



Nuclear Waste Management Organization Reconciliation Baseline Evaluation Summary Report

December 2020



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“Status quo hasn’t served Indigenous people and won’t serve them well in the future. If we’re acting in a manner that is consistent with the status quo we will not be successful as an organization. 100% we will not be successful. That’s our challenge, to change the way we’re doing business to prepare for success through reconciliation.”

~ Bob Watts from #VoicesofReconciliation video #8

This report describes the baseline evaluation of the *Reconciliation Policy* implemented by the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO). The Reconciliation Policy was birthed through ceremony in October 2019. Since the implementation of the policy, activities have included mandatory staff Reconciliation training, relationship building, informal training opportunities, staff support systems, the rollout of the Reconciliation Assessment Tool, and community-driven workplans. This report provides evaluation feedback on the Reconciliation Policy's relevance, implementation, impacts, outcomes, and lessons learned.

Methodology

The scope of this baseline evaluation focused on the process of the raising reconciliation with the NWMO. The evaluation gathered feedback on the meaning and relevance of reconciliation, the implementation of the Reconciliation Policy, the outcomes (expected and unexpected) and impacts, as well as lessons learned for taking the next steps in the reconciliation journey. Furthermore, this evaluation sought to include key recommendations for the NWMO in moving forward. Data were collected through a document review, semi-structured interviews with the Council of Elders and Youth (COEY) and the Indigenous Relations team, surveys with

select NWMO staff, external partners and representatives from impacted communities working with NWMO.



Evaluation Findings

Meaning and Relevance of Reconciliation

The meaning of reconciliation has different interpretations for each individual. Despite varying understandings of what reconciliation means, common definitions and key elements of what constitutes reconciliation emerged among NWMO staff, COEY members, and external and community partners. Acknowledging history and past wrongs and injustices, as well as learning about the colonial history and true history of Canada's relationship with Indigenous Peoples was the most common conceptualization of reconciliation. Among NWMO staff, COEY members, and external and community partners, the notion of self-reflection on one's personal and family history of perpetuating colonial narratives and actions was also commonly brought up. Reconciliation also meant taking action for systemic change by

meaningfully and equitably including Indigenous voices in decision making, and working to build and repair relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

NWMO staff participants reported having both a personal and professional relationship with reconciliation. Staff participants reported personal connections to reconciliation where



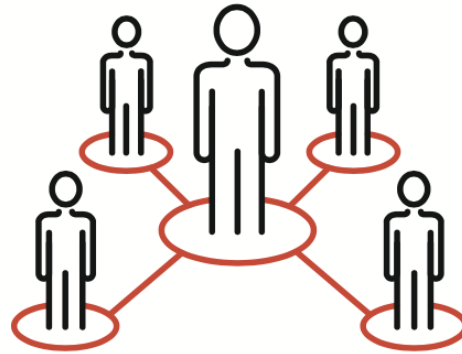
they engage with reconciliation through individual everyday actions, such as honouring ancestors, or acknowledging their settler benefit and white privilege. Staff participants also report professional connections to reconciliation such as engaging in reconciliation at work as it guides and informs their work plans, to addressing systemic bias in their work. Staff also reported engaging in learning sessions, Orange Shirt Day, and viewing Indigenous films to learn more.

Evaluation findings demonstrated that NWMO's Reconciliation Policy is relevant to staff, COEY members, external partners, and community partners. COEY members reported that organizational-wide mandates, like the NWMO Reconciliation Policy, supports action versus only talking about reconciliation. Furthermore, COEY members highlighted that organizational-wide mandates, like the Reconciliation Policy,

Implementation of NWMO Reconciliation Policy

Most NWMO staff participants, but not all, reported the NWMO implementation of the Reconciliation Policy aligned with their own values. Staff participants provided examples of how the NWMO has implemented the Reconciliation Policy, namely identifying training opportunities, such as reconciliation training, cultural awareness training, lunch-and-learns, as well as opportunities to learn from Indigenous cultural practitioners. Additionally, staff reported reviews of policies and procedures with a reconciliation lens through the Reconciliation Assessment Tool was another example of the Reconciliation Policy being implemented. Other examples included the inclusion of cultural practices and ceremony, such as sharing circles and ceremony at milestone events, hiring Indigenous employees, and establishing the dedicated MS Teams page: ReconciliACTION board.

instills values of how to interact and do business into the organization, rather than checking off a box. The Reconciliation Policy was born out of relationships and collaborative working between COEY members and NWMO. COEY members also highlighted that NWMO's Reconciliation Policy is a demonstration of NWMO's leadership and is sending the message that reconciliation is a priority. External partners also saw value and relevance in NWMO's Reconciliation Policy stating that it highlights the Crown's duty to consult, and builds awareness among partners. Increasing transparency and opportunities for reciprocal knowledge sharing was cited as ways to increase the relevance of the Reconciliation Policy to communities.



