

The July 30, 2019 workshop was the first of two the purpose of which is to describe, foster community input on, and make progress for a proposed way forward for “NEBR 2.0” – transitioning the Biosphere Reserve to a more community-based leadership. Terrapin Social Finance and Good Roots Consulting, as consultants to the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Niagara Escarpment Foundation, presented results of their research (see PowerPoint presentation), answered questions and facilitated a robust discussion on those findings. Workshop participants then broke into table discussions on four key leadership topics; results of these table discussion were presented at the culmination of the day.

FEEDBACK ON PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS:

Questions of clarification:

- Who were the other biosphere reserves (BRs) we consulted with?
- Will we be willing to share the PPT? Yes. It is now on the NEC and NEF websites.
- What have we learned about governance of the NEBR since its inception?
- Member: not a member, it's a board member - change language on Slide 12, to read “Has non-voting Board members”]
- Individuals vs. organizations in open-membership: Would organizations be given priority? *They should be.*
- Suggestion: *"Rather than having people vote in the room on the Transitional Leadership Committee (TLC): use sortition, luck of the draw, assuming all applicants meet the criteria."*
- Indigenous participant's feedback: *"I come from the Georgian Bay, but my bloodlines are with the people who travelled through this territory. These traditional lands are as sacred to us in the north as they are in the south."*
- Suggestion by another participant to group: *"Come and listen to the land claims hearings. Attend the pow-wows."*

What are you nervous about?

- A lot of room for clarification about the purpose/role of the new NEBR and relationship to other existing orgs: What does the new NEBR do? How will this be separate from the NEC? How will the tasks of the NEBR relate to existing groups? Can we work together?
- 2022 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) periodic review: needing to have more mechanisms for input
- Don't start a bunch of new things right away
- TLC: process can get in the way of impact, need to identify some low-hanging fruit/easy wins
- We keep talking about this as a transition: but it is brand new
- NEBR doesn't seem to be on the radar of important decision-makers
- Capacity for people to participate is low, the NEBR is so large and many people are giving their time as volunteers

- Nervous about all this discussion – when the rubber hits the road it won't make a difference in terms of influencing the behaviour of Escarpment user groups – would like to see something that makes a difference and achieves a balance. These resources are being used extensively and the right hand isn't speaking to the left e.g. one group is promoting the Bruce Peninsula while another is concerned with managing the overuse.

Opportunities:

- BRs are tied to the United Nations (UN) system. UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): how are we incorporating the SDGs into the periodic review – excited because the NEBR provides a platform to educate and inform about the UN processes and bring out the SD stories achieved by other organizations.; and UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

GUIDING PRINCIPLES EXERCISE:

Existing Guiding Principles:

- Encourage diverse and inclusive participation that is representative of civil society.
- Provide an environment that promotes respect, builds new relationships and embraces diverse ideas, knowledge, cultures, and experiences of all the Network members.
- Facilitate and maintain an accessible, open and transparent Network which enshrines a democratic decision-making process and fosters effective and continuous communications
- Recognize, celebrate and share the successes achieved by the Network.
- Facilitate an action oriented, results-driven, collaborative approach to support the long-term sustainability of the NEBR.

- Addition: Truth and reconciliation
- Addition: Understanding and creating ethical spaces for Indigenous people
- Addition: Protect sacred sites and not monetize them
- Addition: Sustaining the “biosphere” (plants, animals) should be first priority
- Addition: Foundation of biosphere environment (baseline information on ecological composition, biodiversity, etc.)
- Addition: The NEBR will remain politically neutral/non-partisan. E.g. Need language in documents around not representing the views of all members; ability to write into funding agreements that funding from certain funders, e.g. Parks Canada or NEC will not be used for advocacy; certain members can excuse themselves from discussions if there is a real or perceived conflict of interest.
- Refinement: “civil society” struck me as if it could be seem a little paternalistic given all the energy at play around activism, populism, and change management. It isn't always civil. Meaning change and the imperatives of our time (environmental and reconciliation)

BREAK-OUT GROUPS:

Long-term Leadership Model:

Success Factors:

1. Maintain the designation: Ability to report to UNESCO
2. Establish a clear purpose: Distinguish our role to attract people to populate the Board
3. Attract leadership
4. Must be attractive to the next generation, e.g. tangible; Develop a leadership and mentorship development program; start a “farm club” with volunteer activities, citizen science, existing model: Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON) law camp, Six Nations summer institute, align with academic institutions
5. Add value
6. Other:
 - Have flexible participation for smaller orgs
 - Look at successful models (e.g. UNESCO Geo-parks)
 - Promoting the health of the Biosphere: nature, relationships
 - 1.3 M population of the NEBR geography: tapping resources
 - The designation is exciting, powerful
 - A strategy for leadership
 - Establish tangible goals and check-in points
 - Metrics and achievement: build membership, help fundraising
 - Continuous monitoring
 - Flexibility to change with a changing environment, e.g UNESCO
 - Must be attractive to the next generation e.g. tangible; leadership/mentorship development program
 - Access to be fighting climate change
 - Clear skill sets noted to attract the right talent
 - Create a clearing house so like-minded people can find each other

