



BACKGROUND

Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association was approached early in the fall of 2004 by the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) to host a workshop to elicit the perspectives of Inuit Women with respect to how Canada should manage Canada's Nuclear waste.

Over the past 24 months, NWMO has been conducting a broad series of consultations with Canadians, to identify and explore options on how best to manage long term Canada's Nuclear waste. As part of this mandate they have approached Canada's Aboriginal communities, including soliciting the views of Inuit women.

A workshop entitled *Managing Canada's Radioactive Waste* was convened during Pauktuutit's Annual General Meeting in November, 2004. This report will provide a brief overview of considerations that were involved in planning this workshop, followed a summary of outcomes and suggestions for the continued involvement of Inuit women in the NWMO processes.

PLANNING

Canada's Nuclear Waste Management Organization was interested in Inuit women's perspectives regarding three particular storage options: a) at-reactor, b) centralized, and c) deep geological repository. These were considered in the context of objectives and principles outlined in the NWMO *Understanding the Choices* document. Pauktuutit staff worked closely with NWMO Consultant Tony Hodge to develop cultural and language appropriate materials, agenda and workshop format.

Workshop Format

In order to ensure maximum participation and input, the workshop planners decided to employ visuals, a short presentation, and small group work activities with reporting back and discussion. (Appendix A: Workshop Agenda).

It was decided that the workshop would begin with a power point presentation by facilitator, Tony Hodge. The presentation would include: first, an orientation to nuclear waste – a description of the origins of nuclear waste and the three storage options; second, an overview of NWMO Mission and Activities; and third, a summary of workshop objectives – what NWMO was hoping to achieve through this consultation. (Appendix B: Power point Presentation)

Objectives

- To facilitate a workshop with Inuit women to provide an opportunity to benefit from their advice and insight. The results were to be considered in



- NWMO's recommendations to government regarding the long-term management of used nuclear fuel in Canada;
- To inform Inuit women about the current global and Canadian realities of the nuclear waste issue;
 - To inform Inuit women about the range of options that Canada may consider for the management of nuclear waste;
 - To provide an opportunity for Inuit women to assess and offer their unique perspective to these options and to bring forward other ideas that may emerge from the discussion; and,
 - To develop arrangements for long term involvement of Inuit women as Canada decides and implements its chosen path.

Preliminary Considerations and Concerns

Pauktuutit staff were concerned about the highly technical scientific nature of the topic. In order to elicit meaningful contributions, it would be essential that the workshop facilitator keep concepts as basic as possible, and to first and foremost help the women to understand the specific relevance that this concern has for them. In other words, it would be important to discuss the framework in the context of the question “*why does this matter for Inuit women?*” A sentence in the Executive Summary of the *Understanding the Choices* document reads: “*For decades, all Canadians have benefited from Nuclear power*”. We need to ask ourselves: “*Have Inuit benefited from nuclear power? If so, how? If not, why is this a concern for Inuit? Is the North being considered as a possible site for waste storage? Are there benefits to possible Northern waste storage?*”

A potential challenge with respect to translation and interpretation of terminology in that there might not in fact be Inuktitut vocabulary for some of the terminology- was solved for Pauktuutit, as NWMO had just translated a series of information panels into Inuktitut for another workshop they were planning to convene in Nunavut. NWMO provided the panels to Pauktuutit to be displayed on the day of the workshop. These panels were enormously helpful, as they ensured consistency for interpretation and translation. The panels were used to translate the power point presentation and provided terminology orientation for the workshop interpreters.

“This is an important issue and it is important that we understand it. We are concerned about our future and our children. This issue is going to be around for a long time”.

THE WORKSHOP

Participants

The workshop included 17 formal participants, comprised of Pauktuutit Board of Directors and official delegates. In addition, several Pauktuutit staff, board candidates and observers were keenly interested in the discussion. (Appendix C: Participant List)



Proceedings

Tony Hodge provided a strong presentation about the nature of the NWMO mandate and the three key options under consideration. He then opened the floor for discussion and clarification. Topics ranged from questions about Uranium – what it is and where it is found, whether Uranium might be discovered during mining exploration, and what the health effects are of those living near or working on Uranium sites, to questions regarding the safety of Deep Repository Storage and possible effects of volcanic activity, as well as a question about whether outer space has been considered as a storage option.

Participants asked how the Pauktuutit-NWMO workshop partnership came about – had Pauktuutit approached NWMO or did NWMO approach Pauktuutit and why NWMO had wanted to speak with this particular group? Others suggested that NWMO do further outreach in Northern communities and use Northern News media to get information out to Inuit.

“Nuclear waste is really a tough topic...huge to absorb...too much to expect us to know much when this is our first time hearing about it...”

At that point on the agenda, the group was to break into small groups to consider specific aspects of the challenge. This was to stimulate discussion and ensure participant input. However, since meaningful discussion was well underway and participants were displaying little to no hesitation in expressing their views, it was decided that rather than abandon this discussion, the forum would forego the small group activities and continue with the plenary discussion.

