nwmo news

Nuclear Waste Management Organization

Volume 18, Issue 2
2020

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Canada's plan continues to advance in an evolving environment

The COVID-19 global pandemic has affected how and where we work. The NWMO has been flexible and able to adapt to evolving circumstances. We are still advancing Canada's plan for used nuclear fuel, while also keeping people and the environment safe. Find out how specialists across the organization have maintained momentum.

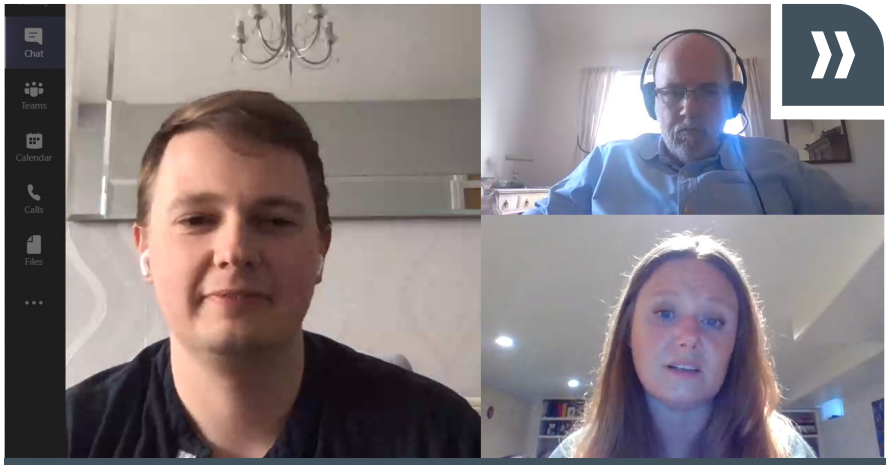
Geosicence

Although field work paused during the pandemic, the geoscience team continued to interpret and integrate data from samples of rock core collected through boreholes in the Ignace-Wabigoon area. This analysis is an important part of how we continue to assess if the site will be a safe location for a deep geological repository for used nuclear fuel.

"The data that we see continues to indicate that the rock is relatively homogeneous and stable," said Andy Parmenter, Section Manager, Geoscientific Integration and Synthesis at the NWMO.



Andy Parmenter has been analyzing geoscience data at home during the pandemic.



Thomas Reilly, Concepts Selection Manager at RWM; Mark Gough, Environmental Assessments Manager at RWM; and Melissa Mayhew, Senior Environmental Scientist at the NWMO participated in a virtual learning exchange.

National and international collaboration

The NWMO has continued national and international collaboration through virtual connection. For example:

In May, the NWMO held a knowledge exchange meeting with Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) in the United Kingdom to discuss the site selection process and scientific data management.

In June, the NWMO hosted our annual Geoscience seminar virtually to bring together over 130 colleagues, including university researchers from across Canada and the globe. Several researchers presented highlights from their research or introduced new projects.

National and international collaboration helps to ensure we are sharing and benefitting from the best science in the long-term management of used nuclear fuel.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Operating through changing circumstances

During these last few months, the world as we know it has changed. The COVID-19 global pandemic has made health and safety top-of mind, and altered the way we live and work. We have also seen protests around the world calling for long-overdue changes to address social injustices. These events require both physical and cultural changes.

Given these greater demands, we have focused more than ever on building resilience and well-being. For example, we are actively supporting our employees from both a work and mental health perspective as we navigate the effect circumstances have had on all of us.

We also have a role to play in providing vital support to siting area communities to help with local responses to the pandemic. As of the end of June, we have provided pandemic-related support totalling more than $500,000.

These steps have had a positive effect. Our staff has continued to advance Canada's plan through the pandemic. For example, when we paused fieldwork, our geoscience team brought forward the data integration and modelling work to advance understanding of the geology, hydrogeology and geochemistry in Ignace, one of our potential siting areas.

We are heartened by how siting area communities have united. The mayors of Ignace and South Bruce and Diane Longboat, a member of our Council of Elders and Youth, have shared in this newsletter how local communities have come together during the pandemic.

However, the protests remind us that we still have work to do in building an equitable society. As the NWMO continues on our journey of Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, we remain committed to equality and diversity broadly, standing together against social injustices.

Now is a time for individuals and communities to create positive change. We won't be going back to business as usual. Together, we will learn how to navigate a new reality.



