

Brock University

Depart. Biol. Sciences

1812 Sir Isaac Brock Way

St. Catharines, ON

L2S 3A1 Canada

T 905-688-5550 ext.4023

F 905-688-1855

brocku.ca/unesco-chair

August 13, 2021

Re: Invitation to participate in the project entitled “*Building Relations Through Ethical Space and Taking Action*”

This letter is to invite you, as a non-governmental organization (NGO), to participate in a new exciting project entitled “Building relations through ethical space and taking action” developed by Plenty Canada and funded by the Greenbelt Foundation. This project aims to develop and offer a training program targeted to NGOs of the UNESCO Niagara Escarpment Biosphere and other stakeholders. The program is based on the Pathway to Canada Target 1 and more precisely to work together to safeguard Canada's biodiversity by improving our network of protected and conserved areas through the recognition of existing Indigenous rights, responsibilities, and priorities in conservation. The program will introduce the principles of both Ethical Space and Two-Eyed Seeing.

The training sessions will be done through virtual meetings and we also hope to include a practical element in the form of field trips, but this is dependent on the evolution of the COVID-19 situation.

Being involved with the UNESCO Niagara Escarpment Biosphere, I strongly believe that such training is essential to enhance awareness and capacity of the stakeholders to better develop ways to improve conservation of biological diversity while reconcile with ways of knowing of Indigenous Peoples. The project is tied to the Agreement between Plenty Canada and the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Transition Leadership Committee as well as the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the We Rise Together report and Canada's Conservation Vision.

It is important to underline that UNESCO Biosphere regions in Canada, and in fact across the world, are considered models for merging conservation purposes with sustainable development. In Canada, Biospheres are also engaged in improving their relationships with Indigenous Peoples through meaningful engagement in the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. There is much to do to ensure that this happens, and we encourage all the stakeholders from the Niagara Escarpment to be part of this wonderful endeavour. This can become a model not only here but for other Biospheres in Canada and the world.

I would like to introduce you to Simone Blain who is working with Plenty Canada to coordinate the events. The first event will be a meet and greet to better explain the project and discuss logistics. We aim for the first meeting to be soon and therefore added a Doodle poll (link: https://doodle.com/poll/uinbtzwffhzp8web?utm\_source=poll&utm\_medium=link) to know which dates would be the best for most people. Please indicate your choice of dates when you confirm. We would appreciate a response by August 23. Ideally the event will be held in person at Brock University, however we will update you considering the COVID-19 situation.

I would greatly appreciate if you could please respond to this invitation by contacting Simone at [simoneblain@yahoo.ca](mailto:simoneblain@yahoo.ca) as well to let her know of your interest as soon as possible. If you need further information, do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail: [lvasseur@brocku.ca](mailto:lvasseur@brocku.ca) or Larry McDermott, director of Plenty Canada at [larry@plentycanada.com](mailto:larry@plentycanada.com).

We look forward to seeing you,

Liette Vasseur, PhD

Member of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Transition Leadership Committee

Full professor

UNESCO Chair on Community Sustainability: From Local to Global