



NUCLEAR WASTE SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION  
MANAGEMENT DES DÉCHETS  
ORGANIZATION NUCLÉAIRES

## ***Report of the Elders' Forum***

***Odawa Native Friendship Center***

***Ottawa, Ontario,***

***August 25-27, 2005***

***Convened by***

***The Nuclear Waste Management Organization***

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# ***NWMO Elders' Forum***

## **1. Introduction**

Since its inception in late 2003, the NWMO has sought dialogue with Canada's Aboriginal community regarding how Canada should best manage its used nuclear fuel over the long term. This "Aboriginal Dialogue" has been in addition to a broad program of engagement involving Canadians from all walks of life.

Throughout the Aboriginal Dialogue, NWMO's goal has been "to build the needed foundation for a long-term, positive relationship between NWMO and the aboriginal people of Canada." Agreements with 15 Aboriginal organizations – national, regional, and local – led to discussions involving several thousand Aboriginal people. In all cases, the support provided by the NWMO was used by the organizations to design and implement discussions by Aboriginal people for themselves. From the perspective of the NWMO, the intent was and is to exercise best possible effort, motivated by a need to generate understanding and open the door to collaboration in the addressing the issues facing the NWMO.

Throughout the Aboriginal Dialogue there has been a consistent call to bring Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge to bear as an equal partner to "western science." Early on in its process (September 24-25, 2003 in Saskatoon)<sup>1</sup>, NWMO convened a Traditional Knowledge Workshop from which emerged a set of insights that were fed into deliberations of the NWMO Round Table on Ethics that led to development of an Ethical and Social Framework for testing any proposed long-term approach to managing used nuclear fuel over the long term.

However, the process of bringing Aboriginal Elders and their knowledge into deliberations is a long-term and continuous one. How best to achieve an effective working partnership between Aboriginal Traditional knowledge and western science is not well understood and all concerned, including and in particular the NWMO, have much to learn on this front.

As one important step in this continuing process, the NWMO convened an Elders' Forum in Ottawa, August 25 – 27, 2005.

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<sup>1</sup> Barnaby, Joanne, 2003. Drawing on Aboriginal Wisdom – A Report on the Traditional Knowledge Workshop held September 24-25, 2003 in Saskatoon. NWMO Workshop Report 8-3. Available at <http://www.nwmo.ca/Default.aspx?DN=285,282,199,20,1,Documents>

Participants were drawn from across the country and included the complete spectrum of Canada's Aboriginal community. In total, 48 individuals participated including 23 Elders, 19 "young" people named by the Elders in a support role, a special translator (Inuktitut) and five individuals from the Nuclear Waste Management Organization.

The invitation protocol involved asking the local, regional, and national organizations who had received support from the NWMO, to suggest Elders that would participate. Elders were then invited, should they wish, to name a young person who could accompany them in a support role.

This report summarizes the results of the Forum. A complete list of participants is included in Appendix 1.

The report is written in a manner that will assist non-aboriginal peoples' to understand what was said while also satisfying participants' need to accurately reflect their understanding of what was communicated. Prior to finalization and to ensure accuracy, the draft report was reviewed by all participants.

The Forum did not follow a pre-set agenda, rather at the request of the Elders; it followed an aboriginal tradition of a 'sharing circle'. In such a circle, each person at the table in turn has the opportunity to offer her or his observations and insights. The circle was completed twice, once to offer initial observations and once to provide insight on the NWMO's work and the engagement of Aboriginal people in the future. At the end of the first circle, a presentation from NWMO was offered that described its work and draft recommendation. A sequential record of each individual's comments is included in Appendix 2, the NWMO Presentation is found in Appendix 3.

This report was synthesized immediately following the Forum. It is organized in a simple format aimed at highlighting the key messages and ideas for moving dialogue between the NWMO and the Aboriginal community forward. In this sense, it is not a "typical" conference report. Following this introduction, Section 2 provides a brief comment on the protocol of the meeting. Section 3 then addresses the importance of Traditional Teachings and Prophecy. Three overarching themes that emerged during the Forum are highlighted in Section 4. In Section 5, concrete recommendations that arose during the Forum are listed to ensure that progress over time can be monitored and assessed. A final concluding note is offered in Section 6.

## 2. Forum Protocol

Below are listed ten assertions or “principles” that served as a protocol to guide the Forum<sup>2</sup>. These principles were discussed at the beginning of the Forum and refined following discussion with participants.

### Forum Protocol

#### Our intent is:

1. To explore, not negotiate;
2. To share, not to decide;
3. To inform and to seek advice;
4. To understand the diversity of perspectives and build relationships;
5. To consider how to widen the network of connections with which NWMO will need to build linkages;
6. To seek identification of areas of common ground, of differences and the various underlying reasons; and
7. To respect that participation and contributions are not to be seen as an endorsement by any participant of the NWMO project (or any specific outcome of it).

#### Attribution of comments:

8. The Forum agreed that in general a record should be maintained in which comments should be attributed to those who offered them.

#### Notes

9. Notes will be prepared from the Forum and shared with the full group prior to finalization. Notes shall typically be of a summary nature and will include a list of participants.
10. Any notes prepared should include these principles at the beginning.

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<sup>2</sup> These principles are modified from a set that was first articulated by Glenn Sigurdson, CSE Group Vancouver, B.C. based on many years of experience at creating effective dialogue.

### 3. The Importance of Traditional Teachings and Prophecy

Many participants of the Forum made reference to the importance of Traditional Teachings and Prophecy. The following comments provide an overview of thoughts that were expressed but fall far short of providing the depth of understanding that has evolved over the centuries. Expression of these ideas here is meant to serve as an opening that will require follow-up as this dialogue proceeds in the future.

A key concept that was touched on and that is contained in many Aboriginal teachings around the world, addresses the roles and responsibilities of the peoples of the world. This is reflected in a variety of ways including the 'medicine wheel' and the 'the teachings of the Drum'. The four colours contained in these teaching symbols include yellow, black, white and red. Among other things, these colours represent peoples of Mother Earth as follows;

**Yellow** – Peoples of Asian descent who have knowledge and responsibilities for air – this is reflected in such distinct cultural practices such as 'chi' and energy transmitted through the air;

**Black** – Peoples of African descent who have knowledge and responsibilities for water- this is evident in their ability in some cases to survive in an inhospitable dry climate where there is little water;

**White** – Peoples of European descent who have knowledge and responsibilities for fire – this is reflected in their ability to understand and produce energy such as electricity and motorized technology; and

**Red** – Peoples of Turtle Island or North America who have responsibility for the earth – this is reflected in the many cultural values and teachings that reflect a relationship with the earth as 'Mother earth.'

