



NIIGANI

# Niigani

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## Special points of interest:

- New Publications available: "Learn More," "Research Support," and "Community Sustainability Visioning"
- New Website for the Site Selection Process [www.nwmo.ca/sitingprocess](http://www.nwmo.ca/sitingprocess)
- NWMO uses Webinars to engage Aboriginal Youth

## *The Traditional Knowledge Contribution*

The NWMO challenge is to design, construct and commission into operation a nuclear waste repository to contain Canada's used nuclear fuel for the long term. The NWMO has been looking for links between western science and traditional knowledge to assist with the development of a deep geological repository. One of the Elders Forum contributions to this project includes the 'interweaving' of traditional knowledge and western science. Traditional knowledge, indigenous knowledge, traditional environmental knowledge, and local knowledge is knowledge passed on from generation to generation as expressed in teachings and laws. This knowledge is passed on through oral tradition and ceremony. The Elders share information so the NWMO can understand Canada's Aboriginal Peoples' world view, cultures, protocols and unique legal rights. The Elders know that world view knowledge is gained in different ways. Aboriginal peoples knowledge comes from a rich oral tradition captured in the concepts of language, culture and ceremonies, while western societies is more written, based on the scientific method. Traditional teachings and laws

clearly state what we should do and what is the consequence of ignoring natural laws. Unfortunately, some of the meaning, understanding and impact is lost in the translation. For example, our people refer to the Earth as our Mother, and they speak passionately about the responsibility to protect the earth, and if you don't, they say "...it will come back on you." This translation into English loses the spiritual component of what is being said. Those who don't take this responsibility to protect may only see the physical impact and overlook the spiritual impact. Elders know that there is always an impact on you, your family and your community which should act as a deterrent, but some do not see. To address this challenge of explaining the world view, the Elders Forum and the NWMO work together to identify links between traditional knowledge and western science. Donna Augustine describes interweaving of traditional knowledge and science as "seeing the other perspectives in the fabric of what we do...Although there are two different world views at the table, the Elders see this as an opportunity to share information for the benefit of all." The Elders

"...seeing the other perspectives in the fabric of what we do."

often discuss how western science has its strengths in determining what could be done. They realize that these techniques to acquire new knowledge or correct previous knowledge are an important contribution to problem solving, but they also know that these methods are only one way of knowing. Even though they have been used for centuries to solve problems, the challenge is the objectivity of the process. A hypothesis is by definition a tentative explanation for an observation, phenomena or scientific problem that can be tested by further investigation. The scientific approach to problem solving is based on the best knowledge known at a point in time. Theories will be either validated or changed over time. The Elders recognize that Canada does not have previous experience with the disposal of nuclear waste and their perspective is important. It takes work, but doing our part is worth it.

## Message from Chairperson—Gordon Williams



The Elders Forum met in Toronto on October 21 and 22. We did so without our sister Mary Richard, who passed

away September 9, 2010. We took some time to honour her life and memory, and her work with us on the Elders Forum. While Mary is no longer

with us physically, her spirit and her presence in our lives and in all the work we do will continue to be with us. Elders Forum members come from the length and breadth of Turtle Island. We carry with us the many years we have raising families, building communities and providing guidance from our life's experience. Each of us carries with us the best interests of our respective communities from all four directions. As we approach our work and advise the NWMO in the

next phase of its work, let us reflect on our advice to the NWMO since we began in 2005. The report contains our shared wisdom, advice and some of the concerns we have raised both individually and collectively at previous Elders Forums. This report will continue as a legacy of our work, and we hope will assist and encourage Aboriginal peoples as they become involved in the NWMO's work. In closing, thank you all for your participation in the Elders Forums, and I look forward to working with you in the future.

