

Edited 'Pessamit' document for consideration by the Board of Governors of the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve  
(Annamarie Hatcher)  
Jan., 2018

Note: Pessamit is a First Nations reserve and Innu community in the Canadian province of Quebec, located about 50 kilometres southwest from Baie-Comeau along the north shore of the Saint Lawrence River at the mouth of the Betsiamites River. It is across the river directly north of Rimouski, Quebec. It belongs to the Pessamit Innu Band. In 2017, the Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association held its AGM in the Manicouagan-Uapishka Biosphere Reserve located in Pessamit territory.

## **PESSAMIT CALL FOR RECONCILIATION**

National Aboriginal Day

June 21, 2017

The Pessamit Call for Reconciliation is launched as a result of meetings to discuss the responsibilities and opportunities for Biosphere Reserves and, by extension, other sites designated by UNESCO in Canada and around the world, to strengthen relations with Indigenous Peoples.

In this year marking the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 10th anniversary of the Manicouagan-Uapishka Biosphere Reserve, of which the Innu Council of Pessamit is a founding member, UNESCO's networks and partners in Canada need to demonstrate leadership. They must ensure a genuine commitment to Indigenous cultures when establishing and governing Biosphere Reserves. In doing so, the partnership will promote and uphold UNESCO's values and priorities in Canada and in the world.

By joining the Pessamit Call for Reconciliation, we agree to make reconciliation a priority and to take action.

Whereas:

- Indigenous cultures deserve to be protected and that all languages deserve to be preserved;
- More than 50 Indigenous communities and many more individuals live within the Canadian Biosphere Reserves, all located on traditional Indigenous territories;
- Many Indigenous communities have actively contributed to building the network of Canada's Biosphere Reserves, sometimes as initiating partners, founding partners and management partners;
- Indigenous knowledge, cultures and worldviews are essential to the building of a more sustainable future and the guarantee that Biosphere Reserves can meet the requirements set out in the Statutory Framework of the Man and Biosphere program of UNESCO and the Lima Action Plan;

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- Biosphere Reserves are uniquely positioned to address the challenges and issues faced by Indigenous youth through the creation of a common ground that offers much-needed opportunities for Indigenous youth and their peoples to make their voices heard;

- Common and shared principles are essential for fostering and strengthening collaboration among culturally- diverse stakeholders of Biosphere Reserves; and Biosphere Reserves and their vast networks are in a unique and privileged position to advance reconciliation and inspire both Canada and the world to take action.

**We call upon Biosphere Reserves to:**

1. Publicly acknowledge that all sites designated by UNESCO in Canada as Biosphere Reserves are located on Indigenous lands. The Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve is located on the traditional, unceded territory of the Mi'kmaw nation in the district of Unama'ki.
2. Provide a culturally respectful environment to welcome meaningful participation of stakeholders from all relevant cultural backgrounds and their worldviews in the governance, planning, and activities of Biosphere Reserves. This participation must be based on relationship-building through mutual respect and trust that will lead to shared governance methodologies. It also implies building a solid understanding of the historical, social, environmental and economic elements that will underlie the development of a culturally-safe common ground;
3. Assist in highlighting and protecting Indigenous Nationhood, as well as the rich and distinct Indigenous cultural elements such as ceremony, stories, languages, and other traditions, which are associated with the territories where Biosphere Reserves are located.
4. Ensure that Indigenous knowledge is valued and reflected in the daily work of Biosphere Reserves and their partners to support sustainable development, biodiversity conservation and capacity building;
5. Recognize the importance of creating collaborative discourse that will invite diverse Indigenous perspectives