use federal lands, and minimize the involvement of state agencies.

His students often contribute to his tours in unexpected ways, as did two sisters who live on a ranch nearby Colstrip. It was sometime during the fourth year of teaching a sophomore world history course when Conroy was explaining artifacts, cultures and things left behind by earlier people that the sisters felt provoked to tell him they had artifacts on their ranch, which made him chuckle. He had heard stories over the years

from the Cheyenne culture about what had happened to the artifacts and weapons that had been taken from Little Bighorn by the Indians and hidden in the hills in their area, but he had never seen such relics.

Conroy's family tree includes Native and non-Native roots, which allow him a rare understanding and connection to the history because it's personal for him. His grandmother's original allotment included Pompey's Pillar, a sandstone butte and now a national monument because it bears Captain Clark's signature, the only remaining physical evidence of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. His grandfather homesteaded by Huntley Project and the land is now owned by his cousin, who grants Conroy permission to set up camp. Shirt-tail relations own the property that Custer took on the Little Bighorn trip, and owners of the Crow's Nest lookout know his cousin's family and both groups allow Conroy full access.

Conroy's reliance upon community links outside his family and students includes people like Jack Bailey, who describes himself as a "kinda Irish-cowboy mostly." He knows from experience that Conroy will protect a site's history and integrity, which is why he grants Conroy unique access to his ranch located four miles north of Lame Deer, on the border of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation and home to a very important Native American spiritual location, the Deer Medicine Rock. It is a sandstone formation about 75 feet tall with a blue streak embedded in the red rock amidst the petroglyphs, said to be the result of a lightning strike by the gods and the spirits. It's said that it is here Sitting

Bull had his vision that the Indians should stand and fight and that they would win on the Bighorn battlefield.

Seven generations, since 1883, have raised cows and grown the hay and grain to feed them on the Bailey ranch. His grandmother came to the area with her parents from Ireland, seven years after the Custer battle and while Sitting Bull's Sun Dance poles still stood. She was a little girl when she learned to speak fluent Cheyenne. The Sisters at St. Labre Indian School used her as an interpreter, Bailey says, and the Indians used her as an interpreter to sell horses to the army. "A little girl, she didn't know how to cheat yet," he says. Their property was on Northern Cheyenne land before it was a reservation. The government bought out the Bailey family and moved them down the creek to their present location when the Northern Cheyenne Reservation was created in 1884.

The Baileys are active stewards of the Deer Medicine Rock. "I own the property, and so I have to set the rules for the preservation of the property. So, we can't let a free run of it, or it would be ruined," Bailey says. The Baileys don't ask for admission money, but if someone gives, it's considered to be a gift. The Baileys don't advertise either. The lane to their place hosts a sign that reads Bailey Ranch, but there is no mention of the Deer Medicine Rock. "What we do, we try to have people come here who are really interested in it. We don't really want it to be a bathroom stop for tourists going through," he explains. The Baileys have been host to writers from the Smithsonian magazine and the History Channel three or four times, and to writers from all over the world.

Today Conroy's influence is far reaching, but the first summer, his first customer—and the only customer— was Lon Jensen, a 76-year-old dentist from Corvallis, Oregon, still practicing public service dentistry. They traveled to the sites in Conroy's truck. Jensen's first time on the Bighorn battleground was with Conroy, 117 years and 20 days after Custer's last fight. He and Conroy arrived in the heat of the afternoon, about the same time as the battle occurred, which was a dream come true for Jensen, who grew up in western Iowa. Jensen recalled that on most Saturday night trips to town while his mom shopped for groceries, he and his dad passed the time visiting with locals in the tavern. Jensen distinctly remembers seeing a Budweiser beer poster depicting Custer's Last Stand on the wall behind the bar. It was that memory that inspired him to join Conroy for the last fourteen years and he has even brought along his son, a teacher in Oregon.

Conroy has succeeded in his vision because the stories have been kept alive. Conroy made money some summers and did not in others. That's fine with him because his goal is preservation, not money, the normal tourism measure of success. His measure of success is reflected in the changes he creates by teaching and showing his students and clients how an event happened on their land, or in their family, or even piqued an idea in a tourist that "history is now." He enriches his clients' relationship to the natural world and helps them see their role in preserving it. Many people don't know about his work and he prefers it that way, to do it alone based upon his passion for the authentic story. His view of tourism is cultural preservation and is sustainable.

