

Chapter 11

From Knowledge to Action: How to Protect Sacred Sites of Indigenous Peoples in the North?

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By taking into consideration the diverse contributions presented in this book, and by intertwining them with the overall approach presented in our introduction, this concluding chapter aims to summarise key messages and strategies for supporting Sacred Natural Sites (SNSs) and related indigenous cultural heritage. It does so in a form of introducing and analysing the *Statement and Recommendations on: “Recognizing and Safeguarding Sacred Sites of Indigenous Peoples in Northern and Arctic Regions”* (The Conference Statement hereafter) (Pyhätunturi Statement 2013), which was mentioned in the introduction of this volume. The process of writing the Conference Statement was guided by Bas Verschuuren, who serves as co-Chair of IUCN’s Specialist group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas and is co-founder of the Sacred Natural Sites Initiative, to whom we would like to express a special gratitude.

The Conference Statement starts by referring to the recommendations of the Global Indigenous Preparatory Conference for the United Nations High Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (Alta Outcome Document 2013), in which the participants “recommend that States affirm and recognize the right to the protection, preservation and restitution of our sacred places, sites and cultural landscapes and establish mechanisms that can effectively promote the implementation of these rights

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including through the allocation of sufficient financial resources” (Alta Outcome Document 2013, At. 5).

Both the Conference Statement as well as Alta Outcome document highlight the right of self-determination of indigenous peoples and related legal principle of free, prior and informed consent concerning all decision-making related to their cultural heritage, including SNSs. The Alta Outcome states: “We affirm that the inherent and inalienable right of self-determination is pre-eminent and is a prerequisite for the realization of all rights. We indigenous peoples have the right of self-determination and permanent sovereignty over our lands, territories, resources, air, ice, oceans and waters, and mountains and forests” (Alta Outcome Document 2013, At. 4).

Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic, referred to by Rode (in Chap. 3), reminds that “the inextricable linkages between issues of sovereignty and sovereign rights in the Arctic and Inuit self-determination and other rights require states to accept the presence and role of Inuit as partners in the conduct of international relations in the Arctic” (ICC Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic, 2009, Art. 3.3).

As maintained by Rode, Inuit Declaration underpins the growing awareness of Indigenous Peoples of promoting new partnerships that does not view indigenous rights to self-determination anymore as detached from shaping political relations and economic development. Disputes over ownership, use and conservation of their traditional lands and territories have been overshadowed for decades and centuries by the negative impact of energy development in the Arctic and circumpolar North. Particularly since the nineteenth century Indigenous communities in the Arctic like the Inuit in Greenland, Canada, Alaska, and Chukotka experienced long-lasting impacts on their livelihoods, well-being, cultures and languages as a result of the expansion of extractive industries and resource development in the circumpolar region.

As mentioned by several legal chapters of this volume, the right to self-determination and related principle of free, prior and informed consent has become accepted by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007. As the UNDRIP is regarded as codifying and specifying already established legal principles concerning indigenous peoples, the authors of this volume have argued that the Declaration should be used as a guideline for interpreting other instruments that guarantee rights for indigenous peoples. Rode’s argument, according to which the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, in relation to its protection of the world heritage sites that belong to indigenous peoples’ heritage, should be read under the recognized rights of the UNDRIP is highly relevant and a very timely issue. In a similar vein, Heinämäki and Xanthaki (in Chap. 5) use UNDRIP as giving weight to general human rights and environmental standards concerning indigenous peoples. Mentioned writers argue that not only should the self-determination and free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples be applied in decisions concerning indigenous peoples, but this should be done by taking into account indigenous peoples’ own customary laws.

Although the right of self-determination of indigenous peoples is still a somewhat disputed concept (e.g., Anaya 2004; Daes 1996; Davis 2008; Koivurova 2008a, b;

Vars 2009; Xanthaki 2009, 2014; Åhren 2016), a general understanding is growing, according to which this right, although not guaranteeing indigenous peoples a total political freedom (option for secession), embraces their control or at least strong decision-making power over the issues that are most important for them as peoples (Heinämäki 2013). Due to traditional, nature-based livelihoods and lifestyles of indigenous peoples, human rights monitoring bodies, such as UN Human Rights Committee, has started to apply to indigenous peoples' cases article 1 of the International Human Rights Covenants¹, which guarantees peoples' right to self-determination in international law. Particularly the natural resource aspect as well as the aspect of effective decision-making related to lands and natural resources has become a general trend by the international human rights monitoring bodies in their statements concerning indigenous peoples' rights. The same trend has been transferred to the Convention on Biological Diversity and related instruments. As a way of life-right, the right to cultural integrity of indigenous peoples has been expanded to the protection of their lands, by strengthening the decision-making capacity of indigenous peoples in relation to their traditional lands and resources.

After the adoption of the UNDRIP in 2007, UN Human Rights Committee (2009), in the case of *Poma Poma v. Peru* (CCPR/C/95/D/1457/2006 24 April 2009), applied the right of the members of Aymara community to free, prior and informed consent in a case where an environmental interference violated their right to traditional livelihood. Similarly, as described by Heinämäki and Xanthaki, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, in *Saramaka v. Suriname* case (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Judgment of November 28, 2007, Series C, No 172.), directly referring to the specific Articles of UNDRIP, required that the consent of the community needs to be applied prior to any project that can have a large-scale effect on the community's ability to practice their traditional livelihood. Although it is a common place to say that declarations are not legally binding, UNDRIP has been widely applied and referred to both in international and national

