



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

Reconciliation Policy

OCTOBER 2019



Introduction

The Reconciliation Policy is designed to provide a framework to support a body of work that has been underway since the Nuclear Waste Management Organization's (NWMO) inception in 2002. The NWMO's Reconciliation Policy will replace and build on the NWMO's Aboriginal Policy.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report in December 2015, which included 94 calls to action. Call to action # 92 calls 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.

The Council of Elders and Youth have had made significant contributions to the development of NWMO policies. The Council recognizes that the NWMO has taken a leadership role in the private sector to establish progressive policies of importance to First Nation and Métis peoples. The NWMO's commitment to Reconciliation presents the opportunity to harmonize the key elements of many of our policies into a holistic policy framework as guided by the Council of Elders and Youth.

On July 18, 2018, the NWMO made a commitment to contribute towards Reconciliation by acknowledging historical wrongs in Canada's past and the need to create a better future by addressing the challenges of today.

This acknowledgment forms part of the NWMO's Reconciliation Statement, which was finalized through an Indigenous ceremony. Members of the Council of Elders and Youth, and NWMO Board of Directors and senior leadership took part in the ceremony, which included a traditional gift exchange.

The NWMO's Reconciliation Statement reads as follows:

In the context of Reconciliation, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) recognizes historical wrongs in Canada's past and the need to create a better future by addressing the challenges of today. The NWMO Council of Elders and Youth speaks of this journey as a new era for humanity – a time of Reconciliation with First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples.

The NWMO is committed to contribute to Reconciliation in all its work by co-creating a shared future built on rights, equity and well-being. In addition, the NWMO will establish a Reconciliation Policy with an implementation strategy that will be measured annually and publicly reported to contribute to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

Purpose

Education and creating a strong foundation of recognition and respect has been the key to the NWMO's journey in Reconciliation. The actions that follow over the next few years will be vital for the NWMO to demonstrate the truth behind our commitment to Reconciliation. Reconciliation as defined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships. This policy sets out how the NWMO will contribute to Reconciliation in all our work. The NWMO will build on our current commitments to work in partnership with First Nation, Métis and municipal communities to develop and implement, collaboratively with communities, a management approach for the long-term care of Canada's used nuclear fuel that is socially acceptable, technically sound, environmentally responsible, and economically feasible.

Scope

This policy applies to all NWMO activities.

Truth (background)

The first step in working towards Reconciliation is understanding the truth and history of First Nation and Métis peoples and their relationship with Canada.

The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reads:

"Canada's residential school system for Aboriginal children was an education system in name only for much of its existence. These residential schools were created for the purpose of separating Aboriginal children from their families, in order to minimize and weaken family ties and cultural linkages, and to indoctrinate children into a new culture—the culture of the legally dominant Euro-Christian Canadian society, led by Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. The schools were in existence for well over 100 years, and many successive generations of children from the same communities and families endured the experience of them. That experience was hidden for most of Canada's history, until Survivors of the system were finally able to find the strength, courage, and support to bring their experiences to light in several thousand court cases that ultimately led to the largest class-action lawsuit in Canada's history."

Through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other initiatives, residential schools are becoming a more widely known fact by many Canadians. The realities of those tragedies and trauma continue to affect generations. Now is the time to move from this darkness into light, where all Canadians find a way to reconcile the truth, never forget the past and create a better future with relationships based on respect.

Canadians can create a new legacy for children of all nations and cultures by joining hands in an open process of dialogue and truth-telling, of Reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission estimates that 80,000 survivors of residential schools live in all regions of Canada today. Canadians need to hear their stories and find ways to ensure our collective future rests on a solid foundation of respect, openness and trust. For the sake of our children and future generations, we can build a stronger Canada.¹

¹ <http://reconciliationcanada.ca/about/history-and-background/background>

Principles

The NWMO will be guided by the following principles in all our work:

- » The NWMO recognizes, honours and supports the belief that Indigenous peoples have a special relationship with the natural environment and have unique stewardship responsibilities that are part of this relationship and are guided by the seven teachings whose principles are universal, including the sacred laws and codes of Indigenous peoples.
- » The NWMO recognizes that protection of Mother Earth for future generations is, in itself, a foundational commitment to be a responsibility of all people.
- » The NWMO supports the Council of Elders and Youth's Declaration of the Keepers of the Land, and the Indigenous Knowledge Policy.
- » The NWMO acknowledges that Indigenous peoples are holders of Indigenous Knowledge, and recognizes that Indigenous Knowledge is essential and integral to decision-making processes.
- » The NWMO will foster respectful relationships among community partners, and recognizes that it takes time to develop knowledge, to experience deep understandings, and to establish trust and respect.
- » The NWMO recognizes that the safety and security of future generations is integral to the Indigenous world view and fundamental to decision-making processes of Indigenous peoples, and is the responsibility of all people to future generations.
- » The NWMO acknowledges that good decision-making among communities regarding the NWMO's work must be built on a foundation of knowledge to ensure that informed choices can be made by communities in the spirit of Reconciliation and partnership together with the NWMO.
- » The NWMO understands that Indigenous Knowledge, together with western science, is part of good decision-making when built on a foundation of trust and sharing of information in a respectful manner.

Policy

The NWMO commits that Indigenous Knowledge will inform all work and activities.

The NWMO acknowledges, respects and honours that First Nation 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 First Nation and Métis peoples. The NWMO also recognizes that there may be unresolved claims between First Nation and Métis communities and the Crown to be considered in relation to a proposed site.

The NWMO will build relationships with First Nation and Métis communities and municipalities, groups and peoples on a foundation of respect for languages and customs, cultural protocols, and political, social, economic, and cultural institutions.

The NWMO commits to meaningful engagement, including consultation as required, building respectful relationships, and seeking the free, prior, and informed consent of impacted Indigenous peoples before proceeding with development of a deep geological repository.

The NWMO will provide impacted First Nation and Métis peoples equitable access to jobs, business opportunities, training, and education opportunities in our work, and ensure their communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from the development of a deep geological repository.

The NWMO commits to providing education for management and staff on the history of Indigenous peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations, which will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism as stated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission call to action # 92.

The NWMO will work with impacted Indigenous communities in implementing our mandate under the *Nuclear Fuel Waste Act (NFWA)* and in the selection of a site as required by Adaptive Phased Management, which was selected as Canada's plan for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel by the Government of Canada in 2007. The selection of a site must be informed by the best available knowledge, including science, social science, Indigenous Knowledge, and ethics.

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 in fulfilling the NWMO's obligations under the *NFWA*. All our work with respect to the duty to consult will be guided by Reconciliation.

The NWMO will work with First Nation and Métis communities and municipalities that wish to share their knowledge and advice in the implementation of the site selection process, and in the design, construction, operation, and monitoring of the deep geological repository.

The NWMO commits to respecting and following local First Nation and Métis protocols related to burial sites found on work sites.

The NWMO will develop an annual Reconciliation implementation plan that will be measured and publicly reported.

The NWMO will communicate clearly with new potential employees about who we are as an organization with regards to our commitment to interweaving Indigenous Knowledge, building partnerships with Indigenous communities and our commitment to Reconciliation.

**For more information,
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