

# Niigani

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## Northern Aboriginal Youth In Saskatchewan Meet at South Bay

Attending a camp in the summer has a long history in the Aboriginal community. It is part of our tradition and culture. After a long winter, where families lived in smaller groups hunting, fishing and trapping, the summer was a time to gather, to re-new acquaintances, and to participate in cultural and ceremonial activities. Many Aboriginal groups continue this tradition.

Each year in northern Saskatchewan, there are a number of Dene and Cree Cultural Camps. This year was the 17th annual camp held at the South Bay Veteran's Park near Ile-a-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan. South Bay is unique because the focus of the camp is youth 10 to 16 years old from all over Saskatchewan. At the camp, the youth attended presentations by Elders, workshops on a variety of topics, and had the opportunity to attend a number of athletic, social and educational events. The theme of this years cultural camp was "Outdoor Youth Wellness".

The NWMO, as part of their engagement with Aboriginal youth, provided financial assistance to the camp and encouraged Saskatchewan Elders Forum and Niigani members to attend.

Again this year youth were introduced to the work of the NWMO. Jim Sinclair, a member of Niigani, was part of the opening ceremonies. His message was to encourage the youth to prepare to be leaders. "...start today to develop your leadership skills...be aware...culture and language will provide you with the grounding you need to lead...challenge yourself and others." Elders Forum and Niigani members from Saskatchewan attended the camp and were involved in a number of meetings with youth and leaders attending the camp. Jim Sinclair has attended the South Bay Youth Camp every year for over a decade.

"...It is an important event because youth from all over the north attend... if you spend time with them, you will find out very quickly what is happening in the north...As a member of Niigani, I use these camps as a way to find out what youth know about used nuclear fuel. I am able to share information about Niigani's work.

Sinclair said. "The Elders Forum is encouraging youth to get involved in the discussion on used nuclear fuel. Now we are in the siting process, their in-

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and culture...

volvement is critical. The youth are seen by all members of the Elder's Forum as the leaders of tomorrow and leaders need to know more about this topic. Without knowledge and leadership skills, there is a fear that the youth will not be able to represent the interests of the community in the future."

This is the reason Niigani members continue to encourage the NWMO to work with Aboriginal youth, to fund scholarship programs and to fund camps such as this. Leaders in northern Saskatchewan see the value of cultivating youth leadership and preparing youth in their communities to take an active role in articulating the needs and concerns of the north. This is why they are very active in promoting events like South Bay.

The event was held on July 4th to 8th, with over 100 youth attending.

### Special points of interest:

- Elders Forum Reports available on the NWMO Website
- Moving Forward Together: Overview of Canada's Plan for the Long-Term Management of Used Nuclear Fuel is available
- Niigani Research Projects: traditional knowledge, community involvement and youth understanding the long-term management of used nuclear fuel

## Message from Chairperson — Gordon Williams



Since early 2010 Niigani has been busy developing and planning three projects that we are conducting this year which are based on the advice that the Elders Forum has provided to the

NWMO over the past five years. These projects are on the topics of the interweaving of traditional knowledge and western knowledge; youth understanding of the long term management of used

nuclear fuel; and community involvement from the Elders Forum perspective. Niigani presented each of these projects to the members of the Elders Forum at our meeting in Winnipeg in July. Today, I would like to highlight the youth project. Over the past 5 years the Elders Forum has stressed the importance of youth understanding the long-term management of used nuclear fuel. In May, Elders Forum Youth came to Toronto to learn about nuclear waste management. NWMO staff and external presenters shared their knowledge and expertise on the science and engineering involved.

The youth were actively involved and following the seminar planned their own presentations which were given to the Elders Forum in July. It was heartening to see the vibrancy of our youth as they asked questions, discussed topics and sought clarity on each of the topics presented to them. As we move forward in our work with the NWMO, the Elders Forum will continue to look for opportunities to advise the NWMO on the processes for future training and development of youth in preparing for the deep geological repository as well as the many other areas of advice in which we are now involved.

