

# Council of Elders and Youth

## Record of Discussion #17

**APM-REP-00676-0209**

**March 2017**

**Jessica Perritt**

**nwmo**

NUCLEAR WASTE  
MANAGEMENT  
ORGANIZATION

SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION  
DES DÉCHETS  
NUCLÉAIRES

**Nuclear Waste Management Organization**  
22 St. Clair Avenue East, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4T 2S3  
Canada

Tel: 416-934-9814  
Web: [www.nwmo.ca](http://www.nwmo.ca)

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Jessica Perritt  
NWMO

**Record of Discussion**  
**NWMO Council of Elders and Youth**  
**Kingbridge Conference Centre & Institute**  
**March 2-4, 2017**

**Attendees**

**NWMO Council of Elders**

**Chair:** Donna Augustine and Jeff Kinew

**Members:** Augus Gardiner, Diane Longboat, Grace Manitowabi, George Morin, Dorothy Parenteau, Billie Schibler, Roland St. Germain, Gordon Williams, Debbie Plain, Shavonne Custer, Brandon Petahtegoose, Norman Stagg, Madison Levi, Rayanna Seymour-Hourie

**Advisors:** Joanne Barnaby, Fred Kelly, Melanie Hadley

**NWMO:**

**Staff:** Laurie Swami, Bob Watts, Jessica Perritt, Joe Gaboury, Jamie Matear, Raymond Hatfield, Arthur Moore, Greg Plain, Ross Holden, Goyce Kakegamic

**Guests:**

Ron Jamieson, David Charles, Willie Pine

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**Wednesday March 2, 2017**

**Policy Round Table Discussion**

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As a follow up action from the November 2016 meeting the Council of Elders and Youth requested a discussion on how the Aboriginal Policy, Indigenous Knowledge Policy, Social and Ethical Framework Document and the Declaration of the Keepers of the Land could potentially complement one another and the Council wanted to work on finding opportunities for them to be harmonized. The Indigenous Knowledge and Aboriginal Policy together with the Declaration of the Keepers of the Land have provided NWMO with clear insight and strong direction for how to effectively work with Aboriginal communities. The Council is also cognizant of the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) regarding opportunities in the private sector.

Bob Watts thanked the Council for providing advice which has allowed the NWMO to take a leadership role in the private sector to establish progressive policies that the Council has advised the NWMO to develop. Bob also mentions how the APM project will only be sited in a willing and informed community in alignment with UNDRIP and its principle of FPIC. Bob informed the Council that NWMO provided cultural awareness training for staff and contractors which is in

alignment with the TRC's calls to action. The cultural awareness training for 2016 was attended by 70 staff members in a full-day training session that focused on Indigenous worldview, treaties, how treaties impact NWMO's work, residential school and reconciliation.

Joanne Barnaby introduced a high-level summary of all of the documents and asked the Council to consider how all of these important pieces fit together and if there are gaps or opportunities to harmonize what they recognized as key elements to a holistic policy framework. She put the following questions to the members:

1. Are there are gaps in current NWMO policy in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations?
2. Are any of the pertinent principles set out in UNDRIP missing in NWMO policy that are within the purview of the NWMO?
3. Are there additional questions that we would like to add to the Ethical Framework? Perhaps discussion around how, when and by whom questions such as these should be addressed in the planning process would help provide guidance to NWMO.
4. Are there changes or additions to these policy documents that we would like to work on? How do we reconcile the language used, Aboriginal vs Indigenous?
5. How do we measure how effectively NWMO policies are implemented?
6. Is there anything else we need to do to 'line up all of our ducks'?

#### Questions/Comments:

- Members would like more time to reflect on all of the documentation provided to be able to answer the questions to the best of their ability.
- How is NWMO evaluating that the staff cultural awareness training is effective?
- Suggested that NWMO could potentially post testimonials on their website for staff that participated in the training session on how the training impacted them.
- One Elder recommended the development of a NWMO Reconciliation Agenda – this could be a vehicle to harmonize policies like the Aboriginal Policy, Indigenous Knowledge Policy and the Declaration of the Keepers of the Land.
- A reconciliation agenda would need to reflect the respect for community policies
- A reconciliation agenda would need to reflect UNDRIP and TRC calls to action
- The Ethical Framework document is a dated document and could use some updating
- Ideas for Aboriginal Awareness training
  - start with the Creation story
  - include old maps with traditional jurisdiction
- NWMO needs to start showcasing some of the great work they are doing as leaders so other industry can learn from NWMO
- The Elders and Youth would like to create a full description of the work they have done

to date

- Indigenous Knowledge needs to be incorporated into Safety e.g. explore the traditional teachings on the safety of the rocks.
- Opportunity to reconcile language e.g. traditionally nobody owned the land we called it our territory
- Indigenous Knowledge systems need to be defined so western scientists understand and we are not always in a position of justifying Indigenous science
- NWMO should be having this same discussion with the Indigenous communities they are working with.