Laurie Swami
President and CEO

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WHAT WE DO

The NWMO is responsible for implementing Canada's plan for the safe, long-term management of used nuclear fuel.

The plan, known as Adaptive Phased Management (APM), emerged through dialogue and was selected by the Government of Canada in 2007.

APM involves constructing a deep geological repository in which to contain and isolate the used fuel. The project will only proceed with municipalities, First Nation and Métis communities, and surrounding communities, working in partnership to implement it.

We are currently working in communities in two potential siting areas, the Ignace area in northern Ontario and South Bruce in southern Ontario, and expect to identify a preferred site by 2023.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE ENGAGEMENT CORPORATE

Viewpoint

Jennifer Huinink-Tremblay
Director, Learning and Development



THE IMPORTANCE OF RESILIENCE

With project timelines as long as hundreds of thousands of years, it's no surprise that the NWMO spends a lot of time considering the importance of resilience.

Resilience has taken on a new level of importance as the pandemic has driven great change as a global community. We are experiencing uncertainty in every aspect of our lives. Work and home life is now intertwined for many of us. We may be finding it challenging to maintain well-being. Resilience will help us come through the global pandemic, and adjust to a changing reality as lockdowns are gradually lifted.

As the NWMO prepares for important steps before us – making our way through site selection, the regulatory processes and moving toward construction and operation of a deep geological repository for used nuclear fuel – we are supporting our team with additional communication channels and learning new ways to adapt. After all, our project is adaptive by nature.

During the pandemic, we've enhanced support to help employees build their resilience even more. Increased work schedule flexibility helps employees manage work while balancing other demands. We are also offering mental health workshops to staff from Ontario Shores, sharing circles, and mindfulness sessions, to name a few.

Similarly the communities engaged in the siting process have demonstrated great resilience, putting in place and adapting local programs to support their residents and ensure their well-being.

People bring "all of themselves" to work and they can only stay focused and contribute their fullest if they are feeling well.

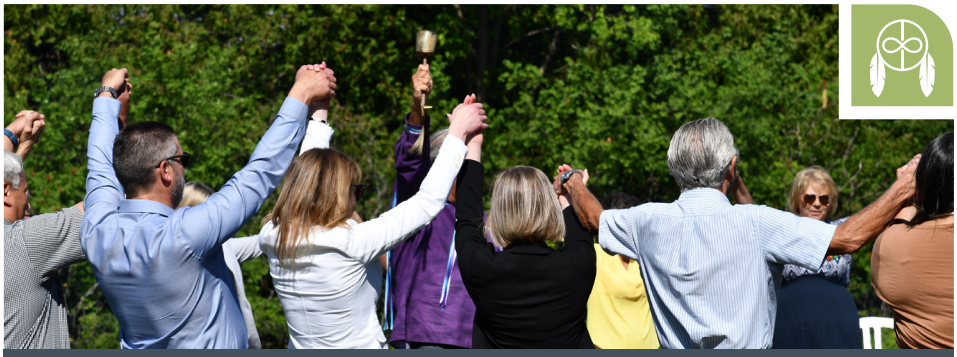
Both employees and people we work with in communities are essential to implementing Canada's plan. As we build resilience, together we will be able to achieve our goals.

The NWMO receives international recognition for communicating about our Reconciliation journey

The NWMO has achieved a new milestone in our collective journey toward Reconciliation – in June, we were recognized by the International Association of Business Communicators' (IABC) 2020 Gold Quill Awards for our work on this important Canadian subject. The Gold Quill Awards recognize excellence in strategic communication worldwide. The organization also gained recognition from the IABC Toronto Chapter's 2020 OVATION Awards.

"We recognize the importance of receiving this premier award from IABC – but accepting this international recognition does not mean an end to our work," said Bob Watts, Vice-President Indigenous Relations. "If anything, it reinforces the approach our organization has taken on Reconciliation and renews our commitment to co-creating a better future, built on rights, equity and well-being for everyone."

For its awards submission, the NWMO highlighted the collaborative approach between its Indigenous Relations and Stakeholder Relations teams to launch two organizational milestones – our Reconciliation Statement in July 2018 and subsequent Reconciliation Policy in October 2019, which commits to an implementation strategy that will be measured annually and publicly reported.



The NWMO has been recognized with an international award for its work in communicating about its collective journey toward Reconciliation.

