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 Peoples 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 defended 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 programme of UNESCO and the Lima Action Plan;

Biosphere Reserves are uniquely positioned to address the challenges and issues faced by Indigenous youth through the creation of solution spaces that offer much-needed hope and opportunities for Indigenous youth and their peoples to make their voices heard;

Common and shared principles are essential for fostering and strengthening collaboration between Biosphere Reserves and Indigenous Peoples; 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;
2. Engage and facilitate the active and meaningful participation of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems 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 facilitate Indigenous participation;
3. Assist in protecting, revitalizing and promoting Indigenous Nationhood, as well as the rich and distinct Indigenous cultural elements such as stories, languages, and other traditions, which are associated with the territories where Biosphere Reserves’ activities and projects are taking place;
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 collaboration spaces that can include diverse Indigenous perspectives, including that of youth, elders, knowledge keepers and women.