Participants to the Forum also shared and identified common elements among their respective prophecies. Commonalities include:

- The understanding that the world will be facing major change and that the economic and technological systems we depend on today will break down;
- The four peoples of the world must work together to find solutions building on their respective knowledge and strengths if anyone is to survive;
- While much of what we know today will be lost, there will be survivors and they will need to exercise and practice the basic knowledge of all four cultures in a collective format unimpeded by racism or other negative attitudes; and
- There are clear signs of strain in today's world that suggest system breakdown including war; climate change; extreme storms; diseased fish and

animals, contaminated air, water and land; trees dying from the top down; extensive forest fires; and major industrial accidents (the nuclear and chemical plant accidents are examples);

It is in the above context that the world today is seen and understood by many aboriginal peoples. This context raises both fear and trepidation for the generations who will be alive when this period starts. It points to the importance aboriginal people still place on survival skills.

One elder did point out that there could be other better options for mother earth and the human race but that we would need to change, NOW. All the Elders agreed that they were not overly optimistic

This context however, provides the basis and motivation for many to participate actively in addressing the needs and challenges now. This commitment was apparent among elders and youth alike. Many expressed the desire to learn more and continue sharing their own traditional knowledge to find solutions together with other peoples, including as they termed it 'the complex question of nuclear waste'. Participating with others to address the challenges now is a means to exercise their traditional responsibilities for taking care of mother earth.

## **4. Overarching Themes Emerging**

### **Theme 1. There is a Need for More Education**

Elders and youth expressed a desire to learn more about a full range of matters related to nuclear energy including:

- the extraction and processing of uranium;
- the operations and design of power plants;
- the current storage of waste;
- the options being considered for its management; and
- the risks associated with each of these options.

They emphasized the importance of making this information available in a culturally appropriate manner using a lot of visual aids, fostering site visits, translating information into their languages and making it available at the community level. This information and education will increase their capacity to contribute to the challenges and make responsible assessments of the options available. Youth and elders talked about the importance of sharing what they learn with others and to contribute to the education of their communities.

Elders repeatedly stated their willingness and commitment to educating non-aboriginal people about Aboriginal Traditional knowledge and understandings. They voiced a hope that such sharing would help change practices that have led to the current problems while contributing to the design of lasting solutions. An appreciation of the importance of communicating and sharing spiritual beliefs and understandings was viewed as an integral part of this. Further the Elders were emphatic that their Traditional Knowledge be considered a partner with Western Science and given equal weight.

Young people voiced the importance of renewing traditional stewardship responsibilities in aboriginal communities and practicing these responsibilities at the individual, community as well as national levels and challenged all aboriginal communities to take steps to keep their environments clean.

Youth participants demonstrated the importance of raising awareness of all youth about nuclear waste and its management. This generation is overwhelmed with information and with fear about all sorts of horrific events globally that it will take special efforts to give them a sense of hope that something can be done about this issue. The youth participating in this forum need to be provided with the opportunity to help shape the steps taken to reach out to other youth and to contribute in the broader discussions.

The idea of establishing a NWMO scholarship fund to foster education in natural and social sciences, in traditional knowledge and in technology development fields received support from many.

### **Theme 2. There is a Need for Continuity**

The Forum recognized that the challenge of managing nuclear waste was long term. They stressed the importance of continuity to build on the work to date to engage aboriginal peoples now and into the future. Several ideas on how to achieve this were raised and included adding Aboriginal members to the current NWMO Advisory Council, re-convening this Forum on a regular basis, and seeking representation from this Forum to act as a committee or advisory group to work with NWMO staff between meetings of the Forum.

All participants expressed appreciation to the NWMO for bringing them together and providing the opportunity for them to learn and share. They recognized the rare opportunity that it presents for youth and elders to work together on matters of importance to all of Canada now and for future generations. They also articulated the importance of the cultural sensitivity demonstrated by the NWMO in the tone and flexibility with which the meeting was carried out.



**Theme 3. There is a Need for a Partnership Between Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge and Western Science; Spirituality is Key**

Elders expressed belief that traditional knowledge is very relevant to the challenges of nuclear waste management. While they do not have a history of producing or managing nuclear waste, they do have management practices that could be used to deal with the challenge and to prevent further problems in the future. NWMO is encouraged to review the results of its Traditional Knowledge Workshop and to build on these results. Aboriginal management practices would not allow for the production of wastes in the first place unless an accepted approach to their management was in place. Forum participants want to engage Canada in the discussion about continuing the production of waste that cannot be effectively managed.

Many recommendations from the Traditional Knowledge Workshop, if implemented would increase access to traditional knowledge in a manner that is respectful and appropriate. The Forum spoke about the importance of cultural protocols addressing research and ensuring protection of intellectual property in the process of working with traditional knowledge. Forum participants are prepared to provide further guidance in these matters building on the results of the workshop.

Through out the Forum, participants emphasized their belief that Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge and western science should see themselves as partners – separate but running in parallel and mutually supportive tracks.

An aspect of traditional knowledge that participants emphasized that is distinct and central to their knowledge system is the role of spiritual beliefs and practices. These beliefs are the fabric of their society and the Elders displayed pride and much respect when discussing spiritual matters. They encourage the NWMO to acknowledge these beliefs and in doing so, gain an appreciation of their relevance.

## 5. Specific Recommendations

- ✓ **Consultation.** NWMO should affirm to Canada and Aboriginal Governments that discussion to date does not constitute 'consultation with aboriginal peoples' as required by law
- ✓ **Parallel Presentation.** The respective principles and values of Aboriginal and Non-aboriginal peoples should be presented side by side to reflect mutual respect for cultural perspectives;
- ✓ **Stand Alone Aboriginal Report Needed.** A stand alone report summarizing all of the activities to engage aboriginal peoples to date should be published and made available to Aboriginal communities and to Parliament;
- ✓ **Elders' Forum Should Continue.** The Elders' Forum should continue into the future as a primary vehicle to address the cross section of perspectives of Inuit, Métis, First Nation, Non-status, Women, Elders and Youth needed to address the challenges faced by the NWMO. A Forum that includes elders and youth, men and women together, is extremely important;
- ✓ **Ongoing National Aboriginal Advisory Committee Should be Established.** An ongoing national Aboriginal advisory committee to the NWMO made up of participants from this Forum should be struck to assist with planning and policy needs;
- ✓ **Aboriginal Scholarships Should be Created.** A scholarship fund should be established to encourage Aboriginal youth to further their education in the natural sciences, traditional knowledge, the social sciences and in technological development fields;
- ✓ **Culturally Appropriate Communications Needed.** Culturally relevant materials to use in the education of aboriginal communities should be developed collaboratively between the NWMO and Aboriginal people. Issues that should be addressed include: the extraction and processing of uranium, the design and functions of nuclear power plants, the current storage and treatment of nuclear waste, the risks associated with each of these activities and the options under consideration;
- ✓ **Grass Roots Focus in the Future.** The ongoing NWMO dialogue should focus on aboriginal participation at the grass roots level while encouraging governmental support for National and Regional Aboriginal governments to provide technical and liaison support to communities;
- ✓ **Integrity.** The NWMO should operate from a place of integrity by maintaining an open and honest relationship with aboriginal communities on all matters and in particular with the question of storage sites; the good practices established in this Forum should be built upon.