The NWMO also featured our Voices of Reconciliation video series, which includes interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals creating an ongoing conversation highlighting the importance of reconciliation and the NWMO's advocacy for co-creating a better future.

"As the NWMO assesses its Reconciliation strategy for 2020 and beyond, we will continue to communicate and emphasize that through Reconciliation we can co-create a better future by addressing the challenges of today," said Mr. Watts.

Canada's plan continues to advance in an evolving environment

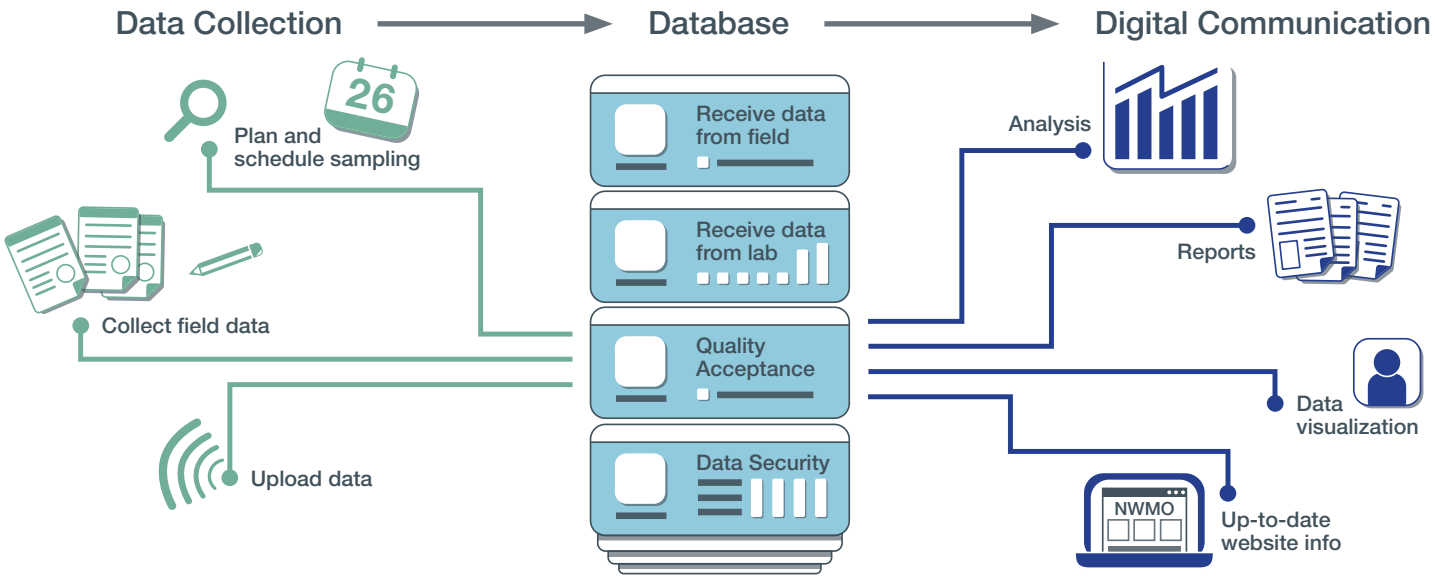
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Environment

Together with potential host communities, the NWMO is co-designing an environmental baseline program to understand existing conditions, pressures and changes to the environment. In the Ignace area, the NWMO shared a final draft of the program's design to ensure community input has been incorporated. In South Bruce, we will seek public feedback on how the project will meet the NWMO and communities' interests and exploring what a trustworthy environmental program will look like.

To support the environmental monitoring program, the NWMO is purchasing and implementing a meteorological station and an environmental database. The meteorological station will be installed in the Revell-Batholith rock formation near Ignace to gather weather patterns and climate data to help us understand the local environment and where, what and how to monitor it.

The environmental database will allow us to share data with the public. "In response to what we heard from the communities, the environmental database will allow us to be transparent and share environmental data," explained Joanne Jacyk, Section Manager, Environmental Assessment.



Data collected from the environmental monitoring program will be added to the environmental database. The database will allow the NWMO to be transparent and share environmental data with the public through multiple channels.

Engagement

The NWMO continues to engage with communities on the progress of Canada's plan through online communication. NWMO staff have participated in virtual Community Liaison Committee (CLC) meetings and Council meetings in our potential host sites. We provided updates on the NWMO's environmental baseline program at both potential sites as well as land access in South Bruce.