After the broad and inclusive discussion, the workshop dedicated its final half-hour to allowing each participant to share ideas, thoughts, concerns and suggestions with respect to what they would like to see in NWMO’s recommendations to the Canadian government for managing the nuclear waste.

The facilitator repeatedly pointed out that the intent of this workshop was to discuss alternate methods of managing the waste, *not* to assess particular geographical areas where it might be stored. He further assured the meeting participants that Canada’s North was, to his knowledge, not now under consideration as a location for disposal or storage of nuclear waste, nor was it suited geographically for future consideration.

“...need to have faith that there is a solution. This is a global problem...we need to have faith”...

In spite of this, the participants seemed to feel the need to send a strong message that nuclear waste should not be stored in the North. The facilitator clearly re-stated that it was his strong impression that nuclear waste neither would nor should go to Canada’s North. NWMO is trying rather, to sensitize all Canadians to the realities of the long term challenge of nuclear waste for everyone on earth, and to include Inuit in this outreach as they gather considerations and recommendations from across Canada.



There was a suggestion for research to explore differences in weather and climate conditions and how these might affect decisions regarding waste storage. The fact that this is a global concern brought the suggestion to dialogue with the United States and the rest of the world about what should be done with nuclear waste. The Inter Circumpolar Conference (ICC) was suggested as a potential contact for international dialogue. It was explained that NWMO has strong interaction at the highest levels around the world and is working closely internationally with other countries who have nuclear waste. Canadian efforts are being monitored closely because, having legislated the NWMO mandate, Canada is at the leading edge of global efforts to address this critical challenge.

“...worried about it being disposed of in the Arctic... worried about the wildlife and marine life...I would not support anyone thinking of disposing of it in the Arctic – in the ground or the ocean ...”

One participant reported that although she has considered the danger of mines, PCBs and other contaminants, she had never considered where the waste from mines has been put. There were several comments about the dangers and hazards of mines and clean-up upon mine closure.

The question of recycling Uranium was raised, and discussion about used uranium in weapons ensued.

Some participants asked whether scientists were working towards making nuclear waste safe, and thus making storage unnecessary. Others suggested that until science catches up with the problem, mankind might simply stop making nuclear power.

Many felt that the question of what should be done with nuclear waste, being a new concept, was too large an issue to know what to suggest after a two-hour discussion. Moreover, participants felt it was important to state that the views expressed during the workshop were not necessarily representative perspectives of the communities and regions in which they live. Participants indicated that there are people who are knowledgeable about this issue in the North and that NWMO should consult with them. Participants indicated the need for increased consultation with people in Northern communities and the incorporation of Inuit values and ethics.

“We are grateful that you are consulting the Inuit women of Canada...We need to protect the future...need to be informed...”

Many of the participants thanked NWMO for consulting with Inuit women of Canada. They indicated that they would be taking the information back to their communities and wished to remain involved in future dialogue about this issue.

The participants would like to see the report that is scheduled for release in three months time. When asked for assistance with future work in Northern communities, participants agreed to stay involved, and further suggested that NWMO contact municipal Hamlets and councils.



The Facilitator's Style

The time and effort that went into preparation for this workshop was greatly appreciated. It was evident that the facilitator had considered the audience and planned the workshop and presentation style accordingly. The facilitator created a comfortable and safe place for sharing as well as a flexible approach, meaning that the agenda could be adjusted according to how things played out during the workshop. The facilitator was patient, and allowed plenty of time for participants to absorb and seek clarification about the technical information that was being presented. Most importantly, the facilitator demonstrated respect and appreciation to participants for their thoughtful questions and insight.

LIMITATIONS & SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORKSHOPS

One participant suggested that smaller group activities might have provided an opportunity to share more freely.

Due to the technical nature of this workshop, and the amount of information to absorb, it was felt that participants' level of comfort with the subject matter might be improved with more time. Some of the participants, although grateful for having been consulted, felt that it was a lot to expect of them during the time allotted.

Although there was an opportunity to provide feedback orally about the participants' experience of the workshop, it would have been valuable to have been given an opportunity to provide written feedback. A written feedback form would have to have been prepared ahead of time.

CONCLUSIONS

The strongest recurring message was to keep the waste in Southern Canada. In response to the comment that there might be a slim possibility that the waste may be transported across Hudson Bay, strong resistance was voiced to having the waste transported across the water on which they rely for food.

Future – what next? There is work going on with ITK. Pauktuutit, as the national voice for Inuit women in Canada, would like to be included in this consultation work in the north as well.

These women want to stay involved. They were grateful for having been considered in this dialogue and would like to maintain communication with NWMO.



“...We are heavily polluted from the South...when there are forest fires, smoke pollutes our air...sawmills...toxins dumped into the oceans...PCB contaminants harm wildlife and ourselves...We are a dumping ground and have been for years. If they are considering Northern Ontario, it is only a matter of time before they look North. They shouldn't only consider money, they should consider land. Human life, land and marine life need to be considered first and foremost...Thank you for giving Inuit women an opportunity to participate in this discussion. We were not consulted in fisheries because “*women didn't have anything to do with fisheries*” ...Thank you”



Photo: Mary Palliser, President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association
Tony Hodge, Workshop Facilitator