## Introducing Melanie Nepinak



Melanie Nepinak is a youth member of the Elders Forum. She was born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Early in her life, she was introduced to the hurt caused by racism in

schools. When her parents found out what the children were doing, she says she learned a valuable lesson. "I thought they would be angry, but their response was to reach out to these children and teach them about our culture. This was the beginning of our family project to educate and teach people all over the world." Melanie travelled to Europe, Japan, Australia, Southeast Asia and South America, sharing the richness of the Ojibway culture. "I believe that our people have an important contribution to make to the world...Many people in the world have no idea that we exist...In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, we were introduced to a young man who was obsessed with North American Indians. He had all the memorabilia,

but did not know Indians still exist in Canada." My parents, Barbara and Clarence Nepinak, are members of the Pine Creek First Nation. They are excellent role models. Our family group, the Summer Bear Dance Troup, teaches in schools, does special projects, presents workshops and performs at conferences. "...I am amazed that I have travelled the world, met hundreds of interesting people, all because I was tormented in school." Melanie works for Animiki See Digital Production Inc. as a production coordinator. She organizes film shoots, writes creative scripts and wrangles talent for an APTN reality show *Fit First*. She is a passionate story teller. "I started work when I was 12 years old, transcribing and logging tapes. The work was laborious, but it led to an internship with the Woman's Television Network and work with the Aboriginal Youth Pilot Program through National Screen Institute. My first major production was 'Do you know Earl Soldier.' I had to do everything, and it led to an offer for work from CBC Canada Now as a researcher. I got in-

**Our family group, the Summer Bear Dance Troup, teaches in schools, does special projects, presents workshops and performs at conferences.**

involved with the NWMO through Mary Richard. She was my great-aunt. After the first meeting, I was hooked. This work is interesting, intriguing and controversial. The perfect recipe for passion. Sometimes I feel frustrated, but I also feel invigorated after I learn how things work and see potential solutions. I am very impressed that the Elders never compromise on what they know is right. It is a rare quality. I feel very lucky to be tutored by such a group. I hope what I do reaches non-Aboriginal people so they can see our strength and passion to build our community." Melanie is getting married in September 2011 so she can start a family of her own.

## Message from the President of the NWMO—Ken Nash



Early involvement and information sharing with affected Aboriginal communities throughout the development of Adaptive Phased Management (APM) is an impor-

tant commitment in the APM site selection process. I am happy to report that we have begun the first steps in

this process in the provinces where communities have begun to express interest to learn more about APM. We were pleased to be able to do this in a recent meeting with Grand Chief Diane Kelly, Grand Council Treaty 3, and Chief Ruben Cantin, Wabigoon First Nation, ON, and through an agreement with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, in an education session with the Lands & Resources Commission Chiefs, staff, Elders and youth.

During the Elders Forum in July we had the opportunity to explore a number of community involvement topics and the members of the Elders Forum held a serious discussion about their role and advice in our work with interested potential host communities going forward. Over the next few years as communities learn more, and surrounding communities and affected Aboriginal peoples, become involved, we anticipate that Elders will continue to be involved and we will continue to learn together as we move forward.

### Niigani Youth participate in NWMO Webinars

Niigani Youth are involved in a number of webinars to learn more about nuclear waste. This topic is complex and takes time and effort to understand. As Niigani members work with the NWMO and the community, it has become very clear that informing one self or others requires a deeper understanding of the problem and potential solutions. Not only is it important to get the information, it is also important to identify how information is shared. Webinars provide the opportunity to dialogue using the Internet. Webinars or web conferencing is

used to conduct live meetings, training and presentations using the Internet. Dialogue is a very effective way to gain a clear understanding of another person's or group's perspective. Positions we take are based on our beliefs, and if the beliefs are 'warped' or 'false', then we just dig in and argue emotionally. Emotional debates are often used to persuade, but they are not usually helpful to inform. As the NWMO begins the identification of a willing host community using the Site Selection Process, potential willing host (Aboriginal) communities need to

**...Making an informed choice means that you have a clear understanding of the question and your options.**

consider their potential involvement carefully. Developing information, materials and new ways of presenting information will become even more important. Since Aboriginal youth are more computer literate than most of their parents, it becomes important to use these new tools.

