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MHC Release

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Marine Harvest and Kitasoo/Xai'xais mark ten years of partnership at Klemtu

Klemtu –A celebration was recently held in the small coastal village of Klemtu, British Columbia, to commemorate the ten years of collaboration and business success between the Kitasoo/Xai'xais First Nation and Marine Harvest Canada.

Twenty years ago the people of Klemtu turned to salmon aquaculture to try to replace the economic opportunity lost in the decline of the commercial salmon fishery. This pioneering salmon aquaculture business lasted for five years but eventually declining salmon prices and high operating costs combined to shut down the operations in 1993.

It was reborn in 1998 with an agreement between Marine Harvest and the Kitasoo/Xai'xais—and the community has not looked back since.

Today, about 10 million pounds of fresh Atlantic salmon are grown and processed by Kitasoo Seafoods and sold to customers throughout Canada and the United States. The farms, processing plant, and harvesting vessels employ about 60 people. Unemployment in Klemtu has been cut to 40 percent from about 90 percent ten years ago.

“I can't say enough about what this partnership means to our community,” says Percy Starr, Band Manager of the Kitasoo/Xai'xais First Nation. “It has meant steady jobs for a lot of our people and a sense of optimism and encouragement for the future. It is wonderful to see the workers walking home with a paycheck in their hand and a smile on their face. The relationship with Marine Harvest has been beautiful for our people.”

Ian Roberts, who worked at Klemtu for nine years and is now Marine Harvest's Manager of Communications, says it has been “a very rewarding experience”.

“Klemtu is a very isolated place, and it's a real credit to the Kitasoo/Xai'xais people that they've shown a lot of determination and perseverance in making Kitasoo Seafoods a very real and significant player in the Canadian aquaculture industry.”

The November 13th celebration included a village feast, attended by over 250 community members and ten Marine Harvest representatives. The festivities included an annual basketball game, dinner, dancing and drumming, and gift exchanges.

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ERqhADnds4>

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