



# Nuclear Waste Management Organization 2021 Annual Evaluation Report - Executive Summary

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*“Status quo hasn’t served Indigenous people and won’t serve them well in the future. If we’re acting in a manner that is consistent with the status quo we will not be successful as an organization. 100% we will not be successful. That’s our challenge, to change the way we’re doing business to prepare for success through reconciliation.”*

~ Bob Watts from #VoicesofReconciliation video #8

## Executive Summary

This report describes the annual evaluation of the *Reconciliation Policy* implemented by the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO). The Reconciliation Policy was birthed through ceremony in October 2019. Since the implementation of the policy, activities have included mandatory staff Reconciliation training, relationship building, informal training opportunities, staff support systems, the implementation of the Reconciliation Assessment Tool, and community-driven workplans. At the end of 2020, a baseline assessment was conducted. This report provides evaluation feedback on the Reconciliation Policy’s impacts and outcomes for the 2021 year.

### Methodology

The evaluation scope included an impact and initial outcome evaluation (specific to 2021) of the Reconciliation Policy. This evaluation sought to establish an understanding of the growth, outcomes and impacts of the Reconciliation Policy within NWMO staff, as well as promising approaches for maintaining and continuing the reconciliation journey in a good way. Impacts and outcomes which surfaced in 2021, were collected through survey tools. These tools provided space for stories told by NWMO staff through qualitative and quantitative data. All staff at NWMO were invited to participate in the survey, with demographics of participants shared by identity as well as department. The analysis and report writing format was guided by the strengths-based teachings offered by Bob Watts, who offered the image of reconciliation

work at NWMO as a young spirit in the formative stage of life, requiring independence



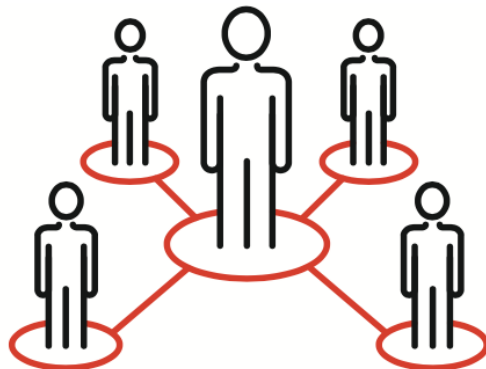
and experiential learning as well nurturing and guidance.

### Evaluation Findings

#### Impacts of the Reconciliation Policy

NWMO staff participants shared the ways in which the implementation of the Reconciliation Policy influenced an increased understanding of reconciliation and colonialism and mobilized a change where staff are seeking ways to

integrate learnings into their work. Key influences which support the increase in understanding include trainings and other educational/experiential learning opportunities.



The Reconciliation Policy created a shift in the organization whereby staff participants felt an increased sense of priority, investment, and commitment to advance reconciliation with the work environment. It was also shared that the structure provided by the Reconciliation Policy has served as a foundation for advancing meaningful community engagement. Impacts of organizational changes influenced by the Reconciliation policy were described by staff participants as increased sense of pride in the work they do, shifts in relational behaviors such

as collaboration and consensus building as well as increased confidence in speaking out/ speaking truth against racism in personal contexts and workspaces. Additional impacts on behavior changes were noted by staff participants when discussing how they engaged in ‘spending their privilege’. These include actions such as demonstrating openness to and creating space for diverse voices and perspectives as well as normalizing the acknowledgement of Indigenous sovereignty and white settler privilege in the workspace.

While many staff participants reported experiences characterized as positive changes,

### Outcomes

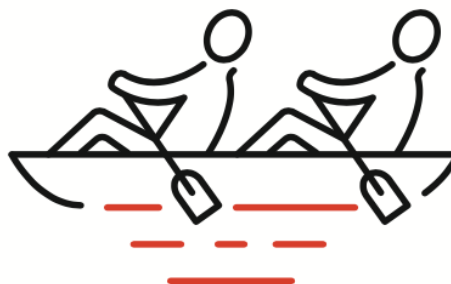
When asked about the impacts of the Reconciliation Policy on the sense of ownership demonstrated by NWMO staff, staff participants described moderate to high levels of change since the baseline assessment in 2020. Levels in change of ownership were attributed to actions such as increased likeliness of challenging harmful narratives and sharing education with the wider community, as well as changes in decision making and relationship building within the work environment. Staff participants shared about the ways in which they related ownership to their ability to mobilized learnings into actions such as changes in practice. Some attributed high ratings of change in ownership to ways in which reconciliation education and commitments were directly applied in their work. Others shared their strong sense of increased awareness and openness while acknowledging room for growth