Other Native Americans like Jackie Yellowtail use tourism to support a personal vision; hers is to eliminate xenophobia, the unreasonable fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers.

She embraces collaborative opportunities with other tourism entities to eliminate boundaries that have blocked understanding of her Crow people.

As tourism coordinator for the Crow people, she takes pride in the six community college students she has trained as Apsáalooke Tour guides who enter the coach buses at the Little Bighorn Battlefield, and tell tourists authentic stories about the Indians who died in the battle to preserve their land and culture. And someday she even envisions her white friend, who lives in the neighboring town of Hardin daring to visit the Crow Reservation for the first time.

For most of history, Indians have been denied an equal voice in telling history's story. It took a period of 115 years after the Little Bighorn battle — which was known to the Indians as the Battle at Greasy Grass—and President George H. Bush's signature on 1991 legislation to rename the Custer Battlefield National Monument to the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, and authorize an Indian memorial to be built on-site. For years, even the Indians feared telling the truth of the battle for fear of punishment from the government because of their role in the battle, according to Jerome Green, historian, in a paper he presented at the battlefield in June 2008. Greene recounts the history of a military interpretation as the focus of the battlefield story by the War Department administration until 1940 when the site's administration was transferred to the National Park Service. It wasn't until the 1970s that this popular Montana tourist destination started to acknowledge the Indian voice in its history.

Little Big Horn College Extension Office's Apsáalooke Tours has a five-year contract with the National Park Service that began in May 2008. With Yellowtail providing oversight, they provide six daily tours on the battlefield, custom package tours, and are "step-on guides" to bus tours between the Memorial and Labor Day holidays. The college students have the opportunity to humanize the Indians who were facing serious problems prior to that battle of 1876 after white settlers had killed their animal food sources, mined their gold in the Black Hills, and dissected their land with railroads.

Yellowtail's profile as the Crow representative on the Montana Tribal Tourism Alliance (MTTA) was to help gather information for an advertising agency to edit and produce the Seven Lodges brochure, meant to break down barriers and encourage tourists to visit Montana reservations. MTTA is a tourism cooperative between the seven Montana reservations. In March 2009, the organization unveiled its first visitor's guide to Montana's "Indian Country," created by a Native advertising agency and MTTA, with maps and pictures, words from the elders and tips on indigenous cultural etiquette.

Yellowtail's third most recent effort to broaden the scope of potential visitors and their understanding is by ensuring placement of the Crow Reservation on a map that is the result of a collaboration between the Greater Yellowstone Region and National Geographic. The reservation was selected as one of the 175 culturally authentic sites from a pool of 1,000 nominations within the 20 million acres designated as the Greater Yellowstone Region. This map required cooperation by several organizations, including

the tourism offices in Montana, Wyoming and Idaho. The map is now available free or can be downloaded from the website at [www.yellowstonegeotourism.org](http://www.yellowstonegeotourism.org).

Yellowtail does her work in an effort to help tourists get to know the Crow people more intimately. Her efforts with Apsáalooke Tours reached 10,335 tourists on the Bighorn Battlefield in its first summer of operations. The thousands of copies of the Seven Lodges brochure and the National Geographic geotourism downloadable map make her hope that more visitors will come to the Crow Reservation, resulting in economic gain to her people. However, all her efforts and intent to grab hold of these new opportunities are to break down xenophobia without compromise to the tribe or Crow culture.

Another group based on the Crow Reservation, seeking to empower the culture was created by Crow member Peggy White Wellknown Buffalo, and non-Crow member Susie Kelly. They devote proceeds from their tour operations, The Center Pole at Wellknown Buffalo, to fund social services and create change on the Crow Reservation. Their goal is to see more Native American high school students headed for college, neighbors living in a new owner-occupied straw bale houses, and more children getting food and school supplies.

