

# NWMO Aboriginal Policy



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**nwmo**

NUCLEAR WASTE  
MANAGEMENT  
ORGANIZATION

SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION  
DES DÉCHETS  
NUCLÉAIRES

# NWMO Aboriginal Policy

## Background

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) was established in 2002 in accordance with federal legislation, the *Nuclear Fuel Waste Act*, to study, recommend and implement an approach for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel in Canada. Used nuclear fuel is presently safely stored on an interim basis at licensed facilities at nuclear reactor sites. In 2005, the NWMO recommended that Canada proceed in a deliberate and collaborative way to contain and isolate the used fuel in a manner that safeguards people and respects the environment, now and in the future. In 2007, the Government of Canada selected the NWMO recommendation, Adaptive Phased Management, as Canada's approach for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel. The NWMO is now implementing this approach.

Adaptive Phased Management has as its technical endpoint the containment and isolation of used nuclear fuel in a deep geological repository constructed in a suitable rock formation with ongoing monitoring and potential for retrievability over an extended period of time.

It is an important component of the NWMO's work to understand the nature of any impacts on Aboriginal rights, treaties and land claims resulting from the implementation of Adaptive Phased Management and how Aboriginal peoples should be accommodated as a result of any impacts. The NWMO needs to ensure effective consultation with Aboriginal peoples and that all those affected have the opportunity for meaningful involvement.

Aboriginal and western worldviews and knowledge systems are each unique. However, the interweaving of these two worldviews in the implementation of Adaptive Phased Management can bring opportunities to strengthen this work as we learn from one another.

The development of this Policy has benefited from advice from the NWMO Elders Forum, the NWMO Aboriginal Working Group Niigani, and through our relationships with Aboriginal organizations at the national, provincial and regional levels.

## Principles

The development of this Policy is guided by the following principles:

- » Good decision-making among Aboriginal peoples regarding the NWMO's work must be built on a foundation of knowledge to ensure that informed choices can be made by Aboriginal communities.
- » The NWMO recognizes and honours that Aboriginal peoples have a special relationship with the natural environment and have unique stewardship responsibilities that are part of this relationship.
- » Consideration for the safety and security of future generations is integral to the Aboriginal worldview and fundamental to decision-making processes of Aboriginal peoples.
- » Open and honest relationships are built on a foundation of trust and sharing of knowledge and information.
- » The NWMO acknowledges that Aboriginal peoples are holders of Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge and recognizes the value that Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge can bring to decision-making processes.

# Policy

The NWMO recognizes and respects that Aboriginal peoples believe that all life is sustained by Mother Earth, and that in carrying out our work, we all have a stewardship responsibility to protect and preserve the earth for this and future generations guided by the seven teachings.

The NWMO acknowledges, respects and honours that Aboriginal peoples — Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada — have unique status and rights as recognized and affirmed in s.35 of the *Constitution Act (1982)*. The NWMO is committed to respecting the Aboriginal rights and treaties of Aboriginal peoples. The NWMO also recognizes that there may be unresolved claims between Aboriginal communities and the Crown to be taken into account in relation to a proposed site.

The NWMO will build relationships with Aboriginal communities, groups and peoples on a foundation of respect for languages and customs, cultural protocols, and political, social, economic and cultural institutions. The NWMO recognizes and will honour the diversity of spiritual beliefs and practices of people within and among Aboriginal communities.

The NWMO will pursue agreements with affected Aboriginal communities which are to the mutual benefit of all parties, including the recognition for potential provision of economic benefits; provide the opportunity for employment, education and capacity building; and ensure that communities are involved in decisions affecting them.

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge can bring value to the decision-making process, and the NWMO will strive to interweave this knowledge with our work as appropriate. The NWMO will ensure that intellectual property is protected as agreed with those that are owners of the intellectual property.

The NWMO will work with Aboriginal communities in implementing our mandate under the *Nuclear Fuel Waste Act*. The NWMO will work with the Crown regarding the Crown's duty to consult and accommodate as guided by decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada. All our work will be guided by our commitment to collaborative planning and decision-making.

## Implementation

- » The NWMO will strive to provide the needed resources and expertise to support capacity building and involvement in the siting process.
- » The NWMO will strive to ensure that members of the community, including Elders, youth and women, have been provided an effective opportunity to participate.
- » The NWMO will ensure that agreements set out clear and understandable terms for the roles of all parties.
- » Timelines will be developed in a reasonable manner to allow affected Aboriginal people to review terms and assess them against their own needs, community vision and aspirations.
- » The NWMO recognizes that Aboriginal peoples have existing governments that work in partnership with other forms of government and will work in a cooperative and respectful manner with these governments.
- » Elders will continue to be an integral source of advice to the NWMO throughout implementation of Adaptive Phased Management.
- » The NWMO will conduct ongoing cultural education programs and opportunities for NWMO staff and decision makers in order to facilitate communication across western science and Traditional Knowledge.

**Nuclear Waste  
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