

**Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs Nuclear Waste  
Management Sessions**

**Final Report**

**Submitted on July 29th, 2005  
Submitted to NWMO**

## **Introduction**

Four sessions were held within the Atlantic Region where Mi'kmaq Maliseet and Passamaquoddy people from various age groups were invited to attend and give their opinions and thoughts into the process dealing with nuclear waste management. These meetings allowed for a more in-depth discussion on Nuclear Waste and sparked interest to learn more about this issue. The following is a brief description and an overview of the discussions and recommendations which flowed from the four sessions.

### **Elsipogtog First Nation**

The first day-long Nuclear Waste Management workshop organized by the Atlantic Policy Congress was held in Elsipogtog, New Brunswick, at the Elsipogtog Health Center on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005. We had 9 participants show up all together and we had 13 people present including speakers. The meeting started at 10 a.m. with an opening prayer made by a much respected elder from Elsipogtog First Nation. Opening comments were made by Cheryl Knockwood and Oasoeg Milliea. The main observation at this workshop was that the issue of nuclear waste storage is so complicated and the impacts of the decisions are so great that we must give ourselves the necessary time and resources to examine and analyze the options. Tony Hodge from NWMO was there to give an overview of this subject matter. Simon Osmond from APCFNC discussed other possible sources of energy. There was a lively discussion and many questions were asked. Meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Many of the participants conveyed the importance of educating ourselves on this issue and the need to adapt ourselves to something even better such as conserving energy. One person commented on how powerful Nuclear waste and how devastating it is on environment. Meantime we must be very cautious. Got to respect nuclear waste, the answers will not come over night.

Another participant expressed how horrified she was by impacts of nuclear energy on first nations in Ontario. She stated she came from a community where she seen the fish from that area, covered with tumors. She said people were getting cancers and dying from it. She raised concerns about how much money they put in front of first nation communities. "You don't get anything for nothing; nuclear waste is a time machine. When

looking at the radius for PLGS we will be destroyed in seconds. I don't believe first nations should be looking after that, we should not be taken care of it and as for transportation I think no keep it where it is. Man has tampered with something and now they don't know what to do with it."

An Elder asked if there was a Mi'kmaq name for nuclear waste, and none of the elders could think of none. "Our knowledge is to leave it where it is and stop producing it. What will happen if there are earthquakes or collapses, who will take care of it, nobody. We are poisoning the earth, our own people use the plants as medicines, and they too will become toxic. We are losing lots of land. Nuclear waste is bad medicine, if you change the life of that spirit. Yet the government continues to make the waste, theories on what to do with the waste, it will change and adopt it bounce back here to deal with this. These are the changes we'll have to live it. Nuclear energy was a mistake that now we are trying to hide it in the earth but we can't because it's alive. Canada wants to bury it but it will come out.

## **Fredericton**

The second day-long Nuclear Waste Management workshop organized by the Atlantic Policy Congress was held in Fredericton, New Brunswick, at the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel on June 9th, 2005. We had 8 participants show up all together and we had 12 people present including speakers. The meeting started at 10 a.m. with an opening prayer made by a much respected elder from Tobique First Nation. Opening comments were made from myself, Oasoeg Milliea. Also Tony Hodge from NWMO was there to present on methods of disposal. Nancy Bobbish from the AFN was also present to share the national First Nation input. Simon Osmond from the APCFNC presented on other energy resources. The main observation at this workshop was that many people are concerned about the impacts of nuclear waste on the earth which lead towards broader discussions about energy use and policies within Canada. Many questions were asked. Meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

One person commented that understanding the full impacts of nuclear waste is complicated but now that he is aware of it he wants to learn more such as what research has been done on uranium and what impacts radiation has on humans and the earth. Concerns were raised about what impacts uranium mining may have on aboriginal lands. As Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and

Passamaquoddy peoples we need to develop and implement policies for future generations.

One person noted that the deadline being imposed of November 2005 was too short considering the information to digest was so complicated and the implications of the recommendations on the earth and future generations are too great. Furthermore he stated that it is because governments and other agencies ask for our input so late in the process that it creates a level of distrust by FN on the agency which is difficult to overcome. Regardless of the shortcoming of this process the issue is much too important to not to address. Participants felt it was their responsibility to step forward and examine this issue. The potential impacts of nuclear waste on the health of all Canadians are so important it must be addressed. The increase in cancers or birth defects due to radiation is unacceptable.