## **6. Conclusion**

The traditional offering of tobacco and sweet grass at the beginning of the Forum to participants while asking for their assistance in helping to find solutions was recognized as demonstrating respect and greatly appreciated. It signals a willingness to respectfully seek the wisdom of aboriginal peoples in meeting the challenges the NWMO faces. Aboriginal people want to feel secure about the intentions and integrity of NWMO, and they want to help create solutions. This Forum provides a good start to building a trusting and lasting relationship that is based on mutual respect and co-existence. Participants look forward to reviewing progress made and to working together in the years ahead.

# Appendix 1

## Aboriginal Elders and Youth Forum

### List of Participants

<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Recommending Organization</b>
1. Akeeagok	P J	Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)
<b>2. Angiyou</b>	<b>Eli</b>	<b>Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)</b>
3. Angnakak	Sharon	Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association
4. Atlookan	Cindy (Jayne)	Eabametoong First Nation
<b>5. Augustine</b>	<b>Donna</b>	<b>Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)</b>
<b>6. Bear</b>	<b>Gwen</b>	<b>Union of New Brunswick Indians (UNBI)</b>
<b>7. Boyce</b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Eabametoong First Nation</b>
8. Corrigan	Jansen	Sakitawak Métis Nation
<b>9. Courchene</b>	<b>Elmer</b>	<b>Assembly of First Nations (AFN)</b>
<b>10. Crowe</b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Alderville First Nation</b>
11. Bercier	Jesse	Métis National Council (MNC)
<b>12. Flett</b>	<b>Bill</b>	<b>Métis National Council (MNC)</b>
<b>13. Gardiner</b>	<b>Angus</b>	<b>Sakitawak Métis Nation</b>
<b>14. LaBillois</b>	<b>Margaret</b>	<b>Union of New Brunswick Indians (UNBI)</b>
15. LaBillois	Holly	Union of New Brunswick Indians (UNBI)
16. Lafontaine	Chris	Support to Jim Sinclair
<b>17. Laliberté</b>	<b>Vianney</b>	<b>Sakitawak Métis Nation</b>
18. Lloyd	Conor	Métis National Council (MNC)
19. Magiskan	Mary	Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)
<b>20. Mandamin</b>	<b>Josephine</b>	<b>Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)</b>
21. Mattinas Jr.	Tom	Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association (OMAA)
<b>22. Mattinas Sr.</b>	<b>Tom</b>	<b>Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association (OMAA)</b>
<b>23. McGuire</b>	<b>Michael</b>	<b>Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association (OMAA)</b>
24. McGuire	Veronica	Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association (OMAA)
<b>25. Meeseetawageesic</b>	<b>Madeline</b>	<b>Eabametoong First Nation</b>
26. Merasty	Brennan	Sakitawak Métis Nation
<b>27. Michael</b>	<b>Stephen</b>	<b>Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs (APC)</b>

<b>28.Morin</b>	<b>Allan</b>	<b>NWMO Dialogue Participant</b>
29. Nepinak	Melanie	Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP)
30. Nevin	Gitpu	Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)
31. O'Keese	Quincey	Eabametoong First Nation
32. Orechia	Larry	Union of New Brunswick Indians (UNBI)
<b>33.Pokiak</b>	<b>Randal Boogie</b>	<b>Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)</b>
34. Pokiak	Rebecca	Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)
<b>35.Richard</b>	<b>Mary</b>	<b>Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP)</b>
<b>36.Schoenthal</b>	<b>Walter</b>	<b>Métis National Council (MNC)</b>
<b>37.Signorie</b>	<b>Susan</b>	<b>Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association</b>
<b>38.Sinclair</b>	<b>Jim</b>	<b>NWMO Dialogue Participant</b>
39. Soucie	Rebecca	Translator for Susan Signorie
40. Trapper	Lillian	Assembly of First Nations (AFN)
<b>41.Two Rivers</b>	<b>Billy</b>	<b>Assembly of First Nations (AFN)</b>
<b>42.Williams</b>	<b>Gordon</b>	<b>Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP)</b>
43. Williams	Kona	Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP)
<b>NWMO</b>		
44. Dowdeswell	Elizabeth	
45. Hodge	Tony	
46. Patton	Pat	
<b>SUPPORT</b>		
47. Barnaby	Joanne	Joanne Barnaby Consulting, Hay River, NWT
48. Rae	Mike	Natural Resource Planning, Thunder Bay, ON

Notes:

1. Elders' names are bolded.
2. There are a total of 48 individuals listed including 23 Elders, 19 youth/support people, 1 translator (Inuktitut), and 5 from NWMO.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Summary of Participants' Comments**

## Summary of Participants' Comments

Note: Each participating Elder was encouraged to name an accompanying “youth” to serve in a support/learning role while fully participating in the discussions.

### Thursday, 25 August 05

#### Evening Session

The opening ceremony was lead by **Greg Meekis** with the **Ojibway-Cree Singers** from Ottawa.

**Tony Hodge** welcomed the participants on behalf of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization. Introductions followed. Because many had traveled a long distance that day, the substantive start to the meeting was put off until Friday morning.

**Donna Augustine** proposed beginning the meeting with a round table of opening remarks as a way of respecting traditions. This was agreed to.

The **Principles of Participation** were reviewed and adopted with revisions.

The issue of **recording the meeting (audio, video)** was discussed. The Forum agreed that generating a full record was a good idea. Participants asked that if any of the recorded material was used, that a copy be made available to them. This was agreed to by NWMO.

Dinner followed and the meeting was adjourned until Friday morning.

## **Friday, 26 August 05**

### **Morning Session**

An opening prayer and song was offered by **Donna Augustine**

**Joanne Barnaby** (*Forum Rapporteur*): made a commitment to respect Traditional Knowledge that had been shared at the workshop, held September 24-25 in Saskatoon.

**Randal Pokiak**: nuclear energy is being considered in Alaska; close to home thus there is a need for Inuit people to be involved in this discussion.

**Rebecca Pokiak** (*support for Randal Pokiak*): here to learn

**Larry Orechia** (*support for Gwen Bear*): no comment at this time

**Gwen Bear**: language teaches us to live with challenges, it contains answers. The environmental protection challenge ongoing, not much has changed there is still insanity underlying government decisions and energy corporations are still driven by economics. Hope there is a strong consensus here.

**Chris LaFontaine** (*support for Jim Sinclair*): There is so little knowledge out there while interest in participating in discussions around it is very high. Interested in learning. Need to be open about the risks.

**Tom Mattinas Sr.:** Spoke of the prophecies – fear – we are in that period. Traditional Knowledge is still not recognized. Prophecy- A day will come when; trees will be dying from top down, fish will be floating down the river belly up, won't be able to drink the water. We have been warned through teachings but we don't listen. Need to have purpose for being here at this meeting; we need to address the real issues and not the symptoms. We cannot live without our environment, but it can live without us. Mother earth can only take so much. We are running out of time, soon mother earth will give up on us. The earth will burst in flames. Traditional Knowledge teaches that the earth does not turn, the sun goes around the earth, science teaches the opposite. Western science has brought mother earth to its knees. The business world will also come to its knees, because it is all take and no give. Not long since Aboriginal people knew how to live in peace and harmony. We still have that in our experience, in the 50's I got exposed to the modern world. I did research, and it made me cry. We have to learn about nuclear waste and understand it. If we understand it, we can help find solutions from Traditional Knowledge. We need to teach Traditional Knowledge to NWMO so that they can act



responsibly. Need to get to the root of the problem not symptoms. To do that, we need to be clear on the purpose of this meeting.

