



**Assembly of First Nations**  
**Nuclear Fuel Waste Dialogue**

**Interim Report #1**  
**to the**  
**Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO)**  
**Submitted July 5, 2005**



## Background

In September 2003 the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) entered into a 3 year contribution agreement with Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) for the purpose of delivering a dialogue on nuclear fuel waste management with First Nations across Canada. This agreement builds on the long-standing involvement of the AFN with nuclear waste issues. The AFN participated in the Seaborn Panel review of the AECL concept in the 1980s and 1990s and later made submissions to the *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources* and the *Standing Senate Committee on Energy, The Environment and Natural Resources* in November 2001 and May 2002 respectively.

The objectives of the AFN dialogue on nuclear fuel waste management are as follows:

1. Raise awareness within First Nations communities about nuclear fuel waste management and the potential impacts on their communities;
2. Build First Nations' capacity to engage in discussions and decision making on the issue of nuclear fuel waste management;
3. Promote dialogue within First Nations and between First Nations and NRCan regarding long-term management of nuclear fuel waste;
4. Facilitate First Nations engagement on the issue of nuclear fuel waste management within the broader Canadian society.

The AFN-led dialogue on nuclear fuel waste management is not a "consultation". The goal is to share information about nuclear fuel waste management in Canada, promote discussion, and build First Nations capacity to engage regarding nuclear fuel waste management. Information from the dialogue process will be summarized and submitted in a final report to the Minister of Natural Resources, prior to November 15, 2005 for their consideration in accepting a recommended approach for the long term management of used nuclear fuel waste. As always, individual First Nations will retain decision making authority when, or if, a nuclear waste management facility is proposed for their area.

## NWMO funding agreement

In June 2004, a funding agreement was finalized between the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) and the AFN to enhance the dialogue process designed with funding from NRCan. As part of this agreement the AFN agreed to deliver a wide range of activities related to the implementation of a dialogue on nuclear fuel waste management.

The purpose of this report is to update the NWMO on the progress which has been made by the AFN in the implementation of its dialogue on nuclear fuel waste management. It will also outline dialogue activities which are planned to take place in the near future.



## ACTIVITIES TO DATE

### *Staffing*

All of the necessary personnel are now in place to carry out the dialogue process. A brief summary of staff members is provided below, with a summary of their function. Please note that Regional Coordinators have been selected and will begin their employment in late July.

Program Manager – Lawrence Ignace, Manager of the Environment Secretariat, AFN.

- Serve as a general advisor to the program, developing policy, approving the strategic and communications plans and monitoring developments on a part time basis.

Dialogue Coordinator – Paul Johanson

- Responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the dialogue.

Administrative Support – Trish Collison

- Responsible for providing administrative support to all members of the dialogue staff (e.g., travel arrangements, printing, other logistical support as necessary).

Regional Coordinators

Northern Ontario – Lillian Trapper

Southern Ontario – Melissa Gus

Western and Northern Canada – Dawn Pratt

Quebec and Atlantic – interviews are still being conducted for a bilingual candidate.

### *Partnerships*

To provide analytical support for the dialogue process, Anna Stanley of the University of Guelph has agreed to be an advisor to the program. Anna is currently working on her PhD. thesis: *An Evaluation of In/Justice in Canada's Nuclear Fuel Waste Management Discourse*, and brings a great deal to our dialogue process.

Anna, and her colleagues Richard Kuhn (University of Guelph) and Brenda Murphy (Wilfrid Laurier University) provided in June, 2004 a series of reports which will make a valuable contribution to the dialogue process by helping to train incoming staff and for distribution to First Nations communities. The following reports were prepared by Anna and her colleagues:

- Summary and interpretation of the history of nuclear fuel waste management policy in Canada, including a summary and critique of the NWMO's study process and engagement initiatives (Anna Stanley – University of Guelph)



- Summary and analysis of the testimonies and submissions of Aboriginal peoples and Nations to the public environmental assessment panel on the concept of deep geological disposal in the Canadian shield (Anna Stanley – University of Guelph)
- First Nations, traditional knowledge and nuclear fuel waste management (Richard Kuhn – University of Guelph)
- International nuclear waste management and Aboriginal peoples (Brenda Murphy – Wilfrid Laurier)
- The institutional context of nuclear power generation and nuclear waste management – excerpts from Doctoral Thesis (Brenda Murphy – Wilfrid Laurier)

### *AFN Fact Sheets*

The AFN Environment Secretariat released two Fact Sheets as part of their dialogue process in May 2004. These Fact Sheets provide the reader with a quick information summary that can be handed out at meetings, presentations and other gatherings. Fact Sheets will be updated periodically as feedback from the dialogue process is gathered.