In June, the NWMO hosted a virtual information session for residents of South Bruce. It was the first of a series of online sessions for people in the community to learn more, and for the NWMO to address residents' questions about Canada's plan for used nuclear fuel.

Engineering

Virtual collaboration has allowed the NWMO to continue maintenance and upgrades on equipment used to produce used fuel containers. In April, the NWMO engineering team participated in remote testing to verify upgrades on an electroplating tank system used to apply copper coating to prototype used fuel containers. This testing was performed in two stages:

1. Factory acceptance - performed at the fabricator's (Empire Buff) facility in Quebec.
2. Commissioning - performed at our copper coating vendor's (Integran Technologies) facility in Mississauga, Ontario.

In June, we re-opened our Oakville facility, which is home to our design, optimization, and proof-testing program. The facility's large space has equipment that can be remotely or individually operated, which means we can maintain physical distancing.

Indigenous Relations

Last year, the NWMO launched a Reconciliation Policy and committed to measuring our progress annually. We are developing a baseline assessment to allow us to effectively measure our contributions to Reconciliation. We have also begun implementing an assessment tool to look at corporate policies and procedures through the lens of Reconciliation.

"This work will help identify gaps and shape how we move forward as an organization," explained Jessica Perritt, Section Manager, Indigenous Knowledge and Reconciliation.

The Indigenous Relations team has continued to offer cultural awareness training to NWMO employees (and their families). In April, more than 55 employees attended each of the training sessions, led by Indigenous trainer Lyndon Linklater.



Trainer Lyndon Linklater (top – second box from right) tells a story to engage families during a virtual cultural awareness lunch and learn.

Transportation

The technical transportation team has focused on design, logistics and cost estimates of different transportation systems in collaboration (virtually) during the pandemic. "We can do this work because we use desktop studies to explore these areas," explained Ginni Cheema, Manager, Used Fuel Transportation. "We've been able to keep pace with key milestones."

Numerous factors are considered when designing a transportation system. Some include:



Potential mode of transport (road or rail)

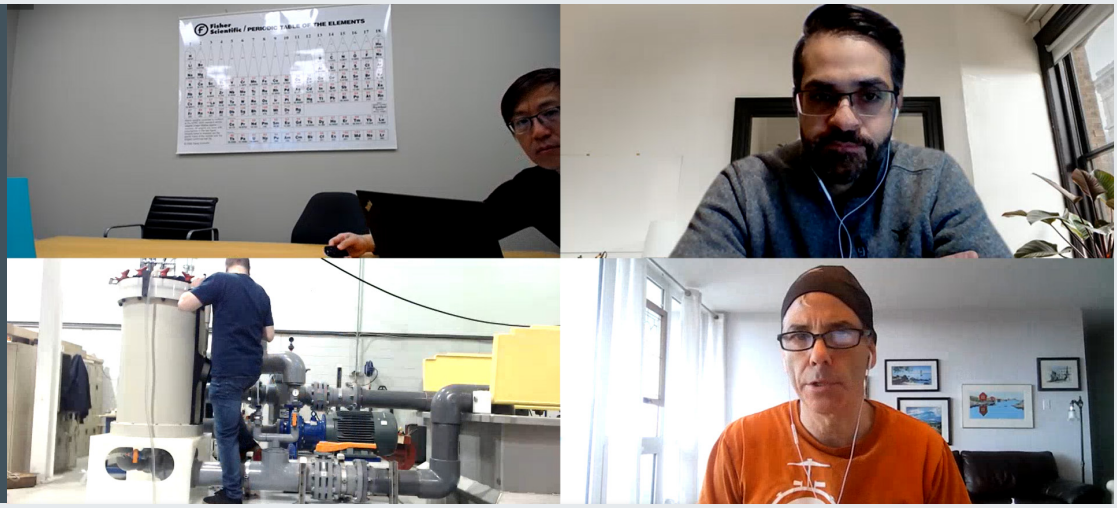
Type of transportation package used

Type of vehicle used

Possible routes

Repository facility infrastructure and equipment

During a Factory Acceptance Test, Patrick La Ricca, Project Engineer, Empire Buff, Ltée (bottom left) takes a picture of a pressure gauge on his phone, which he then shared with Peter Lin, Integran Technologies and Jason Giallonardo (top right) and Dave Doyle (bottom right), NWMO.