**Mike McGuire:** affirmed that it is a good idea to video tape the meeting. We used to sit around the fire to learn, today we need to substitute the fire with television/video in modern times. Communities need to be better informed of the challenge. Need to begin using more solar energy and break dependency on sources like nuclear energy. We have a legend from the Serpent River area (Elliot Lake) about letting a snake out of the earth. This turned out to be nuclear energy. We have exposed something that was never meant to be exposed.

**Veronica McGuire** (*support for Mike McGuire*): don't really care about this, if it's not this problem that humans create, there will be another.

**Mike Rae** (*support for NWMO*): here to listen and learn.

**Mary Magiskan** (*support for Josephine Mandamin*): here to listen and learn

**Josephine Mandamin:** participated in northern Ontario nuclear waste meetings, even more confused now. We are traditionally caretakers and it is difficult to be this today. Aboriginal people are seen as barriers to 'progress.' I see this 'progress' as destruction. Money comes and goes. One day the money changers will see their destructiveness. You see it in the sky and water, how can they not see it or care about it. Met an American this summer who said he did not care about the water and that Indians should get out of the way of progress.

**Conrad Lloyd** (*support for Bill Flett*): This is his second meeting on this topic; hope to get more information. Come to understand that we need to do more than band-aid, short term solutions.

**Bill Flett:** We have to do something; we cannot avoid making some tough choices. Am concerned about security of waste given terrorism threats. Was impressed with the technology and safety shown at the Pickering plant. In Manitoba we are dependent on hydro, and are promoting solar and wind energy. I'm self-educated - carpenter and management studies. Did it on my own – it wasn't easy but I did it and we can meet this challenge.

**Stephen Michael:** I was afraid when I first heard about this meeting. People need a tragedy to pull together and help each other. Traditionally we took care of each other, there was no bumming just sharing. The forestry industry came and destroyed, we now have a crisis problem with suicide, and our young people are choosing death. Being with AA has taught me that I am not alone. There's a tree dying that has survived for thousands of years but it has never become a fish, it is still a tree. We do the best we can with what we know and what we have and we share what we have. One day we will return to mother earth, in the meantime we are turning the earth into the garbage dump. The eagle teaches us and we must remember these teachings. When my first grandchild

was born I began to think about future generations. I kicked my children off my reserve to go out into the world to learn and then come home when they are all well educated. I will respect and then I will get respect. Compromise and negotiations is the most important skill I have. I know one thing about nuclear waste, we can bury it for a million years, but it will still be active. The technology we have today, if we work as a team, we can create solutions together. If I talk from my heart then it will go to your hearts.

**Vianney Laliberté:** really concerned that the young lady said she does not care. We need to deal with the consequences of our decisions. We dug out the uranium, opened it up and now its loose and affecting the earth.

**Angus Gardiner:** Has spent his life as a trapper and fisherman in Saskatchewan; concerned about safety and environment; how effective are the storage containers proposed? What are they made of? Am concerned about future generations. Even scared to eat ducks and geese because they land in the uranium mining area.

**John Boyce:** This is my second meeting. Went to Toronto for the March meeting where I learned a lot. I think about the negative effects and worry. Rocks in the Canadian Shield move, and it is not safe to bury it there. We don't want the waste in our area. Our generation of elders is looking ahead to future generations for at least a hundred years.

**Quincey O'Keese** (*support for John Boyce*): I too don't care because I don't understand. I think they have already decided where they are going to store it. It looks like they want to store it in our area. I have a lot of respect for elders but I understand that young woman. I have already learned from these elders – we need to learn and share it.

**Madeline Meeseetawageesic:** This too is my second meeting. I've, thought a lot about this management problem, thinking about future generations not only mine but people all around the world. It is difficult to understand the information that is sent because it is not interpreted into our language. I would like the material translated, I want to be able to understand. If something should go wrong, our way of life would be affected.

**Cindy (Jayne) Atlookan** (*support for Madeline Meeseetawageesic*): I am glad to be here and am learning a lot and we need to ensure that future generations will be looked after.

**Donna Augustine:** Very happy that we are sitting here altogether as elders and youth. The elders are here to bring forward knowledge and wisdom and the youth are that seventh generation. It is taught that they will bring back the ancient knowledge of the past. We need to think globally. The medicine wheel has four colors, the colors of mankind. A white buffalo was born a few years ago, buffalo cat woman spirit means a sign that the 4 races will begin to forgive each other. It has started to happen and I am beginning to see it in other parts of the world. Need to ensure that this is ongoing and that it does not stop here. Yellow people are responsible for air (chi, air energy). Black responsible for water- they conserve. White responsible for fire –lights, cars, space ships, electricity, nuclear energy etc. Red people responsible for earth – mother earth,

medicines and we are responsible to teach others what we know. It is not our culture to hurt others, so I understand the young people who say they don't care. I work as a traditional teacher, I work on repatriation. Have been involved with initiatives that go nowhere, I don't want that to happen again. A natural gift has been misused – uranium has been dug up to make nuclear power and bombs. Where are the heads of the nuclear energy companies? Why are they not here to listen to us? Now there's a mess and they want our help to clean it up. Our own people and the creator recognize us as elders; we need to challenge the nuclear industry to be honest with us. We have to be careful with this 'consultation', we have to be strong like the bear, we need to speak out. The spiritual leaders have to work with our political leaders, its time to re-balance.

**Gitpu Nevin** (*support for Donna Augustine*): We have two ears and one mouth for a reason, we need to talk less and listen more. I lost and had to re-learn my relationship to the land. I slowly became one with nature again. Modern society does not understand that and try to control the environment because they have lost the understanding. We need to become united and we as native people need to teach people to care about the environment. We have to follow up with this meeting to demonstrate we care and incorporate our environmental values; it doesn't cost anything to live these values.

### Afternoon Session

**Walter Schoenthal:** don't have any back ground on this, here to learn

**Jesse Bercier** (*support for Walter Schoenthal*): here to learn and listen

**Jim Sinclair:** liked hearing and learning. The changes made through the Constitutional development process in Canada provide for opportunities like this. Métis have a history of racism and with non recognition. We lived on the 'edge' all the time; we couldn't hunt because we were not recognized as aboriginal people. We went to war not because we loved Canada we went because we were hungry. Unfortunately, when our people returned after the War they returned to racism and were never recognized for their service to Canada. The constitution while it made some improvements, Bill C 31 was designed to get rid of all aboriginal peoples in Canada. Why has there been no consistency in aboriginal participation in this process? There has to be a national committee set up with an ongoing role. We need to set it up so that we can draw on both Traditional Knowledge and Western Science. We have to set up an ongoing educational process so that informed decisions can be made. Emphasis has to be at the community level. We need to teach others about our culture and Traditional Knowledge and I like the idea of youth and elders working together, they are our future.

