

# A GUIDE TO BEING A BIOSPHERE RESERVE IN CANADA

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Association  
canadienne des  
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United Nations  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	1
Glossary	2
What Are Biosphere Reserves?	3
How Did This Idea Get Started?	4
How Are Biosphere Reserves Funded?	8
Being A Biosphere Reserve: A Two Way Relationship	9
The Biosphere Reserve Programme	10
The National Context	13
Operational Fundamentals	15
How to Become a Biosphere Reserve In Canada	20
Your Journey Has Only Just Begun	25

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This guide was prepared by Peter G. Kingsmill, past-chair and founding director of the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve. (April 2018).

# GLOSSARY

PROGRAMME	The formal British spelling of “program” is preferred by UNESCO and is used throughout this document.
UNESCO:	United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organization
CCUNESCO:	Canadian Commission for UNESCO
MAB:	Man and the Biosphere Programme
CCMAB:	Canadian Man and the Biosphere Committee
IACBR:	International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves
ICC:	International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere Programme
WNBR:	World Network of Biosphere Reserves
CBRA:	Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association





# WHAT ARE BIOSPHERE RESERVES?

Biosphere reserves are special places where people and organizations have made a commitment to live and work more in harmony with nature and with one another. The people living in these areas are figuring out – and demonstrating – how to achieve a sustainable balance between conserving cultural diversity, natural ecosystems and biodiversity, and fostering sound economic development. Biosphere reserves share a commitment to meaningfully engage Indigenous Peoples, and have a mandate to support research, learning, education and capacity building in their regions. These goals correspond with the three official functions of all UNESCO Biosphere Reserves: conservation, development and logistic support. [1]

In Canada, as of 2018, there are 18 biosphere reserves, with at least one in each of the provinces and territories except Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland & Labrador, Yukon and Nunavut. Their populations range from fewer than 700 (Tsá Tué) to more than 1.3 million (Niagara Escarpment). Some of Canada's biosphere reserves have a small footprint (as small as 1100ha at Mont-Saint-Hilaire in Québec) to as large as 9,331,300ha at Tsá Tué (N.W.T.).

Biosphere reserves (there are 669 biosphere reserves in 120 countries worldwide) are designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) operates under the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB). Canada has been involved through the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO) and the Canadian MAB National Committee (CCMAB) since the 1970s.



# HOW DID THIS IDEA GET STARTED?

## UNESCO

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First, of course, there was UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), founded in 1945 as a specialized agency of the United Nations. UNESCO's mandate is to contribute across continents to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, the improvement of health, and sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, scientific activities, culture, communication and information. [2]

## THE MAB PROGRAMME

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In 1971, UNESCO launched the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme as an intergovernmental scientific program that aimed to establish a scientific basis for improving relationships between people and their environments. MAB combines the practical application of natural and social sciences, economics and education to improve human livelihoods and the equitable sharing of benefits, and to safeguard natural and managed ecosystems, promoting innovative approaches to economic development that are socially and culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable. [3]



## THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE PROGRAMME:

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The MAB Programme is now implemented in sites through the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR), launched in 1976. Biosphere reserves are models to test and apply interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes in social and ecological systems, and their interaction, including conflict prevention and the conservation of biodiversity. Biosphere reserves promote scientific, traditional and Indigenous ways of knowing and provide opportunities for knowledge sharing between diverse communities. While biosphere reserves are nominated by national governments and remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the states where they are located, their global status as biosphere reserves is internationally recognized. [4,5]

## WHAT A BIOSPHERE RESERVE IS NOT:

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The use of the word “reserve” does not mean that biosphere reserves are set aside from human use and development. In fact, human activity and the health of people and communities are an integral part of the biosphere reserve program. It is very important to be aware that the UNESCO label does not bring with it any new authorities over land, water or resources and therefore the existing powers, rights and responsibilities of governments, businesses and landowners remain unchanged.

