



## NIAGARA ESCARPMENT BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Welcome to the first newsletter of the UNESCO Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve (NEBR)! Stretching over 725km from the northern tip of the Bruce Peninsula in Tobermorey to Queenston, Niagara in the south, the NEBR strives to be a place where people share a way of living with nature that builds a future we're proud of.

Going forward our hope is that this newsletter will be a collective contribution and become a forum for the NEBR community to share stories and communicate successes. So read on to find out what the biosphere community has been up to over the past few months.

### Building the NEBR Network

In June 2015, over 40 practitioners with an interest in the NEBR attended a workshop held by the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) in the Town of Mono to explore interest in developing and participating in a network. The purpose of the network is to foster more connection, collaboration and a sense of shared responsibility for the NEBR. The network also aligns with the objectives of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme.

The participants at the workshop had an opportunity to consider the current NEBR governance framework, and to share ideas on how it could be strengthened through the creation of a network. Generally, participants voiced support for the network and the opportunity it offers to facilitate better communications, program support and information sharing across the NEBR.

Workshop participants volunteered to be part of a working group to create a draft Terms of Reference for the network. The working group held several subsequent meetings, and a draft Terms of Reference and governance structure for the network has now been developed, which will be presented to the larger group for further discussion at a workshop planned for the near future – stay tuned.

### Indigenous Community Engagement

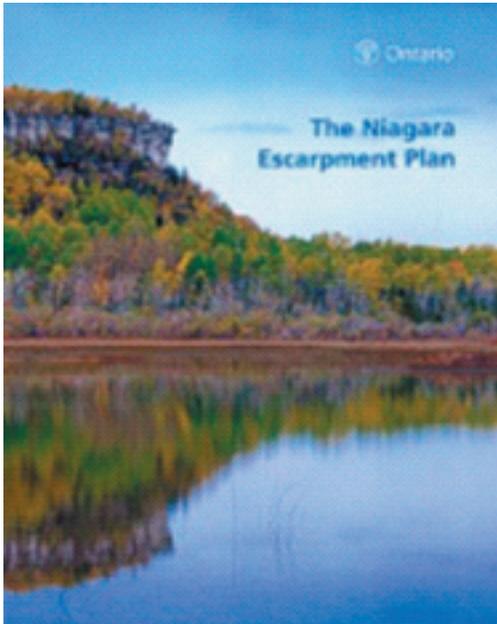


Staff from Plenty Canada meet with the Niagara Escarpment Commission. (Photo: Tim Johnson, Plenty Canada)

As part of the development of the NEBR Network, the NEC with the help of Larry McDermott, a member of Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation, and Executive Director of Plenty Canada and Tim Johnson, Senior Advisor on Indigenous connections, Plenty Canada, is initiating an effort to engage Indigenous communities whose lands and activities intersect with the Niagara Escarpment. Indigenous participation on NEBR Network initiatives is a key deliverable of the EuroMAB 2013 conference, the

MAB Strategy 2015-2025 and the Lima Action Plan 2016-2025. The ultimate goal is to have membership and active participation of Indigenous communities on the NEBR Network to ensure its work is informed by traditional Indigenous knowledge and cultural experiences.

# Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review



In February 2017, the NEC submitted its final recommendations to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) on revised policies and mapping for the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP). This was the culmination of four years of intense work for NEC staff, including research, planning, analysis and preparation of staff reports to the Commission and ultimately, recommendations to the Minister.