**Eli Angiyou:** We live on the northern coast and are dependent on the ocean. Am very concerned about deep geological burial of nuclear waste and the impact it would have on the Hudson's Bay. Waters flow north and end up in our area and the HB. It's essential that we be involved, all peoples in the north are downstream. We are willing to help and

want this group to take on the challenge of coming up with a solution for managing the waste. Aboriginal peoples have experience with uranium mining, the use of it for the bombing of Hiroshima. Aboriginal peoples were used to transport the uranium and are suffering from cancer now. We want to stop this foolishness. We want to work to ensure we participate fully so that this sort of thing never happens again.

**PJ Akeagok** (*support for Eli Angiyou*): honoured to be here, been involved in the earlier work.

**Sharon Angnakak** (*support for Susan Signorie*): hope to hear more from youth. Want to point out that each of us contribute to waste energy and therefore to this problem.

**Rebecca Soucie**: translating for Inuit elder, Susan Signorie.

**Susan Signorie**: originally from Pond Inlet and moved to north Baffin Island. Need to learn more about nuclear waste first before I can contribute.

**John Crowe**. This meeting came up quickly and I haven't had a chance to review the material so I am here to learn and to take back what I hear to our people. We are the closest First Nation to Pickering and we have seen much change, not always good.

**Lillian Trapper** (*support for Billy Two Rivers and Elmer Courchene*). Here as a 'youth', work for AFN on the nuclear waste question. Have the background in environment. Every day I go home afraid because this is a problem that will last for millions of years. It is frustrating and confusing and the time pressures are difficult to work with. The AFN National Assembly passed a resolution to seek more time to inform people at the community level. My staff who work on this issue are facing uncertainty about their future.

**Billy Two Rivers**. I am Bear clan – you are going to hear a recording from me- the stories and teachings from my ancestors. Today we are participating in the second national event like this. I am the only elder here that was at the first one in Saskatchewan. Those of us there were not told about this one. We reached a consensus in Saskatchewan that we should not be involved in dealing with this issue. Recommendations were made that were ignored. I am concerned about continuity from NWMO – are they ensuring that we have no real impact on their decisions by bringing in new people to each of these meetings? We forget the responsibilities of the Crown to consult with aboriginal peoples. Tom talked about the prophecies. There are similarities across the country regarding these teachings but we need to learn from these teachings. Did we pollute the land, animals and water? When I returned from the Saskatchewan meeting, I had discussions in my home community and we talked about our traditional knowledge and skills that we will need for survival when the 'big freeze' comes. Both the bible and our teachings say that some will survive and will need to have our traditional survival skills. We are self-destructing in many ways in the way that we are living on this earth; look at the poverty all over the world. There are new diseases, even mosquitoes are carrying diseases. There are two types of humans, those who respect

creation and those who believe they can dominate and control the environment. We will have to learn to live with the problems of nuclear waste; it will be here for millions of years. Are we too blind to see the signs of destruction? Told my daughter that I would not want to be young today, we are living in the most difficult time in human history. Many of the problems we have we are responsible for but this one is not our problem. We will monitor and be involved and we will take steps to protect our land and our environment and ensure that the waste is not brought onto or buried in our land.

**Elmer Courchene:** It is good to hear people speaking their language here, it gives meaning to what people are saying, and it is simple, clear and powerful. This results in good decisions. I asked for information in advance which I read. I was hurt and insulted. When I look at our history and how many times we have shared our Traditional Knowledge and how it has been ignored. If it had been listened to, we would not have to be here. I come from a history of political leaders and although I avoided it I am now active politically. I was scared, now I know that it has to be done. If we don't voice what's happening in this generation, then seven generations down the road will not have a chance to survive. I need to hear from our own technicians. I cannot say that I can support one management option over another. If we have an ongoing and meaningful role we can make a positive contribution. Our people are very smart and we can do our own independent research. We cannot take a back seat, we have to stand strong. Our people are getting more vocal. Got a message in a ceremony which told me to look after my spirit, look after the earth. Don't worry about money, it is not important. The nuclear waste does not belong to us but we have to be part of ensuring that the problem is dealt with responsibly. We need to have an ongoing and continuous role. I have not been able to find any reference to Nishnabee representatives in the draft report, this is important. I need to know that future generations can look back and know that our elders and leaders took steps to protect them. We don't know if the industry is already looking at specific sites.

**Holly LaBillois** (*support for Margaret Labillois*). Did internet research to learn but there wasn't much available – the same information we have here. There is very little on negative impacts. Here to learn and bring it home

**Margaret LaBillois.** Don't know much and am worried about the dangers and wonder why we don't pursue alternatives like wind and water.

**Allan Morin:** I've participated in discussions on this issue for many years – first with the Seaborn commission. I recommended that aboriginal peoples be fully involved and consulted. We need to apply Traditional Knowledge to nuclear waste management. We need to develop a process for doing this. We need to figure that out here and I don't know how the NWMO will do this. Many corporations are pursuing Traditional Knowledge these days. We need to define Traditional Knowledge ourselves; we cannot let others define it for us. How do we protect how the Traditional Knowledge that we share is used. Will they apply it wisely or will they abuse it as they have in the past? We learn by observation and through oral transmission. It disturbs me that there are non-aboriginal people who claim to be Traditional Knowledge experts. It works different

than western science. I didn't take the time to teach my children, it's good to see grandparents and parents with their young people with them. I view Traditional Knowledge as the sacredness of life, captures the wisdom of women as they are the nurturers of life, the men were the providers and protectors, the wisdom of the community as whole, the wisdom of the earth and understanding it as sacred, spirituality, values and traditions. We need to establish a council of elders to oversee this. When it comes to site selection, we must be consulted, regardless of where it is as one way or another we will be affected.

**Brennan Merasty** (*support for Angus Gardiner*): Young people need to be involved and it is good to see that here. We are not used to industry consulting with us, they usually come and take what they want and leave a mess behind. NWMO sponsored a provincial wide youth workshop which was very important; the young people said they did not want the waste in Saskatchewan.

**Jansen Corrigan** (*support for Vianney Laliberté*): I contribute to the problem by my lifestyle and I am aware of it (computers and other modern technology).

**Gordon Williams**: This reminds me of the engineer who kept filing unreadable detailed and complex reports and was asked to do better. Finally, when reporting on the derailment of a train he reported: Off again, on again, gone again. I am concerned about the lack of follow up on the recommendations from the Traditional Knowledge Saskatoon workshop. There is no national committee in place as was recommended; there is no communications person identified. The final NWMO Study report should have a specific section in the report for aboriginal peoples. This is not 'consultation' as required by law.

**Kona Williams** (*support for Gordon Williams*): have a western science background. Have many technical questions to ask: how many reactors are there; where are they etc, as well as how we as aboriginal people will be involved in the future. We need to address the need for alternative energy sources; I see fossil fuel as a poor source of energy. We need more effective information to effectively contribute.

