

Environmental analyses include Indigenous perspectives

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

This is the sixth and final column.

In the last installment, I talked about where the NWMO is in the process of selecting a safe and socially acceptable site for the deep geological repository.



Here, I'll illustrate how both Indigenous Knowledge and Western science are contributing to this large and unique infrastructure project.

My colleagues at the NWMO include specialists from many different backgrounds, including geoscientists, transportation engineers, and experts in repository design and construction, social research, Indigenous Knowledge, municipal planning, public engagement, ethics, and finance. Together, we collaborate to implement Canada's plan for used nuclear fuel.

Staff members receive Indigenous cultural awareness training, and this provides an understanding of the history and beliefs of First Nations and Métis people, that they can incorporate into their roles. This training augments the Indigenous Knowledge policy, which is widely respected throughout the organization.

My colleague Melissa Mayhew, an environmental scientist, beautifully describes how Indigenous cultural awareness has stirred a new way of looking at land, water, wildlife and rock. "The Western science that I practise as an ecologist is complementary in many ways with Indigenous knowledge, and the inter-weaving of these knowledge systems can greatly contribute to decision-making when trying to understand something as complex as an ecosystem," she says.

"On a personal level, I've found a deep admiration for the commitment to protecting Mother Earth that Elders, Youth, and community members demonstrate each time we meet to learn together."

Indigenous Knowledge is valued in all aspects of the NWMO.

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