

NEWS RELEASE - February 4, 2014

VIU and Parksville Partnership to Support Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve

Vancouver Island University (VIU) and the City of Parksville are working closely to support and protect the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve (MABR) designation. VIU and the City recently signed a memorandum of understanding intended to establish a foundation for regional cooperation in areas of mutual benefit and interest pertaining to the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recognized and designated the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve to ensure environmental, economic and social (including cultural and spiritual) sustainability. VIU and the City share similar interests and support the mandate and goals of the UNESCO Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve designation and will work together as caretakers of the MABR to enhance the regional benefits which derive from such a designation.

“The MABR provides an important scholarship and applied research venue for VIU right in our backyard,” says David Witty, VIU Provost and Vice-President Academic. “It offers exciting opportunities for a variety of interdisciplinary and discipline based activity across cultural, economic, natural environment and social themes. It also links VIU to the broader national and international world of UNESCO.”

“Maintaining ourselves as one of only two biosphere reserves in the entire province helps to differentiate this region and speaks perfectly to our ongoing goals to be a place of innovation and learning,” said City of Parksville Mayor Chris Burger.

The goals of the memorandum of understanding are to:

- Promote the mandate and goals of the UNESCO designation in general and the MABR in particular;
- Explore and promote the enhancement of the role of the MABR within the region;
- Promote the cultural, economic, environmental and social health of the region as it pertains to the MABR;
- Identify community engagement opportunities and research related to the MABR mandate;
- Ensure the City’s Official Community Plan and associated bylaws and policies frame future discussions related to the MABR;
- Identify potential sources of funding to undertake MABR initiatives, including but not limited to communications, community engagement, events, UNESCO liaison, research and travel;
- Expand mutual interests to include other MABR partners such as First Nations, Regional District of Nanaimo, resource users, landowners and other key stakeholders interested in the MABR;
- Prepare a short-term action plan by June 30, 2014, an interim action plan by December 31, 2014, and review accomplishments and next steps by November 30, 2015.

-30-

For more information:

Mayor Chris Burger	250 954-4661
VIU Provost and Vice-President Academic, Dave Witty	250-740-6104