White Wellknown Buffalo is committed to Crow empowerment while Kelly is committed to sending Native American students to college. She started the Kelly Foundation after coming to the Crow Reservation in the 1990s as a photo editor for Time-Life Books. She merged her efforts with Wellknown Buffalo and The Center Pole in 2002. Cooperatively

they manage a community center, youth camps, a food pantry, the Buffalo Nickel Thrift Store and programs to teach self-improvement skills on the Crow Reservation.

White Wellknown Buffalo and Kelly also operate A Wa Ku Leh tours, a small commercial operation and subsidiary of their larger non-profit, which they use to generate money to support their social services operations. White Wellknown Buffalo leads the tours, typically accompanied by an elder, and gives customers access to Indian sites where normally only Natives are allowed. Most tour groups are small and they stay about a week. For the last nine years A Wa Ku Leh tours has averaged 300 to 400 clients per year, and charges \$50 a day per person, Kelly says. Tour itineraries are based upon the requests of clients. For example, for the past nine years, a group from Guilford College in North Carolina has come to live and do work in the community. Some people come for healing, explains White Wellknown Buffalo. Many volunteer groups want to experience spiritual places or sacred sites, or camp out in a teepee. Last year A Wa Ku Leh hosted a group of photographers who stayed for the annual Crow Fair celebration. In the autumn of 2009, a group of teachers from Wagner College in New York is coming to study the reservation education system.

Not all tour requests are scheduled in advance. Kelly states that there has never been a means to satisfy impromptu requests by tourists to eat a traditional meal, or to see traditional art. Kelly and White Wellknown Buffalo are responding to that need by opening a coffee and art shop for the 2009 summer tourists to generate more revenue to fund social projects.



The Center Pole was nominated in 2008 as one of the most innovative geotourism companies in a global competition sponsored by National Geographic. The company got more attention when the October 2008 issue of National Geographic Traveler published thoughts of a writer who had taken a solitary tour with White Wellknown Buffalo. The story tells of her leading the writer to Pretty Eagle Point which overlooks Bighorn Lake, then offering up a prayer and a sacred pouch of tobacco, then letting him wander alone for a bit where he can enjoy the same preserved, pristine view as Chief Pretty Eagle might have seen.

Tourism as an enrichment of Crow culture has also allowed White Wellknown Buffalo and Kelly to see the completion of three straw bale homes since 2005, all owned by Crow members who are first required to accrue volunteer hours at the Center Pole to be considered eligible. The home ownership program, similar to Habitat for Humanity, requires involvement by the owner to fundraise, finance, help build and repair the home.

Nearly 400 students, since 1999, from more than 20 Indian reservations have gone to college helped by Center Pole sponsorship only to have returned home to give back to their communities. Last year, 72,000 pounds of turkey was distributed from their 5,000 square foot warehouse, and young kids had new backpacks and school supplies.

Each of these three groups is creating changes on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations by applying their unique visions to tourism. None of the operations has financial gain as their primary agenda. Conroy's model creates change slowly and

independently. But, his connections on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations bring authentic history to life and puts present-day value on the preservation of the stories and the sites. Yellowtail's model creates change by telling the stories to a new generation, and creating alliances with local, regional and national organizations by using collateral materials and web sites to reach a broader spectrum of people. Kelly and White Wellknown Buffalo create change through social services, student-by-student, house-by-house. Their common goal is to reach out, re-educate and preserve their culture by flipping the traditional concept of tourism without exploitation of natural landscapes or beauty.

## German Tourists and Montana Tribes

Carlson Old Elk is a 40-year-old Montana Crow Indian who lives in Spain and travels professionally as part of a small core of Natives from the U.S. and Canada who deliver Indian shows across the European continent. In 1998, he was recruited from a casting call at a local pow wow to Tarragona, Spain, to be a “real live Indian,” according to Old Elk, for an amusement park show which was soon thereafter cancelled. However, Old Elk had fallen in love with a Spanish woman by then and has stayed on to teach his culture and help satisfy the European fascination with Native Americans.