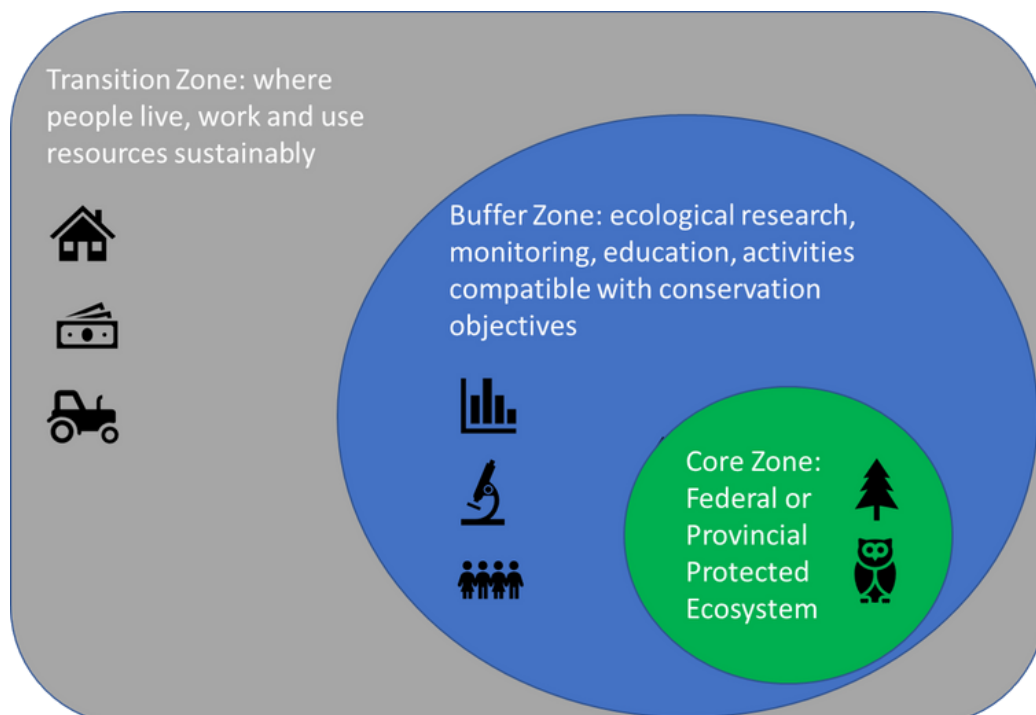
# ALL BIOSPHERE RESERVES HAVE THREE DISTINCT AREAS, OR ZONES

Biosphere reserves configure their zones in a variety of ways, and of course few of them look just like the map above. However, meeting the principles of zonation are requirements for designation as a biosphere reserve [6]:

**Core Zone:** This consists of one or more protected areas, such as a national or provincial park, migratory bird sanctuary or other protected area. The Core Zone acts as a reference point on the natural state of the ecosystem(s) that the biosphere reserve represents.

**Buffer Zone:** Surrounding and adjacent to the Core zone(s), buffer zones are managed in ways that support the conservation objectives of the Core. Examples may include: a municipally regulated floodplain; a woodland special management area; a municipally-zoned area that regulates development to protect the Core; or a conservation easement on private land.

**Transition Zone (or Area of Cooperation):** This is usually the largest part of the biosphere reserve, surrounding the Core and Buffer zones, and is where most of the residents live and work, using natural resources in a sustainable manner.





# HOW ARE BIOSPHERE RESERVES GOVERNED?

Biosphere reserves in Canada are governed by local committees, often constituted as non-profit corporations. There is no one model of how these committees are populated; several have volunteer organizations to which interested persons can sign up (and in some cases pay) for a membership, from which a board of directors is elected by the organization's members in the standard fashion.

Other biosphere reserves have a more complex governance structure: these organizations typically include a board of directors populated by elected representatives of municipal and Indigenous governments as well as representatives from local and regional non-government organizations. Most of these include a small number of "at large" directors.