**Mary Richard**: I ask a lot of questions, I don't know anything. Why is uranium mined, how is it used, what's its effect in its natural state. We need to know more in order to help. Mother earth is the reproducer of all life, and when we hurt her she will produce deformity and unhealthy life. It's important that all people understand the Creator did not put anything negative on earth. It's man that may use these resources to create something negative. The men who created nuclear bombs forgot to thank mother earth, if they had they would never have created the bomb, they would have found something more positive. The Creator gave us the gifts and understandings, we need to live in peace and live our values of kindness, caring, sharing; respect and honesty. It's time to now start out on the right foot again. In my experience in the past, when elders share their Traditional Knowledge, they have proven to be right; when they don't there are consequences that are damaging. We need to take responsibility for ensuring that our knowledge is not forgotten. We need to talk to our own leaders, they need to get active. We also need to talk to our MPs. We can't forget to do the follow up when we get home,

each of us needs to take responsibility for the follow up. It's very difficult to convince our own people to practice their culture, language and to take responsibility for anything. I have learned that every time I pray for something, if it's meant to be it will happen, it's just a matter of time. I believe that there will be or is a young person who will have the solution that will be safe. Should set up an aboriginal scholarship to study in this field, they will bring forward our values to western science and may well be the ones who come up with the solution.

**Melanie Nepinak** (support to Mary Richard): I hope that our words will be considered.

**Pat Patton** (NWMO): I come from Vancouver Island and grew up in northern British Columbia and have been with NWMO for about a year. Previously, I worked in the mental health field and have been involved with many public processes. I have learned that information is important to make good decisions. Most projects take many years, sometimes things change and we need to be willing to change as we learn and gain experience. This challenge requires flexibility and we see this as the beginning of a very long term process. We all need to take responsibility to share as we learn.

**Tony Hodge** (NWMO): This has been a rich and very informative sharing circle. A year ago I was asked to assume responsibility for the relationship between NWMO and Canada's Aboriginal peoples. I have been impressed with the openness of aboriginal peoples in my dealings across Canada. But what is my own role in all of this? I think there is a need to bridge cultures. I agree with those who say we cannot squish together western science and Traditional Knowledge, they need to be heard in parallel. Nobody says this is an easy problem to resolve. 20 of the 22 reactors are on the shores of the Great Lakes, they are leaving the waste at those sites. Current containers only have a lifespan of 50 years. Is it fairer to leave it where it is on the shores of the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence or to move it to some place far away? What is fair today and to future generations? This is not an easy question but it is what we are faced with. We have tried to take an approach that recognizes that it will take time (300 years) to produce a solution. That is the only thing that is realistic – but what we can do now is to put into place the beginning of a solution. If we don't start now, we will eliminate options for the future – if we start now, we create options for the future. Be assured that there is no site chosen. Aboriginal peoples must be consulted – it must happen – by law, by moral commitment. Over the past 20 years, things have changed as a result of the work of many of the people here in this room. For example, as we heard Mary describe, non-aboriginal people are reaching out to aboriginal peoples for spirituality, that is new. We accept that this is not necessarily “consultation” as described in the law – we never set out to meet that test. Rather, we set out to do the best we possibly could in terms of building a relationship with Aboriginal people through respectful dialogue. Inside NWMO there are people who are listening and hearing.

**Jim Sinclair:** We need mechanisms that protect us and our rights to consultation. It has just been clarified to me that the federal government did not, and cannot, transfer responsibility for consultation with aboriginal peoples in mandating the NWMO.

## **Saturday, 27 August 05**

### Morning Session

Opening Prayer and song by **Donna Augustine**

Gift presentation from **Margaret LaBillois** to Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

Several participants heard geese calling during the prayer song.

**Tony Hodge** reviewed the questions to be summarized in peoples' commentary:

- 1) What is their sense of what NWMO has done and is proposing?
- 2) How should Elders, youth, this forum, and the Aboriginal community in general be involved from here on in?

**Randal Pokiak:** We have to live with the results of past mistakes. We have systems set up at home that give us authority to make decisions that affect us. The screening and review processes that we now have and that ensure local consultation, are very important. I feel sorry for people in the south who do not have that control. I am glad that aboriginal peoples have a role of in this process. We need to draw on our Traditional Knowledge; it has enabled us to survive and meet the needs of our people. It really surprises me that technology has not been developed to deal with nuclear waste effectively. I just hope that those immediately affected will have a say in solutions.

**Gwen Bear:** Thank you for all your contributions; you have validated the things that our people have said at home. I agree that it is time to start on the right foot. The abuse of fire affects all other elements, earth, water, and air. Our experience with environmental losses from hydro development is very painful, we need to remember that when we look at nuclear waste. Our solutions lie in our languages as our language contains our values.

**Tom Mattinas Sr.:** When I talked about our prophecy- time is near when trees burn, etc The sun will come close to the earth, the chemicals and pollution will explode. But the prophecies also say that before that happens there will be a chance to change. We need aboriginal science to understand the earth and know how to reverse the damage created. The rivers are the veins, the minerals and everything else is part of the body of our mother. Uranium does not do damage if left in its natural state. It would be good if a group of scientists focused on understanding mother. If you transplant a heart it may work for a while but it will give out sooner or later. We need to take the time to learn and understand, perhaps for the next 1,000 years, if we can maintain until we learn and come up with understandings before doing something that may create even more problems. Part of this teaching will come from aboriginal peoples; our Traditional Knowledge has this understanding. A day will come when the lights will go off. All the signs of prophecies are starting. Business does not care what it takes and what it kills. Western science has brought us to our knees. The fish up north far away from industrial



development are sick; this tells me that the pollution is traveling far away. Moose have breathing problems and their lungs are green. Animals are coming to town; these are signs of a very hurt mother. We cannot keep passing this problem to future generations, we have to solve the problems that we create, and we cannot pass it on. If we create solutions now, more people will survive the hard times. Will our solutions that we come to today be good for the future? If we really love our future generations we will not pass on this problem to them. I will be prepared to work with you all and share the knowledge. The spirits are warning us the time is now.

**Mike McGuire:** Yesterday we talked about the snake, we woke the snake and it is alive today. NWMO has done a good job but we need to expand the engagement process. How should the elders be involved? We are the keepers of the knowledge, keepers of the legends. We are the teachers. There must be a role for us and the youth. We should help the youth, other races are also affected not just the red race. Tom's shaking tent ceremony would help us. The way forward that's found must have a spirit within – elders can help bring this wisdom.

**Josephine Mandamin:** Sometimes it is difficult to understand, I try to put it into perspective. My Indian name means 'One who comes with the light'. I find this problem very disturbing, the more I learn the more I am disturbed. It will take many years to address this problem. I have two cousins, who worked in Elliot Lake at the uranium mine, one died and one is very sick. When we were told that we have responsibility I was very disturbed when we have no control over the decisions made. Our way was to ensure that when dangers were present you take precautions. I thought about that, why not just stop what they are doing (mining uranium and operating power plants). Ten or more whole generations will be affected by these poisons. From my perspective I would tell the government to shut the whole damn business down.