The Germans, in particular, are fascinated with Native American culture, and they are coming to Montana to get a taste of it, in hopes of meeting a Native American. The Germans are the largest group of overseas visitors to Montana, at 24 percent. Montana entrepreneurs specializing in Native American cultural offerings are profiting from this German interest. German tour operators also benefit by bringing fellow Germans to Montana Native American pow wows. And, American travel agents who specialize in providing services for foreign visitors, known as receptive operators, tack on their percentage to private Montana suppliers and German tour operator fees. Ironically, with few exceptions, everyone seems to be making a profit from German tourists’ interests in the Indian culture except for the Montana tribes.

Germans’ fascination with Native Americans has a long history. German writer Karl May captivated the hearts of his countrymen when his Western novels about an Apache chief named Winnetou and his white sidekick Old Shatterhand were first published in 1892. The duo were faithful friends who fought injustices of the West. These beloved

characters were precursors to the American version of the Lone Ranger and his Indian sidekick Tonto, who came to life in the 1933 radio series. Over 200 million of May's books have been sold. His writing has been translated into thirty languages and Germany has a Karl May Museum ([www.karl-may-museum.de](http://www.karl-may-museum.de)) in Radebeul.

May still casts his spell over thousands of Germans who spend their weekends dressing up and playing Indian in camps made just for this purpose. They call themselves Indian hobbyists and have organized more than three hundred clubs under two umbrella groups: the *Indianistikbund*, who are strictly Indian culture practitioners, and the *Westernbunds*, who allow cowboys.

Birgit Hans, professor and chair of the Department of Indian Studies at the University of North Dakota, and a former German citizen, has traced the German hobbyist tradition to 1897 when the first club was organized to “prepare” people for emigration, so they could interact with the Native people of the New Country. However, Hans faults May for creating fanciful Native American enthusiasm in Germany, particularly concerning the Plains Indians. The authenticity of May's presentation of the Indians is based upon his imagination and research from a German prison while serving time for petty crimes. He visited America only after his books were written, and never traveled further west than New York State. Hans has researched the topic of hobbyists for ten years, gained access to German Indian camps, and is near completion of a book about them. She grew up in Germany and still speaks with a strong German accent. She freely admits to reading May books, but says most hobbyists deny a May connection. According to Hans, the

hobbyists believe that May does not represent real Indian life, and to a great degree, they are correct.

Germans' cultural fascination with Native America is maintained by touring Indian shows like the one in which Old Elk is involved. Aside from its commercial aspect, it is Old Elk's hope, as well as intent, that the troupe can introduce audience members to Native American culture and broaden their scope of understanding through singing and dancing, demonstrating arts and crafts, and storytelling.

Each hobbyist group typically chooses one tribe to mimic their dress, beadwork and music, for example. Most of the cultural replication, however, is a romanticized notion of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Native Americans with men wearing war paint and a feather headdress while carrying a spear, wearing only a leather breechcloth, for example. Old Elk has never been to any of the Indian hobbyist camps in Germany. "I do know that they work hard on their regalia, sometimes too hard," he says. Ironically, some of his Native American friends have not been allowed to enter hobbyist camps because of their modern dress.

Old Elk returns to Montana to attend the Crow Fair each year with a small group of European tourists that he leads over the plains and mountains on the Crow Reservation and Yellowstone Park, explaining the local meaning of places, according to the traditions of his people. But out of respect for his culture, he avoids attending Sun Dances and any other spiritual gatherings. Last year his small group of Spanish customers rendezvoused

in Montana with Italians for the tour. Old Elk expects to include Austrians, Dutch and Germans in his tours groups to Montana.

Germans travel extensively because they enjoy an average of twenty-seven vacation days every year. When they travel, there is no question that the German fascination with Native Americans results in Montana visits. According to the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (I.T.R.R.), Montana's tourism research arm, almost one-quarter of the 202,515 overseas travelers to Montana are German. In this group, 22 percent of them come to Montana for Native American history.

In Montana, Darrell Norman, Blackfeet member and owner of the Lodgepole Gallery and Tipi Village in Browning ([www.blackfeetculturecamp.com](http://www.blackfeetculturecamp.com)), attracts the bulk of Montana's German tourists. His web site has been translated into German, and his wife, Angelika, is German-born from Hamburg, and serves as a translator. They met initially when she came to his place in 1999 as a German tourist and she now helps run the company.

