

Litefoot's Clothing Line Brings "Native Style" to Indian Country



by AJ Naff

Litefoot, the award-winning Native hip-hop artist, actor and speaker, is taking his clothing line, Native Style, in exciting new directions. The company, which creates apparel featuring Native designs, is expanding its retail presence throughout North America and venturing into brand-specific marketing products geared toward Indian gaming and resort properties, as well as Native organizations. "We can take a property's logo and apply it to whatever type of garment they choose," said Litefoot. "We can even offer ideas to help them market their fashions to their core consumers and give them a branded approach that will promote their facility when the designs leave the property."

Native Style began as a means of funding Litefoot's appearances throughout Indian Country. His tours, such as 2005's "Reach the Rez," provide inspiration, motivation and encouragement to tribal communities. However, with a reduction in programming budgets at tribal nations and organizations, he knew he would have to find a way to supplement the expenses incurred for his tours. "One of our strengths had always been providing clothing to my fans," he said. "We saw that there was truly something we could do to be involved with fashion to a greater extent than we were."

Creating apparel that featured song lyrics such as *Native Honey* and *Indian Goddess*, Native Style began appearing at Litefoot's concerts. The clothing line was immediately

successful and allowed him to continue delivering his message. "The clothing paid for our expenses and allowed us to stay in the community," said Litefoot. "I think we grew faster because of that motivation than had we been trying to become a multi-million-dollar company. I think we did this for the right reasons and the Creator has blessed us because of that."

Since its inception, Native Style has maintained a presence in Indian Country, with retail booths at all major powwows and events, as well as Litefoot's performances. "The brand recognition just grew so phenomenally that we knew we had to open it up for wholesale," he said. "But we first needed the proper infrastructure in place and a strong core competency in manufacturing." Since beginning wholesale services in October of 2009, Native Style's retail locations in North America have grown to over 30, with new retailers signing on at a rapid rate.

From a design perspective, Native Style has included Native culture in all that it does. The symbolism and design elements were created to resonate with Native Americans and to inspire hope and inspiration. Yet the designs also sustain a broad appeal across other cultures. "If you're not Native, you're going to think these are really cool designs and understand that there's something Native about them," said Litefoot. "We also didn't want to offer the stereotypical or typical. We wanted our designs to be very unique and I think we've accomplished that."

With a full art department at its disposal, Native Style offers numerous application methods, from silk screening to embroidery, and can create a wide range of customized apparel and products. "If a logo or design can be applied to clothing or merchandise, we can do it," said Litefoot. He also

envisions Native Style encouraging more Native-to-Native business within Indian Country. “We are striving to be competitive as a Native-owned and operated supplier for Native-owned and operated tribal entities.”

Most recently, Native Style undertook the design and production of the embroidered golf towels that the National



Ernest L. Stevens, Jr. wearing a Native Style designed shirt.

Indian Gaming Association distributed at its annual golf tournament. The company even designs NIGA Chairman Ernest L. Stevens, Jr.’s exclusive shirts, dubbed the ‘Chairman’s Shirts.’ “We like to work with tribal leaders to give them more of a branded approach to how they present themselves,” said Litefoot. For Chairman Stevens, the design is an exclusive, modified version of the NIGA staff and medicine wheel, which is

embroidered on all of his golf shirts, casual shirts and dress shirts. “The design has served to make him the envy of his colleagues. We’ve had to create more Chairman’s Shirts for his peers, which has been a great promotional vehicle for NIGA and other tribal leaders.”

From day one, Litefoot has wanted to move Native Style into the mainstream, becoming a national brand enjoyed by all walks of life. The company has already established a wide online presence, with thousands of fans on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. The full catalog is also available on Native Style’s secure website. “Because of the design elements that we put into what we do, I think that the mainstream community embraces our product at a higher level than anything else out there,” Litefoot said. “I think that it will be groundbreaking to build a bridge that serves as a further way of teaching the world about who Natives are today.” ♣

For more information about Native Style, call (866) 287-2685 or visit www.nativestyle.net.

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