## **Membertou**

The third day-long Nuclear Waste Management workshop organized by the Atlantic Policy Congress was held in Membertou, Nova Scotia, at the Membertou Trade and Convention center on July 12th, 2005. We had 3 participants show up all together and we had 7 people present including speakers. The meeting started at 10 a.m. with an opening prayer made by a much respected elder from Membertou First Nation. Opening comments where made by Cheryl Knockwood and Oasoeg Milliea. Mike Krizanc from NWMO was there to present on the fourth nuclear waste storage option. Nancy Bobbish from the AFN was present to share the national findings and recommendations from First Nations across Canada. Simon Osmond from the APCFNC presented on climate change and renewable energy. The main finding of this workshop was related to the unacceptable long term impacts of nuclear waste on the earth and what we can and should do about limiting our demand on energy. Meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

An elder stated that NWMO needs to keep these sessions going with first nation communities so it can spark interest with Chiefs, Councils and youths because they will be dealing with this issue in the future. .

## **Elders and Youth Workshop**

The fourth two-day Nuclear Waste Management workshop organized by the Atlantic Policy Congress was held at the Holiday Inn Harbourview in Dartmouth NS on July 27-28th, 2005. We had 24 participants show including 6 presenters. The meeting started at 10 a.m. with an opening prayer made by a much respected elder from Membertou First Nation. Opening comments were made by Cheryl Knockwood and Oasoeg Milliea. Mike Krizanc from NWMO was there to present on the draft recommendation report NWOM may make to Minister of Natural Resources. Norville Getty from the UNBI was present to give overview and recommendations made by UNBI on this issue. Simon Osmond from the APCFNC and Daisy Kidston from Clean Nova Scotia presented on climate change and renewable energy. The main finding of this workshop was related to the unacceptable long term impacts of nuclear waste on the earth and what we can and should do about limiting our demand on energy. Meeting was adjourned on noon the second day.

Norville Getty gave UNBI's analysis on Nuclear Waste Issue. He passed out a PowerPoint presentation. He stated that AFN's recommendations to Seabourne Panel in 1980's were totally ignored. AFN got funding but not enough. Not enough funding is ever provided consistently to have good faith discussions with First Nations. UNBI finally received funding in July 2005 to do community level negotiations and submit report within a month when UNBI has been asking for funds for over 2 years. Concern that disposal sites will be in the traditional territory of aboriginal peoples and this will impact us. His understanding is that discussions have been initiated with aboriginals on potential sites. There will be another opportunity on Aug. 18th for FN in NB to give input into this dialogue at the Metepenagiag Lodge.

Youth expressed importance of thinking long term and to allow room for new information to help in decision making. He also expressed concerned about how our input will be used. He suggested more people need to be aware of this subject and that everyone at meeting inform others of issue and bring information to communities such as newsletters and ongoing workshops.

Elder expressed frustration that our input is sought too late in the game after the substantive decisions will be made. I would like everyone to be aware that we have an advisory committee to look into this issue because we are the people responsible for mother earth and if anything

happens to plant mother earth will be affected by it. We need to keep vigilant in providing information to our people. We would like for NWMO and government to be honest with us. We need to set up a task force to keep on their backs and to keep us informed on what they are going to do.

Elder expressed worries about long term impacts on earth. I would like young people to hear more about it. We need to have a youth conference and to keep them informed of this initiative. This should all be going to schools and high schools and let the young people know what is going on because they are ones in 30 years who will neutralize or eliminate nuclear waste. We are really in a dangerous situation and they want to put disposal sites on our traditional lands and it is the same as when they gave us small pox infested blankets. We need to educate our peoples. I really wish there were more young people. If we go to Red Bank want to take youth with us we want o make sure they don't bury this on our traditional lands.

Elder expressed frustration over situation we are in and wondered if we will ever get through this. The decisions we make today and how they are made will have long reaching impacts. We have a right/obligation to say no and say we don't want nuclear waste in our territories.

Native people input may not have mattered to them but it matters to us. We look at things holistically and they don't. They say they care about future generations but I don't think they mind too much about passing it on. Their recommendation is based on a best case scenario. Why did they need an Act to act responsibly with the waste. They should have done this in beginning. The nuclear waste destroys and to create waste that will impact future generations is totally irresponsible of us. In NB Point Lepreau decision to refurbish is scheduled for this week. We have to sit here and face it and talk about it and teach other people about it and we can't ignore it anymore.

