

Generating Justice for a Generation

Annual Report from the Chairperson - 2011

The Inter-Church Uranium Committee Educational Co-operative has passed the thirty-year milestone. It has spanned a generation. This thirty-year generational mark is truly something to celebrate, but it is also something to mourn. It is something to mourn because even from those heady days of victory with regard to opposition to the Warman refinery, the ecological degradation, health risk, economic folly, radioactive waste, and nuclear weapons connections have not gone away or decreased, but have increased. The nuclear chain continues to bind and to enslave the environment, the economy, and people and their cultures. However, the thirty years of ICUC is also something to celebrate. ICUC has generated for over a generation the concerns of ecojustice for individuals, societies, and all living things. There is a closer monitoring of uranium mining and remediation, refining and nuclear generation are not in our backyard, health and safety issues remain at the forefront, the evil of depleted uranium armaments and nuclear weapons has been called to account, and now, the questioning of deep disposal waste sites are taking place thanks in part to the work and support of many, many people over the years with ICUC. For over thirty years ICUC has helped generate the issues and concerns surrounding the uranium mining and nuclear industries for the sake of life, justice, and peace for the air, water, land, plants, animals, people and societies.

Unfortunately, our work is not over, but has become more pressing and more challenging. The government is using the issue of economic stimulus and public anxiety over the economy as a smokescreen to dismantle federal environmental assessment. The Provincial government has adopted the same irrational, scorched-earth mentality in its mandate, such that irremediable exploitation rather than environmental, social, and economic sustainability will be the incalculable cost of these nuclear degenerative proposals.

Whether in our encounters with the uranium mining industry, the proponents of nuclear generated electricity, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC), the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO), or the provincial government of Saskatchewan, there is a policy shift to remove environmental

protections in the name of short-term economic recovery or growth, on the one hand, and efficiency and harmonization between federal and provincial agencies, on the other hand, such that we are placing our environment, our health, and our long-term economic and social well-being at risk now and for the future. Another alarming implication is the Harper government's steady, stable, majority presence in purposefully promoting the absence of meaningful public consultation. This is evident in participant funding cuts to such organizations as KAIROS, the Canadian Environmental Network and its provincial counterpart the Saskatchewan Environmental Network. It is also warranted in noting that environmental ministry decisions and CNSC decisions are now such that often these reviews or screenings are only of a technical nature and thus public participation is deemed irrelevant and unnecessary. Environment Minister Peter Kent's aping of the Prime Minister's Office's paternalistic prognostications for promoting prosperity posits no time for participatory democracy and public input into project proposals that affect the future well-being of communities and the vitality of ecosystems. The next generation is at risk.

ICUCEC along with other concerned groups and citizens in Saskatchewan saw the evidences of this shift in the limited public participation and mandated unwillingness to consider alternative proposals. ICUCEC as a part of the Coalition for a Clean Green Saskatchewan, a network of diverse, grass-roots organizations across rural, northern and urban Saskatchewan, worked very hard with other concerned environmental groups in the province to garner more opportunities for public participation, to inform the public about the devalued qualities of life from proposed uranium and nuclear projects, especially the deep storage and misnamed disposal of high level radioactive waste, and to expose and to oppose the greenwashing of our future by the government, industry and NWMO concerning these projects. ICUCEC has also maintained its contact with leadership within the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the leadership of the Metis nation. The concern here is to look at how the uranium mining projects affect First Nations' and Metis' lands and people in terms of principles regarding the Creator as well as the health and happiness of the people.

Throughout this engagement with the governmental principalities and the nuclear powers ICUCEC's position has been that human beings are not the centre of the powers and processes, but are finite participants in the vast ecosystem of the

planet. Our being-at-home in creation entails a physical, biological, geographical, psychological, cultural, and spiritual rootedness and calls forth a sense of dependence, awe, gratitude, humility and respect for the places we inhabit. As the traditional ways of First Nations and Metis peoples also exemplify, choices made by human beings must respect God's creation in its careful interconnectedness of earth, water, air, and all living things. Exploiting the earth's resources in such a way which disturbs the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic and human communities beyond their normal spatial and temporal scales is sinful, immoral, and unjust against God and God's creation. Creation is not to be possessed, invaded or appropriated, but acknowledged as the gift that sustains human life and life as a whole. Technology and economic development, including uranium mining, nuclear power generation, and the deep disposal of high level waste, must be subject to critical reflection in light of the impact that such actions have on people and the environment in the present and into the future. Of particular concern is that the potential damage to nature with respect to the uranium and nuclear industry is of a different order and magnitude than past damage and is manifested in ways distinct from nature's own regenerative and restorative capacities for life and self-renewal.

However, the future of the uranium industry is not only taking this material out of the ground, but also wanting to put it back into the ground in a highly toxic, radioactive form. ICUCEC has been involved in the discussions with the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) whose federal mandate is to establish a site for a high level nuclear waste repository. As Bill Adamson states in one of ICUCEC's pamphlets, "What Do We Know About High Level Nuclear Waste?" "By 1975 ... there were dozens of reactors operating in Canada ... all of them producing irradiated nuclear fuel. Sometime in the future, scientists would decide what to do with the high level waste." The future is now. Although deep waste disposal has not been proven effective, despite the United States closing down its Yucca Mountain project, despite the Whiteshell Research Laboratory experimental deep rock shaft at Pinawa Manitoba cancelled after fifteen years because of the flow of underground water, NWMO continues to promote the fictive future of burying high level nuclear waste in the Canadian Shield. NWMO is going across Canada promoting its plan (the future of an illusion) trying to locate a site and hoping to find a community that will accept it. So far three sites in Saskatchewan have asked to be identified as a site: the First Nations band at English River, the

Metis band at Pinehouse, and the village of Creighton. NWMO has released the initial screening reports for Pinehouse and English River which means that further study on these sites can go ahead.