Norman traces the German fascination for his Native American culture to a much earlier era than the Karl May books. "You might say they were the first tourists," he notes about the early 1830s visit by German royalty. German Prince Alexander Philipp Maximilian and his group came as scientists, not as colonizers, to study the Plains Indians in America. They brought a sketch artist, Karl Bodmer, who documented their trip. That was the first contact that Norman knows between the Blackfeet and the Germans. "So," Norman

claims, “it’s been a long-time relationship, you might say, between the Germans and the Native American people, particularly our tribe.”

Norman has hosted German Indian hobbyists at his place. They have come primarily to satisfy their curiosity and to meet Native American people. “They are very romantic and idealistic in their views about Indian people,” he observes. Of all the groups who come, Norman cites the hobbyists as the least likely to purchase anything from his gallery because they are imitators, not buyers. They are keen observers who then they go home and “do it themselves,” Norman says.

“Imitation is the greatest form of flattery,” says Sarah Chapman, owner of Go Native America ([gonativeamerica.com](http://gonativeamerica.com)) tours and the other big player in the state to have specialized in international Native American tourism for the last fifteen years. Chapman tries to weed out the German hobbyists because they typically come to dress up and be like Indians and participate in ceremony. Go Native is fair trade company, committed to ethically responsible tourism and will not facilitate people playing Indians. Chapman says allowing ceremony to the hobbyists would be “like dressing like a monk and going to Ireland and asking him for a ceremony in their church.”

With just one office in the United States, located in Billings, Chapman averages four-to five-hundred customers a season, over 90 percent of whom are Europeans. She boasts a customer return rate of 60 percent, and many customers book more than one of her Native-American-themed tours each year. Her British accent and her worldly views are derived from her English mom and Canadian dad, who raised her in Hong Kong. She

married a Native American writer and photographer from Oklahoma, but his family – the Strange Owl family – lives on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. She is the sole owner and operates the entire business from a laptop connected to satellite Internet because the majority of her customers book reservations directly through the web site.

Chapman's tours are upscale and expensive, costing \$350/day for up to four people. Her customers won't do tipi stays because of the physical discomfort. But that does not deter her and her husband from strict adherence to their commitment of directing tourism dollars to the welfare of Native Americans. They have self-imposed environmental, social and economic policies which center on using tourist money whenever possible to benefit the tribes. They stay in tribally owned lodging, eat at tribally owned restaurants, promote Native American art and products, buy gas on reservations and hire local guides when possible. Ernie LaPointe, great-grandson to Sitting Bull, is one of her tour guides, for example. His wife Sonya, is German, and she provides translation if they need it.

Chapman has had more German customers of late because of a newly established business relationship with a German firm. Germans differ from most European tourists because you don't get the hobbyists to the same extent from Spain or France, for example, because they are more interested in learning than in doing, Chapman states. And she compares their characteristics to a similar movement in England, called the Pow Wow Circuit, a group that is making up Native American culture as they go, according to what they like out of books they have read.



Chapman explains that a hobbyist could ruin her business. One possible scenario is of a hobbyist being invited to do a sweat in a sweat lodge during a Go Native tour. That action might result in a blog about the cost of a sweat in America, and give the impression that Go Native is selling ceremony. That type of accusation would shut down her business even though she knows of Natives who sell ceremony out of a genuine need to feed their children, she says. Some hobbyists invite a Native American to their country, all expenses paid under the pretense of honor, but with intent to garner an artificial stamp of approval from the European group, she said.

There is nothing artificial about Chapman's mission to teach her customers the realities of Native American culture. Her commitment to the benefit of tribes extends beyond the tourism dollars to other notable projects she incorporates into her operations. Go Native has partnerships with non-profits and other native-owned companies, like NativeEnergy, to "help tour members apply traditional native principles of walking lightly on the land in the way of the ancestors for the benefit of the generations to come." She also includes a stop whenever possible at the Cheyenne's Children Center on the Cheyenne Reservation, so customers have an opportunity to help needy children. The Cheyenne ask for \$300 per sponsorship fee, and nearly 80 percent of Chapman's customers choose to sponsor a child, which has resulted in her customers making up over one-quarter of the center's sponsorships.

