



Collaboration with *First Nations*

First Nations have lived on the lands that encompass the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region (MABR) since time immemorial. The First Nations of the Salish Sea have a unique relationship with the lands and waters that transcends time. It is a relationship rooted in a deep, rich cultural connection to nature; a connection and relationship that has informed their way of life.

Through its Man and Biosphere Programme, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recognized the MABR for the outstanding qualities of the traditional territories of the First Nations.

MABR's institutional partners, initiated by a collaboration between Vancouver Island University and the City of Parksville, want to work with First Nations in a respectful and supportive relationship that recognizes the special association that each Nation has with its traditional territory, including the MABR. As a UNESCO biosphere region, MABR should complement the interests of the First Nations; not compete with them. To that end, all institutional partners will be directed by the following Guiding Principles in their MABR-related work.

Guiding Principles

The MABR's work will be premised upon processes, procedures and protocols that reflect a collaborative, comprehensive and collegial course of action with First Nations that is rooted in Guiding Principles that:

1. Honour the deep, rich, cultural connection to the land and the sea; a connection and relationship that informs First Nations way of life;
2. Honour the fact that First Nations have lived from time immemorial in their traditional territories and, through that special relationship as stewards of the land, have a unique association with the MABR;
3. Explore and promote ways and means of enhancing the role of the MABR within the region while being respectful of First Nation interests;
4. Continue to develop a trusting and respectful relationship with First Nations and support appropriate projects that First Nations would like to collaborate on, protecting the confidentiality of knowledge or culturally sensitive information of First Nations communities;
5. Establish respectful processes that value First Nation perspectives, methods of decision-making, cultural values and historical connections to the land;
6. Identify First Nation community engagement opportunities and associated research that relates to the mandate of the MABR;
7. Ensure that the interests and perspectives of First Nations frame future discussions about the MABR;
8. Work with First Nations to identify potential sources of funding to undertake MABR-related initiatives of interest to First Nations;
9. Promote the Mandate and Goals of the UNESCO designation in general and the MABR in particular while recognizing that First Nations have a special relationship with the MABR lands that transcends time and creates a special bond with the MABR.

