



# Niigani

## Designing The Process of Siting?

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The NWMO has started the dialogue to collaboratively design a process for selecting a permanent site for a deep geological repository. In June of 2007, the Government of Canada approved a plan for taking care of the used nuclear fuel for the long term. The plan is called Adaptive Phased Management (APM). The goal of the plan is to place the used fuel deep underground in rock where it will be watched to make sure it is secure and not affecting anything

around it. Then at some point in the future, people will decide if they want to close the facility and return the ground to its natural state. The money needed to do this is being set aside now by the companies that produce the nuclear waste, so that those of us who benefit from nuclear waste energy will not leave a debt for future generations.

The Siting Process or "...the Process for Siting" will develop a step by step process that will be used to select the willing host community where the repository will be located. In 2009, NWMO will continue designing the Siting Process. This means that, continuing the process begun in 2008, the NWMO will ask Canadians to identify what steps should be considered in creating a Siting

process. Consistent with the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act, Aboriginal Canadians will be asked for their input.

The focus of NWMO Aboriginal Engagement in 2009 will be to "...conduct activities that support and receive input for the development of this Draft Siting Process Proposal."

The NWMO effort will focus its engagement on the 4 nuclear fuel cycle provinces (Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan.) In early 2009, the NWMO will develop a Draft Site Selection Process document. The public will then be invited to discuss the proposal. Based on the public input, the document will be changed so Canadian issues and concerns are considered along with technical considerations.

### Special points of interest:

- Niigani meet with NWMO Board and Advisory Board in November 2008
- Brochure and DVD to be released in December 2008
- NWMO releases draft Transparency Policy
- NWMO Designing the Process for Selecting a Site



## Niigani Brochure and DVD Released

The NWMO, with the assistance of Aboriginal communication experts from across Canada, including a Niigani member, has created communications materials to help introduce the work of the NWMO, the Elders Forum

and Niigani. If you would like brochures or a DVD please contact the NWMO directly using contact information on page 4 of this newsletter. We encourage you to use this information to inform and stimulate discussion in your community.

## Message from Chairperson—Gordon Williams



2008 was a productive year for Niigani. As I reflect on our accomplishments, I am confident that as we learned more about the long-term management of

used nuclear fuel in Canada and internationally, we made a positive contribution to NWMO's understanding of issues and concerns of our people and how engagement should take place. In June, we had a very successful Elders' Forum in Waskesiu, Saskatchewan. Local Elders shared information on the local culture and protocols.

During the Elders' Forum we were all warmly welcomed to Saskatchewan by Gary Arcand, on behalf of Chief Lawrence Joseph, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and by Métis leaders Robert Doucette, President of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. I want to personally thank the Felix Family for their generous help in conducting Pipe Ceremonies and assisting us in understanding the traditional practices and protocols in Saskatchewan. For me, this was the highlight of the Forum.

We were also pleased that three members of the NWMO Board of Directors and two Advisory Council members attended the Elder's Forum.

In November, Niigani also had the opportunity to meet with the NWMO Board of Directors and the Advisory Council.

This is part of Niigani's continuing involvement in the NWMO's planning and engagement program activities and our direct involvement in the NWMO proposed Draft Siting Process.

I would like to thank all Elders' Forum and Niigani members for their ongoing support and involvement and wish you the very best of the holiday season and for the New Year.

**Chairperson of Niigani**

## Introducing “...Thunderbird Turtle Woman”



Donna Augustine is “Thunderbird Turtle Woman. She is a member of Niigani. ‘My name is a gift and when you receive a name it comes with a responsibility’ she begins. Donna is a Mi'kmaq from

Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick. When you first meet her you are struck with her smile and her interest in you. Ask her about her children and grandchildren and you will feel the unconditional love, pride and respect of a responsible parent. “I am not a single parent, I am a responsible parent who has raised 7 children and helping raise 10 grand children. I

love my family.” she said. Her most important work is her family, but she defines ‘family’ a little broader than most. Donna’s ‘family’ is her children, grandchildren and ‘the ancestors.’