The variety of governance structures is a reflection of the fact that there is no top-driven structural expectation for biosphere reserves, which can adapt over time to the structures that work best for their communities. Unique to Canada is its adoption of the EuroMAB 2013 Recommendations for Collaboration with Indigenous Peoples [7] , which include the following two references to governance:

- Add significant Indigenous representation in biosphere reserve governance and management as a criterion for designation.
- Recognize responsibility to engage Indigenous communities as rights-holders and hosts of biosphere reserves; recognize that sites are located within their territories.

These recommendations are reflected in the Lima Action Plan 2016-2025 for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves: "Ensure processes for selecting, designing, planning, and nominating BRs are open and participatory, involving all concerned stakeholders, taking into account local and Indigenous practices, traditions and cultures, and based on sound science" (p. 37, Action A2.2). [8]





A photograph of a person swimming in clear, turquoise water. The person is in the middle of a stroke, with their arms extended forward and water splashing around them. The water is very clear, showing the rocky bottom. The rocks are a mix of brown, orange, and grey. The overall scene is bright and natural.

# HOW ARE BIOSPHERE RESERVES FUNDED?

UNESCO does not directly fund biosphere reserves anywhere. Biosphere reserves in Canada – as of 2018 – receive no core funding support from the Government of Canada either. The Canadian Commission for UNESCO is responsible for overseeing all UNESCO programs in Canada but it does not fund biosphere reserves. From time to time, and according to the priorities of CCUNESCO, funding may be provided to the network of Canadian biosphere reserves to support initiatives that match CCUNESCO’s strategic priorities.

This is not to say that the federal government – and similarly provincial governments – never contribute financially to biosphere reserve activities, but most – if not all – of such funding is project-based, contingent upon senior government priorities and contract delivery expectations. To sustain themselves financially, biosphere reserves usually develop partnerships with local and provincial governments, NGOs, charitable organizations and private-sector donors.



# BEING A BIOSPHERE RESERVE: A TWO-WAY RELATIONSHIP

A lot of work goes into being nominated – and designated – as a biosphere reserve. That is as it should be because it is indeed an honour to have your community recognized as a special place – by a very special organization: UNESCO. The nomination process (which will be examined later in this manual) is a challenge in itself, but actually being a biosphere reserve means living up to UNESCO objectives and the particular strategies of the MAB Programme itself.

More than living up to UNESCO – and National – objectives is the expectation that all biosphere reserves will participate actively in the national and international networks. The primary doors to participation are through the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association (CBRA). Consider the overarching objective of UNESCO:

*“to contribute to peace and security in the world by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science, culture and communication in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law, and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.”*

Those are bold expectations for diverse communities – both large and small – to absorb, but they are the basis for what biosphere reserves are supposed to do. Being a biosphere reserve means contributing time, effort, and local wisdom and knowledge, under a mantra of collaboration, goodwill and sharing, with the biosphere reserve network and indeed with humanity. UNESCO and MAB have developed strategies to respond to those expectations, and, as with society as a whole, the strategies are adjusted over time. Understanding UNESCO and MAB strategies will help biosphere reserve practitioners meet UNESCO expectations, and are therefore “required reading” for biosphere reserve practitioners.





# THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE PROGRAMME: 1976 TO 2025

## 1971

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In 1971, UNESCO launched the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme as an intergovernmental scientific program that aimed to establish a scientific basis for the improvement of relationships between people and their environments. Five years later, in 1976, MAB launched the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).

