



# Niigani

## What is the difference?

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**What is the difference between what is usually done by industry and government and what the NWMO is doing to engage the Aboriginal community?** Jim Sinclair describes five things that he thinks are different: First, NWMO asked Elders to participate at the very beginning. Second, Elders, were asked to identify the process and not 'rubber stamp' an existing plan. We came to the table with no presets and assumptions. Elders identified the principles that would

guide the relationship: Section 35 of the Constitution, Treaty principles and traditional knowledge. Elders developed their own mission statement: **"...to protect**

**and preserve all creation: air, land, water, plants, medicines, animals and human kind, guided by the seven universal teachings of love, trust, sharing, honesty, humility, respect and wisdom."** We are clear why we are at the table. The third difference is who we meet at the table. We work with the decision-makers, the President, the Board Chairperson, top management. The NWMO President has attended every one of our meetings. Fourth, Elders bring to the

table their own view in their own language. Fifth, we discuss problems and solutions from our perspective. **Why are these differences so important?** He said, "...the Elders are developing a model that could be used by any industry or government. It is new. This is not usual in our relationships with industry and government. I want to make one more comment ...before, the reader jumps to a wrong conclusion, I want to make it very clear, we do not agree on all matters because we are dealing with a difficult and controversial subject; however, there is a forum to hold respectful discussions. Our challenge is to establish a process where our people are informed and engaged so they can make their own decisions."

### Special points of interest:

- Niigani to meet with NWMO Board November 13, 2008
- Brochure to be released in December 2008
- NWMO releases Policy on Transparency and Implementation Plan for 2008-2012
- NWMO Designing the Process for Selecting a Site



## Niigani - 2008 Elder's Forum

The 4th Elders Forum was held in Waskesiu, Saskatchewan, June 4-6, 2008. Special guests included: Gary Arcand, representing Chief Lawrence Joseph, Federation of Saskatchewan

Indians and Robert Doucette (President) and Max Morin (Secretary), Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. The focus of the Elder's Forum agenda was advising the NWMO on its Aboriginal Policy.

## Message from Chairperson—Gordon Williams



Greetings from the Chair. This is the second edition of the Niigani newsletter. The main focus of Niigani's work has been to build relationships between Aboriginal groups and NWMO. The Elders' Forum met in June in Waskesiu, Saskatchewan. The meeting focused on the general principles for a NWMO Aboriginal Policy. Since June, many of the Niigani mem-

bers have been active in their respective provinces. Jim Sinclair has been working tirelessly in Saskatchewan to inform communities about NWMO's work. Donna Augustine and Gwen Bear have been doing similar work in New Brunswick by arranging interviews with Elders for the Summer Project. The story of this project is included in this Newsletter. It is these kinds of grass root activities that will help build the foundation for the NWMO Adaptive Phase Management and the siting process which is being developed. I have

been working in the province of Ontario to explore ways to inform First Nations and Métis communities about the NWMO's work and am working to set up introductory meetings. As NWMO begins its work to collaboratively develop a process for selecting a site for a deep geological repository, Niigani members are actively participating in the dialogue and providing advice on working with Aboriginal peoples.

Chairperson of Niigani

## Introducing Mary Richard



Mary Richard life's work is grounded in community development. Born and raised in Camperville, Manitoba, the ninth of thirteen children, she recalls the impact of the Catholic Priests on her community development knowledge. "...I observed community development in action by watching the priests organize local people. They used community development principles and that is why they were so effective."

Mary's ability to communicate was cultivated by not attending residential school. "...I kept my language and my culture because I was raised by my family. In Camperville we spoke, Ojibway, Cree, Plains Cree, Metchif, and English... I learned very early that to communicate effectively you need to speak the person's first lan-

guage. This is why I am so passionate about our languages." Mary speaks a number of languages. She continues "...life in Camperville before 1959 was great, all the people had jobs and few people would drink. My dad was a blacksmith, truck driver, fisherman, trapper, logger and the family raised cattle. Then it all came to an end."

In 1959, the Manitoba Government authorized extensive flooding of the area to build the South Indian Lake Hydro Project. "...the government did not realize what they were doing. The Elders told them that the permafrost would melt and there would be no shoreline. The Elders wanted them to construct a shoreline before flooding, but our people's views were not considered because they were not 'scientists.' Now there is a big problem. ..This is why I am so passionate about respecting community people's knowledge and why I agreed to become a member of the Elders Forum and Niigani. I want to ensure that Aboriginal people understand

**...My goal is to see NWMO work with the communities before, during and after site selection."**

what is being proposed and what will be the impacts. My goal is to encourage the NWMO to work with potential host communities before, during, and after site selection. Local people need to have complete information regarding the benefits and impacts of a used nuclear fuel facility in their region. Information needs to be factual, and people need to be engaged and not just involved in information sessions and discussions...Information needs to go to the people not just elected leaders. It will take time to implement Adaptive Phase Management, but we need to take it.

## Message from the President of NWMO—Ken Nash



This issue of the Niigani Newsletter is all about working with communities and people - something that the NWMO believes is critical to en-

sure that the process and decisions made in our work continue to meet the needs of Canada's citizens. We are now at a very important step in the implementation of Adaptive Phased Management, the collaborative design of a process for selecting a site for a deep geological repository.

The NWMO has committed to designing the process for selecting a site for the long-term management of Canada's used nuclear fuel collaboratively with Canadians and Aboriginal peoples. We believe that citizens expect and deserve to be involved in decision-making about important policy issues like this. Over

the past few months we have continued to build relationships with groups and organizations in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick to provide information and materials on our work as we prepare for implementing Adaptive Phased Management.

