

Assembly of First Nations Seven Generations Report

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Assembly of First Nations

nwmo

NUCLEAR WASTE
MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZATION

SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION
DES DÉCHETS
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ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

SEVEN GENERATIONS REPORT

March 25, 2009
Best Western Tin Wis Resort
Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation
Tofino, British Columbia

Background

Nuclear power plants generate large quantities of used nuclear fuel which will remain radioactive for hundreds of thousands of years. First Nations now have to come to terms with the two million used nuclear fuel bundles produced from Canada's nuclear power program including its future production. First Nations have concerns about the impacts of the nuclear industry and the entire fuel cycle from uranium mining to the ultimate management of used nuclear fuel.

First Nations have a unique cultural, traditional and social connection to the land and have a special interest in preserving and protecting the balance of the environment while providing a sustainable future for generations to come. Elders have advised that we must consider the impact of our actions for seven generations. The Seven Generations teachings state that you must try to consider what the impact of your actions will be seven generations into the future. This is particularly important with the creation of a long-term deep geological repository for used nuclear fuel.

Objective

The objective of the forum was to provide the opportunity for First Nations traditional knowledge holders to come together and discuss the Seven Generations teachings. These teachings should play a major role in influencing how decisions are made for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel. It is important to understand the concept of the Seven Generations teachings and how the decisions being made today will have an impact on the generations in the future.

The AFN invited the following guest speakers to share their knowledge on the Seven Generations teaching:

- Barney Williams, Elder
- Dennis Councillor, Traditional Healer
- Charlie Snowshoe, Elder
- Simon Lucas, Elder
- Josee Whiteduck, Elder
- Aaron Therriault, Spiritual Healer

- David Courchene, Spiritual Leader
- Elmer Courchene, Elder

Recommendations

The Seven Generations forum was a good opportunity for Elders, spiritual leaders and healers to come together and share their knowledge about the seven generations teachings. The following recommendations are based upon the discussions that took place at the forum.

- It is recommended that an Elders and youth gathering is needed so that the teachings of the Elders can be passed onto the youth as there is disconnect between the youth and Elders. The gathering should include an invite to all Elders, spiritual leaders/healers and youth from across the country (versus NWMO's approach of focussing discussion in the four nuclear provinces). This would provide Elders the opportunity to share their values of life, culture and teachings.
- Elders need to become part of the decision making process and should be given the opportunity to provide their guidance and influence the APM process. Elders from across the country can bring different perspectives and teachings. The AFN recommends that Niigani be expanded and be inclusive to all Elders who wish to participate in the APM process. This would create opportunities for networking, raising awareness and sharing amongst Elders.
- Elders need to become part of the APM process. It is recommended to have an environmental review board in place to monitor the project and the environmental impacts. This review board could include both Elders and youth.
- There is a need to bridge the scientific and holistic ways of thinking. Incorporating spiritual teachings at meetings is just as important as science. It is important to consider that Elders are considered scientists and have just as much knowledge. It is recommended to bring together scientists and Elders so that they have the opportunity to share their knowledge (focus should include all regions versus the four nuclear provinces).

- Life changes every seven years. There is a need to adapt and look back at what was accomplished and make an assessment of work completed to date. It is recommended that the APM process be assessed every seven years so that changes and/or improvements can be made.