**Bill Flett:** I was impressed with the technology and safeguards at the nuclear power plant I saw in Pickering. In Manitoba we are starting to use solar, wind, geothermal and hydro. Manitoba Hydro will assist you through subsidies with geothermal. I am hoping that a peaceful use for the nuclear waste can be found. I am concerned about security issues with the current waste. Once we start seriously developing renewable energy we should start decommissioning these nuclear power plants. I have learned a lot from the elders here.

**Stephen Michael:** We don't have nuclear power plant in our province (Nova Scotia), we don't want them either. When I was young I didn't care about time, once I got older I value time and family. When we do talking circles we go around 3 times. This is the beginning, don't rush us and I want to take the time to deal with this issue. We need to keep this group going so that we can build on what we have started here.

**Vianney Laliberté.** Aboriginal people understand the earth. The land is a breathing thing and if you cut off something from the earth it is going to retaliate. We need to stick to this knowledge and use it. Even the bible teaches that. We created a big problem when we dug up the uranium. We have to solve it because we understand the earth. The circle

is strong here. We need time to come up with the answer, this group has the wisdom and it should be given time to come up with the answers here.

**Angus Gardiner:** This is the first time I have been to a conference. This nuclear waste really scares me. We need to think about our grandchildren. What are the guarantees? We have to work together to come up with the solutions. Sometimes we take things for granted and we hurt ourselves, maybe this is what we have done.

**John Boyce:** On May 24 I had surgery, 2 days later the surgeon asked me to wash the floor, 4 days later I left the hospital, a month later I went back and the doctor asked “do you recognize me?” I said yes you’re the one put a hole in my head, he said yes and I didn’t find anything! This a complex issue, and we are not sure what to do about it. I know that it could bring a lot of destruction in the area we live in; we have a lot of experience around this table. As elders we have carried wisdom for a long time. Our ancestors were very knowledgeable and we have benefited from them. It’s going to very difficult for NWMO to find solutions alone. Together we can help. Today we live very comfortable because of the white mans knowledge, for example electricity. Elders need to come together and speak with one voice.

**Madeline Meeseetawageesic:** It’s a very good day today. I love my people and community, born 1943. As an elder I do a lot of sewing. My thoughts are that we should try to help those people who live near this problem. As an elder I think of a lot of big problems like this, when I was young I did not. My mother told me that things would be very hard in the future. She passed away 7 years ago. She instructed me to prepare my children. I understand what people are saying here and I am committed to standing together with you to deal with this issue. I will have my children translate the reports and material so that I can continue to be involved. Thanks to organizers, cooks and participants. Will pray for each of you and encourage you all to work on this issue.

**Donna Augustine:** I would like to propose that we meet again and that when we return home that we pray about the issue and the answer. Perhaps next time the young people should be brought together a day earlier. The principles as they are expressed in the NWMO Draft Study Report do not include the views of red people which always consider physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects. In particular we can’t leave out the spiritual. We want time to participate; we don’t want to be “token Indians.” We are keepers of the land and as Indigenous Wisdom Keepers, the land speaks through us and the Spirit may give us an answer. But to now, the language that is used does not reflect our language or our principles and values. The teachings of the medicine wheel should be there, side-by-side to reflect our unique culture rather than creating a melting pot.

**Walter Schoenthal:** When I was in Germany I looked for mines to dismantle them, this is more dangerous. We should come back to continue this challenge

**Jim Sinclair:** Thanks to everyone here, spirit leaders and youth. We are dealing with a dangerous substance but our people are dying of diabetes. Uranium was used to kill

people in Japan, it came from our land and Dené land, I want to also take the opportunity to apologize to the Japanese like the Dené have. We need a clear commitment from the NWMO to continued involvement. We need parallel guiding principles and a parallel process for using a national steering committee to help. This committee would be to bring forward the wisdom of elders. This is not a consultation process yet; we need to do a lot more work to get to that stage; and a national steering committee would help in this regard. We need a lot more discussion and debate to come to a clear understanding

**Eli Angiyou:** I appreciate the fair approach taken by the NWMO and would like to see that attitude continue on to the future. Inuit prophecies include a time when fish die off and will not be edible; we are taught that at that time you must search for a lake with no rivers and you can use that fish to survive. I produce a lot of garbage, in the old days we did not produce much garbage. Today my garbage is just as good as anybody else's. Despite our best efforts to come up with a solution, I am concerned that we may fail. If we do fail, it will most likely end up in our northern waters. I want therefore to ensure that Inuit are directly involved in the follow-up. We should also have the James Bay Cree, they should be here.

**Sharon Angnakak:** It is clear that nobody has enough info to make safe decisions about the long term. I am concerned about future generations. Youth need to continue to be involved.

**Susan Signorie:** I am learning about modern technology. Am grateful that you include elders from all the regions and to include us in the decisions. Impossible for us to tell you what to do, I support you in dealing with it. I have learned a lot from these elders and their commitment to passing on their knowledge to future generations.

**Lillian Trapper:** I have learned from the prophecies shared here, I saw this summer trees dying from the top down and fish were floating down river. It got so hot that the vegetation became overgrown in the water and used all the oxygen. International work in the past has lead to a realization that we need to stop producing uranium and nuclear energy. We need more time to address this issue. I am concerned about the future of my staff in November when our program comes to an end. I too don't want to hand over this problem to my children.

**Billy Two Rivers:** We have spent time here demonstrating respect for each other. Materialistic development started slowly and is now fast, prophecies tell us that we will not catch up. Technology is moving very fast, we need to take the energy and move along side it. I need to go home and help build immunity; we sterilize things and kill our immunity. I need to feed my family dirt so that they build their immunity. I do not catch diseases because I build up my immunity. We need to build up immunity to this problem and get ready for it. We are creating the problems; we are not stopping the production of nuclear waste. Government is not accountable to people, they are accountable to big business. Corporations are committed to profit and do not think about future generations. We have to prepare people to survive this. We need to take the next steps, form a monitoring or watchdog committee. NWMO must implement the decisions made in

Saskatchewan and be held accountable. The government takes care of the business community. Beware, people who live in remote areas. They will not risk the people around the breadbasket (Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa) so they will take the risk and put in small populated areas like the north. I am a sceptic and think that the site has already been pre-determined. NWMO's mandate is OK – but we have to protect our postage-stamp sized land. We have to work together to prepare for survival. We have to help ourselves and work together to protect ourselves. We are going to survive; mother earth will shake herself off and cleanse herself. There will be survivors but not many. We are guardians and stewards of the earth, the real owners are those not yet born.

