

## **Research Priorities of the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve (2010-2015)**

The following concepts are based upon discussions leading up to, and including, the RMBR Research and Knowledge Forum of March 2009.

Rural communities in the RMBR need to explore a range of opportunities that will enhance regional infrastructure, increase collaboration between communities, and encourage immigration of creative young people into the region. There is a need for applied, practical research in the following areas:

### **A. Sustainable Economic Development for Rural Communities**

- how can we diversify the economic base for communities and families in the region? Agriculture and forestry, recreation and tourism, art and culture, and a variety of other small industry opportunities should be considered.
- how can we facilitate and encourage a creative entrepreneurial culture in the region?
- how can we increase cooperation between municipalities, First Nations and government agencies to maximize the benefit to all communities?
- what do local businesses need to succeed, in terms of infrastructure, marketing and other concerns, and how can costs and benefits be shared?
- how can we create a vibrant local economy that keeps youth in the community and encourages immigration into the region?
- how can communities in the Biosphere Reserve increase the benefits they receive from visitors who come from all over the world to visit Riding Mountain National Park?

### **B. Cultural and Social Adaptation in Rural Communities**

- how do people value their relationships with the natural environment?
- what would make the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve more relevant to residents of the region?
- how can we encourage sharing of the rich cultural diversity of the area?
- how can we record and communicate the traditional knowledge and community history of the local people?
- what are the impacts of “out-migration” from the area, and how can this be reversed?
- how can the RMBR facilitate engagement of First Nations and other communities in cultural, social, economic and environmental exchange?

### **C. A Healthy Environment for Rural Communities**

- how can environmental monitoring programs be coordinated across jurisdictional boundaries?
- what baseline information is available to give context to current and future conservation initiatives?
- can the RMBR fulfil a role as a centre of excellence for research and knowledge?
- how do people in the region value the various benefits of a healthy lifestyles, natural environments, and native biodiversity?
- what are the “environmental footprint” and the “carbon budget” of the RMBR region?
- how can we best begin the process of adaptation to climate change?
- what are the opportunities for renewable resources in the region (woodlots, fishery, specialty crops)?
- what economic opportunities exist in areas of alternative energy sources, green technologies, a waste reduction in the region?
- what are the potential roles and synergies of various industry, government, academic and other agencies with an interest in the region?