

# Working Together to Inspire a Positive Future: Best practices from Canada's UNESCO biosphere reserves



[biospherecanada.ca](http://biospherecanada.ca)



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture



Canadian  
Biosphere  
Reserves Association

Association  
canadienne des  
réserves de la  
biosphère

# Biosphere reserves are sites designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

## Canada's UNESCO biosphere reserves...

- are proof that a sustainable way of living is not only possible but already happening
- work in partnership with all orders of government, Indigenous Peoples, the private sector, civil society organizations, academic institutions, youth, and residents
- facilitate dialogue, showcase models of co-governance, and coordinate projects that bridge environmental, economic, social, and cultural divides
- foster reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples through land-based programs and stewardship
- provide local and scalable solutions to balance long-term conservation and sustainable use of natural resources
- find effective ways for people and nature to thrive together
- inspire Canadians and all global citizens to replicate the practices modeled in biosphere reserves

Behind each biosphere reserve site, there is a convener organization that develops, implements, manages, and coordinates the initiatives that catalyze the above-stated mandate. The financial and governance structures of biosphere reserves vary, and include not-for-profit societies, charities, university institutes, and social enterprises.

In Canada, biosphere reserves are represented by the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.



170 million people live in biosphere reserves worldwide



2.3 million people live in biosphere reserves in Canada



**Watch TVO's Striking Balance documentary series!**

Each episode features one Canadian biosphere reserve.

[tvo.org/programs/striking-balance](http://tvo.org/programs/striking-balance)

# THEMES THAT CANADA'S BIOSPHERE RESERVES COLLECTIVELY ADDRESS



## 1. Sustainable Development

Canada's biosphere reserves establish collaborative initiatives and support policies that facilitate the development of sustainable livelihoods, allowing humans to meet their needs without compromising the needs of future generations.

### *Sustainable Development in Action*

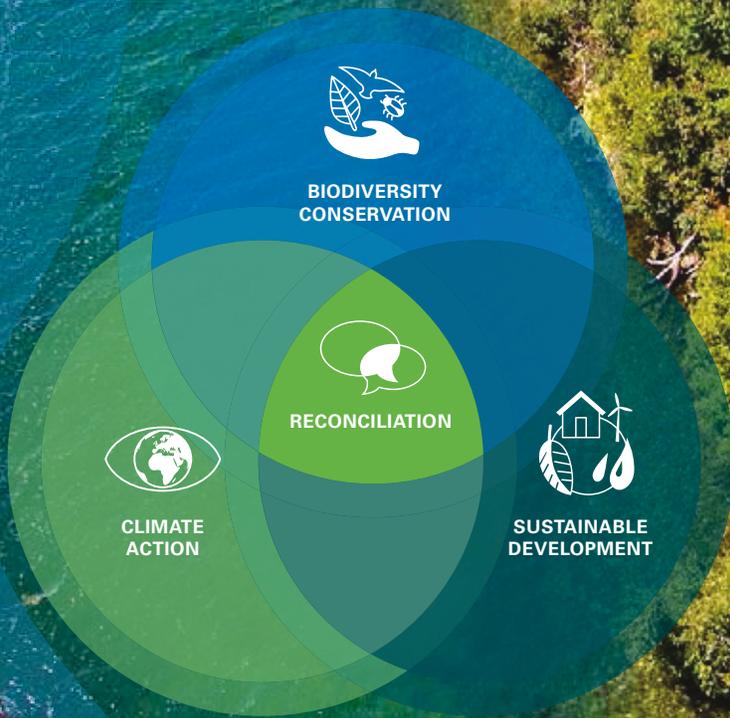
#### **Building Sustainable Communities and Model Regions**

Biosphere reserves across Canada are leading conversations, research, and collaborative initiatives around plastics pollution, renewable energy, waste management, sustainable land-use planning, green building practices, food security, and local procurement. Using social economy principles, biosphere reserves invest in community projects that address the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They are recognized for their work in Canada's Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.

#### **Developing the Conservation Economy**



'Amazing Places' is a sustainable tourism brand developed by and for Canada's UNESCO biosphere reserves. An Amazing Place is a unique, beautiful, and natural area (e.g. trail, waterfall, park, breathtaking vista) that is considered a regional gem. The Amazing Places program brings stakeholders together in a collective effort to enhance ecological and cultural education through sustainable tourism. The brand is leveraged locally and nationally with social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits for all.  
[biospherecanada.ca/amazingplaces](http://biospherecanada.ca/amazingplaces)



#### PARTNERS

- Municipalities Provinces
- Indigenous Peoples and Nations
- Universities Residents
- Civil Society Organizations
- Private Landowners
- Agricultural Stakeholders

#### PARTNERS

- Tourism industry and operators
- Local Business Communities
- Indigenous Peoples
- Parks Agencies Residents
- Municipal and Regional Governments
- Schools and Universities



## 2. Biodiversity Conservation

Canada's biosphere reserves are grounded in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and support the achievement of domestic and international biodiversity targets. They work with partners to test and apply interdisciplinary approaches that help us understand and manage changes and interactions in social and ecological systems. Biosphere reserves acknowledge the interconnection between cultural and biological diversity.

