



# AFN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

RESPECTING AND PROTECTING MOTHER EARTH

*Note: The following information is provided as a factual background for general areas of discussion on environmental issues as they relate to First Nations in Canada. It is not intended to provide a scientific background or research paper, but simply to stimulate thought and provide information to the reader.*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS USED NUCLEAR FUEL



### **What is the role of the AFN?**

The AFN is committed to working with First Nations communities to ensure the security of First Nations lands through increased engagement and participation in the decision making process for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel. Communication and collaboration is the first step in building long-term, positive relationships between First Nations and the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO). The AFN will help to build linkages and identify opportunities for partnerships. The AFN will ensure that culturally appropriate communication and education materials are made readily available to First so that First Nations can make informed decisions.



### **Will dialogues sessions undertaken by NWMO be perceived as consultation with First Nations?**

Dialogue sessions undertaken by the NWMO are designed share information about used nuclear fuel, promote discussion and engage First Nations in the process for selecting a site for a long-term deep geological repository. The AFN's position is that consultation must take place between First Nations governments and the federal government. Note that the AFN does not have the authority or mandate to consult on behalf of First Nations in Canada.



### **What about the role of Traditional Knowledge?**

It is important that the use of Traditional Knowledge is interpreted according to the spirit of those teaching and First Nations have the opportunity to review and verify the usage and interpretation of that knowledge. The establishment of a protocol for the use of traditional knowledge is imperative so that the knowledge provided is protected and appropriate protection of intellectual property is secured in agreement with those affected prior to use or publishing of any information.

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 **Will the deep geological repository (storage facility) for used nuclear fuel be located on or near First Nations lands?**

The NWMO is currently designing a process by which a site for the long term management of used nuclear fuel will be selected. The NWMO will be looking for a willing, informed community and the site selection process for a deep geological repository will be focused in the provinces directly involved in the nuclear fuel cycle: New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario and Saskatchewan. However, communities in other regions that express an interest will also be considered. The AFN strongly recommends that First Nations communities become involved in the site selection process so that First Nations can influence the process, be part of and make informed decisions in the process.

 **What influence will the host community have in the decision making process?**

While it is understood that a host community will be part of the decision making process, other affected communities in the region will also be part of the site selection process. First Nations governments and communities need to be involved in shared decision-making with the host community in order to balance the interests of First Nations.

 **Is used nuclear fuel dangerous?**

Yes, used nuclear fuel is highly radioactive and very dangerous. While the level of radioactivity in used nuclear fuel diminished with time, it remains a potential health, safety and security hazard, and must be safely contained and isolated from people and the environment indefinitely. In accordance with the Canada's regulations, used nuclear fuel is currently safely stored in licensed interim storage facilities at nuclear power reactor sites and research sites.

 **What are the risks associated with the transportation of used nuclear fuel?**

The regulatory regime for regulation and oversight of used fuel transportation is well-established. In Canada, the movement of radioactive materials like used nuclear fuel is regulated by Transport Canada and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. Therefore, the risks are low because of this regulatory system. Consideration must be given to First Nations along transportation routes and once a potential site is identified open communication will be needed to keep First Nations communities well informed about transportation routes through their communities and traditional territories.

**For more information on how to get involved, contact the Assembly of First Nations at 613-241-6789 or toll-free 1-866-869-6789 or send an email to [environment@afn.ca](mailto:environment@afn.ca)**