

Council of Elders

Record of Discussion #6

APM-REP-00676-0006

April 2014



nwmo

NUCLEAR WASTE
MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZATION

SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION
DES DÉCHETS
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Record of Discussion
NWMO Council of Elders
The Westin Ottawa, Ottawa, ON
April 15-17, 2014

Attendees:

Elders:

Chair: Donna Augustine

Members: Leslie Perley, Joseph Poitras, Diane Longboat, Billie Schibler, Roland St. Germain, Billy Two Rivers, Gordon Williams, Grace Manitowabi, George Morin. NEW YOUTH MEMBERS: Jeff Kinew, Rayanna Seymour-Hourie, Rebekah Wilson, Brandon Petahtagoose

NWMO:

Staff: Ken Nash, Kathryn Shaver, Bob Watts, Pat Patton, Ben Belfadhel, Raymond Hatfield, Cynthia Jourdain, Lawrence Joseph, Jessica Perritt, Ross Holden

Guests: Joanne Barnaby, Fred Kelly, Melanie Hadley, Cheyenne Gray, Karlee Posine, Steve Meawasige, Gloria Hendrick-Laliberte

Wednesday, April 16th

The Council of Elders meeting opened with a ceremony conducted by Fred Kelly, followed by opening comments by Chair Donna Augustine and Kathryn Shaver.

Kathryn welcomed new elder George Morin from Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation in Saskatchewan. In addition five new youth members were added to the membership; Jeff Kinew from Onigaming First Nation, Rayanna Seymour-Hourie from Big Island First Nation, Madeline Levi from Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Nation, Brandon Petahtagoose from Atikameksheng Anishinawbek and returning youth member Rebekah Wilson, Métis.

Kathryn gave an update on NWMO's activities; there are now 15 communities in the process, more outreach to Aboriginal and Métis people, programs and funds for communities to utilize and NWMO is having early discussions on ways to incorporate traditional knowledge. She welcomed any advice the Council of Elders and will continue to look to this forum for guidance on respectful engagement, respect for treaties and topics such as traditional knowledge in the field and the meaning of walking in partnership. She thanked the Council of Elders members who have been out in the field with NWMO staff at open houses and community meetings.

Youth Membership – Bob Watts, Gordon Williams, Melanie Hadley

The new youth members in attendance were welcomed to the council and gifted with an eagle feather by Bob Watts, Kathryn Shaver and Donna Augustine. The significance of the eagle feathers was explained beforehand and each feather was passed around the group in order to put positive energy and prayers into them.

Bob gave a summary of the youth selection process which included submission of biographies, telephone interviews and review by sub-committee members Leslie Perley, Gordon Williams, Donna Augustine and NWMO staff Jessica Perritt and Bob Watts. A list of five questions was asked of each nominee during the interview process. The feedback from the new youth members who went through the process was overall positive. They advised that in-person interviews would be preferred and requested that an orientation be provided once the full complement of youth are chosen. It was suggested that one topic could be “how to difficult situations/people”, to better prepare them in their role with NWMO. All Elders felt the youth members chosen will add strong elements to the group and look forward to working with them. It was noted that Melanie Hadley will serve as an advisor to the youth members.

Action Items:

- Three more spots are to be filled for youth members
- Council of Elders members to submit more names of nominees, as well as from Aboriginal and Métis organizations NWMO has relationships with
- Once full complement of youth are confirmed, they will have an orientation session

Report from November 17-19, 2013 Council of Elders Meeting - Bob Watts

Bob reviewed the record of discussion from the November 17-19, 2013 meeting with the group and made changes/corrections as appropriate. He gave updates on the actions items noted from the meeting such as the bursaries/scholarships and the meeting materials requested by members that have been incorporated.

NWMO Aboriginal Policy – Bob Watts

Bob reviewed the policy and pointed out the changes incorporated as directed by Council of Elders members from the previous meeting. There was overall positive feedback, but it was noted that First Nations and Métis communities around potential host communities should have equal access to information.

There was some concern over using the term “potentially affected” in referring to communities, as it was felt that communities *will be* affected.

