

Port Madison Enterprises: Investing in the Future



For the Suquamish, creating lasting economic change means developing more than buildings on the Port Madison Indian Reservation. It means developing programs to train and educate the employees charged with future management and growth of the businesses there. Port Madison Enterprises (PME), the Suquamish Tribe's corporate division located near Seattle in Western Washington, has created several educational programs for employees to ensure that development. The most recent and comprehensive program includes partnering with an area community college to offer a certificate in Tribal Enterprise and Gaming. The certificate program, two years in the making, comes complete with accredited college coursework in human relations, hospitality, marketing, financial analysis and gaming.

"I was part of a group of gaming human resource directors who got together to discuss best practices a couple of years ago and found that we were all doing parts of programs that were about education and training in the industry," said PME Human Resource Director Barb Griffin. Looking to create a more complete course in gaming and tribal enterprises, Griffin coordinated with experts at PME and educators at nearby Olympic Community College to design a program. "We worked with department directors to find out what competencies they would expect an employee to have if they had received a Tribal Enterprise and Gaming certificate, then created the curriculum for each course from there."

Pictured above: Slot Department employees at Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort from left, Veronica Rhodes, Jackie Lumaban, Danielle Morsette, Angie Huang, Shelly Wood, Amber Snow and Archie Arreola enjoy some outdoor sunshine during a recent team building retreat. In addition to comprehensive training and education programs, departments at Port Madison Enterprises are given the opportunity to learn and grow together with half-day retreats where curriculum is geared toward increasing communication, cooperation and group participation.

Employees, selected by department directors for the program, commit to nearly a year of coursework. Each subject is covered in a 10-week class held at the company's training and resource center on the reservation. The company pays for each class and all student course materials, including books, tuition and fees. They also compensate each student employee for the three hours they are required to be in class each week. "I think this is going to be a great opportunity for me to receive training in a number of facets of the casino I don't usually work with, like marketing and finance," said Slot Relief Supervisor Maurice Salagna, a PME employee chosen for the program.

In addition to providing educational opportunities for employees, the program also provides long-term employees incentive to grow in their positions. "I think it's great that the casino is willing to invest in our courses and textbooks. I might not be able to do something like this on my own," said Table Games Shift Manager Dionne Norris, an

11-year PME employee also selected for the program.

PME executives have chosen a total of 14 employees for the first class this fall, with plans to expand both the curriculum and availability of classes for additional students in the future. Coursework in retail operations is being considered, along with opening the classes to students from other area tribes that also have corporate and gaming operations. The company also plans to use the program as a recruitment tool for employees in the future. "It's another step in succession and career development for PME and a testament to the unique opportunities available to those working for tribal enterprises," said Griffin.

In addition to the newly formed certificate course, PME also provides a comprehensive scholarship program to two graduating Suquamish tribal members every year. Recipients are granted tuition, books, room and board, plus a monthly stipend to attend the college of their choosing. When not attending college, recipients spend their vacations and breaks in the corporate classroom, returning to Suquamish for internships at PME gaming and hospitality venues. "Interns are given positions in a variety of fields at our properties throughout their college careers, gaining a true appreciation for what it takes to run a company of this size and scope," said Griffin.

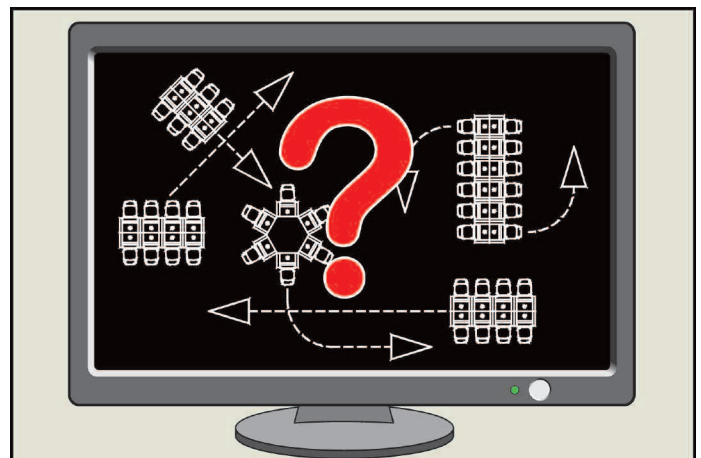
In addition to front-line positions at the hotel, casino and retail properties, interns also spend valuable time with department managers and company executives. They attend meetings with the Chief Executive Officer, profit and loss sessions with managers, and PME Board of Directors meetings. "Through continued education and hands-on work experience, interns are given the tools they need to make educated decisions about their future career paths," said PME CEO Russell Steele. PME Operations Manager Nic'cola Armstrong, a Suquamish tribal member and recent graduate from the internship program at the company, believes the newly formed certificate program is a significant opportunity for employees. "If you're focused on your specific department, it's hard to understand how others affect the overall success of the company," said Armstrong.

Employees at PME have access to a full-time trainer and instructive courses on everything from office skills to front-line micros systems at the Training and Resource Center. The company also provides supervisors and management with a prized leadership training program. Additionally, every tribal employee is given the opportunity to take college courses, receiving up to eight hours of paid time each week for instruction. Comprehensive career and education counseling is also available to all tribal employees. "Education is the cornerstone for future business growth

at our hospitality, gaming and retail properties. We've done a lot in the past 20 years. It will be up to the next generation to take what we've done and bring it to an even higher level," said Casino General Manager Rich Purser.

Port Madison Enterprises, an economic agent of the Suquamish Tribe, is located along the shores of the Puget Sound in Western Washington. Businesses owned and operated by Port Madison Enterprises include Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort, the historic Kiana Lodge, Agate Pass Business Park and several retail outlets. PME employs more than 750 people and is fast becoming one of the largest employers in Kitsap County, just outside the greater Seattle metropolitan area. ♣

For more information about Port Madison Enterprises and Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort visit www.clearwatercasino.com.



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