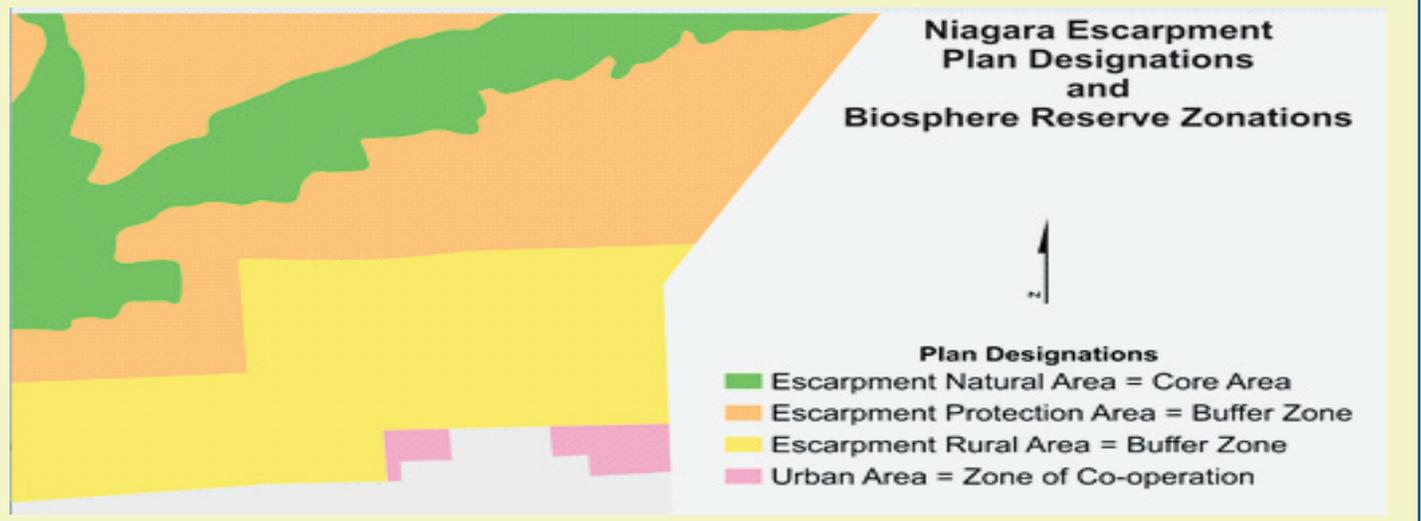
The Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act requires that the NEP be reviewed every 10 years. For the first time, the provincial government co-ordinated the review of the NEP with the reviews of three other provincial plans: The Greenbelt Plan, The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. These four provincial land use plans work together to manage growth, build

complete communities, curb urban sprawl and protect the natural environment across much of south-central Ontario.

Introduced in 1985, the NEP is Canada's first large-scale, environment-first land-use plan. It is this strong foundation of protection that is the basis for the Niagara Escarpment's designation as a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. The plan's current land use designation mapping—which corresponds to UNESCO's zonation structure for biosphere reserves—dates to the original NEP, and has not been updated since before the Escarpment received its biosphere reserve designation in 1990.

With the Ontario government expected to officially announce the new and updated NEP this spring, the NEBR is well positioned to continue its embrace of the UNESCO World Biosphere Reserves vision.

## Comparison of UNESCO World Biosphere Zonations and Niagara Escarpment Land Use Designations





The 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in Lima, Peru (Photo: UNESCO.org)

## 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves

In March 2016 an NEC staff representative for the NEBR attended the 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves (4WCBR) in Lima, Peru. Global Biosphere Reserve congresses take place approximately every 10 years. The purpose of the 4WCBR was to endorse a new action plan for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves that ensures all entities are working towards clearly defined and shared goals.

The adoption of the Lima Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves creates a common international agenda and gives biosphere reserves in Canada, and worldwide, a crucial role in the implementation of the sustainable development goals recently adopted by United Nations.

Highlights of NEBR contributions at the World Congress included NEC staff participation in a working group session focused on how to enhance traditional Indigenous cultures and knowledge into the biosphere reserve model. NEC staff also participated in a plenary session on the NEBR's experience with the UNESCO Brand and Story project. The NEBR was one of 5 pilot sites that participated in this international project aimed at creating a core brand for world biosphere reserves and developing a communications toolkit for marketing biosphere reserves at the local level. A number of NEBR network members will recall participating in the toolkit workshop that helped to develop our message: A place where people share a way of living with nature that builds a future we're proud of, a message we continue to promote!