Promoting international tourism in Montana is the responsibility of Pam Gosink, overseas marketing manager for the Montana Department of Commerce Promotion Division. She promotes German media coverage through familiarization tours to the state by

international journalists. And she acts as the middle man, introducing buyers to sellers, and marketing strictly to tour operators and travel agents to generate tourism dollars for the state. “The Germans are enthralled with the Indian culture,” says Gosink.

Gosink works hand-in-hand with Montana’s contracted international marketing firm, Rocky Mountain International (RMI), based in Wyoming and in five European offices. The state tourism offices of Wyoming, South Dakota and Idaho also use RMI to coordinate the international tourism effort in packaging the rural nature of the four-state region and the Western lifestyle as the “Real America.”

Carola Kolmann is the account manager for the RMI-Frankfurt office and is aware of Indian hobbyist groups in Germany. RMI-Frankfurt has a relationship with a German tour operator in Germany, Indianerreisen ([www.indianerreisen.com](http://www.indianerreisen.com)), run by Mr. Bertram Postner who specializes in Native American Travel to Montana. The *Indianerreisen* 2009 tours to Montana, as translated from its web site, read:

The Pow Wow Path (tour), costs 2,200 Euros (converted is \$3,100 USD). The tour, led by German speakers, will depart from and return to Billings, MT and is for friends of Pow Wows. The tour is especially for people who want to stay longer in one place. First the participants will visit a well-known Pow Wow in Hayes. They will have lots of time to get to know the Reservation and they will spend nights in a comfortable Tipi. Their leader will be “Big Bird,” an Indian tour guide. Then the tour continues at the Crow Fair, one of the largest and most spectacular Pow Wows. Participants will view the wonderful colorful Regalia of the Indians, and they will also see an exciting Rodeo. Of course there will also be time for getting to know the historical aspects of the Little Big Horn area. Dates: August 5 – 18, 2009.

Journey to the Blackfeet Indians, costs 380 Euros (\$535 USD) for two people. It is a two-day stay in the heart of the Blackfeet Reservation, where the prairie meets the Rocky Mountains. Participants will stay overnight in comfortable, traditional Tipis, authentic Blackfeet structures in circular designs. Darrell Norman will be the tour guide. Your host will

be Angelika Harden-Norman, a German speaker. The tours are held from May until October.

RMI has promoted the German trade as worldwide exhibitors at the Internationale Tourismus Boerse (ITB) trade show in Berlin each March, and as an exhibitor at the annual Pow Wow trade show hosted by the U.S. Travel Association each May. The name has nothing to do with Native American travel, but refers to the business of hooking up U.S. travel suppliers with international buyers.

The business of international travel works like this: RMI works with U.S.-based tour operators called receptive operators, or receptives. RMI has enjoyed long-established ties with the receptive companies America for You, based in California, and Rocky Mountain Holidays, based in Fort Collins, Colorado. The receptives are better versed in the people and places in the RMI Western territory than are the German tour operators because they work directly with Montana Indian tribes or other “suppliers” to coordinate a reliable and satisfactory product offering, such as a guided tour.

Gary Schluter is a representative from Rocky Mountain Holidays. Schluter says that most German groups fly into Denver, their designated gateway city, and then use a bus or car to tour the region in what’s called a fly-drive tour. Schluter typically books their lodging, which once in a while includes a tipi stay. The only Native American suppliers in Montana he has worked with are guides around Crow Agency for a day tour and Darrell Norman in Browning, who offers his tipi village.

Schluter contracts with the supplier for the best tour rate. For example, if a Native American tour guide charges \$200 for the day, then Schluter adds 7.5 percent as the

Rocky Mountain Holidays markup, which then offers that price as a net rate to the German tour operator. The tour operator marks it up an additional 20 percent to cover the advertisements and promotional costs needed to sell the package in Germany.

RMI-Frankfurt also works with a network of German travel representatives who come each year to familiarize themselves with the four states and attend the RMI-sponsored annual Round-Up, which is rotated in cities within the region. It's a day of fast-match dating, where suppliers get ten minutes to give their pitch to the European tour operators, before moving to the next table.