South Bruce residents support each other through the pandemic

When COVID-19 started, the municipality of South Bruce quickly put in place measures for the safety of the community. We closed offices, asked people to work from home (with the exception of essential services), and practiced social distancing. It's been effective, yet we still remain vigilant.

Social distancing has been difficult for everyone. Not being able to visit friends and family in person is challenging. It's especially difficult to support people who have experienced tragic situations or lost a loved one.

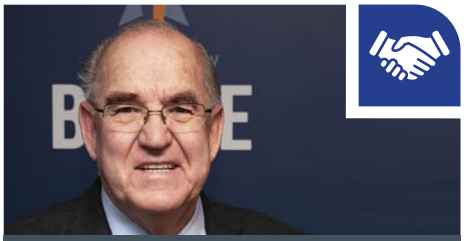
However, in this challenging time, our close-knit small community has committed to help each other manage through the situation. During the past few months, residents have created a Facebook group called "Teeswater Together." The group enables residents to come together virtually and exchange positive messages and ideas of activities to do with children while practicing social distancing – such as tractor hunts and crafts.

Service groups are reaching out when they can to offer a helping hand to people in need and neighbours are helping neighbours with grocery shopping. It's a good feeling to know that we live in such a caring community.

Community members have also supported each other through meaningful gestures, such as creating sidewalk art, painting rocks and pictures with kind messages to leave around town, and expressing appreciation to front-line workers. It's pretty amazing to see how these small acts can brighten someone's day.

The NWMO has graciously provided our community with funding to help with COVID-19 relief efforts. Some of these funds have been directed to our two local food banks, as an increase in the need for this service has risen substantially during this time.

In absence of in-person engagement, local NWMO staff remain available to connect via phone and email with our residents who have questions about the project. NWMO newsletters also keep us up-to-date on how Canada's plan is advancing.



Robert Buckle,
Mayor, South Bruce

However, we appreciate that the NWMO has respected our municipality's obligations for community safety during this worldwide pandemic. As we move to a new normal and as people adjust, we will be able to find new ways to explore the project with the NWMO and the community.

The Ignace family comes together during the pandemic



Penny Lucas,
Mayor, Ignace

In some ways, Ignace has experienced the global pandemic in ways similar to other communities. We are sheltering at home, physical distancing and working remotely (sometimes with children at home). However, our small community in Northwestern Ontario is also experiencing some unique circumstances.

During the pandemic, Ignace had a change of mayors. I took office on May 4 and worked to establish a sense of calm right away. Communication is key to leadership, so I've been out in the community, taking questions from citizens and providing answers. I approach challenges like "eating an elephant" – one bite a time.

Also, our location means our internet connection is sometimes inconsistent or slow. This can be frustrating when people are depending on virtual connection. Nevertheless, we are all connecting more with family and friends. We are also supporting our local businesses by ordering online or by phone for delivery.

I can't say enough good things about the citizens of Ignace. Our small community is like a family. People are eager to help one another. For example, some citizens are leaving surprise packages for seniors that contain books, puzzles, and other engaging items. We are also continuing programs that help vulnerable residents. For instance, our "Blessings in a Backpack" program, normally operated through schools, provides food for children who would otherwise come to school hungry. Food is now being delivered to children at home through the program. Food banks are also delivering food boxes to those in need, during a time when usage has doubled.

The NWMO has been very helpful at this time, too. Not only is it providing funding for emergency services, NWMO staff are out in the community helping with local initiatives and calling up individuals and groups to ask what they can do to help.

The NWMO has been part of this community for a long time now – over ten years – and they, during transitional and challenging times, and I, have no reason to believe that will change any time soon. They are part of our family now too.

Moving through a time of great illness



Diane Longboat, Member of the Mohawk Turtle Clan from Six Nations in the Grand River Territory and Elder on the Council of Elders and Youth for the NWMO.

Seers (spiritual visionaries) in our community of Six Nations Grand River Territory received messages as late as 2012 that a lung disease would ravage human beings and we would have to strengthen our immune systems with our medicines to move through a time of great illness.

The pandemic, which emerged in China in December 2019, took hold in Canada by March 2020. Six Nations Grand River Territory mobilized to respond. For the first time, one of our Faith Keepers delivered a message through YouTube to uplift our spirits and encourage us to share, be kind, and be mindful of thoughts reflective of a "Good Mind."