### Short-Term Growth through a Long-Term Lens

The NWMO Reconciliation Policy has resulted in moderate-to-high changes since the baseline assessment in 2020, which has been largely shaped by the educational opportunities provided and organizational efforts to support and prioritize reconciliation work. However, the experience of change and the readiness to move forward to build on teachings gained is reflected in the majority of staff, variation remains. Variations in confidence moving forward have been identified through experiences of stagnation or dissonance as a result of resistance to the narrative of historical and ongoing

there were also staff participants who described a differing change trajectory. Some shared about ways they were wrestling with elements of the Reconciliation Policy and had mixed feelings about whether the impacts were experienced in a collective positive direction by all NWMO staff. Similarly, some reported that they were feeling the emotional impact of wrestling with doubts of the validity of education provided on reconciliation and colonialism. The normalization of concepts of white settler privilege surfaced as a point where viewpoints varied.

in confidence to apply learnings into their work. In reflecting on ownership as demonstrated by



application of reconciliation learning in their work, staff participants noted external and organizational barriers as well as knowledge gaps in further implementing reconciliation into their workspace.

experiences of colonialism, uncertainty on the role or ability of white settler staff in moving reconciliation forward and structure challenges relating to organizational accountability, leadership, alignment between organizational policy and reconciliation values/commitments and barriers embedded in the organizational structure weighing down on capacity to carry reconciliation work forward. As an organization, NWMO is investing in their relationship with partner communities as well as working to facilitate relationship building between the communities themselves. While there is a lot of

growth that needs to happen before NWMO will be a mature reflection of its Reconciliation Policy in all its implementation, the growth within NWMO staff and with community relationship

building noted in this 2021 short term evaluation is important for the long term development of NWMO as an organization committed to growing in reconciliation action.

**Table 1: Quantitative Data at a Glance**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Participation in Evaluation</b>	Number and percentage of NWMO staff participating	93 (43%)
<b>Staff ownership of reconciliation</b>	Most common rating of staff ownership of reconciliation within their work (between 1-10)	7
<b>Reconciliation Training</b>	Number and percentage of staff completed Reconciliation Training 1 in 2021	97 (45%)
	Total percentage of staff having completed Reconciliation Training 1	90%
	Number and percentage of staff completed Reconciliation Training 2 in 2021	174 (80%)
	Total percentage of staff having completed Reconciliation Training 2	82%
<b>Reconciliation Assessments</b>	Number of Reconciliation Assessments reflected as a Corporate Objective in 2021	8
	Number and percentage of Reconciliation Assessments completed in 2021	13 (163%)
<b>Partner Community projects</b>	Number of partner community projects	4 (2 per siting region)
<b>Indigenous Knowledge/Western Science (IK/WS) workshops</b>	Number of Indigenous Knowledge/Western Science workshops hosted by NWMO	2
	Total number of participants at the IK/WS workshops	160
	Total number of NWMO staff at the IK/WS workshops	31
<b>Investment in Indigenous partner communities</b>	Monetary investment to date	\$15.9 million
	2021 monetary investment	\$5.2 million
	Number of jobs provided	14
	Number of business opportunities created	3
	Number of education opportunities created	4
<b>Indigenous Staff at NWMO</b>	Percentage of NWMO staff identifying as Indigenous in 2021	10%
	Percentage of new hires identifying as Indigenous in 2021	11%

## Recommendations

The following section outlines recommendations and promising practices to continue in the work of Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO), based on the insights and experiences of NWMO staff representatives under the themes of (i) training, ongoing learning, and education, (ii) organizational structure and capacity, and (iii) evaluation opportunities.

### **Training, Ongoing Learning and Education**

The reconciliation trainings provided to NWMO staff were an identified factor in staff feeling greater ownership of reconciliation in their lives and in their work compared to the previous year. In hopes of continuing to meet NWMO staff where they are at in their journey in reconciliation awareness and ownership, the following recommendations are offered toward facilitating a multi-pronged ongoing learning and education strategy to meet individuals at various stages in their learning journey.