Dee Ann Cates, general manager of the tribally owned Best Western KwaTaqNuk Resort in Polson, attended the last Round-Up in Boise, Idaho. She had a chance to speak with German tour operators about her facility, and to listen to their needs. She got a "crash course" in international marketing and continues to work closely with RMI to increase the resort's international bookings, but does nothing independently to attract German tourists. She also relies on the Best Western international network to refer Germans to her facility. Cates gets some inquiries via the resort's web site at [www.kwataqnuk.com](http://www.kwataqnuk.com).

The KwaTaqNuk Resort is the only tribally owned lodging that Chapman finds suitable for her Go Native customers in the entire state of Montana. In other states where Chapman offers tours, like Arizona and New Mexico, she can run some tours staying exclusively in tribally owned properties, but not in Montana, because there are not enough suitable lodges.

“We don’t have the infrastructure,” according to Latonna Old Elk, Crow member and president of the Montana Tribal Tourism Association (MTTA), when she explains why the tribes lose out on foreign tourist dollars. Most of the Montana reservations lack tribally owned hotels, motels or restaurants to accommodate tourists. Her own tribe has done assessments to develop a hotel and casino for this reason, she says, but she attributes the lack of infrastructure to the lack of money.

The state generates tourism development money from a bed tax which is generated from the hotel/motel stays in Montana, then distributed by the department of commerce. Old Elk referred to the fact that no tribe or organization such as MTTA, receives a direct allocation of “bed tax” funds like Travel Montana, or the designated tourist regions. “We don’t pay the bed tax, so we don’t get the tourism distribution funds,” Old Elk says.

The lodging tax is not waived for Native American lodging establishments, according to Victor Bjornberg, tourism development coordinator for the Montana Commerce Department Tourism Division, but they just don’t collect it and submit to the state which is a requirement for free listings on the Montana web sites and publications. He says that Indian organizations and businesses have access to the same low and no cost marketing assistance provided through Travel Montana.

Bjornberg explains that in 2007 there was legislation to re-allocate the 3 percent of the state’s 7 percent lodging tax from the general fund to a number of historic preservation and cultural and heritage organizations, in addition to the state funding. That action

would have resulted in the MTTA being eligible to have received funding similar to what a tourism region receives. The measure passed the legislature, but was vetoed by the Governor because it was not in his original budget. The legislation was not brought up for consideration in 2009.

Mathias Jung, marketing manager for RMI-Germany, is based in Wyoming. He suggests that if Montana tribes played a more active role in developing unique tours or access for overseas tourists, they could economically benefit. To facilitate this possibility, RMI manages two web sites: the company website ([www.rockymtintl.com](http://www.rockymtintl.com)) which is a how-to for suppliers to enter the international tourism arena, and a second site ([www.rmi-realamerica.com](http://www.rmi-realamerica.com)) dedicated to assisting the German consumer in planning a trip to RMI territory.

Direct marketing is another advantage to drawing in Germans. Chapman, for example, books nearly all her business over the Internet. Currently, MTTA has no web site, but Old Elk is supervising development of a site scheduled to be uploaded in September.

Gosink noted that at one time the state was able to offer federal funds to assist suppliers with overseas marketing provided they completed the required training. The MTTA took advantage of this opportunity, and sent their representative to the World Travel Market in the United Kingdom in partnership with the state, but hasn't attended again. That was about four years ago, according to Old Elk, who stated that the person who attended on their behalf is no longer with the organization.

All the money pouring into the state from Germans is due to their fascination with Native American culture, and the tribes should reap some of the thousands of dollars due them. Infrastructure, product development, and direct marketing efforts are being successfully practiced by KwaTaqNuk and may serve as a model for other Montana tribes. However, ultimately the solution to this matter does not rely upon one group or business.

It is an independent choice for each member in this industry to find their own balance between the weight of making tourism dollars and the exploitation of a culture that has been exploited for centuries. Chapman, for example, succeeds in meeting the expectations of white cultural tourists by rejecting tipi stays, for example. However, she also succeeds in touting the history of the Native Americans from their own perspective and generating income for tribal operations without being Native American herself. A collective balance between both worlds may be possible with players like Chapman who has found a balance that satisfies her foreign customers and respects the culture of Montana Native Americans.