Report on EuroMAB 2015
A UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Conference
Haapsalu, Estonia | May 19-22, 2015

Attended by
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Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI)
Vancouver Island University
About EuroMAB

EuroMAB is a network of nearly 300 European and North American biosphere reserves that are part of UNESCO’s Man and Biosphere Programme. The EuroMAB network gathers every two years for a conference in different biosphere regions. EuroMAB 2013 took place at Frontenac Arch biosphere reserve in Ontario, Canada and in 2017, the conference will be hosted in Dordogne, France. Representatives from UNESCO’s Man and Biosphere Programme Secretariat, directors of national biosphere reserve associations and individual biosphere reserve managers, coordinators and researchers attend the event. Over the course of four to five days, plenary sessions, workshops, regional excursions and networking take place. It is also a time when EuroMAB working groups and sub-committees gather in person to identify recent progress and next steps. By the end of the conference, participants are brought up to speed on recent initiatives within the network, they have visited and learned about the biosphere region they are in, and they have connected meaningfully with one another, building the social capital that is necessary for the successful existence of any sizeable network or organization. There are 290+ biosphere reserves within EuroMAB and over 630 worldwide.

Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region’s Role in EuroMAB 2015

Monica Shore and Pam Shaw are members of the EuroMAB Indigenous Working Group (IWG) in addition to their respective roles with the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region and its affiliated Research Institute at VIU. The IWG also includes Tammy Dorward, Cathy Thicke and Rebecca Hurwitz from Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, as well as two external Indigenous knowledge holders and researchers in other parts of Canada. In 2014, the IWG was invited to host a five-hour workshop on Cultural Heritage and Indigenous Knowledge within the framework of UNESCO biosphere reserves. Between January and May 2015, Monica Shore, Pam Shaw, Tammy Dorward and Cathy Thicke organized a collaborative workshop and individual presentations for EuroMAB 2015 in Haapsalu, Estonia. The goal of the workshop was to raise awareness of Indigenous protocol on Vancouver Island and to facilitate activities and discussion around how to better honour Indigenous knowledge and culture internationally within biosphere reserves. We were also joined by Ms. Helgi Pollo from the West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Reserve, who spoke to the meaning of “Indigenous knowledge” in the Estonian context.

Haapsalu is a seaside resort town located on the west coast of Estonia. There are approximately 10,000 full-time inhabitants. To the west of Haapsalu is an archipelago of islands that, together, form the West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Reserve.

Map source: www.maps.com

1 Read more about UNESCO’s Man and Biosphere Programme here.
Workshop D: Cultural Heritage & Indigenous Knowledge

Celebrating the ‘C’ in UNESCO Biosphere Reserves

Our five-hour workshop was broken up into a mix of three individual presentations and a number of interactive activities to keep participants engaged. In our presentation about Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region, we described Vancouver Island University’s new role in its co-management and the positive changes that have occurred since the university became involved. Please see Appendix A for a comprehensive timeline of our workshop and associated activities.
Our Objectives for Participating at EuroMAB 2015

It was extremely important for the MABR to have a presence at EuroMAB 2015. Our main objectives were to:

1. Communicate the changes that have taken place within the MABR since VIU’s involvement;
2. Meet members of the EuroMAB network and learn from the experiences of other biosphere researchers and coordinators;
3. Plant the seeds for a meaningful relationship with members of the Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association (CBRA);
4. Demonstrate that MABR and its affiliated Research Institute are creating positive initiatives and relationships within the region;
5. Raise awareness about the MABR within the European network.

We were successful in meeting each of these objectives.

Our Impact

Spreading the Brand

The workshop was attended by an engaging group of researchers and professionals from many backgrounds and countries: Hungary, Greece, the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Canada and Estonia. As such, the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region received international recognition amongst a diverse and invested group of people.

Acting as International Ambassadors

There was significant interest in MABR’s model of functioning as part of a university-community alliance as well as in the research that is being coordinated and conducted at MABRRRI. Many people were keen to discover whether a university at the helm of a biosphere reserve was an effective model. We spoke of VIU’s innovative approach to supporting all forms of knowledge sharing.

Communicating that Change is Possible

Jean-Philippe Messier, Chair of the Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association (CBRA), participated in our workshop. After our presentation about the MABR’s progress since governance transferred to VIU and the City Parksville and about our committed focus on First Nations engagement, he publicly congratulated us and made a most sincere statement as to how impressed he was with our work. Mr. Messier admitted that, before VIU’s involvement, he had lost hope for the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region. He said that the drastic turnaround since July 2014 came as an unexpected and delightful surprise.