## 1995

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In March 1995, an international conference of experts was organized by UNESCO in Seville (Spain). The strategy developed there – known as the Seville Strategy – recommended the actions to be taken for the future development of biosphere reserves in the 21st century. That meeting in Seville also helped to finalize a Statutory Framework setting out the conditions for the functioning of the WNBR. The Framework introduced the requirement for periodic review of biosphere reserves once every 10 years, while the Seville Strategy [9] reinforced the requirement for local engagement in biosphere reserve operations. There were a number of Conferences and Action Plans between 1995 and 2015, but the most significant outcome for biosphere reserves operating today was the development of the MAB Strategy 2015-2025 [10]

## 1995

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For biosphere reserves, a key take-away from that document was a refreshed mission statement:

- develop and strengthen models for sustainable development in the WNBR;
- communicate the experiences and lessons learned, facilitating the global diffusion and application of these models;
- support evaluation and high quality management, strategies and policies for sustainable development and planning, as well as accountable and resilient institutions;
- help Member States and stakeholders to urgently meet the Sustainable Development Goals through experiences from the WNBR, particularly through exploring and testing policies, technologies and innovations for the sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources and mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

## 2016

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In 2016, the Lima Action Plan [11], which is specific to biosphere reserves, drew on the mission statement above, and pointed the way for biosphere reserves through 2025 and beyond. It provides a “must-read” tabulated series of actions, outputs and responsibilities for the next decade and more. Of special significance are the following Actions:

(A2.2) Ensure processes for selecting, designing, planning, and nominating BRs are open and participatory, involving all concerned stakeholders, taking into account local and Indigenous practices, traditions and cultures,



and based on sound science.

(A2.3) Ensure processes for implementing, managing, monitoring and periodic review of BRs are open and participatory and take into account local and indigenous practices, traditions and cultures.

Other critically important international documents include The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) [12], the UN Sustainable Development Goals [13] , the UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples [14], and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity [15]. Also, as a follow-up to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, a subsequent convention produced the Aichi Biodiversity Targets [16] , which consist of a set of 20, time-bound, measurable targets agreed to in Nagoya, Japan (October 2010) by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.







# THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

A number of national agreements, plans and strategies have been produced that serve to guide the development, operations and values of Canadian biosphere reserves. They include Canada's 2020 Biodiversity Targets [17] and The Federal Sustainable Development Strategy 2016-2019 [18] (which makes reference to the important work of biosphere reserves). The Pathway to Canada Target 1 [19], Conservation 2020 Target 1 states: By 2020, at least 17% of terrestrial areas and inland water, and 10% of coastal and marine areas, are conserved through networks of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

A key expectation for all biosphere reserves is reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and this means different things in different places. Federal and other national level documents that provide background and ways forward include the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action [20] , and the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism [21] .

The Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association (CBRA) is a not-for-profit



organisation that had its roots in 1980 when the Biosphere Reserves Working Group was convened by Canada's national committee for the UNESCO/MAB Programme. In 1996, the Working Group, together with representatives from the existing biosphere reserves, formed the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association to enhance the scope of support and program activities beyond what was possible under its prior arrangements. CBRA was incorporated in 1997 and received official charitable status in 1998; all designated biosphere reserves in Canada appoint one person to represent their organization on CBRA's board of directors.



# OPERATIONAL FUNDAMENTALS

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

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Biosphere reserve organizations are required to produce annual financial reports that are reviewed or audited and accepted by the organization board of directors. It is obvious that, for biosphere reserves that have not been able to make arrangements for long-term financial support, developing budgets and managing cash flow can be challenges; suffice it to say that the network can neither underwrite cost over-runs nor tolerate the bankruptcy of a Canadian biosphere reserve. Fiscal solvency of biosphere reserves is a requirement of designation; a report produced for CBRA about applying for charitable registration for biosphere reserves will be of potential interest to biosphere reserve practitioners [22].

## ANNUAL TRACKING AND REPORTING

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Beyond financial documentation and reporting (covered above), biosphere reserves are required to document their annual activities and track their progress. This is not only important for good governance, but reporting activities and results to CBRA for inclusion in its annual reports is a requirement. This reporting is also key for national initiatives and funding opportunities. Furthermore, annual tracking and documentation will be essential for a successful Periodic Review.