### The 8th Elders Forum held in Toronto, Ontario

The 8th Elders Forum was held October 21-22, 2010, in Toronto, Ontario. The meeting was an opportunity for the Elders to meet by themselves to discuss the *Report of the Elders Forum and Niigani 2005-2010*. The Report will be part of the NWMO's Triennial Report to the Federal Minister of Natural Resources. The Elders also took the opportunity to discuss their direct involvement in the Site Selection Process, review the work of the Elders Fo-

rum and recommit themselves to their mission statement "...to protect and preserve all creation: air, land, fire, plants, medicines, animals and human kind—guided by the seven universal teachings of love, trust, sharing, honesty, humility, respect and wisdom." The conversations were all encompassing and covered a number of topics. The group agreed that all that they do needs to be guided by the Mission Statement, especially as they work with

the NWMO in the next few years in the selection of a host community. The Elders established a committee to clarify their existing role and look at what potential role they could play in the selection of a host community. The group will prepare some recommendations for consideration of the Elders Forum and the NWMO. The group met in Toronto and will continue to meet by conference call over the next couple of months.

### NWMO Elders Forum

How to have your voice heard. Send an email.

Website [www.nwmo.ca](http://www.nwmo.ca)

Webmaster Email [info@nwmo.ca](mailto:info@nwmo.ca)

Call us Toll Free 1.866.249.6966 (within Canada) or send a letter or fax

Tel 416.934.9814

Fax 416.934.9526

### Nuclear Waste Management Organization

22 St. Clair Avenue East, Sixth Floor  
Toronto Ontario Canada M4T 2S3

[www.nwmo.ca](http://www.nwmo.ca)

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**nwmo**

NUCLEAR WASTE  
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DES DÉCHETS  
NUCLÉAIRES



## Update on the NWMO Site Selection Process

In May 2010, the NWMO moved from designing a community-based process to implementing the process to select an “...informed and willing community to host the deep geological repository for Canada’s used nuclear fuel.” This is a brief update of some of the activities undertaken by the NWMO in the past few months.

The NWMO continues to provide briefings through the siting process in its effort to provide information with presentations at tradeshow, conferences, assemblies and associations meetings. The following are examples of events attended by the NWMO: Federation of Canadian Municipalities Annual Conference; Assembly of First Nations Annual Assembly; Métis Nation Ontario Annual Assembly; Association of Municipalities of Ontario. A number of other events will be attended in the next few months. These activities will continue through the siting process.

To date there are 4 communities that have identified their interest in learning more about being a “willing host community” and have requested an initial screening: the Township of Ear Falls and the Township of Ignace, both in Ontario, and the Northern Village of Pinehouse and English River First Nation, in Saskatchewan.

The community groups have attended or are in the process of attending a “Learn More” visit with the NWMO. This will be an opportunity for the communities to assess their own interest in entering the site selection process. After a community assesses its own interest, it may continue in the process and request a high-level screening of its geographic area using the initial screening criteria. The screening criteria includes:

- Enough land to accommodate surface and underground facilities
- Outside protected areas, heritage sites, provincial/national parks
- Land must not contain groundwater resources at repository depth
- Land must not contain known economically exploitable natural resources
- Land must not be located in areas with known geological or hydrogeological features that prevent the site from being safe.

This preliminary screening provides the community with an early understanding of whether there are any obvious conditions that would exclude them from consideration. The screening does not obligate the community to engage in the site selection process. The screening is completed in 2-3 months. At this stage, the NWMO meets with the community to confirm the scope of the initial screening. The community then decides if it wishes to proceed to the next step. As the site selection process continues, the NWMO will continue to do mailings and distribute electronic information to inform Canadians. The NWMO has even created a dedicated website for the site selection process. The web address is [www.nwmo.ca/sitingprocess](http://www.nwmo.ca/sitingprocess).

The NWMO has also published and distributed:

- “Learn More” which is a program for early capacity building.
- “Research Support” which is a program providing small amounts of funding for research that will “...contribute to shaping the knowledge platform on which the Adaptive Phased Management project will proceed. Research proposals will contribute to building understanding of important issues related to the site selection process.”
- “Community Sustainability Visioning” for communities that express an interest in becoming a “willing host community” with suitable geology.

The NWMO has also signed Agreements with National and Provincial Aboriginal organizations for ongoing liaison and capacity support for their members in the siting process.