The first Fact Sheet entitled “Nuclear Fuel Waste Management” covers nuclear basics (e.g., how much waste, where, etc) and discusses nuclear fuel waste management in an First Nations context, also explaining previous involvement by the AFN on nuclear issues such as its involvement in the Seaborn hearings and the AFN’s submissions on the drafting of Bill C-27.

The second Fact Sheet entitled “Nuclear Fuel Waste Dialogue” is a quick two page summary of planned activities for the AFN dialogue and an invitation for First Nations to become actively involved in our process.

Both Fact Sheets are available in French and English and are posted on the AFN website: [www.afn.ca](http://www.afn.ca) and were distributed at the Nuclear Dialogue display booth at the May Assembly of First Nations Confederacy meeting in Saskatoon. The Fact Sheets were well received and stimulated much discussion.

### *National Youth Art Contest*

To promote the involvement of First Nations youth, and to allow for an artistic means of expression on the nuclear fuel waste debate, a National Youth Art Contest has been designed as part of the NWMO funding agreement. It is anticipated that this contest will stimulate significant discussion amongst youth and between youth and their parents.

The contest flyer is currently being finalized and will be distributed at the Assembly of First Nations Annual General Assembly in July, 2004. The contest flyer will also be



available on the AFN website and will be distributed by Regional Coordinators during their travels and discussions with First Nations communities.

### *Presentation – May Confederacy Meeting, Saskatoon*

An Expo display for the nuclear dialogue was hosted by Paul Johanson and Trish Collison for 3 days during the May Confederacy meeting of the First Nations in Saskatoon. This presentation was a “dry run” for our dialogue, where we explained our preliminary dialogue process and handed out Fact Sheets and addressed questions from the crowd. Copies of Lorraine Rekmans’ book “*This is my Homeland: Stories of the effects of nuclear industries by the people of Serpent River First Nation and the north shore of Lake Huron*” were also distributed, generating good discussions.

During meeting coffee breaks, nuclear waste management and the dialogue process were discussed with over 30 individuals. During these discussions many people indicated that they were very concerned about the effects of the nuclear industry on First Nations peoples.

### *Initial welcome package*

On June 9, 2004 an introductory “welcome package” was sent to all 633 First Nations communities and approximately 25 Provincial and Territorial Organizations (PTOs). The welcome package consisted of an introductory letter, a copy of our Fact Sheets and a timeline of dialogue activities until November 2005. The purpose of this welcome package was to ensure that all First Nations communities had been notified of our dialogue process and were given some information to consider prior to being contacted by a Regional Coordinator.

We have received responses to our initial welcome package, including requests for presentations by Regional Coordinators.

### *Communications product*

A bumper sticker is in the final stages of development and will be distributed at the Annual General Assembly in July 2004. The purpose of this communications product is to stimulate interest in the nuclear dialogue and to serve as a “leave behind” to keep people focused and interested. Bumper stickers will be distributed during our Expo presentations at large gatherings and by Regional Coordinators when traveling to meet with First Nations communities.

### *Website ([www.afn.ca](http://www.afn.ca))*

A separate link on the AFN website has been established for the nuclear dialogue, where information will be posted as it becomes available. Currently, there are links to our two Fact Sheets (in French and English) and some background information on our dialogue.



In the near future we will be adding our National Youth Art Contest poster, a digital image of our Bumper Sticker (with information on ordering), an interactive forum for submitting comments, a summary of AFN submissions to Bill C-27, staff profiles, schedules for Regional Coordinators and other information as it becomes available.

### *Planning documents*

Prior to commencement of dialogue activities, a Strategic Plan, Communications Plan and Monitoring Framework were developed. These core documents will provide guidance to the dialogue process, recognizing that through implementation of the adaptive management approach our dialogue will adjust as required by the feedback that we receive. Final approval of these documents will be made by the Program Manager and the Regional Chiefs Panel on the Environment.

### PLANNED ACTIVITIES

#### *Working group*

A Nuclear Dialogue Working Group has been established and will hold its first meeting July 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004 in Ottawa. Originally, the first meeting of the working group was planned for June, 2004 but due to scheduling conflicts it was necessary to reschedule to July. The working group will provide regionally reflective input and guidance to the dialogue process and review milestone documents released by the NWMO. During the first meeting in July, the Working Group will review Discussion Document 1 "Asking the Right Questions". A summary report of this critique and discussions from the meeting will be submitted to the NWMO by July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004.

