



**Media Contact:**

Kyndra Gamache  
Northern Quest Resort & Casino  
[kgamache@northernquest.com](mailto:kgamache@northernquest.com)  
(509)481-6342

**Northern Quest Resort & Casino  
Follow Up Media Statement  
June 18, 2013**

This is a follow up statement to a situation with an employee of Northern Quest Resort & Casino who recently resigned. Late in the day on Thursday, June 13, one of our employees, Melanie Strandberg, resigned via text message, saying that she was asked to wear a wig after shaving her head in support of her sister, who has cancer.

We are very concerned about Melanie's reported experience. It is inconsistent with our values, culture and past practices and it's unacceptable.

To be clear, Northern Quest does not have a policy that prohibits team members from shaving their heads. And there is NO policy that requires someone with a shaved head to wear a wig. Over the years we have had other team members who have undergone treatment for cancer and others who have shaved their heads in support of family or friends. We have always supported their choice to do so.

Our HR team has conducted a thorough review of the situation and found the following information:

- When Melanie interviewed for her job, she shared her story about previously shaving her head in support of her sister. Our team was inspired by her courage. They hired her with this knowledge.

- A couple weeks ago Melanie learned her sister was going to face chemotherapy again and she decided to shave her head in support. She discussed it openly in the salon before she did it.
- Melanie worked for several days with her head shaved, with and without a wig, prior to resigning.
- Melanie submitted her concerns in writing to HR at 3:00PM Thursday, June 13<sup>th</sup>. The front-line HR representative communicated to her that she needed to research whether there was a department-specific policy. This HR representative said she would respond once she was able to clarify. Melanie quit via text message at 6:26PM Thursday evening, before HR could resolve the issue. There was no department-level policy that required a wig to be worn.
- In interviews with her colleagues, it was clear that they were very supportive of her and what she was going through. They were talking about planning a fundraiser for her sister and they have a lot of admiration for Melanie.
- Northern Quest has reached out to Melanie repeatedly to get her account of what happened. HR called her and left her a voicemail at 8:30AM on Friday June 14<sup>th</sup> after receiving her resignation text the night before. HR also emailed her at 12:47PM Friday afternoon. Melanie emailed HR Friday night at 7:20PM to say she had been legally advised not to do anything at this time. We've done our best to put together all the facts without her input. We'd still welcome the opportunity to talk with her directly.
- It's clear to us, through her text message and her media interviews, Melanie did not feel supported in her decision to work with a shaved head and that's not okay with us. It does not align with our values, our policy or the way we have supported other team members in the past.

**We have drawn the following conclusions:**

- There was clearly confusion in the salon about the policy. Managers should have contacted HR sooner to help clarify. Melanie quit before HR could resolve her concerns.
- We want Melanie to know Northern Quest supports her and her family. Her job is open to her and we would love to talk with her directly.

**Northern Quest Resort & Casino is taking the following actions:**

- To ensure there is no confusion about policy, we have communicated to our entire organization, clarifying there is no policy that prevents any team member from working with a shaved head and no one is required to wear a wig.

- We are adding specific language to our team member orientation and to the appearance policy, clarifying our practice on this issue.
- We've reached out to Melanie repeatedly to offer to resolve her concern, tell her we would welcome her back to work with a shaved head and ensure she knows her job is open. We would love to meet with her in person and tell her Northern Quest supports her.
- Our Spa Director is on administrative leave. We are conducting a more thorough assessment of spa operations and will be working with the entire team to ensure the environment is a great one for both team members and guests. We support all our team members and are committed to working with them to consistently improve our operations.

The most important thing to us is that ALL our team members know that Northern Quest supports them, whether they are going through a health issue themselves, or have family members who are ill. Team members can shave their heads in support of a loved one or a colleague. We've had this happen many times in our history and have always been supportive.

Over the last decade, the Tribe has partnered with dozens of non-profits including the Susan G. Komen Foundation, the Rypien Foundation, the American Cancer Society, Cancer Patient Care, Coaches Vs. Cancer and many others. We have actively supported these groups providing human and financial resources. In the past decade we've given more than one million dollars to cancer-related causes. We've done this because cancer is a disease that affects everyone in some way and we want to ensure our community has great support for families dealing with the disease.

This incident does not reflect Northern Quest's values, policy or practices. We have learned from this experience and have taken it as an opportunity to strengthen our organization.

###

**Media Contact:**

Kyndra Gamache

Northern Quest Resort & Casino

[kgamache@northernquest.com](mailto:kgamache@northernquest.com)

(509)481-6342