Families began to gather spring medicines and young people began to do the same for Elders. Our honoured medicine women prepared the medicines and instructed families on their use.

As messages of sanitation and social distancing became louder from public health authorities, messages in the Six Nations' community became "Protect our Elders." We prioritized deliveries of traditional medicines to Elders along with groceries and pharmacy needs.

Although a difficult time, the virus presented an opportunity for more family connection and for strengthening culture, faith and respect for traditional knowledge of medicines.

Looking more broadly, First Nations across Canada – including in potential siting areas – have been diligent in meeting local needs. To help their communities stay safe, health centres have delivered cleaners, hand sanitizers and sanitizing wipes to households. Some communities have also purchased their own mobile testing vans, and sold masks at a low cost. Youth workers have organized activities through social media, a creative solution to connecting during this time.

Some First Nations have also put in place supports to help ensure residents have access to free or minimal cost food (including weekly food baskets, fresh fish, dry foods and frozen meat) through venues such as fishermen's depots and community centres.

Political leadership across territories and homelands meet virtually to discuss an Indigenous pandemic command site, and mutual support.

At the NWMO, the Council of Elders and Youth not only continue work on Reconciliation, but also check in on each other's well-being. The Council has become a family – and on a larger scale, so have our neighbours.

Supporting communities through the pandemic

The NWMO is committed to supporting the health, safety and well-being of the communities where we are active. Through to the end of June we have provided pandemic-related support totalling more than $500,000.

$10,000
KENORA DISTRICT MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

$50,000
NORTHWESTERN HEALTH UNIT
SERVING NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

$2,500
REGIONAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION ASSOCIATION

&

$15,000
roots to harvest
THUNDER BAY

$25,000
19 MUNICIPAL AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE SITING PROCESS

$3,500
WELLNESS & EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR YOUTH ONLINE IN WALKERTON

50,000 BOTTLES OF HAND SANITIZER
IN BRUCE, GREY & HURON COUNTIES THROUGH BRUCE POWER INITIATIVE

The NWMO recognizes National Indigenous Peoples History Month and Day



Throughout National Indigenous Peoples History month, we recognized and honoured the important contributions Indigenous peoples have made to Canada.

During the month of June, the NWMO recognized National Indigenous Peoples History Month and National Indigenous Peoples History Day (June 21).

"This is an opportunity for Canadians to learn about the cultural, technical and social contributions that Indigenous peoples have made to our country. It is also a chance to celebrate the resiliency of Indigenous peoples," said Bob Watts, Vice-President, Indigenous Relations at the NWMO.

The NWMO is on a Reconciliation journey and has taken steps through our Reconciliation Statement and Policy. Also through our work with the Council of Elders and Youth, we're learning from current and future Indigenous leaders, and asking them to help us apply that learning to guide our work as we move forward.

"For our organization, providing space to honour this day and month is part of manifesting our commitment to Reconciliation. We have a special role to play in setting a new standard for corporate Canada on how to co-create a shared future with Indigenous peoples," said Mr. Watts.

Throughout the month, the NWMO held virtual activities and shared information to learn about and celebrate Indigenous Knowledge and history.

As part of our commitment to Reconciliation, the NWMO sponsors the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund and Right to Play – Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY) Program in Ontario. During the month, both of these organizations hosted virtual lunch and learn sessions for NWMO staff and families about the work their organizations are doing.

The NWMO released a video called Learning from Spirit and Ceremony, which explains why and how we are working to integrate ceremony and sacred items into our work in a meaningful way. We also ran a social media campaign that highlights the work of three former members of the Council of Elders and Youth, and profiles the purpose and work of the Council of Elders and Youth. Since its inception, the Council has created a strong foundation and their advice has helped shape the principles of the NWMO.

"We still have a long way to go in terms of creating a shared future. However, through sharing with each other, we have an opportunity to create more [a better life] for our children and grandchildren," said Mr. Watts.

> *"This is an opportunity for Canadians to learn about the cultural, technical and social contributions that Indigenous Peoples have made to our country. It is also a chance to celebrate the resiliency of Indigenous Peoples."*
>
> **Bob Watts,**
> **NWMO Vice-President,**
> **Indigenous Relations**

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