

Remediation as Reconciliation: Applying Truth & Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #92 to Canadian Brownfields

Kear Porttris, QM Environmental

In 2015, the Truth & Reconciliation Commission developed 94 *Calls to Action* that are meant to guide Canadians and help “redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation”. In this new era of reconciliation, we are seeing Indigenous communities at the table more than ever and we need to think outside the box on our commitments to them. With Indigenous people brought in as partners we are seeing and hearing their needs and desires which are changing the way projects are being developed, putting new and interesting requirements on government, contractors, and stakeholders.

Remediation is no longer about cleaning up the environment but has become an economic development tool for Indigenous Peoples and communities. Whether through treaty or legacy clean-up projects, Indigenous communities are seeing a landslide of opportunities whose momentum could propel future generations into success for generations. This often takes a broad strategy to maximize the benefit to the community.

What is your organization doing to align with Call to Action #92? Understanding that there are many Calls to Action, we are going to focus on #92 as we believe it applies to all organizations, not just private industry. We will facilitate a case-study-based, practical discussion on how we can adjust operations to achieve reconciliation objectives. Using case studies from projects that we have and are working on, we will initiate discussions on what can be done to improve reconciliation efforts or how we can shift to align our work with reconciliation strategies.

We need to identify our truth so that we can meaningfully take action and responsibility for reconciliation at all levels of our organization.

Kear Porttris

Kear Porttris is the Director of Indigenous Relations for QM Environmental. He is trained as a civil engineer with consulting, contracting and public sector experience who recently completed his MASc in Civil Engineering. He is Métis-Chinese and has lived experience of bridging cultures and Peoples, navigating complex relationships both personally and professionally. He has more than 7 years in the environmental industry and more than 10 years working with and connecting to Indigenous People and communities. After graduating with his bachelor's degree he helped establish an Indigenous civil/environmental consulting firm in Victoria and continues to teach a 4th year civil engineering course focused on the challenges and opportunities of working with Indigenous communities. He is passionate about involving Indigenous people in his industry and is able to do so at all levels across the country in his current role. He's happy to share his experience on life, career and education, as he personally understands the difficulties and successes of them all.

Jeremy Robinson

Jeremy began his career with QM in 2011 as a Supervisor for the Hazardous Material Abatement division in Victoria, BC. Over the years, his responsibilities have grown from Project Manager to Regional Manager to currently leading two divisions nationally, culminating in his current position of Senior Vice-President, HazMat and Emergency Management & Environmental Response Services. With over 15 years of experience in leadership and the environmental sector, Jeremy has successfully managed complex projects and large-scale teams that have consistently achieved cost, quality and execution objectives resulting in business growth.

With progressive, comprehensive experience, Jeremy is able to be strategic and successfully lead large divisions within the organization. He is regularly called upon by consulting firms and regulatory authorities to provide technical expertise in the field of asbestos abatement and demolition best practices.

Jeremy has a proven track record for bridging process and system gaps within organizations. Using collaborative approaches to organizational issues highlights his effectiveness in problem-solving within the areas of hazardous materials abatement, remediation, demolition, emergency response, and in particular indigenous engagement and capacity building.