Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Northern Cheyenne Indians of Lame Deer, Mont., recently launched a small industry on their reservation that is beginning to bring dividends with the Yule season. The firm, called Northern Cheyenne Originals, manufactures Christmas trees, wreaths, costume jewelry and other novelty items for decorations from pine cones collected on the reservation.

Samples of the trees and wreaths, complete with miniature lights peeking from between the cones, have been sent to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Robert L. Bennett, who in turn has arranged for their display in the lobby of the Department of the Interior Building in Washington.

The handcrafted trees vary in height from 12 inches to 5 feet, and the wreaths are from 21 to 36 inches in diameter; both are spray painted for extra beauty. The units may be packed away for use from season to season.

Northern Cheyenne Originals is a joint venture by an individual businessman and the Northern Cheyenne Tribe. President of the firm is tribal president John Woodenlegs. This is the second industry on the reservation; over 150 Northern Cheyennes are employed by the Guild Arts and Crafts plastic novelties factory located at Ashland, Mont.

Negotiations to establish the new factory were handled by the Industrial Development Branch of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. An on-the-job training contract is currently being negotiated with the Bureau.