“...Our people’s biggest challenge is knowing who we are spiritually. In 1977, I was called to do a special work of repatriation. When you are given the responsibility by the ancestors you don’t say ‘no.’ Repatriation of sacred human remains, funerary or burial goods buried with our dead, objects of cultural patrimony... is what I was called to do. These are protected in the United States because of the Native American Graves Protection Repatriation Act...and I am a member of the NAGPRA Review Committee” she explains.

“...I have been given the gift in dreams, ceremonies, and instruction from Elders on how to approach a burial site, how to

**...our people's biggest challenge is knowing who we are spiritually.”**

do reburial ceremonies. I have been all over the United States to recover and return to our communities: sacred human remains, our ceremonial items – masks, wampum belts, totem poles, objects needed by whole tribes to continue their ceremonial practices. I have been to the United Nations twice, on my own to observe and participate in indigenous forums. My goal is to work with our people in Canada to develop Canadian legislation to protect our ancestors. Now the Cemeteries Acts protect our ancestors for only 90 or 100 years then archaeologists can remove our sacred human re-

## Introducing “...Thunderbird Turtle Woman” Continued from page 2

mains. This causes great trauma, people are afraid and hopeless, and they carry the hurt inside them. Think about it, the government can ‘take our children – remove our dead, what a great injustice...They are taking our identify – telling us that we are not valued. This is a huge imbalance. My work is try to make it right in ‘a good way.’ For example, museums in Canada will not tell us how many sacred remains, sacred pipes, ceremonial objects they have because they are not obligated by law to do so.

I believe, that alcohol and drugs addictions stems from the lack of an identity. We need to reclaim our spiritual identity to empower ourselves...We need to honour ourselves by ensuring that we honour future generations. This is why I am so passionate in my work with the NWMO. As a member of the Elders Form and Niigani, I have an opportunity to hon-

our my community.” she said.

She uses her experience and knowledge to teach the NWMO staff and management to understand the culture and value system of our people. “...Sometimes I teach and they don’t seem to get it, but I am always encouraged by the one person who in a private conversation demonstrates that what I taught was understood. It makes all I do worth my effort....My Elders teach me that I must share this message with people of all colours. ...Everything we do is spiritual so we need to acknowledge our spiritual relationships: on the land; below the land; above the land. We are told that if we are diligent in our learning and teaching we can teach all people of all races how to live in harmony with Mother Earth again...All people will begin to understand that when we honour the land; we honour one another. The NWMO is a great opportu-

nity to work with scientists. Our tradition is an oral tradition. We gain knowledge by using our intuition, our ancestors, our feelings. In the scientific community everything begins with a question or observation. This leads to a hypothesis, predictions, experiments and conclusion. Both groups gain knowledge in different ways, one is not better than the other they are different. Both need to be valued. As a member of Niigani, I am part of the team. The gift I bring is the Aboriginal way of learning—the spiritual component in decision-making. I know if you put the spiritual first, you will never go wrong. I bring the spirit of our ancestors to help deal with nuclear waste. I bring to the table my life experience on how to engage our communities. Niigani invites all to join the circle to find the best solution to deal with this nuclear waste challenge now and into the future. All my relations.” she concludes.

## Message from the President of NWMO—Ken Nash



The 2008 year has seen the NWMO through a process of concentrated planning and preparation for implementing Adaptive Phased Manage-

ment, the approach for the long-term management of Canada's used nuclear fuel. The Elders' Forum and Niigani have made significant contributions to our planning and throughout the year have provided us with consistent and thoughtful advice. The Elders' Forum

guidance in June on the development of our Aboriginal Policy and willingness to help us understand Aboriginal culture and protocols and Traditional Knowledge stand out as significant contributions over the year. This advice has helped to inform and guide our thinking on these and many of the subjects that face us as we prepare for our work in 2009 in developing and seeking input to the proposed Draft Site Selection Process. I want to thank all Elders' Forum members for your assistance and advice. I especially wish to thank Gordon Williams as the Chair of Niigani and to all members of Niigani for providing us

“...Elders' Forum and Niigani have made significant contributions...”

with unwavering assistance. As 2008 comes to a close I wish to extend my best wishes for the holiday season and the new year and look forward to our work together in 2009.