In what seems interminably longer than the half-life of the radioactive elements which emit our concern, we continue to submit briefs and to appear for CNSC hearings on the screening, licensing, review, renewal and decommissioning of uranium mines and facilities in the province. The major hearings included the Rabbit Lake Solution Processing Project, the Key Lake and McArthur River facilities, the Cigar Lake and Waterby Lake, McClean Lake, Midwest, and Caribou mines proposals, and the Beaverlodge, Gunnar mines, and Cluff Lake decommissionings. The screening process for the Laredo/Nero Lake rehabilitation and remediation process has begun and the comprehensive study for the Millenium/Moon Lake project has just issued a call for public participation. Other possible proposed uranium mining sites are Centennial, Virgin River, Read Lake, Dawn Lake, LaRocque Lake and Tamarack Lake. The future of the industry, like its element, promotes the fission and fusion of future projects. Rabbit Lake, Key Lake, and McArthur River licensing renewals were approved without question by the CNSC despite significant modifications to the original licensing projects and safety questions concerning their current operations. The Cigar Lake mine, which ICUCEC pointed out has been literally "flooded" with regulatory violations, engineering blunders, and environmental spills and degradation, received an indefinite extension to repair all the leaks in that deluge of disaster and is slated to resume production sometime in 2012. Under the politically expedient appointment of the demagogue Michael Binder as director of the CNSC it is toxically apparent that CNSC does not consider good science or environmental health and safety arguments in making decisions, but exclusively the ideological, short-term economic, and political biases for promoting and enhancing the uranium and nuclear industry in Canada. Meanwhile, the future health and safety of workers and the well-being of the environment continue to be jeopardized. [For your information: The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission hearings are now on live webcasts and saved for three months. You can go to their website and witness the genesis of pseudo-safety and pseudo-regulation in the Commission.]

We are still considered for participant funding in the Gunnar Mines Decommissioning Environmental Assessment. Again, the government agencies

seem to be in complete confusion regarding the timelines for completion of the studies, hearings, and assessment of the decommissioning process. Nothing has happened for over twenty seven months. Obfuscation seems to be the tactic to frustrate and to discourage public participation. Monitoring the health, safety, sustainability, and viability of eco-systems and citizens does not seem to be a governmental priority.

One other facet of ICUCEC activity is education. ICUCEC continues to research and write, publish, post on our website, and distribute many pamphlets and papers around the issues of the nuclear industry. Jim Penna, Graham Simpson, and Bill Adamson are our stalwart leaders in these endeavors. By all means, I encourage you to be a regular visitor to this site.

At this time, on behalf of everyone at ICUC, I would like to acknowledge the thirty years of service Bill Adamson and Graham Simpson have given to this organization. They have been with ICUC from the beginning. Graham and Bill in their own right incarnate an Environmental Impact Statement and have had a tremendous impact on sustaining ecological integrity throughout this province and Canada. An unofficial study released by Sask Power indicates that if one could harness the energy and drive Bill Adamson and Graham Simpson have generated for ICUC and related interests in the past thirty years, there is enough energy to supply 647 homes for a generation. ICUC's own study suggests this underestimates their generating capacity. Graham Simpson, who has the richest deposit of information concerning the uranium and nuclear industry, has been an invaluable resource for us. When it comes to physics he makes sure our data does not fuse or fizzle, and in chemistry he prevents us from making a mountain out of a molehill. Bill Adamson should be listed as the first definition for the term "tenacity" in the Oxford English Dictionary. Whether the head of CNSC, the premier, or the author of a letter to the editor in the StarPhoenix, no one escapes Bill's to the point questioning, his sharp analyses, and wit. For the sake of health and justice Bill will not allow the industry, business, or government to vitiate the life of creation. Their contributions are inestimable. It is impossible to recognize them in proper measure or to repay them for all that they have done. Thus, it is with deep appreciation and gratitude that I say thank you to Bill Adamson and Graham Simpson for their contributions to ICUC.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation and gratitude to the other members of the Executive Board of ICUCEC. Linda Murphy, who serves as our secretary and treasurer. Jim Penna for his tireless communication and publication efforts. Neil Sinclair, who reminds us of the links between the educational, environmental, and political. Many, many thanks for your hard work and dedication to the activities of ICUCEC.

The issues keep arising, the work seems endless, the industry continues to fight for its life. But we too are fighting for lives, the lives of the environment, plants, animals and humans affected by this industry whose operation does not result in a sustainable future, but in an unsustainable demise and devastation whose future is devoid of life and its habitat. I admire the tenacity of all the members who constitute and support this activist acronym known as ICUCEC. Your fortitude, energy, hope, and humour are truly what sustain an eco-community who values life, justice, and peace. I thank you all for your participation in the organization and look forward to the future and to working with all of you.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Poellet, Chairperson