### *Biodiversity Conservation in Action*

#### **Establishing and Expanding Conserved and Protected Areas**

Canada's biosphere reserves contribute to the achievement of Canada Biodiversity Target 1 by supporting the establishment of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs). Biosphere reserves use their skills in creating safe spaces for dialogue to advance the types of discussions needed for conserving biodiversity in ways that respect cultural and organizational diversity. [biospherecanada.ca/target1](http://biospherecanada.ca/target1)

#### **Protecting Species and Habitats**

Canada's biosphere reserves monitor and restore wetlands, identify and protect species at risk and associated habitats, create stewardship incentives programs for landowners, acquire land for conservation purposes, restore native species, and help revitalize Indigenous languages and knowledge systems that contain within them ancestral wisdom about local lands and waters. The collaborative work that biosphere reserves accomplish can be replicated across Canada.

## 3. Climate Action

Canada's biosphere reserves empower people to mitigate and adapt to climate change and carry out climate action projects in partnership with all sectors of society. Biosphere reserves take into account the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its protocols.

### *Climate Mitigation and Adaptation in Action*

#### **Offsetting Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

The TREE Project began in 2018 as part of a contract with the Government of Canada to make the G7 Summit an environmentally responsible event. As part of this agreement, Canada's biosphere reserves planted 100,000 trees with local partners to help offset some of the greenhouse gases caused by the summit. The TREE Project will become an annual initiative, ensuring that at least one national or international event generates opportunities for climate action across Canada's biosphere reserves. [www.projetarbre-treeproject.ca](http://www.projetarbre-treeproject.ca)

#### **Monitoring and Adapting to Climate Change**

As part of a world network of nearly 700 biosphere reserves, the opportunities to share data and make a global impact are bountiful. Several of Canada's biosphere reserves are involved in climate monitoring initiatives and have established the partnerships required to build and install weather stations connected to international databases. By developing projects in partnership with others, biosphere reserves contribute to an open, transparent and democratic society where knowledge is shared in order to create a positive future for all.

#### PARTNERS

- Local Communities
- Municipalities
- Indigenous Peoples
- Civil Society Organizations
- Provinces and Territories
- Environment & Climate Change Canada

#### PARTNERS

- Indigenous Peoples
- Residents
- Civil Society Organizations
- Universities
- Governments
- Forestry Companies
- Private Landowners
- Agricultural Practitioners

#### PARTNERS

- Government of Canada
- Municipalities & Schools in biosphere reserves
- Media
- Forestry Companies
- Youth
- Residents

#### PARTNERS

- Provincial, Regional & Municipal Governments
- Universities
- Indigenous Governments
- Private Landholders
- Civil Society Organizations
- UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves



## 4. Reconciliation

In Canada, biosphere reserves and Indigenous Peoples see humans and the environment as interconnected, and both acknowledge that sustainable livelihoods can be practiced in a way that respects natural law. Canada's biosphere reserves implement projects in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, build ethical space into their work, and uphold the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

### Reconciliation in Action

#### Building Relationships and Sharing Knowledge

CBRA's Indigenous Circle provides guidance to Canada's biosphere reserves on how to build strong and lasting relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Biosphere reserves also work with Indigenous Circle members to develop and implement projects that value Indigenous and Western knowledge systems in equal measure. The relationship building between CBRA's board of directors and Indigenous Circle is a strong example of the Ethical Spaces framework in action.

#### Telling Stories of Reconciliation

The Reconciliation Stories Project is a series of reflection papers and short films that share moving examples of reconciliation in Canada's biosphere reserves. Stories speak to the development of a relationship or initiative that has created reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples in each region, told by those who live and work in the biosphere reserve. In each case, a small gesture and some humility go a long way. [biospherecanada.ca/reconciliation](http://biospherecanada.ca/reconciliation)

#### PARTNERS

 Indigenous Peoples whose territories host biosphere reserves  
 Canadian biosphere reserves

#### PARTNERS

 Canadian Commission for UNESCO  
 Communities Conservation Research Network  Lock3 Media  
 Indigenous Peoples  
 Residents  Local Authors



## More Facts

- Biosphere reserves implement global agreements at the local level, including the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets
- Canada hosts the only 100% Indigenous-led biosphere reserve in the world: Tsá Tué
- The International Journal for UNESCO Biosphere Reserves ([biospherejournal.org](http://biospherejournal.org)) is published by a Canadian biosphere reserve
- Find out more at [biospherecanada.ca](http://biospherecanada.ca)



Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association  
 Association canadienne des réserves de la biosphère



Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture  
 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
 COMMISSION CANADIENNE POUR L'UNESCO  
 CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

## Work with Canada's UNESCO biosphere reserves to create collaborative opportunities that inspire a positive future for people and nature

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