# THE PERIODIC REVIEW PROCESS

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The periodic review represents an opportunity to carry out a qualitative survey of the actions implemented and their results. Periodic reviews – typically conducted once every ten years – are a requirement of the MAB Programme, and they are a time to take stock of progress made by the biosphere reserve, particularly with regards to the updating of knowledge, skills and expertise in resource and ecosystem management.

The periodic review provides opportunities to: discuss the updating of the zonation system and assess its relevance; question the objectives and means of management policies; and examine the issues and problems tied to implementation. And, it is also a time to discuss weak points. The objective is to improve the quality of the biosphere reserves and their functioning as sites for testing and demonstrating approaches to sustainable development, and it is a “must do” component of being a biosphere reserve. A further description of the process and the review template are available in [23] .

Date	Item
<b>Summer/Fall 2017</b>	The Biosphere Reserve (BR) completes its Self-Study.
<b>Fall 2017</b>	CCUNESCO recruits two external reviewers (two reviewers per Biosphere Reserve).
<b>January 31st, 2018</b>	Self-study due. To be sent to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO). Self-study consulted by the reviewers and the Canadian MAB Committee (CC-MAB).
<b>March 26-April 8, 2018</b> <b>The site visit will be conducted during 2-3 days, within this time period</b>	Site visit conducted by the two external reviewers. The site visit follows the self-study and provides the opportunity for reviewers to ask questions regarding the BR's self-study. This also allows the reviewers to validate the self-study's content and meet with the BR's various contributors. Reviewers make a summary of the BR's strengths and weaknesses.
<b>April 30, 2018</b>	Reviewers Report due and sent to the BR and CCUNESCO. A copy is also sent to the CC-MAB.
<b>May 21st, 2018</b>	The BR sends its Periodic Review Final Report to CCUNESCO (including the Reviewer's report). CCUNESCO sends the Periodic Review Final Report to CC-MAB as well.
<b>June 29, 2018</b>	CC-MAB will deliberate and deliver its recommendations to CCUNESCO.
<b>August 15, 2018</b>	CC-MAB's recommendations submitted to the Executive Committee (by CCUNESCO - a memorandum will be submitted to the Executive Committee for approbation).
<b>September 2018 (TBD)</b>	Executive Committee Meeting. Deliberations of the Executive Committee.
<b>September 30th, 2018</b>	Periodic Review Final Report submitted to the MAB Secretariat in Paris.



# AT BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN CANADA, THE PROCEDURE MOVES FORWARD AS FOLLOWS:



1

The point of contact regarding the periodic review is the Program Officer of the CCUNESCO.

2

About a year prior to the review, the Program Officer will contact the BR informing them of the timeline and identifying a single contact point at the biosphere reserve.

3

Biosphere reserves are responsible for completing a self-study document following the MAB template [24] prior to their review.

4

CCUNESCO will select two reviewers to conduct the review. Once the self-study document has been received, the reviewers will go over the document and a time for an on-site visit will be arranged. Following the on-site visit, reviewers will draft their review.

5

The biosphere reserve has 30 days to respond to the review. The CCMAB reviews all information and makes a recommendation to the Executive Committee of CCUNESCO, which then makes a recommendation to the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves (IACBR). Final decisions are made by the International Coordinating Council (ICC). There may be further recommendations going forward, including recommendations to bring the biosphere reserve into compliance within a specified time (e.g. 2 years).

6

Failure to comply with the deadlines will be taken to mean that the biosphere reserve is not functional and the Canadian Commission will initiate what is referred to as the “exit strategy”.

# REASONS AND PROCESS FOR WITHDRAWAL OF BIOSPHERE RESERVE STATUS

If, after thorough and documented community and stakeholder consultation, a designated biosphere reserve in Canada wishes to withdraw from the network, it can request to be withdrawn in a letter to the CCUNESCO.