**Elmer Courchene:** I have mixed feelings; I have always tried to help the world and the environment. I believe that our people have the knowledge of this land because we love and know its spirit. I support the proposed national committee so that we can watch and help. In our kindness and humbleness we will help to resolve this problem. We must be honest, if sites have been selected you must tell us. To participate, we need to know where the sites are and why. I want a political person at the table to answer questions truthfully. The free trade agreement has contributed to our problems, the US is powerful, greedy and walking all over us, they also want our energy, and this contributes to the problem. I don't want our voices to go unheard; I don't want this forum and what we say to be shelved; we cannot stand back. Our strongest power is at the grass root level that is the voice that needs to be heard. We are not hearing the voice of mother earth crying out. The materialistic world races forward and does not hear that voice. We are at a cross roads where mother is telling us we need to change. The earth is like a human body, I hope we are listening.

**Margaret LaBillois:** We need to offer words of wisdom that will help resolve this dangerous situation. I cannot help as much as I would like to.

**Allan Morin:** There is a song that is very special to me that I learned from my father: *when I was a child, I traveled with my parents where the peaceful waters flow. Take me down the deep river where paradise lies at Sakitawak.* I buried my father on the same spot that the mid-wife delivered him. Jim Brady, a Métis prospector warned us of the dangers of uranium. One day he went off with the company people and never came back. This is a true story. This issue we are talking about here is important to me. Mixed messages are coming from the various forums on this issue. I was told that I was doing an injustice to the youth by explaining the nuclear waste problem; I am being ostracized by the mining industry in northern Saskatchewan for it seems, simply reporting what people are saying. The mining companies don't listen to our people. One of the youth said it was ok. I was involved in Seaborn, we need more time. The greatest production of uranium comes from Saskatchewan. Some people say that it should be returned to the site, our people say no. The industry is trying to humiliate me because I am educating our people. Site selection must respect our traditional lands and our sphere of influence. This includes transportation of waste. It's important that we are involved and we must be heard. We need to translate the material into our languages and put into laymen terms with visual material to help people understand. To date, the material has been too

technical, too scientific. It needs to be in Aboriginal languages and we need to work together to develop a framework for moving forward.

**Gordon Williams:** Regarding the questions that were originally posed at the beginning of this session, I don't yet know how many presentations were made to NWMO from Aboriginal peoples. All of the messages and submissions by Aboriginal peoples should be collated, there should be a second book presented that brings all of these voices together. This committee should come from this forum. We believe in the wampum, the two perspectives must be brought forward side by side. We have not been heard well enough as stewards. The fire people are starting to feel the heat of the fires they have started...maybe they will soon hear us. Cree prophecy helps us understand that we cannot eat money.

**Mary Richard:** I agree that we should have our perspective put in side by side in the main report. What you do is more powerful than what you say. By standing up I want Ms. Dowdeswell to understand the importance of what I am saying. Western science is not needed to make decisions; you can buy technicians but not good people. I call elders professionals, you have to play their game to get things done...our elders are professionals. We need to support our young people; we need short term action too. Your Board can take steps now to set up a committee from this forum. We need to ensure that there are no cutbacks to deal with this issue. There has to be enough money to do the right thing. We need to take action now to secure that long term solution. A scholarship must be set up to support young people in studying science. I had to learn from an elder about economic development from an Aboriginal perspective. Respect for the environment was the central teaching. We are not afraid of development; its how it's done to ensure the protection of the next seven generations. You have to respect money if you don't it will take over. It is powerful and will overtake you and make you greedy.

**Chris Lafontaine:** We need to see a parallel set of Aboriginal principles. I like the parallel idea, a national committee. We need to incorporate the importance of spirituality (not religions) in the decision making process. We need commitments to ongoing and meaningful participation spelled out by the NWMO.

**Quincey O' Keese:** We learned a lot here. I now realize that we are talking about the future of my children and grandchildren. I need to talk to youth back home to educate them about what it is, what it can do. Our youth are really smart; they must be given an opportunity. I invite the NWMO to come meet with the youth so that we can help others including non-native people

**Veronica McGuire:** I'm looking at the agenda, all I heard here is stories, they were nice but we did not help create solutions. What about other pollution? We need to think of it all.

**Cindy (Jayne) Atlookan:** I'm grateful for your stories and teachings. I've been deeply moved by what I've heard. We do need time to educate ourselves and our people back home. It is our responsibility to help our people back home to understand what this is all

about. We need the material Allan Morin mentioned. We didn't come here by chance; this is a very important issue, our children and our children's children will be touched by the outcome.

**Gitpu Nevin:** Everyone has spoken about the reality that our knowledge is not being used by mainstream. We don't hold all the answers – we need others too. We do not take care of our own land; our communities are full of garbage and dirt. We too need to take responsibility. We have to stop blaming and we have to work with others. We have been scientists for generations. It's how we use our knowledge that counts. The proposed council should work on all environmental issues – the nuclear waste issue is a small but important sub-set. We can help here and the NWMO should invite us to participate in the decision making process. If we can combine our gifts we can find a way to move forward together.

**Jesse Bercier:** I still don't know much but I want to learn more.

**Holly Labillois:** I don't know much more about NWMO or their plans, are you willing to work with the proposed aboriginal committee? (Question posed to Ms. Dowdeswell)

**Kona Williams:** I believe the stories are important, but we need to go beyond stories. We need more factual information also. I haven't learned much about NWMO, nuclear waste, or nuclear power. What I've learned is that people are afraid because they don't know. People need to learn, to understand, to know the risks so that good decisions can be made. Next time, the meeting needs to be more prepared. The proposed committee must be educated, we need to deal with the problem and not just stop producing waste.

**Melanie Nepinak:** The NWMO has good intentions but we need more time to learn and debate, and more information including the history of nuclear power development. A national aboriginal committee should be set up and be ongoing – educate itself and others – keeping new people coming in. It should include consideration of Aboriginal technology and insight to assist in reaching culturally sensitive decisions that honour the Aboriginal way.

**Billy Two Rivers:** We learn from stories, rap songs are also stories.

**Elizabeth Dowdeswell:** Thank you for your honesty. For three years we have worked in various ways with aboriginal peoples, ethical committee, national organizations, community visits. Common themes include – (1) the need for inclusivity; (2) a commitment to continuous learning; (3) time is required to learn about and reflect on this issue (including impact assessment, site selection etc.), (3) need to keep the long-term perspective; (4) need for monitoring over the long term; (5) need for collaborative decision-making. It is true that the NMWO can make choices without government on how we proceed together to find solutions and learn from each other. We will do that.

**Jim Sinclair:** there is a gap with the young people; I hold some responsibility for not working enough with young people. Our stories are of great importance and we have a responsibility to teach them to the youth, whatever it takes.

**Veronica McGuire:** If you want to inform youth, do educational programs that appeal to young people.

### Closing

**Tony Hodge** offered a gift to thank everyone and recognize their contribution. The gifts were decorated with a 1976 Bill Reid (Haida Guai artist) design marking the opening of the Museum of Civilization. It is called “Children of the Raven” and reflects the Haida Legend of Origin – the discovery of mankind in a clamshell by Raven.

The closing was then lead by **Greg Meekis** with the **Ojibway-Cree Singers** from Ottawa.

**Appendix 3**

**NWMO PowerPoint Presentation**