The Council of Elders and Youth members came to consensus on the recommendation of a NWMO Reconciliation Agenda. They would like time to reflect on the questions and get feedback through Jessica before the next meeting. Jessica Perritt will summarize the discussion and send the summary with supporting documentation to all members via email. Members will have the option to provide feedback via email or call Jessica to provide feedback verbally. The recommendation of a reconciliation agenda will be brought to the next meeting as well as a summary of feedback.

### **Friday March 3, 2017**

#### **Opening Ceremony and Welcome Remarks**

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Elder Fred Kelly provided a ceremony to begin the meeting which included a Pipe ceremony and a female Elder to speak to the water. The ceremony also included a special recognition of Ben Belfadhel to honour and signify his new role as Vice President, Site Selection. Ben was gifted a traditional muskrat hat from the circle and the traditional teaching of the muskrat was shared.

President and CEO, Laurie Swami expressed her gratitude for being able to meet with the Council of Elders and Youth again. She reflected on what a humbling experience she had at the November 2016 meeting when the Council welcomed her to her new role through ceremony. She shared that her new role has been very interesting thus far and attending the ICGR Conference in Paris in December was very informative. She learned a lot about this project and was fortunate to be able to learn with colleagues and leadership from the communities we are working with. She expressed the importance for all of us to work together to find the safest place for the DRG while ensuring that we do that in the best possible way. She said it made her very happy to see how embracing the Elders and Youth were towards Ben in his new role and it gave her confidence that she made the right choice in her selection of the Vice President position. She informed the group that she will be heading out on the road in the spring to start meeting with both municipal and Aboriginal communities involved in the project. She updated the Council on their recommendation from the November 2016 meeting for the Council of Elders and Youth to meet with the Board of Directors; this recommendation was brought to the Board and the joint meeting has been set to take place during the July 2017 meeting. She closed her remarks by saying she looks forward to the Council's continued advice.

Vice President of Site Selection, Ben Belfadhel thanked the Elders and Youth for the very moving ceremony to welcome him into his new role and he expressed difficulty in fully expressing his feelings in being honoured in such a special way as one of his traditional teachings is that of humility. Over his past 10 years at the NWMO he has been fortunate to work in engagement activities with both the municipal and Aboriginal communities as well as the Council of Elders and Youth. Ben expressed his excitement as Traditional Knowledge and working with Indigenous Communities is important and there are not many companies out there working in the way NWMO is. He updated the group that NWMO is at a turning point in site selection process as NWMO will be working towards borehole drilling this year in some of the areas and this will increase NWMO's visibility. Ben closed his comments by saying that NWMO's ultimate priority is to protect Mother Earth and future generations.

Bob Watts opened his remarks by acknowledging the great work being done by his staff. NWMO is starting to move forward as a project and less as a process and due to this transition it has become evident that there is a need for NWMO to start focusing on partnership discussions. In having those discussions well-being is a primary element to partnership so this will also become a focus for NWMO in 2017 which is in align with NWMO's commitment to communities being better off for having worked with NWMO. Bob also updated the group that NWMO has a new focus on water as the communities wish to discuss and ensure water and the protection of water is communicated appropriately. Water is also a topic that will be brought to the Council for advice and it is on the agenda for this meeting. This is a great opportunity for NWMO to interweave Indigenous Knowledge with Western Science as Indigenous people hold a lot of knowledge of water. He closed his remark by thanking everyone for their attendance and that he is looking forward to the next few days.

### **Update on Borehole Drilling and Other Land Based Activities**

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Ben Belfadhel and Bob Watts provided an update on the field activities that took place in 2017. Ben presented on the technical aspects of the work and the next steps planned for 2017. Bob Watts presented on the First Nation and Metis contributions to the field work and the next steps for 2017. The presentation included a broad overview on what consultation would look like for borehole drilling.

### **Questions/Comments:**

- Inquiry on how the safety of water is being communicated to communities
- What did the communities do when a sacred site/sensitive site was discovered during the field activities?
- NWMO needs to be aware of the migratory nature of the Nations when finding artifacts as that it may not always be a closest Nation that the artifact belongs to
- As NWMO gets closer to selecting a site the social impacts of this project need to be focused on at the community level. What resources are going into community well-being?
- What does partnership mean to NWMO?
- Has NWMO started to discuss partnership with communities?
- Protests are going to come up, does NWMO have a strategy on how to deal with protests?

