



IROQUOIS CAUCUS | ANISHINABEK NATION

Joint Declaration between the Anishinabek Nation and the Iroquois Caucus on the Transport and Abandonment of Radioactive Waste

Preamble

The Anishinabek Nation and Iroquois Caucus have renewed their relationship and commitment of unity by smoking the sacred pipe. The two nations have met to discuss radioactive waste matters that are within their traditional and treaty territories.

Central to the discussions were ceremony, and spirituality, as reflected in our inherent responsibilities and intimate relationship to the land, waters, and all our relations.

We the Anishinabek Nation and Iroquois Caucus have jurisdiction over the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basins as a result of Aboriginal titles, and the treaties that have been entered into by First Nations and the Crown. We have our own territories and exercise our jurisdiction on a Nation-to-Nation basis.

Many projects are being proposed, decided upon, and initiated in our territories without consulting our First Nation communities. The transportation and abandonment of nuclear waste within our territories has the potential to adversely affect our rights, areas, and activities.

This joint declaration asserts that we must consider future generations, as they are the ones that will be affected by our decisions. We draw on sacred law, traditional law, customary laws – we need to protect the lands, waters and all living things for future generations.

We will not allow the Government of Canada or the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec to abandon radioactive waste in our territories. The potential for long-lived contamination of the environment and of all living entities is too great.

We remain collective and unified in our determination that radioactive waste is kept away from all water bodies, as the risks of contamination are uncertain and the consequences are too great.

We remain collective and unified in our determination that radioactive waste will not be transported, exported or imported throughout our territories against our wishes by road, rail, water, air or any other means of transportation.

We maintain our rights to our lands, waters, and to all our resources and insist that radioactive waste be better contained, and carefully maintained in retrievable and monitored storage.

The five starting points that we have all agreed on are:

Joint Declaration – Anishinabek Nation and Iroquois Caucus

1. No abandonment

Radioactive waste materials are damaging to living things. Many of these materials remain dangerous for tens of thousands of years or even longer. They must be kept out of the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the land we live on for many generations to come. The forces of Mother Earth are powerful and unpredictable and no human-made structures can be counted on to resist those forces forever. Such dangerous materials cannot be abandoned and forgotten.

2. Better containment, more packaging

Cost and profit must never be the basis for long-term radioactive waste management. Paying a higher price for better containment today will help prevent much greater costs in the future when containment fails. Such failure will include irreparable environmental damage and radiation-induced diseases. The right kinds of packaging should be designed to make it easier to monitor, retrieve, and repackage insecure portions of the waste inventory as needed, for centuries to come.

3. Monitored and retrievable storage

Continuous guardianship of nuclear waste material is needed. This means long-term monitoring and retrievable storage. Information and resources must be passed on from one generation to the next so that our grandchildren's grandchildren will be able to detect any signs of leakage of radioactive waste materials and protect themselves. They need to know how to fix such leaks as soon as they happen.

4. Away from Major Water Bodies

Rivers and lakes are the blood and the lungs of Mother Earth. When we contaminate our waterways, we are poisoning life itself. That is why radioactive waste must not be stored beside major water bodies for the long-term. Yet this is exactly what is being planned at five or more locations in Canada, including Kincardine on Lake Huron, Port Hope near Lake Ontario, Pinawa beside the Winnipeg River, and Chalk River and Rolphton, both beside the Ottawa River.

5. No imports or exports

The import and export of nuclear wastes over public roads and bridges should be forbidden except in truly exceptional cases after full consultation with all whose lands and waters are being put at risk. In particular, the planned shipment of highly radioactive liquid from Chalk River to South Carolina should not be allowed because it can be down-blended and solidified on site at Chalk River. Transport of nuclear waste should be strictly limited and decided on a case-by-case basis with full consultation with all those affected.

As the leaders of today, it is our duty to preserve and protect Mother Earth. We cannot risk the long-term, irreversible destruction of our lands and waters, which are life-giving for all beings.

We hold the government of Canada to account to respect the rights of indigenous peoples. Transparency and full disclosure are essential, but much more is needed. The government has a duty to consult our First Nations. We are determined to ensure the full participation of indigenous people on all aspects of nuclear waste transportation and storage, from planning to execution. *[Original declaration 2017; revised 2020]*