**President of NWMO**

## NWMO Elders Forum

You can reach the NWMO in many ways.

Website [www.nwmo.ca](http://www.nwmo.ca)  
Webmaster Email [info@nwmo.ca](mailto:info@nwmo.ca)

Toll Free 1.866.249.6966 (within Canada)

Tel 416.934.9814

**Nuclear Waste Management Organization**  
22 St. Clair Avenue East, Sixth Floor  
Toronto Ontario Canada M4T 2S3

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

**nwmo**

NUCLEAR WASTE  
MANAGEMENT  
ORGANIZATION

SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION  
DES DÉCHETS  
NUCLÉAIRES

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is nuclear fuel waste?

A nuclear fuel bundle is about the size and shape of a fireplace log, weighing approximately 24 kg. Each bundle produces enough electricity to power 100 homes for a year. After a fuel bundle has been used to make electricity, it becomes highly radioactive and must be safely contained and isolated for a very long time to protect people and the environment. The production of isotopes used in medical procedures also leaves waste which requires long term containment and isolation. Nuclear waste must always be carefully stored in a licensed and regulated facility. A nuclear fuel bundle is approximately 0.5 metres long. Stacked like cordwood, all of Canada's used fuel at this time could fit into six hockey rinks up to the boards.

### What is radiation?

Radiation is a form of energy that can move through space. We encounter radiation every day—as microwaves are

used to cook food, radio waves, light from the sun, x-rays for medical diagnosis and rays for medical treatment. Radiation can be either natural or man made. Things are said to be radioactive when they emit high energy electromagnetic radiation or other particles. Some forms of radiation have enough energy to change the make-up of materials at their most basic level, the nucleus of the atom; while others do not have enough energy to cause nuclear changes.

### How did we get here?

Nearly everything we do is dependent on electricity. Canada has run nuclear power plants fueled by uranium for over forty years. Nuclear power provides about 15% of Canada's electricity production. It also provides isotopes used in millions of medical procedures to help people around the world, every year.

## A Review of the Work of the Elders Forum and Niigani in 2008

A year is not a long time and when some look back, they ask where does time go and what did we do? This is not the problem for the Elders Forum and Niigani. Gordon Williams, Chairperson reporting to the NWMO Board said "...we accomplished a lot in 2008, and we would like to acknowledge the support of the NWMO staff. Last year members of the Elders Forum and Niigani participated in the following activities:

- Elders Forum Meeting held June 4-6, 2008 in Waskesiu, Saskatchewan. Members of the NWMO Board, the Advisory Council and NWMO staff met with the Elders' Forum. The focus of this meeting was the development of the NWMO Aboriginal Policy. The policy will be completed in 2009.
- Niigani Meetings were held in February, March, September and November. This year members participated in the development of the Draft Siting Proposal; training on the nuclear fuel cycle; and the Assembly of First Nations/Canada Treaty Conference in March.
- Niigani members assisted NWMO in creating and maintaining relationships with Aboriginal leaders and organizations at the national, regional and local level.
- Summer Youth Project. Niigani members assisted NWMO staff and 2 summer students do research with Elders, facilitate youth gatherings, and create materials for other projects.
- Culturally appropriate Communications Materials have been developed with the advice and assistance of a committee of Aboriginal communications professionals, including a Niigani member, working with NWMO staff. A brochure and DVD is now available.
- Cross Cultural Training for NWMO Board, management and staff. Niigani Elders conducted a number of training sessions on protocols, Treaties and governance, and the sacred seven universal teachings.
- The Traditional Knowledge Project. This was a three part project to assist NWMO technical and engagement staff to explore concepts on how to interweave traditional knowledge and western scientific knowledge.
- Newsletters. In 2008 there were three newsletters created to help communications between Niigani and Elders Forum Members.
- Projects. Niigani members helped facilitate NWMO initiatives underway with the Assembly of First Nations, Native Women's Association of Canada and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

"...thank you to everyone for a job well done." Gordon Williams concluded."

## Future Issues

**Newsletters are Published Three Times a Year.** The next issue will be in the spring.