- ⇒ Consider educational or professional development opportunities that support individuals who are at a place of resistance, frustration, and confusion before advancing into ongoing modules of learning. This may include spaces for staff to debrief the emotional reaction to training materials, particularly feelings of white fragility and resistance. One key area identified is the concept of white privilege, whereby frequent concerns arose among white/settler/unidentified staff.
- ⇒ Enable training opportunities for staff expressing confidence in learnings so far with interest in learning more about history and contemporary legal challenges faced by Indigenous peoples, Indigenous rights and Indigenous sovereignty and distinctions between cultural awareness work and reconciliation work.
- ⇒ Developing opportunities to expand knowledge on how to apply reconciliation learnings into action within the NWMO workspace. One staff member suggested sharing and celebrating actions taken so far, including small or immediate outcomes to exemplify and celebrate the work being done.
  - This aligns with the baseline recommendation to create avenues for staff to voice barriers to implementing reconciliation initiatives or voice confusion they may be feeling.
- ⇒ Enable learning and dialogue on Indigenous data governance and protocols for sharing and applying Indigenous knowledge in NWMO work as non-Indigenous people. Education and collaboration on establishing promising approaches and protocols have potential to ease concerns relating to appropriateness of engaging with Indigenous Knowledge. Increased clarity may also support more independence and reduced reliance on Indigenous staff to carry the work of applying teachings in practice.
- ⇒ Extend skills and tools for addressing racism and stereotypes gained through educational work within NWMO to partners such as municipal communities.
- ⇒ Educational tools or delivery formats which were received well and can be continued include organizational-wide required trainings, professional development opportunities, guest speaker and learning from Indigenous staff. Listening to and learning from Indigenous People was highlighted as particularly impactful.

### **Organizational Structure and Capacity**

Staff shared about the organization structure and perceived capacity within the work environment shaping their ability to move forward in reconciliation work. Recommendations to continue creating an enabling organization structure include:

- ⇒ Continue to allow the Reconciliation Policy to disrupt NWMO at its structural core by shifting policies to reflect community values, work on governance documents and policies, create more positions for Indigenous leadership, and create clear accountability structures whereby the voices of affected communities are heard and affect organizational change.
- ⇒ Developing knowledge sharing and data governance protocols to support reciprocity in knowledge sharing and clarity on how to navigate knowledge sharing
- ⇒ Enabling collaboration across departments to reduce silos or inconsistency in reconciliation processes across NWMO as a whole

- ⇒ Consider ways in which strategic planning can incorporate reconciliation work, such as creating space of Indigenous Knowledge and openness to systems change
- ⇒ Explore opportunities to create more flexibility in project schedules to enable time for meaningful engagement with the Indigenous Relations Team, such as participation in sharing circles and relationship building
- ⇒ Continue acknowledging the important role of Elders in supporting reconciliation work. With the strong mental, emotional, and spiritual impacts of working with Elders, consider broadening staff access to Elder support. In line with NWMO's pattern of working with Elders, intentional efforts should be made to create a respectful and supportive environment for Elders including providing cultural appropriate workspaces and compensation
  - This aligns with the baseline recommendation to keep the spiritual connection of the Reconciliation Policy central.
- ⇒ Staff expressed the desire to engage in experiential and spiritual learning opportunities through ceremony, cultural activities and relationship building with Indigenous communities. Consider how to respond to this desire beyond what is currently in place and in line with the current practice of respectful cultural engagement
- ⇒ Ensure the Reconciliation Policy is central to all community engagement work, but particularly present and discussed during community engagement sessions.
- ⇒ Work towards influencing an increase in momentum and participation in reconciliation work across NWMO
- ⇒ Engage in a focused strategic planning session to begin conversations around the mitigation of violence at the future construction site and to identify intermediate actions that can be taken with the community partnerships
- ⇒ Make an explicit effort to invite Metis communities into the projects with other partner communities, including First Nations and municipalities



## Evaluation Opportunities

Staff participants provided feedback on the experience of using the evaluation tools and provided insights for future evaluation cycles. This feedback is combined with observations from the evaluation team.

- ⇒ Consider the unique role of leadership in moving reconciliation work forward in the workplace and provide accountability mechanisms to address comments made by staff regarding the of lack of openness of leadership to engage in systems change and to staff's ideas related to reconciliation
  - Ensuring the buy-in of senior leadership to the reconciliation work was a recommendation in the baseline as well as an identified key to the success of reconciliation work across the organization. The lack of openness noted again this year prompts the question of how the leadership could do more to lead by example with regard to reconciliation? What feedback loops are in place for the staff to know how the leadership is holding themselves accountable to the Reconciliation Policy within their own work? Consider implementing an internally public feedback loop by which the NWMO (senior) leadership can demonstrate transparency and accountability by example.
- Implement an accountability mechanism whereby misalignment between organizational policy and reconciliation commitments are explored and addressed
- ⇒ Consider adapting questions in the annual evaluation tools to reflect the experience of new employees. While comparison questions were helpful in supporting long term staff in reflecting on changes over time, new staff reported difficulty responding. Consider an approach which can support new employees to share about their baseline experiences during annual assessments.
- ⇒ Continue utilizing the Reconcili-ACTION board as a platform to share tangible commitment and progress towards commitments made with all NWMO staff. Consider implementing rhythms throughout the year whereby staff recommit themselves to reconciliation in their work and reflect on this progress made to date. This could also factor as an important point of discussion in annual performance reviews.