### **Youth Presentation**

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Melanie Hadley and the Youth members presented a summary of the results from the speed teachings volume I and II. As part of the presentation they include some of their observations from the speed teachings which included:

- Everyone engaged in conversations
- Time used effectively
- Opportunity for everyone to share
- Stimulated better and more equal discussion
- Opportunity for Youth to develop their leadership and facilitation skills
- Youth felt their unique gifts were recognized and appreciated
- Opportunity for Youth and Elders to connect

The Youth asked the larger circle to share their reflections on the speed teachings. Comments shared were:

- Lengthier time frame
- No time to deliberate
- Maybe next time only one question with more time to reflect and answer
- Council of Elders and Youth mission statement should be read before every meeting to keep the Council grounded and reminded of their purpose

Melanie Hadley explained to the group that the speed teachings are not meant to replace the traditional way Elders like to share teachings but rather to add to the communication mix of how the group is interacting. The Council of Elders and Youth members and NWMO staff agreed that they liked the speed teachings and would like them to continue as they provide an opportunity for Youth to develop their skills and focus the Elders on providing advice to the NWMO. Bob Watts asked the Elders and Youth to think about if/how the speed teachings could be vehicle for the Council to provide advice to the NWMO. It was agreed that if that was concluded both NWMO and Youth would need to put more thought into how the questions are developed. Bob said he would be happy to work with the Youth on the speed teaching concept.

### **Talking Circle**

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Bob Watts introduced the talking circle. The subject for the talking circle was:

1. What are key principles and values that support Partnership?
2. What are people hearing and learning regarding the implementation of projects that could help the NWMO?

### **Comments**

- Community and project need to be integrated.
- Empowerment and support of Indigenous communities is a must
- Respect for all engaged
- Healthy life and good things will come
- Healing of some communities may be required before they can think about partnership
- Equalizing power differentials (indigenous / Science)



- Co-operation
- Inclusion of all territories on Turtle Island
- Listen with an open mind
- Open dialog & patience
- Respect
- Social Impacts – Economic – People – Inclusion
- Sincerity – controversial issues should not be sugar coated. When you are sincere people want to work with you.
- Ability to listen
- Willingness to learn about the communities you are working with
- Communities need to be a willingness to learn

To close the day NWMO staff presented the gift to the meeting participants. The gift was a stone bear smudge bowl which signified the importance of ceremony which was a common theme for the meeting.

### **Saturday March 4, 2017**

#### **Introduction to Water Discussion**

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The discussion opened with an audio track provided by Joanne Barnaby where a study was done on the sound of healthy water and unhealthy water. It sounded like an ultrasound of a pregnant Mother and the flow of the water sounded like a heartbeat. The healthy water had a very strong and rhythmic “heartbeat” and the unhealthy water had a weaker and irregular “heartbeat”. The Elders and Youth really connected with this analogy as traditionally water is described as Mother Earth’s bloodline. The Council then made the comparison that borehole drilling and learning about the water at depth would be like doing an amniocentesis of Mother Earth.

Bob opened the discussion by clarifying that we are in the early stages of developing communication material to discuss water and the safety of water. He said this is an opportunity for NWMO to interweave Indigenous Knowledge with Western Science and asked the members to think about what Indigenous Knowledge teachings may need to be part of that story. One main message was very clear and consistent - Water has Spirit. Other teachings included:

- women are the keepers of the water and can speak for the water
- instead of sharing stories regarding water we should share experiences
- water carries memory
- the healing properties of water
- could be helpful to listen to traditional water walkers
- water ceremonies will need to be part of NWMO’s work
- the need to respect clean water

The Council was clear that this was the beginning of the discussion, the Elders and Youth request this topic to be brought to the next meeting.

### **Next Meeting**

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- Date for the next meeting is July 5-7, 2017
- Jessica Perritt to send summary of policy discussion with supporting documentation to allow for members to provide advice prior to the July meeting
- Reconciliation agenda – agenda item for the July meeting
- Continue water discussion - agenda item for July meeting
- Read Mission statement before every meeting

### **Closing Ceremony**

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Fred Kelly closed meeting with a closing invocation.

*Date notes taken: November March 2-4, 2017*

*This note was prepared by staff and has not been approved and/or reviewed for accuracy by other meeting participants.*