Building Research Networks

Dr. Pam Shaw joined EuroMAB’s Science Sub-Committee and is participating in a research project with two other biosphere reserves on compiling existing research to identify gaps and potential joint projects. The team is also preparing a presentation for the World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in Lima Peru in March of 2016.
Other Opportunities for International Outreach

**June 2015:** Monica attended Canadian Commission for UNESCO AGM in Ottawa

**March 2016:** 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in Lima, Peru

**Spring 2017:** EuroMAB Meeting hosted by the Bassin de la Dordogne réserve de la biosphere, France

In Conclusion

Through our active participation and networking at EuroMAB 2015, we connected with colleagues across Canada and Europe and created positive associations with the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region as well as with Vancouver Island University. It is important to continue building these relationships at every opportunity in order to share ideas and resources and to remain motivated and inspired by others who strive to meet similar goals worldwide. This experience was time, energy and resources well spent.

Jean-Philippe Messier, Monica Shore, Pam Shaw, Helgi Pollo, Tammy Dorward & Cathy Thicke
The Town of Haapsalu

Episcopalian castle

Town centre
Traditional dances by high school students to welcome conference delegates

The Baltic Sea
Conference Excursion to the Hiiuma Island
Part of the West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Region
Traditional Dances on Hiiuma Island

Graceful steps and twirls to the music of the accordion

Conference delegates are invited to give it a try!
APPENDIX A: Workshop Outline

**EuroMAB 2015**
Workshop on Day 2 - May 20, 2015: Cultural Heritage & Indigenous Knowledge

**Celebrating the “C” in UNESCO Biosphere Reserves**
Monica Shore & Pam Shaw (MABR), Tammy Dorward & Cathy Thicke (CBT) & Helgi Pollo (WEABR)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Persons Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:00-1:30</td>
<td>Set up room: tables, flipcharts, markers, sticky notes, masking tape</td>
<td>All 5 presenters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-2:00</td>
<td>West Estonia Archipelago BR presents on Estonian cultural heritage and its role within the WEABR. Helgi then welcomes Canadian groups to Estonia territory and invites us to present.</td>
<td>Helgi Pollo (WEABR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00-2:05</td>
<td>Tla-o-qui-aht Entrance song</td>
<td>Tammy (please email to us!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:05-2:10</td>
<td>Tammy, Cathy, Pam and Monica each introduce themselves, following protocol modeled by Tammy</td>
<td>CBT &amp; MABR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10-2:20</td>
<td>Discussion of protocols around the welcome ceremony. Invitation to all participants to form circle and introduce themselves.</td>
<td>Tammy &amp; Cathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:20-2:22</td>
<td>Introduce workshop outline/program</td>
<td>Cathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:22-2:50</td>
<td>Circle introductions</td>
<td>All participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:50-3:00</td>
<td>Time for any questions &amp; reminder of what will follow the coffee break</td>
<td>All (Monica can remind participants what’s to come after break)</td>
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**3:00-3:30pm coffee break**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:30-3:50</td>
<td>The (hi)story of Clayoquot Biosphere Trust</td>
<td>Cathy &amp; Tammy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:50-4:05</td>
<td>Canoe game</td>
<td>Tammy leads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:05-4:25</td>
<td>The (hi)story of Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve</td>
<td>Pam &amp; Monica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:25-4:30</td>
<td>Breakout activity instructions. Reminder that this is a safe place—no wrong answers.</td>
<td>Monica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30-5:00</td>
<td>Breakout activity: 5 different questions at each table. Participants move around freely between tables and spend 5 or so minutes at each table. Flipchart paper covers all tables. Participants record their thoughts and questions on paper.</td>
<td>Indigenous Working Group facilitate/ move around the room. See questions below.</td>
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**Short Break (optional)**

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:00-5:30</td>
<td>Report back to larger group. Share main findings, lingering questions, thoughts on what needs to be reported back to UNESCO</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5:30-6:00</td>
<td>Personal commitments from each participant. Say it out loud.</td>
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Questions for Break-Out Session (1 Q per table + Handouts with all Q's):

To be prefaced with a reminder that there are no wrong answers and that this is an opportunity to share and openly explore our questions around the role of culture in biosphere reserves:

1. How are Indigenous knowledge and culture heritage a part of your biosphere reserve?
2. Can you provide any successful examples of working with Indigenous Peoples or of celebrating culture in your biosphere reserve? Could any of these examples be replicated in other biosphere reserves?
3. Was Indigenous knowledge a part of your childhood education? If so, what were the messages? If not, why do you think that is?
4. What is the biggest cultural issue in your Biosphere Reserve?
5. What are the questions that you wish you could ask about Indigenous practices in your region but that you haven’t ever asked? What has prevented you from asking? (e.g. lack of a support/knowledge network, fear of seeming ignorant, not knowing who to ask)