If, as in Point 6 above, a biosphere reserve fails to meet ICC-MAB expectations and deadlines, the ICC-MAB Exit Strategy will be implemented through CCUNESCO. The Exit Strategy is still under development by ICC-MAB, but pages 15 – 20 of the report from the twenty-ninth session of ICC-MAB in June 2017 details progress to date and is available in [25]



# HOW TO BECOME A BIOSPHERE RESERVE IN CANADA

It is not easy to create a biosphere reserve. Past experience shows that – in Canada – it takes an average of eight years for an area to be designated. The process requires a rigorous collection of data and extensive public involvement. However, if the biosphere reserve model fits your vision of the future for your community, then you can help lead the people of your region on a journey toward a sustainable future, in harmony with the natural world.

## 1

Download and review the specific questions asked in Part I of the UNESCO biosphere reserve nomination form [26] .

## 2

Form a team of committed individuals to gather data to answer the following questions:

- Does your area contain biophysical characteristics that make it globally important?
- Which protected or regulated areas might serve as the Core and Buffer areas of the biosphere reserve?
- What cultural elements are present? It will be important to draw upon the 1996 Statutory Framework for Biosphere Reserves [27] and the Lima Action Plan 2016-2025 [28]. You will need to demonstrate how you propose to achieve the aims of the international program.
- What are the main elements of the regional economy and what potential exists for sustainable development?
- Which organizations or networks might contribute to the activities of a biosphere reserve?

## 3

Contact The Program Officer – Natural Sciences at CCUNESCO to let them know that you are developing a biosphere reserve proposal.



**4** Garner support for your proposal. Major stakeholders of your region, including the general public, must generally agree with the idea of a biosphere reserve before you put forward a nomination to UNESCO.

**5** Contact the managers of the proposed Core and Buffer areas to seek their cooperation and agreement.

**6** Contact rights holders to explain the concept and garner their support. These will include Indigenous Chiefs and Councils, as well as municipalities and federal and provincial government agencies. Note: your nomination must have the support of any Indigenous Nations within whose traditional territory(ies) your proposed biosphere reserve is situated, and letters of support must form part of your nomination. Recommendations in this regard were developed by the EuroMAB 2013 Indigenous Working Group and are considered foundational in Canada; [29] .

**7** Contact non-government organizations, local businesses, community groups, farming or fishing organizations and educational institutions.

**8** Publish articles in the local press, hold “open houses” and public meetings, and make visits to municipal councils to involve the public in the dialogue.

**9** Invite representatives of local organizations and members of the public to join your coordinating committee.

After rights holders and stakeholders have given their agreement to seek designation as a biosphere reserve, you should formalize their cooperation by creating a permanent coordinating committee. Since this group will normally coordinate the biosphere reserve after designation is received, it is important to create a strong organization from the start. This will also involve considering how best to include Indigenous peoples in your governance structure. This should be co-determined: it might not be representation, but a model of meaningful engagement must be established and demonstrated.

## DECIDE ON A GOVERNANCE MODEL



Biosphere reserves must have a corporate structure that fits within the regulatory framework set out by the federal, provincial or territorial government. This is typically a not-for-profit corporation (NPC). The organization so formed may develop, pass and operate its own constitution and by-laws as long as it operates within government regulations.

- Some may choose to operate with a board of municipal representatives, rights holders and interest groups.
- Some may choose to operate as community foundations (e.g. Clayoquot Biosphere Trust).
- Some may choose to operate as social enterprises (e.g. Manicouagan-Uapishka).
- Some may base their governance model around their university affiliations (e.g. Mount Arrowsmith, Mont-Saint-Hilaire).
- Some may adopt an entirely Indigenous-led governance model (e.g. Tsá-Tué).

## REFINE BOUNDARIES AND ZONES



It is important to know the geographical extent of the area you are proposing for your biosphere reserve, in order to determine what natural and cultural features it contains. The extent of the area will depend on which groups, organizations, landowners and protected areas are committed to the idea. Defining the boundaries and zones may take some time and will involve extensive data gathering and public dialogue. Again, it is expected that defining boundaries will be undertaken jointly with Indigenous Peoples in the region



## DEFINE OBJECTIVES FOR YOUR PROPOSED BIOSPHERE RESERVE

As you progress through your stakeholder and public consultations, you should discuss the objectives for your biosphere reserve. Developing objectives will help you determine your priorities in the areas of conservation, sustainable development and capacity building. These objectives are also required by the Canadian Committee for MAB (CCMAB) which will be reviewing your nomination and – if approved – sending it to CCUNESCO and UNESCO. Remember to ensure your objectives are matched appropriately with the Strategic Framework and the Lima Action Plan (2.c above).

