

DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES MODEL



Environmental stewardship and the capacity to respond to, and effectively manage environmental challenges, is a priority for Aboriginal peoples and resonates at the core of leadership and communities. A key strategy to developing such capacity is a well-integrated business model whereby an organization and community can provide a range of in-house services and solutions, while remaining focused on a core set of key service offerings to ensure safety, quality, cost effectiveness and profitability.

Quantum Murray is a national environmental and industrial services provider with extensive experience working with Aboriginal peoples, communities and businesses across Canada; ranging from training in excess of 600 Aboriginal peoples, many of whom have been employed on numerous projects, to a range of ventures with Aboriginal businesses and communities. Some of these business ventures have evolved into ongoing and multi-year initiatives and include a diverse range of successful projects as illustrated in the joint venture with Kwikwetlem First Nation, others recently established with unique and promising initiatives underway as with the Malahat Nation as well as the Cheam First Nation.

Each opportunity is unique but common to each is a shared set of goals and priorities, committed leadership, and a management and operations team that can deliver. Quantum Murray provides the expertise, resources and experience to partner in the fields of environmental remediation, demolition,

hazardous materials abatement, waste and water management and treatment, civil works, emergency response and specialized training; all of which comprise a well-integrated environmental services model. Each -Aboriginal partner, whether that be in the form of a formalized agreement or other, provides the local knowledge, resources, cultural and environmental awareness, and various levels of expertise either directly through the community or through Aboriginal owned businesses.

As these relationships and business ventures develop and mature each partner helps develop the capacity of the other, and thereby developing an integrated environmental services model specific to each Nation or community. For example, Quantum Murray is currently working with the Cheam First Nation to develop a First Nation Emergency Response Community Preparedness Plan. Given the various modes of transport and goods that pass through the Nation, aside from the potential for natural events such as flooding, it is critical that the community



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be equipped to adequately respond and ensure the safety of its members in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. In working through this exercise the Cheam First Nation and Quantum Murray develop a relationship and framework that may lead to other opportunities within their traditional territory and along one or more of the environmental services lines. In so doing the Nation builds the capacity of individual members who one day may be engaged in an emergency response call, and the next working on a remediation project. It is capacity building through transferable skills development and a comprehensive and wide reaching business model that provides for enhanced opportunities for employment and revenue generation. At the same time Quantum Murray expands its workforce with local, knowledgeable members, access to resources and services, and at times may be provided access to opportunities that may not have otherwise been available. When designed and managed collaboratively it is a win-win situation for all involved.

An essential component to the success of these initiatives and their longevity lies within relevant and ongoing training that can range from project specific skill development through ongoing coaching and mentoring. A recent example is the Specialized Independent Competencies (SIC), a training program delivered in partnership with, and funded through the Niagara Peninsula Aboriginal Area Management Board (NPAAMB). The 6 week intensive program was aimed at connecting urban Aboriginal youth with opportunities in the construction and environmental industries. Now in its' third year the program has an 85% graduation rate, many of whom have achieved employment either with Quantum Murray or within industry.

The design and delivery of these training programs are based upon the broader initiatives and goals of a given project, organization or Aboriginal community. In the case of the SIC program it was that of building capacity of the youth including a transferable set of skills crossing

numerous industry lines, in others, such as the recent demolition of the St Michael's Residential School Demolition, it was to provide short term employment and skills development for members of the Namgis First Nation in Alert Bay, BC.

In sum, the success of building environmental services capacity within an Aboriginal community is a function of strong and supportive leadership, sound partners, a well-integrated business model, an effective management and operations team, timely and relevant training, meaningful and collaborative relationships, effective communication at all levels, and a willingness and dedication to continuous improvement.