



NUCLEAR WASTE  
MANAGEMENT  
ORGANIZATION

SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION  
DES DÉCHETS  
NUCLÉAIRES

# Engaging Youth

A Report on NWMO Youth Engagement Activities

November 29, 2012

# NWMO Youth Engagement

## Executive Summary

The Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) is responsible for the long-term management of Canada's used nuclear fuel. Towards that end, the NWMO is seeking a community willing to host Canada's used nuclear fuel in a deep geological repository. Given the long timeframes associated with the implementation of Canada's plan, known as Adaptive Phased Management (APM), inter-generational considerations are an important factor informing the work of the NWMO.

In the NWMO's 2008-2010 Triennial Report, the Advisory Council noted "that long-term used nuclear fuel management is an inter-generational issue [and] emphasized the ethical dimension of incorporating opinions of youth into decision-making that will have impacts far into the future."

While the long planning and implementation horizons associated with the NWMO's work allow for many opportunities for phased and adaptive decision-making that is responsive to Canadian values and priorities they can also introduce inter-generational risks that may affect the successful implementation of the project.

The NWMO has consistently articulated a commitment to intergenerational fairness and inclusiveness. It is important that youth continue to be involved in the NWMO's current range of engagement activities and that they are recognized as a key stakeholder group locally, regionally, provincially and nationally who must be provided adequate opportunity to become engaged and informed.

NWMO has involved youth in its engagement program for many years in a variety of different ways. For example, the NWMO includes youth in social research and dialogue activities; involves Aboriginal youth in engagement initiatives and fora; provides presentations to post-secondary students in relevant disciplines; supports and promotes youth science education through the Corporate Social Responsibility Program (CSR); and, presents engagement opportunities for youth at the local level in interested siting communities.

In addition, in 2009, the NWMO established a Youth Roundtable to provide advice on how the NWMO might better reach young audiences as part of its engagement program. Specifically, the NWMO sought recommendations from participants regarding how the NWMO can:

- Raise awareness of the issue of used nuclear fuel and the mandate of the NWMO with youth audiences;
- Build interest and understanding amongst youth regarding Canada's approach for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel, known as Adaptive Phased Management (APM);
- Facilitate participation of youth in the dialogues and decision-making processes associated with the implementation of Adaptive Phased Management (APM).

The YRT was comprised of 16 participants aged 18-25 years from the 4 nuclear-cycle provinces. The group included culturally diverse youth from both urban and rural backgrounds who were at various life-stages and who had a broad range of personal and social interests. In May 2009, the YRT presented the

group's recommendations to the NWMO. Recommendations addressed key messages, communications channels and engaging youth in the community and through educational institutions. In September 2010, the NWMO reconvened the Youth Roundtable for a final meeting to present its members with an overview of efforts by the NWMO to date to address the Roundtable's recommendations. Responsive activities by the NWMO included the use of more focused messages and content in brochures, the development of communications materials that span multiple layers of detail, the creation of animated videos and exhibit modules, better designed documents and web pages, and broadened outreach to youth through educational institutions.

Please click [here](#) to view the recommendations and video provided by the Youth Roundtable to the NWMO and review the actions undertaken by NWMO in response to their recommendations. For a comprehensive list of NWMO youth engagement activities to date, please click [here](#).

Looking ahead, the organization will build upon its current youth engagement program, in alignment with the phased multi-year implementation of APM. As such, youth engagement will evolve to include individuals at the local and regional levels residing in communities involved in the siting process and who are learning more about becoming a potential host for the deep geological repository. As work proceeds, the NWMO will work with communities to identify preferred approaches for youth engagement.

The NWMO is developing a roadmap for youth engagement aimed at steadily building capacity amongst youth through multiple ages and stages of development engaging them via educational institutions and in professional environments. Engagement activities will aim to:

- Foster and promote a culture of science;
- Support secondary school science curriculum and learning;
- Encourage post-secondary interest in relevant disciplines;
- Position the NWMO as an employer of choice; and
- Build capacity among young professionals

## **Scope of NWMO Youth Engagement**

### ***Social Research and Dialogue***

Since its inception in 2002, the NWMO has undertaken extensive engagement with interested Canadians and Aboriginal Peoples, including youth, to seek their input into the development and implementation of Canada's plan for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel. This engagement included a number of social research activities including, for example, multi-party dialogues, citizen panels, public attitude research, e-dialogues, focus groups and workshops. The NWMO will continue to include youth in its ongoing social research and dialogue activities.

### ***Aboriginal Youth Engagement***

The NWMO has involved youth in its Aboriginal engagement program through work with Elders, facilitated dialogues and in siting community engagement activities.