Over the next few months, we want to hear from Canadians and Aboriginal peoples about their expectations and preferences for the process for selecting a site. As we implement APM, the NWMO is committed to working collaboratively with interested and potentially affected citizens and organizations to seek an informed and willing community to host the central repository. To begin this process, we have prepared a discussion document – Moving Forward Together: Designing the Process for Selecting a Site – as well as a number of documents providing background information. We encourage everyone to read these documents and send us your thoughts. Next year, the NWMO

will prepare a draft proposal for selecting a site based on the input received this Fall. The draft proposal will then be available for review and dialogue in 2009. The process of site selection will begin only after the draft siting process has been discussed with Canadians and Aboriginal peoples and refinements are made to address the suggestions and concerns raised.

This issue highlights our work over the past few months and particularly the many years of experience and wisdom in working with communities of two of the Niigani members, Jim Sinclair and Mary Richard. Jim and Mary bring a vast wealth of knowledge and experience to all of our discussions and continue to contribute significantly to building relationships between the NWMO and Aboriginal groups. The advice and knowledge of Niigani and the Elders' Forum will continue to guide us in our work.

## Interweaving Traditional Knowledge and Western Science

Western science utilizes a systematic approach to discovery based on their belief and world view. Indigenous people also have a unique approach to discovery based on their beliefs and world view. Both are valid and useful. In the Spring issue of the newsletter, we will be discussing how the NWMO is learning about the "other" perspective and interweaving Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge and western science. In the words of one Elder "...our goal is to share knowledge so Forum members

can see the differences (in how knowledge is discovered)...I see the differences between traditional knowledge and western science as a source of strength although our difference also creates a unique challenge to communicate effectively between the two knowledge systems. We want to encourage those that have adopted western science to learn from nature while scientist want us to understand their views."

**"...Our difference in approach creates a unique challenge to communicate effectively. "**

## NWMO Elders Forum

You can reach the NWMO in many ways.

Website [www.nwmo.ca](http://www.nwmo.ca)  
Webmaster Email [info@nwmo.ca](mailto:info@nwmo.ca)

Toll Free 1.866.249.6966 (within Canada)

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### Nuclear Waste Management Organization

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## NWMO 2008 Aboriginal Engagement Summer Project

The 2008 Summer Project sought to share information on what the NWMO is doing, and asked Elders to share their experiences. There were two components to the project: youth presentations and interviewing Elders regarding four key areas of the NWMO's work.

Two students were hired to do the project. Throughout the summer the students worked together with the NWMO engagement staff. They began their work after an intense orientation that included: information on the nuclear fuel cycle, and how to engage people in communities. Niigani Elders Donna Augustine and Mary Richard were on hand to guide them through Aboriginal Cultural Governance, Protocols and Practices and communications skills. Students toured the Bruce Power Nuclear Facility and the Ontario Power Generation's Waste Management Facility in Kincardine, Ontario.

Youth Presentations included a brief description of the nuclear fuel cycle, used nuclear fuel and the work of NWMO. The age of youth participants varied from 9 to 17 years old. A trivia challenge game was used to test participants knowledge after presentations. The students attended the Youth Wellness Conference in northern Saskatchewan, a science camp at the First Nation University of Canada in Regina, Saskatchewan, a computer camp at First Nation Technical Institute in Tyendinaga, Ontario and a youth gathering at Turtle Island, New Brunswick.

The highlight of the summer was the Elder interviews. A detailed report describing Elder and Youth comments is available from the NWMO. Jim Sinclair, one of the Niigani Elders, said the following regarding the project: "...this was an excellent way to have youth learn from the experience of the Elders. I see the program as a beginning for youth to experience the importance of capacity building...they are learning to interweave western science and traditional knowledge. They also learned how to do research in our communities: listening to the story before drawing a conclusion and using open ended questions. They learned oral tradition in action...you do not record the stories, you listen to the message first. After the Elder speaks then you ask your question in the proper way... The students learned that you need to meet the interviewee's needs first. As I observed them, the most important teaching were the protocols; how to approach the Elders with offerings. It was encouraging to see them learn. They needed to know and understand the culture. It was a good project."

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the next step in the Adaptive Phase Management Process?

NWMO is now beginning to design the process for selecting a site. The NWMO is inviting all Canadians to help them design a fair, ethical and effective process for making a decision on where to contain and isolate Canada's used nuclear fuel. During the next couple of years (2008-09) the NWMO will work collaboratively with citizens to design a process for selecting a preferred central site.

### Why are Aboriginal people engaged in this consultation process?

The NWMO wishes to engage collaboratively with Canadians and Aboriginal people in the process of developing the approach for the long-term management of Canada's used nuclear fuel. In doing this the NWMO wishes to build long-term, respectful, mutually-beneficial working relationships with Aboriginal communities. The NWMO acknowledges and respects

that Aboriginal people—Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada—have unique status and rights as recognized and affirmed in s. 35 of the *Constitution Act* of Canada and has committed to respecting the Aboriginal rights and treaties of Aboriginal communities potentially affected by our work.

**Won't transportation of used nuclear fuel be risky?** The NWMO will need to demonstrate the safety of any transportation system prior to its implementation. Our research and discussions with authorities in Canada and abroad suggest that used nuclear fuel can be transported safely. Internationally, many nations have been regularly transporting used fuel for decades. Robust transport containers are designed to withstand severe accidents and transport conditions, and must meet high standards which are continually reviewed by regulatory and licensing bodies.

## Future Issues

**The Elders Forum Newsletter is published three times a year.**

The next issue will be a Christmas Issue.