In the workplace, both staff and external partners reported that educational and training opportunities (i.e., reconciliation training), as well as reconciliation dialogues and activities were valued supports for engaging in reconciliation. In their personal lives, staff participants indicated that reconciliation dialogues and activities, and relational opportunities were highly valued for engaging in reconciliation. Personal engagement in reconciliation included: sharing about reconciliation with friends, families, and board of directors, as well as learning from Indigenous relations, non-Indigenous individuals also engaging in reconciliation, and the COEY members.

A lack of time, lack of resources, challenging colleagues and not knowing where to begin were cited as factors that hindered implementation of the Reconciliation Policy. Staff participants reported a lack of fulsome buy-in within NWMO, noting that not all departments are working in unison and not all colleagues/leaders are open to the work.

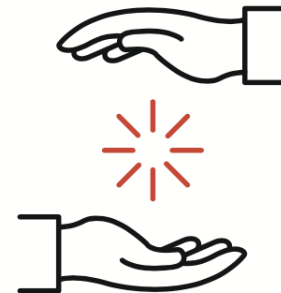
Evaluation findings highlighted the motivations for engaging in reconciliation work, including both professional and personal motivators. Staff participants noted that reconciliation work is essential for successfully establishing a site for a deep geological repository, and is critical in ensuring Indigenous views are included in NWMO's work, management system, and business strategy and planning.

Impacts

The Reconciliation Policy has substantially impacted the work of NWMO staff participants and external partners who responded to the survey. Staff participants now consider reconciliation in their work, such that they are including reconciliation in the development of policies and procedures, and when engaging with siting communities. They are also engaging in land acknowledgements when in meetings. The Reconciliation Policy has created a safer environment to work, as Indigenous work and voices are valued. Finally, the Reconciliation Policy has inspired external partners' reconciliation journey and the development of their own Reconciliation Policy within their own organizations.

There was mixed feedback on the impact of the Reconciliation Policy among community partners. Some community partners reported the Reconciliation Policy was impactful, explaining the process has been respectful and NWMO has invested in building relationships. However, an equal number of concerns about the Reconciliation Policy were raised, namely that there is a need for greater public

awareness of NWMO's Reconciliation Policy, and that there had been little discussion about the Reconciliation Policy during



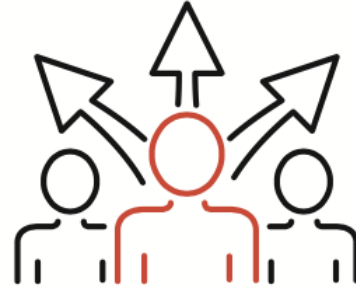
their community engagement sessions. It was also noted that the Reconciliation Policy is written with corporate lawyer language, with no actual enforced accountability.

NWMO is leading the way with their Reconciliation Policy, guided by the wisdom and teachings of COEY. COEY members explained that NWMO has listened to their guidance as independent advisors along the reconciliation journey. COEY is teaching NWMO what respectful engagement means by modeling it in the COEY meetings so that as NWMO engages with impacted siting communities, they have a frame of reference and teachings to draw upon.

Outcomes

The NWMO Reconciliation Policy has resulted in moderate-to-high changes since 2019. There have been significant changes in knowledge, as staff reported improvements in their understanding of reconciliation, and the centrality of relationships to Indigenous peoples. There have also been significant changes in comfort with talking to colleagues, family and friends about reconciliation. Staff participants also reported moderate changes in decision-making, relationship building, and reconciliation actions, such that the Reconciliation Policy is a reinforcer for their learning journey and commitments to reconciliation.

Changes in the internal culture of NWMO and in actions toward reconciliation were reported by staff, external and community participants,



where there have been increased opportunities for learning and understanding history. Community participants reported increased Indigenous representation of NWMO staff, while external partners noted there has been a deeper understanding of reconciliation as NWMO is taking ownership of the Reconciliation Policy. Finally, community representative noticed senior NWMO staff being more accommodating and focused on relationship building in their decision-making.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps for Growth

Evaluation feedback from participants offered ample next steps. Next steps include continued reconciliation



education to deepen understandings of reconciliation and to cultivate opportunities for action and contribution. It was explained that reconciliation is a lifelong learning journey and there is a desire for more training and professional development opportunities (i.e., Blanket exercise).

Continued engagement and focus on relationship-building was also identified as a next step, however it was specifically noted that community engagement occur with potential siting communities and that any engagement with communities occur within a reconciliation

context. Engaging communities within a reconciliation context means centering community voice in the process; engaging in relational work that is grounded in respect and transparency, and; learning from history so as to not perpetuate or repeat past harms.

Finally, next steps offered by participants included embedding reconciliation into NWMO's organizational culture, where reconciliation is named as a value of NWMO and reconciliation standards are held to the same calibre as safety standards. Embedding reconciliation into NWMO's organizational culture also includes prioritizing and communicating accountability mechanisms, such as evaluations and assessments, to remain committed to reconciliation. Increasing Indigenous representation within management at NWMO was also cited as a means to demonstrate NWMO's commitment to reconciliation.