## Introducing Michael McGuire



Michael McGuire is an Elder from MacDiarmid, Ontario. He is fluent in the Ojibway language and knows the history and culture of his people. "...There were 16 children in

our family. I started school at the Indian Day School, but was asked to leave because we were half-breeds. They told us we belonged in the public school. At noon we went to the public school and were asked to go to the Indian School because we were Indians. In one day, I was kicked out of two schools." I learned very early that there is politics in almost everything—we are half-breeds. I was raised a person without rights. The Federal government said we are Provincial responsibility and the Provincial Government said we are a Federal responsibility. Today, Métis are recognized in the Constitution, but it was not easy. I was at the Constitutional table when we negotiated the wording of Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution (1982). "All my life, we worked towards getting our rights recognized. My father was a commercial fisherman, but we all had to work to make a living. When I was young we attended school in the winter, but in the summer we lived in the bush. All summer we lived off the land, picking berries,

hunting and fishing so we had food for the winter. We sold the extra blue berries we picked so we were able to buy the flour, salt, tea, oatmeal, etc. for the winter. It was a hard life, but we were happy. We hunted and fished for food, but we had to do it without the game warden knowing. Our rights were not recognized so we organized our people so we could assert our rights. In 1969, we organized the Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association. We worked with our MP and applied for money for a housing project. We received \$200,000 on one condition, we drop the word Métis in the name of the project. We decided that Métis Rights were more important than a project. 1969 was also the first time I met Jim Sinclair. In the following year, we organized the Native Council of Canada. "Politically organizing our community helps with housing, employment, education, etc. but it is our spirituality that heals. In 1983, I was introduced as an Elder. I had to make a choice, either I would seek after 'gold and silver' or I could choose to be a helper or a healer. I chose to be a helper. Half-breeds are also medicine people. Métis in our area have a drum; we have been given our colours: purple (representing all living things and being); green (representing the earth); blue (representing water); and black, white, red and yellow (representing the peoples of the earth). We have our pipes and cere-

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monies. I have very little formal education, but I know what the Elders teach. I have been taught the prophecies and often ponder why others do not see what I see. The old people saw our times. They knew what would happen to us. They saw the good and the bad. Elders are straight forward when they speak although we do this in a respectful way. I use this approach when we advise the NWMO. We all want the same thing—to find a safe way and a safe place to store nuclear waste. There are some people who would like to stop the use of nuclear power, and there are some people that are for the expansion of nuclear power usage, but regardless of their position we have used nuclear fuel that needs to be dealt with. We cannot overlook the importance of spirituality in our decision-making. I know that to keep it safe we need to do the traditional ceremonies, follow the protocols so we can show our respect to our mother the earth. The Elders can teach us many things, but we need to listen and we need to take the time to understand. Elders do have traditional knowledge and can make a contribution to this project.

## Message from the President of NWMO — Ken Nash

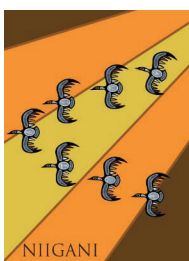


Over the past two years, the NWMO has worked collaboratively with interested organizations and individuals to design a fair and appropriate process for identifying an informed and willing community to host the deep geological repository for Canada's used nuclear fuel. We are now beginning to implement this community-driven process. In siting, the NWMO is providing an op-

portunity for interested individuals, organizations and communities to learn more about Canada's plan for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel, the activities of the NWMO, and the process it will use to select an informed and willing community to host this project. The sharing of knowledge, expertise and worldviews is something the NWMO will continue to learn from and be guided by throughout the siting process. The Elders Forum has worked diligently with the NWMO over the past 5 years to provide advice and understanding of the issues

and concerns that Aboriginal communities might have as we implement Adaptive Phased Management and has provided opportunities to deepen our understanding of Aboriginal governance and culture. We also appreciate all of the thoughtful advice and assistance provided to us through Aboriginal organizations in the regional dialogues on the site selection process held last year. Aboriginal people and communities continue to be a key part of our work as we implement the site selection process.

## Niigani Members Embark on Three Research Projects



Making an informed choice means that you have a clear understanding of the question and your options. Helping others sometimes means you need to be clear on issues and potential solutions. One of the roles of the Elders Forum and

Niigani is to advise the Nuclear Waste Management Organization and the other role is to advise the Aboriginal community so they can understand this complex issue. As Niigani works with both groups, it has become very clear that advising others sometimes requires a deeper un-

derstanding of the problem and potential solutions. It is also important that there is a clear understanding of the other person's or groups perspective. Often this is described as the others' world view. As the NWMO begins the process for identification of a site, Aboriginal communities interested in being a potential willing host community and Aboriginal communities neighbouring potentially interested host communities need to consider their involvement with the NWMO. Niigani members identified three areas needing more research so they can better advise the NWMO and the Aboriginal community so the community is "...informed and willing." The three projects include: a tradi-

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tional knowledge project that will examine successful ways to interweave traditional knowledge with western knowledge; a community project that will investigate how a community decision-making process can provide members free, prior and informed consent and how to involve more Aboriginal youth in understanding the site selection process and used nuclear fuel management.

