

Ground-breaking Indigenous Knowledge policy guides site selection process

By Greg Plain, Senior Engagement Advisor, Aboriginal Relations, NWMO.

This is the fourth of six columns.

In the last installment, I talked about how a series of engineered and natural barriers deep underground will work to safely contain and isolate used nuclear fuel in a deep geological repository.

Here, I'll describe the NWMO's unique Indigenous Knowledge policy, which provides guidance on interweaving Indigenous Knowledge with Western science. The policy helps to ensure that as the NWMO implements Adaptive Phased Management, its values, respects, and honours the beliefs and learnings of Indigenous people.

Bob Watts, Vice President of Indigenous Relations at the NWMO, calls it "a living document that informs and guides what we do."

The policy was launched in 2016 with the guidance of the NWMO's Council of Elders and Youth, an advisory body made up of 12 First Nation and Métis Elders and seven First Nation and Métis Youth. I was there the day members of the Council blessed the policy document through a pipe ceremony, a smudge, a traditional drum song and dance, as well as each member personally putting a hand on the document.

The NWMO supports mutual learning and recognizes that we are all part of and one with Mother Earth. It honours our oral traditions, spiritual beliefs, and safety and security of the environment. The Indigenous Knowledge policy is a formal acknowledgement that these things are important.

In my next column, I'll describe where we are now in the site selection process.

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