Action Items:

- Distribute original draft policy to Council of Elders members for comparison of edited version

Report from Elders Circle & Discussion

Donna Augustine reported on the Council of Elders in-camera session, the Elders Circle, held the day before.

The members requested to focus on various topics that could give them a bigger picture of issues affecting the management of used nuclear fuel such as, ceremonies, uranium mining, global scan of nuclear waste programs, related resolutions passed by First Nations, western and traditional science perspectives, duty to consult, and cultural competency for NWMO staff and the Council of Elders

Action Items:

- It was suggested that Tom Isaacs attend the next meeting to give international overview
- It was suggested they have a chance to see the NWMO mobile transportation exhibit
- Request for Elders Circle to be scheduled for one full day
- Request to meet more often
- Request to visit a uranium mine in order to get a full understanding of the nuclear fuel cycle and for ceremonial purposes
- Request to meet with international indigenous groups, to discuss relationships with similar organizations/mandates.
- Elders suggested pursuing a relationship with the Canadian Climate Forum formerly known as Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences (mentioned in Ben Belfadhel's presentation)
- Request for members attending meetings with NWMO to report back to the members at every meeting going forward.

Phase 2 Activities with Aboriginal Communities – Bob Watts and Ben Belfadhel

An overview of the Phase 2 activities happening in the communities of Schreiber, ON, Ignace, ON and Creighton, SK was presented. Cultural awareness training will be provided to both internal and external parties working for the NWMO in order to be mindful of traditional knowledge and customs in that area.

NWMO Resource Program – Pat Patton

Pat gave an overview of the intent of the resource program; to provide resources to support engagement of First Nations, First Nation organizations, Métis communities and regional Métis organizations in the NWMO site selection process. She noted that this particular program is just the beginning of ensuring communities have the tools needed for meaningful engagement. At many points during the process, the NWMO will seek guidance from communities as to what other tools could be needed such as translation of documents into Aboriginal languages and what kinds of documents they would like translated.

Application of Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge in an Environmental

Assessment Process – Joanne Barnaby

Joanne reviewed the document “Highlights of how traditional knowledge has been used in the management of NWT development projects”. It covered the types of submissions in the regulatory process that incorporated traditional knowledge;

1. Impact assessments affecting wildlife, water, land, social and cultural impacts
2. Monitoring development impacts
3. Closure and reclamation
4. Recent federal changes to regulatory system

She further elaborated on specific cases where the process did not include traditional knowledge and the negative outcomes. She made special mention of the Elders in communities; that it can't be assumed Elders don't know anything just because you can't see them or they don't speak up. They may have experiences that aren't readily available, i.e.; back to times when people could change shapes, and knowledge of the natural world.

She noted that there are mixed reviews on the effectiveness of impact benefit agreements. Socio economic impact agreements should include mitigating tools to deal with employment, training, education, health, and addictions prevention. In some cases, Aboriginal people play a direct role in environmental monitoring agreements with major projects but Elders express frustration that there is no forum/outlet to share the changes they see on the land as a result of these projects. These are lessons the NWMO should consider and can learn from and improve upon.

Joanne recommended that traditional land use planning activities and a protected area strategy be set out beforehand. It should include all three levels of government (federal, territorial and aboriginal).

Comments from members included:

- “Science assumes it has seniority”. The same validity needs to be paid attention to traditional knowledge. There should be consideration of the practical application of traditional knowledge.
- The need to reiterate the connection to the land which includes emotional, spiritual and physical.
- One member likened the term “walking the land” in the Phase 2 activities as “boots and moccasins on the ground”
- Caution to NWMO that news stories regarding contamination to lands, could affect the NWMO’s good intent and processes

Joanne finished her presentation by reiterating that resources need to get to communities, policy framework should be in place so that the process is done well and Aboriginal people aren’t playing “catch up”. As the siting process moves forward, NWMO will need to go into traditional knowledge at a much deeper level.

Cynthia Jourdain ended the day with a closing prayer.

