



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

Indigenous Knowledge Policy

JULY 2020



Introduction

The Indigenous Knowledge Policy is designed to provide a framework to support a body of work that has been underway since NWMO's inception in 2002. The NWMO Indigenous Knowledge Policy will work in partnership with the NWMO Reconciliation Policy.

Indigenous Knowledge recognizes that people are part of and are one with Mother Earth. Indigenous Knowledge systems emphasize the interrelationships among all components of the environment, and as such, believe Indigenous peoples have a responsibility to be the protectors (guardians) of Mother Earth. Indigenous Knowledge is an evolving, complex and sophisticated system of knowledge drawing on millennia of wisdom and experience. It is an evolving knowledge system that ranges in diversity from governance, ecology, biology, ecosystems, harvesting, science and other aspects. It constantly grows and expands with the experience of new generations. It is expected that this knowledge system will continue to provide a source of wisdom through the various stages of project development and implementation. As the project moves through various stages of its work and the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) engages with communities, there is an opportunity to learn from and interweave Indigenous Knowledge.

Indigenous Knowledge, often referred to as "Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge," has contributed to the development of the NWMO Adaptive Phased Management (APM) strategy through the sharing of Indigenous teachings containing values, ethics, principles, and practices.

The NWMO respects the value of what both western science and Indigenous Knowledge systems can contribute to the project development and decision-making process.

Purpose

As the NWMO advances the APM strategy and the NWMO engages with communities, there is an opportunity to learn from local Indigenous Knowledge. The NWMO will build working relationships with First Nation and Métis communities to determine if and how the community wishes to share its Indigenous Knowledge. This policy is designed to set out how the NWMO will support communities, as well as to guide the work of the NWMO and contractors working on its behalf.

It is also designed to help ensure that Indigenous Knowledge in all its forms will continue to be valued and respected by the NWMO and included in planning, project development and decision-making processes.

Scope

This policy applies to all NWMO activities.

Background

The development of this policy has benefited from ongoing advice and the education from the NWMO Council of Elders and Youth and its predecessor, the Elders Forum, and through the building of relationships with First Nation and Métis organizations at the national, provincial and regional levels.

The NWMO was established in 2002 in accordance with federal legislation, the *Nuclear Fuel Waste Act*.

The responsibility of the NWMO is to study, recommend and implement an approach for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel in Canada. In 2005, the NWMO recommended that Canada proceed in a deliberate and collaborative way to contain and isolate the used fuel in a deep geological repository in a manner that safeguards people and respects the environment, now and in the future. In 2007, the Government of Canada selected the NWMO's recommendation, APM, as Canada's approach for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel. The NWMO is now implementing this approach. Recognition of the important role of Indigenous Knowledge was embedded in the APM plan that the NWMO recommended to Government and that was approved in 2007, and is also a requirement of the newly adopted [Impact Assessment Act](#).

Be responsive to advances in technology, natural and social science research, Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge, and societal values and expectations (Choosing a Way Forward, Final Study, NWMO, 2005).

Roles & responsibility

The President is accountable to ensure that Indigenous Knowledge in all its forms will continue to be valued and respected by the NWMO and included in planning and decision-making processes.

The Vice-President of Indigenous Relations is accountable to monitor NWMO's adherence to the implementation of this policy.

The NWMO Council of Elders and Youth will provide advice and guidance to the Indigenous Knowledge Policy.

All staff are accountable to adhere to Indigenous Knowledge Policy.

Principles

The NWMO will be guided by the following principles in its work with communities and Indigenous Knowledge keepers:

- » The NWMO recognizes, honours and supports the belief that Indigenous peoples have a special relationship with the natural environment and have unique stewardship responsibilities that are part of this relationship and are guided by the Seven Teachings whose principles are universal including the sacred laws and codes of Indigenous Peoples.
- » The NWMO recognizes that protection of Mother Earth for future generations is, in itself, a foundational commitment to, and is a responsibility of all people.
- » Indigenous Knowledge continues to evolve and have relevance and provides value in decision-making processes today and in the future.
- » The NWMO acknowledges that Indigenous peoples are holders of Indigenous Knowledge and recognizes that Indigenous Knowledge is essential and integral to decision-making processes.
- » The NWMO understands that Indigenous Knowledge, together with western science, is part of good decision-making when built on a foundation of trust and sharing of information in a respectful manner.
- » The NWMO recognizes that the safety and security of future generations is integral to the Indigenous worldview and fundamental to decision-making processes of Indigenous peoples and is the responsibility of all people to future generations.
- » The NWMO supports the Council of Elders and Youth *Declaration of the Keepers of the Land*, and the Reconciliation Policy.
- » The NWMO respects and honours that Indigenous peoples have an oral tradition and ways of ensuring the validity of knowledge shared.
- » The NWMO will continue to honour spirit and ceremony as a core value within Indigenous Knowledge.

Policy

The NWMO will work with impacted Indigenous communities in implementing our mandate under the *Nuclear Fuel Waste Act* (NFWA) and in the selection of a site as required by Adaptive Phased Management which was selected as Canada's plan for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel by the Government of Canada in 2007. The selection of a site must be informed by the best available knowledge, including science, social science, Indigenous Knowledge, and ethics.

The NWMO commits that Indigenous Knowledge will inform decisions in each step of the planning in the decision-making process.

The NWMO will look to Indigenous peoples to share Indigenous Knowledge with the NWMO to the extent that they wish. The NWMO will ensure that Indigenous intellectual property is protected, as agreed to with the Indigenous peoples who choose to share that knowledge.

The NWMO will work with First Nation and Métis communities and municipalities that wish to share their knowledge and advice in the implementation of the site selection process, and in the design, construction, operation, and monitoring of the DGR.

The NWMO will strive to seek out Indigenous Knowledge experts and/or contractors as it relates to project development and implementation.

The NWMO recognizes that any collection or documentation of Indigenous Knowledge will be of interest to the community beyond the scope of the NWMO project, and the NWMO will agree to manage that information in partnership with the community accordingly.

The NWMO will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding or other agreements as may be requested by communities to ensure protection of Indigenous Knowledge.

The NWMO will provide support for Indigenous Knowledge engagement throughout all steps of research, work plan development (including research capacity building), siting assessment and project implementation.

The NWMO will support the development of community steering committees as may be appropriate for an Indigenous Knowledge research and/or engagement process that will include Elders and knowledge keepers to oversee any Indigenous Knowledge work in their area related to the NWMO project.

The NWMO will build relationships with First Nation and Métis communities and municipalities, groups and peoples on a foundation of respect for languages and customs, cultural protocols, and political, social, economic and cultural institutions.

The NWMO commits to respecting and following local First Nation and Métis protocols related to burial sites found on work sites.

NWMO will communicate clearly with new potential employees about who we are as an organization with regards to our commitment to interweaving Indigenous Knowledge, building partnerships with Indigenous communities and our commitment to Reconciliation.

**For more information,
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