## INITIATE PROJECTS IN YOUR PROPOSED BIOSPHERE RESERVE

A proposed area must already be carrying out some of the functions of a biosphere reserve before the Canadian MAB committee will recommend to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO that the nomination go forward to UNESCO. This functionality is demonstrated by the implementation of one or more biosphere reserve projects, financial sufficiency, and meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples. You must also provide evidence of your area's willingness to participate actively in the national and international networks and initiatives, such as CBRA, EuroMAB.

## NOMINATE YOUR AREA


By this stage you will have downloaded and printed the biosphere reserve nomination form [30] from the UNESCO Web site. The process of completing the nomination form itself could take a year or more. During that time, you should continue to build and strengthen public support for the biosphere reserve.

By this stage you will have downloaded and printed the biosphere reserve nomination form from the UNESCO Web site. The process of completing the nomination form itself could take a year or more. During that time, you should continue to build and strengthen public support for the biosphere reserve.

Once you have completed a draft nomination, it should be sent to the Program Officer of CCUNESCO for comments. CCUNESCO will request the Canadian MAB committee to review and provide advice. You should incorporate any suggestions or revisions you receive and send the complete nomination to CCUNESCO for final review, along with all letters of support from key stakeholders, rights holders and signatures.

UNESCO makes decisions on designation once a year, usually in late October, and the deadline for receiving nominations from member countries by the MAB Secretariat in Paris is September 30 each year. Working back, this means that your completed nomination form needs to be received by CCUNESCO in April or May, after which it will be reviewed by the Canadian MAB Committee. If approved, a recommendation to move forward will be made by mid-August for approval by the Executive Committee by mid-September, after which it will be forwarded to Paris by September 30. The nomination is then forwarded to the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves for review in January prior to submission to the ICC.

## WAIT FOR THE RESULTS OF YOUR UNESCO REVIEW



The UNESCO review of your proposal involves technical staff from the MAB Secretariat and members of the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves. Be patient: the wait time can be 6 - 9 months depending on the timing of the ICC meeting.

- If the MAB Bureau approves your proposal, UNESCO will send you your biosphere reserve charter through CCUNESCO.
- When your proposal is approved, choose a time and place for a public ceremony to have your biosphere reserve charter officially presented.



# YOUR JOURNEY HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN

This Guide was deliberately structured to emphasize Being a biosphere reserve, with this last section focused on how to Become a biosphere reserve. As you prepare to move forward after a successful nomination and designation, it is very much the right time to go back to the beginning of the Guide and reinforce your understanding of the expectations of UNESCO, CCUNESCO (and your “sister” biosphere reserves in Canada through CBRA) as you move forward. Pay special attention to the section on Periodic Reviews; they only happen every ten years, but that time will pass much more quickly than you might expect. Learn and plan now, so your first review will be the fascinating and informative experience it is supposed to be, and not something you face with dread.

It is also time to ensure that your governance model and reporting procedures are well in hand, to avoid misunderstandings and sudden surprises. Of course, you will already have come a long way to setting things up appropriately through the nomination process, but the next few years will be a time to refresh your operation, your working groups and volunteers to make sure you are achieving your goals, meeting your mission and becoming your vision. It is a rewarding journey, and you are moving together with supportive, experienced and knowledgeable colleagues across Canada, who understand your triumphs and failures. They are as vitally interested in your success as you are, and are always ready to help and share their wisdom. Build up your community, at the same time as you build up the network, across Canada and around the world!





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