

Chinook Winds Casino Resort Brings Tribally-Caught Salmon to Dining Outlets Through Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Salmon Marketing Program



Left: Jack Strong, Chinook Winds Executive Chef and Siletz Tribal Member. At right: Jack Strong; Eric Anderson, Chinook Winds Purchasing Manager; Tina Retasket, Siletz Tribal Council; and Rick Thomas with the Nisqually Seafood Marketing Program.

Chinook Winds Casino Resort, owned and operated by the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon, recently announced their partnership with the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) Salmon Marketing Program. “We started this process in September of 2012, first meeting with Tina Retasket from our Tribal Council and ATNI at the Rez Kitchen Tour in Pendleton, Oregon. It has been a journey of learning, communication and cooperation to make this a reality. Working with tribal communities and highlighting traditional Native foods resourced by tribal fisherman is a passion of mine. And it’s only the beginning,” said Executive Chef Jack Strong. “This program is our opportunity to invest in Indian Country while serving a high quality, healthy product throughout our resort. We are committed to setting ourselves apart by putting quality first and supporting inter-tribal cooperation through the ATNI initiative,” said Mike Fisher, General Manager of Chinook Winds Casino Resort.

Created in July 2010, the Salmon Marketing Program was initially funded through EDA and USDA grants in the amount of \$310,000. The purpose of the program is to add value to tribal fishers’ and harvesters’ catches and keep

more of the value added chain in Indian Country. Since its inception in 2010, the program staff and stakeholders have assisted over 125 tribal fishers, harvesters, individuals, and businesses and generating an economic impact of over \$1 million through new sales, increased revenues, and higher premiums. “As long as I have been involved people have been talking ‘buy Indian.’ It seems like it’s time to walk the walk. Chinook Winds and the Siletz Tribes are doing it by being the first Oregon tribe to purchase through our program,” said Mike Burton, Director, ATNI Economic Development.

Chinook Winds Casino Resort purchases seasonal salmon through the ATNI Salmon Marketing Program in which various tribes are participating. Currently, the Nisqually Tribe is delivering seasonal salmon caught and processed by their tribe. The first delivery was for 85 pounds of Steelhead from Quinalt tribal member owned Sea-Atco Seafood in March of this year. In total, Chinook Winds has had 2,225 pounds of Quinalt River Steelhead delivered. However, a single tribe can’t provide enough fish to fulfill their entire year’s needs. Chinook Winds uses over 20,000 pounds of salmon/steelhead product every year in all outlets, so it’s important to work through ATNI’s program to ensure the

need is met. The ATNI Salmon Marketing Program works to promote inter-tribal cooperation for the greater good of the Northwest tribes. In recent history, an Indian Country fisherman wasn't guaranteed a fair price for his catch. With this program in place, ATNI works to keep all the value in Indian Country - up to the final sale - to the consumer. "Our tribe is continuing the efforts of the ATNI/EDC (Economic Development Corporation) efforts with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz and Chinook Winds sharing Quinalt and Nisqually salmon with their patrons," said James Slape Jr., 5th Tribal Councilman, Nisqually Indian Tribe. "Tomorrow our tribes will share products and stories from Siletz and other Oregon tribes with tribal members and casino patrons as well."

At the beginning of discussions, purchase price and product fulfillment were concerns. It turned out to be a little more expensive, but recently salmon has gone up in price but Chinook Winds personnel works closely with ATNI on pricing so the cost remains competitive in the marketplace. "Eric Anderson, CWCR Purchasing Manager, and I worked with ATNI and Nisqually Tribe representatives on price, specifications, delivery details, seasonality of different types of salmon runs and creating a partnership that benefits everybody involved," said Strong. It takes more work to get

something of this size organized and going. But the end result is a higher-quality product for our guests and we support the buy Indian initiative at the same time. Wild-caught salmon has a higher quality and taste than farmed salmon. There are also studies showing the health benefits of the wild salmon as well."

Chinook Winds did a blind tasting with chefs and all involved picked the tribally-caught wild salmon. Once more buyers jump on board, the price of the product will become more competitive all the while keeping the profits in Indian Country.

The ATNI Salmon Marketing Program is just a start. There are many opportunities through tribal partnerships. Tribes are growing wheat, raising buffalo, harvesting oysters and making spices; just to name a few. "We are starting with fish but will continue finding opportunities to keep our purchasing efforts to keep our dollars in Indian Country," said Delores Pigsley, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Tribal Chairman. "ATNI has done ground breaking work through their Salmon Marketing Program and we are proud to be a part of their journey into Oregon." ♣

For more information about Chinook Winds Casino Resort, visit www.chinookwindscasino.com.

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