

MONTANA MUSEUMS

Browning gallery celebrates 20 years

By Jake Sorich

Tribune Staff Writer

Those who visit the Lodgepole Gallery and Tipi Village in Browning usually experience something they will never encounter anywhere else.

Visitors can sleep in a handmade tepee and also check out traditional Blackfeet artwork, go horseback riding on a Spanish Mustang, eat a traditional Amskapi Pikuni meal or partake in Blackfeet campfire entertainment and educational seminars given by traditional artists.

The gallery, which Darrell Norman opened in 1993, marks its 20th anniversary this summer.

Norman is a traditional artist, dancer, singer and enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe. He said over the years he's met people from across the world, including the woman who later became his wife. The two married in 1999.

"(Angelika) was from Hamburg, Germany, and came here as a guest," he said.

Norman, 71, said it was his wife's idea to advertise the gallery online, further opening its doors to the outside world.

"When (she) put us on the Internet it changed our business," he said. "Like, all of a sudden the world is at your doorstep. We have somebody coming from Russia and people coming from southern Siberia. It's amazing what that has done for business."

Along with exhibiting Norman's artwork, the gallery also features paintings, sculptures, artistic clothing and jewelry from fellow Blackfeet artists such as Jackie Bread, David Dragonfly, King Kuka, Glen LaFontaine, Valentina LaPier, Deborah Magee, Robert Orduno, Neil Parsons, Gale Running Wolf, Francis Wall and Macile Reevis.

The gallery has been featured in magazines such as National Geo-



Darrell Norman opened The Lodgepole Gallery and Tipi Village in Browning 20 years ago this summer. COURTESY PHOTO

graphic, *Cowboys & Indians* and *Sunset Magazine* and appeared in a front-page article in the *New York Times*.

When it first opened, the gallery had two tepees. Now it has 12. Norman said they're always working on growing and improving.

"It's just part of doing business each year," he said. "We're always continuing to make improvements."

Norman said another key to their longevity has been maintaining relationships with outside organizations and museums such as Travel Montana, the C.M. Russell Museum and the Montana Historical Society.

"It's been not only our own efforts, but we have had some good support from lot of places throughout Montana," he said.

Last year Norman also worked with the History Museum on their documentary titled "Glacier Park Remembered."

The Lodgepole Gallery and Tipi Village is located 2½ miles west of Browning on Highway 89. The tepee camp is open May through September. The gallery is open June through September from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily and October through May from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For more information, visit blackfeetculture-camp.com.