



Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL) is decommissioning Whiteshell Laboratories to restore and protect the environment for generations to come. This means minimizing and managing all forms of waste, caring for nature through site restoration and remediation, and engaging with First Nations, the Manitoba Métis Federation and local communities to plan for the future.

Whiteshell Laboratories played a key role in the nuclear history of Canada, serving as the testing site for the WR-1 research reactor that contributed greatly to nuclear science in Canada. The decommissioning project is being undertaken by CNL on behalf of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL), a federal Crown corporation. CNL is responsible for managing AECL's assets and liabilities, including the decommissioning and waste management work at the former laboratories.

Our priorities

- **Ensuring safety for humans and environment:** during decommissioning and into the long-term monitoring period, CNL is focused on learning and building best-in-class safety culture to support workers in getting the job done while ensuring the public and the environment remain protected.
- **Leading decommissioning practices:** to date, the team at Whiteshell has taken down more than 40 buildings and safely transported 6,700 cubic metres of waste for safe storage at Chalk River Laboratories. CNL's staff are using the lessons from the challenge of dismantling some of the one-of-a-kind radiological facilities at Whiteshell Laboratories, like the Active Liquid Waste Treatment Centre that was dismantled in 2021, and implementing that decommissioning knowledge to further CNL's broader environmental remediation mission.
- **Involving public and Indigenous perspectives:** CNL is bringing local communities and Indigenous Peoples into the conversation about how the decommissioning goes forward – and what happens after. Indigenous knowledge and participation are essential to complement and improve the work that CNL is doing and help build First Nations and Red River Métis understanding and confidence in the restoration of the site.

Why is CNL decommissioning Whiteshell?

Our scientific legacy and long-term responsibility

- Over 60 years ago the town of Pinawa, nestled on the bank of the Winnipeg River on Treaty 3 Territory, was built for the employees of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL), who would continue to move to the area and work at the much-anticipated nuclear research station.
- The growth of the town was mirrored by the research taking place 14 kilometres away at Whiteshell Laboratories and, at its peak, there were close to 1,400 employees working on-site who helped contribute to nuclear research that has benefitted Canadians and people around the world. The positive socioeconomic impacts of the site, and CNL's operations in the area, continues to this day through employment, local business opportunities, and sub-contracting.
- In 1998, the Government announced the closure of Whiteshell Laboratories. Restoration activities have been underway since then and all research has been moved to Chalk River Laboratories in Ontario.



For the environment

- The Government of Canada is committed to cleaning up former nuclear research sites around Canada. It has provided funding for the decommissioning the Whiteshell Laboratories site.
- CNL is decommissioning Whiteshell Laboratories with the protection of the environment, the public, and workers as top priorities.
- CNL is conducting this work now rather than leaving the liability for future generations. Right now, there are knowledgeable staff with extensive experience at the Whiteshell Laboratories site conducting the work.
- CNL has a solid record of accomplishment in environmental protection. CNL has a robust environmental policy and an environmental protection program that monitors and reports on environmental performance. In 2023 alone more than 3,000 samples including air, river water, wastewater, vegetation and fish were collected on-site to support Environmental Protection program results.
- CNL is supporting Sagkeeng First Nation's independent, Indigenous-led Niigan Aki environmental monitoring program. This collaborative and rights-based environmental monitoring program is being done on and off the Whiteshell Laboratories site, and is developed and administered by the Sagkeeng First Nation with resources and support provided by AECL and CNL. The program was established to empower Sagkeeng's ability to monitor and steward their territory and improve their understanding of the Whiteshell site and operations, which is located in the Sagkeeng's unceded traditional territory.

Taking care of the past to prepare for the future

- CNL is conducting the largest and most complex nuclear remediation project in Canada across four provinces and territories, addressing Canada's legacy waste liabilities, to restore and protect the environment for future generations. Restoring the Whiteshell Laboratories site is a part of this important mission.
- By the end of the restoration project, all buildings at the site will be completely removed, all hazardous materials will be properly dealt with, and any contaminated lands cleaned up to safe levels. To ensure the continued protection of the environment and people who might use the land in the future, environmental monitoring work will continue for at least the next 100 years.
- When the restoration is complete, approximately 10,800 acres of land will remain unaffected, and only a small portion, less than 1% of the former laboratories site, would be maintained under institutional control – to ensure ongoing government oversight for safeguarding people and the environment.
- AECL retains the long-term responsibility for the site even after CNL's job is done. Decisions on how areas of the Whiteshell site will be used in the future involve consultation and input from surrounding communities, First Nations, the Red River Métis, and the wider public.