Working Group members are as follows:

- Suzy Basile (Assembly of First Nations, Quebec and Labrador – Sustainable Development Institute)
- Ron Perly (Union of New Brunswick Indians)
- George Kemp (Federation of Saskatchewan Indians) or appointed member
- Irvin George (Union of Ontario Indians) or appointed member
- Lorraine Rekmans (National Aboriginal Forestry Association and former resident of Serpent River First Nation and author of "This is my Homeland").

All of the Working Group members bring a strong background in environmental and First Nations issues and can provide regional perspectives on the nuclear industry given their proximity to nuclear generating facilities or uranium mining activities. Anna Stanley has also agreed to serve as an "observer" for the Working Group meetings, meaning that she will be available for specific questions, but will not be assisting in the written critique of NWMO documents.





### *Presentation at the Annual General Assembly*

A redesigned Expo display will be presented at the Annual General Assembly (AGA) in Charlottetown, PEI July 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>. Display materials have been improved based on feedback from the presentation made at the Confederacy meeting in Saskatoon. The purpose of this presentation will be to raise the profile of the nuclear dialogue, by presenting material to Chiefs, proxies, and other First Nations members. As part of this presentation, Fact Sheets, Youth Contest advertisements, bumper stickers and other related materials will be distributed.

All discussions that take place during this meeting will be documented as part of the dialogue process and used to refine our materials, etc.

### *Regional Chief Panel on the Environment*

Due to scheduling conflicts with the Co-Chairs, the initial meeting of the Regional Chiefs Panel on the Environment was postponed from late June 2004 to early September 2004. The purpose of the Chiefs Panel will be to raise the profile of the Environment Secretariat's work and to provide political direction on the nuclear dialogue.

The second proposed meeting of the Regional Chiefs Panel on the Environment will need to be adjusted accordingly.

### *Background Report*

A background report on environmental issues facing First Nations is currently being prepared with a target date of August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004 for completion. This document will serve to provide important context for the nuclear waste issue for First Nations. First Nations are facing a wide range of often pressing environmental issues (e.g., climate change, contaminants in water and traditional foods, species at risk, etc). Characterizing the relative "importance" of nuclear waste management is an important step in our nuclear dialogue and will serve towards building environmental strategies for First Nations.

### *Video*

Plans are underway to develop a video, which documents some of the environmental issues facing First Nations and the views of First Nations with regard to nuclear fuel waste management. First Nations have much to offer in shaping a management approach for the long term disposal of used nuclear fuel waste, given their previous experiences with the nuclear industry and their knowledge of the lands they inhabit. Being able to document and share this knowledge in a culturally reflective and respectful manner will greatly enhance our dialogue process.

We anticipate beginning to film in the fall of 2004, with a tentative release date by the spring of 2005.



## *Regional Forums*

As Regional Coordinators develop a network of connections within their assigned region, preparations will begin for the hosting of Regional Forums on nuclear waste management. Regional Forums will be hosted in cooperation with PTOs, to allow for a meetings within the 4 designated "regions" for the nuclear dialogue. These forums will allow for a regionally focused discussion on the future of nuclear waste management. Summary reports from all Regional Forums will be prepared and submitted to the NWMO.

The first round of Regional Forums will be held during the fall and early winter of 2004, pending arrangements made the Regional Coordinators. A second round of Regional Forums is planned for the spring and early summer of 2005, however planning will need to take into account the outcome of the first round of forums.

## SUMMARY

Implementation of the AFN dialogue on nuclear fuel waste management is well underway. All First Nations communities have been welcomed to the dialogue process through a "welcome package", presentations have been given on the dialogue and presentation materials have been prepared. Other activities, such as the Working Group on the nuclear waste dialogue will begin shortly.

Most importantly, Regional Coordinators will soon begin to travel within their regions meeting with First Nations communities, organizations and individuals. In-person meetings will be the cornerstone of the dialogue process, as this is clearly the most effective way to communicate with First Nations people and promote discussion about the long-term management of nuclear waste in Canada. Although other communications media will be used as part of our process (e.g., internet), the importance of developing relationships through in-person meetings can not be overstated.

The selection of a management approach for the long-term management of Canada's used nuclear fuel waste will impact First Nations. Therefore, First Nations must have the opportunity and ability to engage effectively on this issue. The AFN will continue to work diligently to provide an effective and engaging dialogue process for First Nations peoples in Canada. This dialogue will improve the capacity of First Nations to partake in the debate on nuclear fuel waste management and help lay the foundation for their continued involvement into the future.

