

Supporting Indigenous Communities in Protection of Rights and the Environment

Melanie Daniels, Louis Bull Tribe and Michelle Cotton, Solstice Environmental Management

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released their final report in June 2015. Seven years have passed with minimal change in how corporate Canada conducts its day-to-day business operations in minimizing impacts to Indigenous Canadians and combating systemic racism. The Louis Bull Tribe has formed a partnership with Solstice Environmental Management that is designed to achieve the goals outlined in the TRC Call to Action 92.

Environmental professionals and consultants have a unique opportunity in achieving reconciliation as their business line – environmental protection – directly supports the protection of Indigenous rights and traditional uses. Partnerships between Indigenous communities and environmental professionals are mutually beneficial in that most people who embark upon a career in this field do so with the goal to protect the environment and all the species that depend on it.

We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. When we, as environmental professionals support the protection of Indigenous rights and uses on the land, we are working together to achieve these goals and we can support Indigenous Albertans in protecting rights in the spirit of reconciliation.

Melanie Daniels

Melanie Daniels is the Consultation & Land Manager for the Louis Bull Tribe, she has 25 years of experience working with Indigenous communities in an environmental, consultation and land management capacity. She gained her experience through working with both the Federal and Provincial Governments, First Nations and Métis as well as industry. This experience has provided Melanie with an understanding of all perspectives relating to environmental protection, land management and resource development. Through her years of service in various capacities she has built relationships based on mutual respect and trust with most of Alberta First Nations, the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) and the Métis Settlements. Melanie has led in policy development relating to on Reserve environmental protection, served as a regulator, developed consultation procedures for the MNA and Louis Bull Tribe and has led consultation for numerous resource developments on behalf of industry. Melanie is currently a member of the Indigenous Centre for Cumulative Effects, Technical Advisory Committee and has been appointed to the Impact Assessment Agency commission roster by the Minister of Environment.

Michelle Cotton

Founder and Senior Technical Advisor, Solstice Environmental Management