Thursday, April 17th

Opening prayer by Gordon Williams, smudge by Fred Kelly

Ken Nash joined the group and in his opening remarks acknowledged the traditional territory of the Algonquin people, and welcomed new members, George Morin and the new youth members. He gave a brief timeline of learning about Aboriginal engagement; traditional knowledge, culture, relationship to the land. NWMO is now moving into a new phase of its work and is working directly with First Nations and Métis people. There is a lot more work to do, more to learn and NWMO will look to the Council of Elders for advice. He acknowledged and thanked Cynthia for her contribution to the Council of Elders, noting she will be leaving the NWMO soon. An honoring ceremony was conducted for Cynthia at the close of the meeting.

NWMO Traditional Knowledge Policy – Joanne Barnaby

Bob introduced the elements of the policy and noted a lot of input into this document is needed and the NWMO is open to advice and guidance from the Council of Elders. The NWMO’s process is very long-term and the further along it gets, the more intensive it will become. Traditional Knowledge will need to be interwoven to incorporate different world views and systems.

Joanne pointed to the list of questions for Traditional Knowledge Policy Development to guide the discussion. The overall impression of the policy was positive and many members commended the NWMO leadership in considering and implementing such a policy piece, as well as Joanne's work in developing it. Some of the advice offered by the members included:

- The need for bringing public education about the nuclear fuel cycle
- The need for 3rd party review and involvement
- One member suggested under the heading, "Knowledge about the environment", that perhaps "spiritual connections/messages" or "spiritual understanding" be included as this is a very important element to Aboriginal people's relation to the land.
- There was a caution for communities to map traditional areas/sacred sites in order to protect these sensitive areas from outsiders. There should be a statement that covers the need for privacy and discretion. If communities want to keep things sacred and private they should have that option.

Joanne summarized the discussion that the Traditional Knowledge Policy needs to reflect the traditional knowledge holders, the communities involved and that their knowledge will be protected and respected. She noted that it is not necessary to have all of the answers immediately and before 'walking on the land' activities begin, it should be clear that NWMO holds and honors TK. The NWMO will consistently work towards being able to articulate this policy and will do so with the help of the Council of Elders.

Action Items:

- Request to dedicate an entire day to this policy piece
- Continue to have Joanne Barnaby lead this process

Treaty #3 Council of Elders Invitation – Bob Watts and Fred Kelly

Bob gave an overview of the work with Grand Council Treaty #3 to date and then turned it over to Fred Kelly to recount a message from the Treaty #3 Elders Council. The Treaty #3 Elders Council has extended an invite to the NWMO Council of Elders, key staff, David Crombie and Ron Jamieson to meet with them later this year. The purpose is to discuss traditional knowledge, Treaty #3 Resource Law, namely; "Manitoo Inakonigewin (Laws of the Creator); Aki Inakonigewin (Laws of the Land) and Anishinaabe Inakonigewin (Laws of the Anishinaabe).

The Council of Elders is amenable to meeting with Treaty #3 Elders.

Other Questions/Comments

Some questions/comments not covered by the presented topics and worth noting include:

1. Will the surrounding communities get benefits if anything were to happen?

NWMO will only go forward in partnership with the potential host community and Aboriginal communities in the area. The project must meet the safety requirements and elements of community well-being. People are going to have *see* themselves reflected in benefits and the monitoring for support for the project.

2. The term “nuclear”, involves not just translating the word but it is a telling of a story. People have a hard time understanding nuclear, because they lump all issues together.
3. The youth are the ones who can get messages out quickly, due to their connectedness to technology.

Next Steps

There was discussion for possible dates for the next Council of Elders meeting to be held in July. It was requested that people who carry drums, be invited to bring them to the next meeting.

Possible agenda items for next meeting:

1. Draft of the proposed Traditional Knowledge policy/discussion document by Joanne Barnaby
2. International update
3. Tom Isaacs
4. Transportation Safety
5. Siting update

Action Items:

- Request for map of treaty areas to be included in workbooks going forward, with brief summary
- Dry storage tour for new members to be planned.