Elder thanked APCFNC for having these sessions and has caused her to reevaluate her relationship to energy. And she agrees with other elder that we are in an awful mess and she is determined to do something about it. We can all make a change personally in how we live our lives.

Youth expressed shock of impacts of nuclear energy and waste. How am I going to explain this situation and issue to my children? She stated "I

wish I was educated more to say more. We should start educating our youth and the elders could share their knowledge about these issues.”

Another Elder stated that the ramifications of what is discussed here today will impact the long term. Every time society tries to make life easier for us instead it makes it worse. “They force us to be dependent on that energy. But what we have to do is make decisions that are best for us and I am not prepared to mortgage my kids need for my needs right now. This is cultural genocide to make us dependent on that energy. We have to be more vigilant on protecting our culture.”

A youth stated that we have to be proactive instead of reactive and she liked that “UNBI is going to all communities and it is important that this informed is shared at all age levels of our communities and we must continue the dialogue and we should set the pace.”

## **Recommendations**

- Recommend as Mi’kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy people we must re-take control and stop being dependent on nuclear energy.
- Recommend as First Nations we lobby both Federal and Provincial governments to develop an energy policy based on sound environmental choices.
- Recommend we maintain elders/ youth focused dialogue on this issue.
- Recommend that NWMO have a national dialogue with all aboriginal groups involved in nuclear waste dialogue sessions across Canada to come up with recommendations on nuclear fuel waste storage issues.
- Recommend NWMO and APCFNC continues to educate our people and our leaders on this issue.
- Recommend NWMO provide greater funding for training to aboriginal peoples to examine the full implications of nuclear waste and nuclear energy on the health of peoples and the earth.
- Recommend NWMO maintains dialogue with First Nation in Atlantic on this issue and more resources, input and time is given to ensure First Nation Voice is expressed within this dialogue.
- Recommend more funding be allocated from Canada and NWMO to research impacts and possible beneficial uses of nuclear waste.

- Recommend that the option involving consequential decision making by NWMO is more responsible since it allows for the unknown in development of science and technology.
- Recommend that APCFNC send final report directly to Minister of Natural Resources outlining our recommendations to ensure our voice is heard.
- Recommend that NWMO provides ongoing funded dialogue with aboriginals on this issue with long term funding from the Nuclear industry mandated by legislation;
- Recommend that NWMO provides for an accountable aboriginal seat on the NWMO advisory committee; and staff more aboriginals.
- Recommend when NWMO puts security in place around nuclear energy/waste sites that aboriginal peoples be considered for employment in security and environmental monitoring.
- Recommend NWMO fund an Atlantic based youth conference to keep them informed of this initiative.
- Recommend that NWMO fund the development of curriculum on Nuclear energy and waste because they, in 30 years, will neutralize or eliminate and be responsible for storing nuclear waste.
- Recommend that APCFNC adopts this position and lobbies other provincial and federal government of our position.
- Recommend that APCFNC takes a position publicly on the refurbishment of Point Lepreau.
- Recommend that APCFNC continue dialogue on this issue.
- Recommended that Canada stop exporting nuclear fuel to other countries.
- Recommended to find the real cost of nuclear fuel on billing.
- Recommended that NWMO send off final recommendations to Aboriginal's first to see if the right ones are being recommended by them.
- Recommended that NWMO phase out power plants now instead of doubling the amount of waste since NWMO are still trying to figure out what NWMO are going to do with the current waste.
- Recommended that NWMO be put under great public scrutiny via media attention

### **Elders Teachings Roundtables**

The elders shared teaching related to the importance of prayer and positive thinking on all things on earth. Gwen Bear shared teachings of water and



the healing properties of prayer. It was felt by the group that Uranium was to powerful an energy not meant to be used by man and this is apparent when we look at the impacts nuclear energy and its waste will have on the earth. The radiation is deadly and the waste generated from trying to harness this energy is deadly not only for this generation but also for future generations. It was felt by the group that the power of prayer may be instrumental in reducing the negative impacts the waste may have on the earth and all of us who are dependent on it now and in the future.

Child's perspective (age 7)

“Nuclear Waste is in a big house. It takes 7-10 years for it to cool down. Whenever people go near it they will die so that is why the use robots to lift it up. Nuclear waste goes to this place it gets stronger and stronger and then it will become at nuclear bomb. It is very dangerous.”

**Note**

The sharing of the feedback from these sessions is not to be construed as consultation under s 35(1). The main theme in these sessions is the need for First Nations to have more time and dollars to continue with this dialogue in the following years.