Potential Roadblocks:

1. Fuzzy mission/lack of clarity
2. Must avoid needlessly competing with other orgs (e.g. for funding)
3. Existing leadership is tapped out, greying leadership
4. Failure to build relationships with Indigenous communities and individuals: *"need to create ethical spaces for indigenous participation."*
5. Other:
 - 791 km length of the NEBR- a long narrow ribbon, hard to manage this large a BR
 - The diversity: rural, urban

Program Directions:

Success Factors:

- Need a strategic plan, built on a strong theory of change that everybody can link their own activities to
- Link to broader priorities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), SDGs & UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Principles (MAB)
 - Also need to let people know about the MAB periodic review requirements well in advance, so they can build it into planning from the beginning
- Celebrate good work on the ground
- Create and strengthen collaboration and partnerships, including with corporations
- Outreach to land owners and municipal decision-makers
- Other:
 - Canadian Commission for UNESCO published a manual on ecosystem service assessment and could offer a webinar on how to do for NEBR members and hopefully one day there could be some consistency to measure across the NEBR
 - Addressing climate change is key
 - Active transportation: safe cycling
 - Expand boundaries of the NEBR
 - Knowledge Transfer and Exchange (TKE) is a key program area: promote peer to peer exchange about great stuff going on (Rural Ontario Institute (ROI): Ontario Soils Network, Ontario Community Transportation Network)
 - Monitoring the health of the BR: pull together the data (e.g. Muskoka Watershed Council)
 - Maintaining the BR designation

Potential Roadblocks:

- People feeling protective of their own activities: Need their buy-in >> add value, e.g. provide money and other resources, capacity-building opportunities, convene and connect with like-minded groups, tell the story
- Volunteer-run: need an Executive Director and invest in someone experienced, who can see the big picture and who knows the various actors
- Lack of clarity re. role of new NEBR: can't compete, must add value
- Other:
 - NEBR seen to be a regulatory agency since it has been identified so closely with the NEC
 - Programs and organizations are diverse: need to promote partnerships amongst partners
 - Lack of consistency in messaging among partners
 - People don't understand what the BR is
 - The process today has felt reactive: focused on 2022 BR designation renewal
 - Need to become innovative; need forward-thinking change in mentality
 - Need to assess the needs of members: new NEBR could act as only a convener

Communications:

Success Factors:

1. Technology: social media, critical mass, inexpensive
2. Recognize successes: celebrate and make people feel like they can make a difference
3. Information/ data storage and sharing
4. Other:
 - Amazing Places
 - Need a clear purpose
 - Local importance
 - Empower, vehicle for change
 - Make use of the existing capacity of other groups
 - Information synergy
 - Need a communications strategy
 - Need a simple message
 - International recognition
 - Look beyond UNESCO: Greenbelt?
 - Leading Edge conference
 - Measurable metrics
 - Reaching Indigenous communities: language is important, UNESCO importance,

Potential Roadblocks:

1. Outdated terminology (e.g. *Man and the Biosphere*, *Reserve*)
2. Unknown audience/stakeholders
3. Lack of spokespeople/champions
4. Other:
 - Current branding
 - Trustworthiness: tied to regulatory role
 - Competing interests
 - Need to define use of brand
 - Expertise is expensive
 - Language barrier?
 - Inadequate communications with the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association (CBRA)

Fund Development:

Success Factors:

1. Create 'operating funds': membership fees, varying fee structure, fund of funds (brokerage), in-kind investment, planned giving (wills and estates): endowments, bursaries
2. Involve private sectors: land development industry, Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association (OSSGA), corporations
3. Need skilled, magnetic individual to drive the vision forward

- Other:
 - Possible funders: JW McConnell Foundation (up to \$30K to fund a start-up), Metcalf Foundation
 - 1.3 million people live within the NEBR: revenue generation source
 - Create operating funds to leverage follow-on investment/become brokerage to fund goals
 - Opportunities for in-kind support: grad students: define in-kind equivalent
 - Ability to leverage work already done and work underway
 - Develop social enterprises in conjunction with funding sources
 - Market NEBR: tourism

Potential Roadblocks:

1. Define strategy/mission statement/goals and seek funding to achieve those goals
2. Competition for funds: put rules in place for coordination, who goes after what, or at least keep each other informed; don't compete with members
3. Will new NEBR supersede members?