## The 7th Elders Forum in Winnipeg, Manitoba

The 7th Elders Forum was held July 13—15, 2010 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The focus of the meetings was Canada's Plan for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel and the community-based process to select a site for a deep geological repository. Over the past few years the Elders Forum worked with the NWMO to identify how the NWMO could engage the Aboriginal community to identify a "fair and appropriate process for identifying an informed and willing

community to host the deep geological repository." Now the Elders Forum continues to assist as implementation begins. An important part of the implementation plan will be the Niigani Research Projects on Community Involvement; Traditional Knowledge; and Youth. During the three day meeting, there was an in-depth discussion on how a more detailed understanding of these three areas can assist the NWMO as potential Aboriginal communities considering hosting the deep geological re-

pository become involved, or as they may be involved as neighboring communities to a potential site. During the Elders Forum, members also had the opportunity to participate in a number of cultural activities hosted by Aboriginal people in the area. In this way, the Elders were able to show respect by following appropriate cultural protocols acknowledging and respecting the territorial First Nation and Metis peoples where the meeting was held.

### NWMO Elders Forum

How to have your voice heard.

Send an email:

Website [www.nwmo.ca](http://www.nwmo.ca)

Webmaster: [info@nwmo.ca](mailto:info@nwmo.ca)

Call us Toll Free 1.866.249.6966  
(within Canada) or send a letter or fax

Tel 416.934.9814

Fax 416.934.9526

### Nuclear Waste Management Organization

22 St. Clair Avenue East, Sixth Floor  
Toronto Ontario Canada M4T 2S3

[www.nwmo.ca](http://www.nwmo.ca)

**For a more detailed description of the guiding principles and steps in the process see *Moving Forward Together: Process for Selecting a Site for Canada's Deep Geological Repository for Used Nuclear Fuel*, available on the NWMO website or by request to the above address.**

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### NWMO Moves From Design of a process to identify an informed and willing community to implementation of the site selection process for a Deep Geological Repository

In May of 2010, the NWMO moved from the collaborative design of a community based process to implementing the process to select an "...informed and willing community to host the deep geological repository for Canada's used nuclear fuel." The "Moving Forward Together: Overview of Canada's Plan for the Long Term Management of Used Nuclear Fuel" document provides a brief description of the process. The following are a number of excerpts from NWMO's plan to highlight the process and how individuals and communities can learn more.

The Plan identifies the process that will be used to identify an informed and willing host community "...for the construction of a deep geological repository to safely and securely contain and isolate Canada's used nuclear fuel." The first step in the process is an "...Invitation to Learn More...interested individuals, organizations and communities will be provided the opportunity to learn more about Canada's plan for the long term management of used nuclear fuel, the activities of the NWMO, and the process it will use to select an informed and willing community to host this project. Communities that express interest in learning more are not obliged to participate in the site selection process."

#### How much land is required?

The project requires a dedicated surface area of about 100 hectares (250 acres) for the surface buildings and associated facilities. As well, there may be a need to limit activities in the immediate area surrounding the surface facilities in order to meet regulatory or other requirements.

The underground repository requires a subsurface area in suitable host rock of approximately 2.5 kilometers by 1.5 kilometers (375 hectares/930 acres) at the depth of about 500 meters. The NWMO would need to have rights to the land above the underground repository, although alternative uses would be considered, with the community, for portions of this land.

#### Selecting a Site will be guided by the following principles:

##### Focus on Safety

- Safety, security, and protection of people and the environment are first and foremost
- All regulatory requirements will be met and, if possible, exceeded.
- The best available knowledge will inform the process

##### Select an informed and willing host community

- The host community must be informed and willing to accept the project.
- Communities will only be considered for this project if they willingly enter the process.
- Communities that decide to participate have the right to end their involvement at any point up to and until a final agreement is signed.

##### Foster the long-term well-being of the host community.

- The host community has a right to benefit from the project

##### Involve those who are potentially affected.

- The questions and concerns of surrounding communities and those on the transportation route must be addressed.
- The NWMO will involve all potentially affected provincial governments.

##### Respect Aboriginal rights, treaties and land claims.

- The siting process will respect Aboriginal rights and treaties and will take into account unresolved claims between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown.

To Learn More about this important initiative, please contact:

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