### NEBR Making Progress on Periodic Review Recommendations

The 28th meeting of the International Coordinating Council (ICC) of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme was also held in Lima. NEC staff presented an update on NEBR progress toward meeting recommendations from its last periodic review in 2012. The MAB Council acknowledged the positive achievements of the NEBR to date in promoting sustainable development through the implementation of the NEP, and with respect to the steps taken in the development of its collaborative network.

# Field Notes

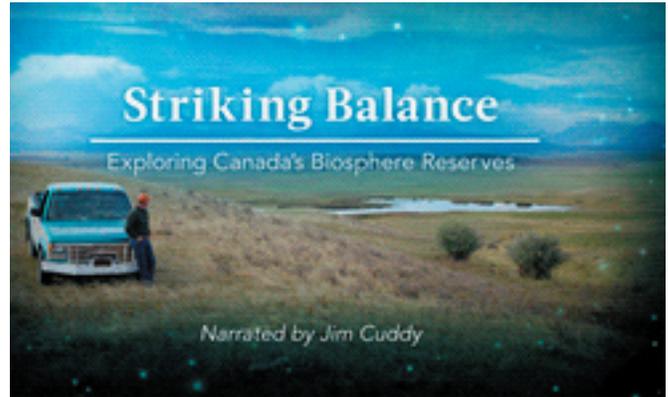
## Cecil Louis Retires



Long-time supporter of the Niagara Escarpment Cecil Louis is retiring. Cecil served five appointments, over 13 years as an NEC Commissioner as a Public-at-Large representative.

As the representative of NEBR over the past 5 years, Cecil's contributions are numerous, including seeing the NEBR through its second successful Periodic Review. Cecil attended Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association Annual Meetings, promoted and shared NEBR initiatives, built and maintained collaborative relationships among our partner biosphere reserves at the local, national and international levels. Cecil's commitment and insight have contributed significantly to achieving the purpose and objectives of the NEP and the biosphere reserve designation. We congratulate Cecil on all his accomplishments, and we hope that Cecil will continue to be engaged in biosphere reserve activities as a member of our Network!

Lisa Grbinicek is pleased to be stepping in to the role of NEBR representative. Many of you have become familiar with Lisa over the years through her long history of employment with the NEC and involvement in the biosphere reserve community, and with environmental monitoring.



Striking Balance takes the audience on a journey to explore Canada's World Biosphere Reserves. (PHOTO: strikingbalance.ca)

## Striking Balance

Striking Balance is a TV documentary series narrated by Blue Rodeo's Jim Cuddy on Canada's Biosphere Reserves. The series was launched in 2016 for TVO and the Knowledge Network (Ontario and BC's public educational broadcasters respectively).

The producers of the series are currently researching topics for another potential season, and have been in contact with NEC staff. Let's keep our fingers crossed that a NEBR profile is around the corner!

To find out more and to watch a trailer for the series, visit [strikingbalance.ca](http://strikingbalance.ca).

## Why did the salamandar cross the road?



Each year, the City of Burlington temporarily closes a road to allow for the safe passage of the endangered Jefferson Salamander during their breeding season. (Photo: The Canadian Press)

To get to the other pond of course! The endangered Jefferson salamander inhabits deciduous forests in southern Ontario, mainly along the Niagara Escarpment. Your best chance of spotting these elusive amphibians is on the first warm, rainy evenings of early spring when they emerge from their long winter slumber, typically in former rodent burrows, and travel to woodland ponds to breed, laying their eggs in clumps attached to underwater vegetation.

NEBR communities are doing their part to make sure that these critters make it to the other side of the road. Each year for three weeks, the City of Burlington closes a busy road to allow the salamanders to cross safely to the breeding ponds. These stewardship actions play a very important role in the recovery of this species.