The NWMO Elders Forum, restructured and renamed in 2012 as the "Council of Elders", held annual meetings from 2005 - 2011 comprised of First Nation, Métis and Inuit members who represented a broad range of interests, backgrounds and experiences. Each Elder appointed to the Forum invited a youth to attend the meetings to act as a support and to learn from Elders in their discussion with the NWMO, promoting the intergenerational learning that is so important in the long-term nature of the NWMO's work. In addition, the Elders Forum and its working group "Niigani", were instrumental in the design of the two Youth Outdoor Summer Camp projects conducted with Aboriginal students aimed to build understanding in the development of culturally-appropriate communication materials.

The restructured Council of Elders is exploring ways to involve youth in the Council.

The NWMO continues to explore ways in which to provide Aboriginal youth with learning opportunities about the work of the NWMO and the APM project .

### ***Youth Outreach through Educational Institutions***

For several years, NWMO staff members have attended university seminars as guest lecturers in various disciplines to build understanding amongst students about the APM project and the work of the NWMO. These presentations allow NWMO to reach out to, and raise awareness amongst, youth pursuing studies in disciplines directly related to the APM project (such as engineering, earth sciences, public policy, etc.). At the same time, this engagement has allowed the NWMO to strengthen relationships with existing networks of university faculty in key program areas. The NWMO will continue to undertake outreach to post-secondary institutions to build a base of understanding about APM amongst young Canadians undertaking relevant disciplines of study. In addition, the NWMO will explore opportunities for engaging young Canadians through related youth chapters of professional associations.

Since the initiation of the siting process in May 2010, the NWMO has worked with communities learning more about being a potential host for the APM project to identify opportunities for engaging youth in their community. Upon invitation of a school principal, the NWMO has provided presentations in classrooms explaining the project to youth audiences. In addition, the NWMO has hosted school groups

interested in attending community open houses and viewing the interactive mobile exhibit developed to explain the project.

Working with communities, the NWMO will continue to explore additional opportunities for youth engagement at the local and regional levels..

### ***Communications Materials and Resources***

Over the next several years, the NWMO will continue to build youth interest in the topic of used nuclear fuel and the APM project through the development of appropriate communications materials and resources.

The NWMO will develop a “Learning Zone” on its website with related educational resources for students, educators and the general public.

In addition, new modules will be added to the NWMO mobile exhibit and a virtual online exhibit is currently under development. The virtual exhibit will reflect all of the information experienced through the physical NWMO exhibit with the opportunity to access additional layers of information according to each user’s level of interest.

### ***Build Understanding of, and Foster Opportunities for, Youth in a Potential Host Community and Region***

Communities that have entered Step 3 of the siting process have established Community Liaison Committees to assist the community in learning more about the project. Several communities have included at least one youth representative on their CLC in order to bring forward a youth perspective and identify opportunities for local youth engagement.

The NWMO will identify, collaboratively with communities, youth opportunities related to implementation of the project and the planning required to ensure future workforce and related career opportunities for youth.

The APM project also includes the establishment of a Centre of Expertise with an associated visitor centre. It will be the home for an active technical and social research demonstration and technology program. The Centre of Expertise could be designed as a focus for engaging members of the community, including youth, and visitors to learn more about the project and to view the scientific and engineering work in-progress involved in site assessment, through public viewing galleries and interactive displays.

### ***Support for Youth Science Organizations - NWMO Corporate Social Responsibility Program***

NWMO has also engaged youth in past years through the organization's Corporate Social Responsibility Program (CSRP). The CSRP, launched in 2008, has allowed the NWMO to provide support to a range of youth organizations focused on encouraging science learning amongst youth at the local, provincial and national levels. For example, NWMO has provided support to:

- Youth Science Canada's science fairs;
- Actua's National Aboriginal Outreach Program;
- Shad Valley's Summer Science Education Program; and
- Science North's Education and Outreach Programs

For more information on the NWMO's CSRP, please visit:

<http://www.nwmo.ca/corporatesocialresponsibility>

## **Priorities**

The following priorities have been identified:

### **1. Outreach to Youth to Build Understanding of APM**

- As the siting process advances, the NWMO will identify opportunities to enhance youth engagement and learning opportunities about APM.
- NWMO will build upon established relationships with key faculty members in relevant programs and seek opportunities to present the work of the NWMO to students and expand opportunities for learning.

### **2. Communications Materials and Resources**

- Development of an online "Learning Zone"
  - NWMO will look to develop content on the NWMO website dedicated to educational resources for students, young professionals, educators and the general public. Components might include interactive fact sheets, animated videos, and a virtual version of the NWMO exhibit, for example.
- Development of a Social Media Strategy
  - NWMO will explore the effective use of social media tools.