¹Article 40 of the CCPR requires States Parties to submit reports on measures taken to give effect to the rights defined therein. An initial report is to be submitted one year after the state ratifies the CCPR, and further reports are required periodically (normally every 5 years). State reports and the Concluding Observations of the UN Human Rights Committee, <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu2/6/hrc/hrcs.htm> (accessed 5 March 2007). See Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee on Canada UN Doc. CCPR/C/79/Add.105 (1999). Explicit references to either Article 1 or to the notion of self-determination have also been made in the Committee's Concluding Observations on Mexico, UN Doc. CCPR/C/79/Add.109 (1999); Norway, UN Doc. CCPR/C/79/Add.112 (1999); Australia, UN Doc. CCPR/CO/69/Aus (2000); Denmark, UN Doc. CCPR/CO/70/DNK (2000); Sweden, UN Doc. CCPR/CO/74/SWE (2002); Finland, UN Doc. CCPR/CO/82/FIN (2004); Canada, UN Doc. CCPR/C/CAN/CO/5 (2005); and the United States, UN Doc. CCPR/C/USA/CO/3 (2006) ; ; Concluding observations on the Sixth periodic report of Finland, CCPR/C/FIN/CO/6, 22 August 2013; Concluding Observations on the Seventh Periodic Report of Sweden, CCPR/C/SWE/CO/728 April 2016, paras 38–39; Concluding observations on the Sixth periodic report of Finland, CCPR/C/FIN/CO/6, 22 August 2013; Concluding Observations on the Seventh Periodic Report of Sweden, CCPR/C/SWE/CO/728 April 2016, paras 38–39.

legal settings. The high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, which was held in September 2014, States reaffirmed their support for the Declaration and committed to upholding its principles, including free, prior and informed consent (UNGA 22 September 2014, A/RES/69/2). This shows that the time has become ripe to embrace, at least to a certain extent, legal subjectivity of indigenous peoples rather than to merely see them as objects to be protected.

The Alta Outcome Document reaffirms the legal subjectivity of indigenous peoples by stating: “As the original and distinct peoples and nations of our territories, we abide by natural laws and have our own laws, spirituality and world views. We have our own governance structures, knowledge systems, values and the love, respect and lifeways, which form the basis of our identity as indigenous peoples and our relationship with the natural world” (Alta Outcome Document 2013, At. 3). It strongly recommends that States, with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples, establish mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the right of free, prior and informed consent before entering the lands and territories of indigenous peoples, including in relation to extractive industries and other development activities (Alta Outcome Document 2013, At. 5).

Concerning the recognition and protection of the SNSs of indigenous peoples, viewing indigenous peoples as custodians and “owners” of their own cultural heritage is vital. Although indigenous peoples themselves often emphasize that from the worldview point of view they do not own the Nature or “Mother Earth”, but are rather a parts or guardians of it, human rights monitoring bodies, particularly the Inter-American Commission and Court, as indicated by Newman, Ruozzi and Kirchner (in Chap. 2) have already a while ago accepted collective property rights for indigenous peoples in relation to their traditional lands that is based on the traditional use of the land rather than ownership in a private sense.

The Conference Statement calls for the recognition of indigenous peoples’ customary laws that include long-standing rules and principles regarding the custodianship, governance and management of their SNSs that should be recognized and respected within a framework of legal pluralism cognizant of indigenous religions, spirituality, beliefs and practices. The call for a legal pluralism and indigenous peoples’ own laws has been made by Bunikowski and Dillon (Chap. 4). Bunikowski and Dillon remind that “the most important problem in implementing the thesis in practice concerns the fundamental ideas of ‘equality’ and ‘justice’: “It is not equal to treat some groups better (in terms of the law) than others, but it is justified to make it an excuse for some important historical reasons” (Bunikowski 2014). This is where the said authors see that legal pluralism and the embrace of indigenous peoples own laws offers not only philosophical but also a concrete solution. As Heinämäki and Xanthaki show in their chapter, the recognition of customs and customary laws of indigenous peoples is a rapidly evolving area in international human rights and environmental law.

Additionally to legal pluralism, the cultural ecology has a valuable approach to offer. It comes quite close to the embracing of the biocultural frame, as described in the introduction. As argued by Bunikowski and Dillon, the standard view

of cultural ecology is that it integrates biological and cultural processes in the study of adaptations of humans to their environment, where environment is taken in the broadest sense to include its psychological and social elements as well the physical. Thus, in short, cultural ecology is concerned with the reciprocal interactions between the behaviour of people and the environments they inhabit. As stated by the Conference Statement, SNSs are important for the biological diversity (plants, animals, their habitats, ecosystems and genetic diversity) and cultural diversity, (spiritual practices and beliefs, identity, linguistic expression), which are inextricably connected in what is increasingly understood as biocultural diversity.

Biocultural diversity is fundamental to a sustainable future in the North, and ensures resilience in Arctic socio-ecological systems, which are a key strength in today's era of global change (Maffi and Woodley 2010). Modern conservation science recognizes that SNSs support high levels of biodiversity, sometimes to an equal or even higher degree than larger public/private parks nearby, and often they are more efficiently protected (Dudley et al. 2009). They can be seen as the world's oldest conservation areas (Wild and McLoed 2008). In addition to the biodiversity value stands the cultural and spiritual value of these lands, as stated by Higgins-Zogib: "[...] millions of people have a special regard for and relationship with hundreds, or thousands, of protected areas not because of their importance to biodiversity but because of their spiritual values" (Higgins-Zogib 2008). SNSs are increasingly recognized as a resilient conservation network and as important natural reservoirs harbouring high levels of biocultural diversity (Maffi and Woodley 2010). They help to uncover the processes by which beliefs and cultural practices (myths, songs, stories, dances) create inextricable inter-linkages between societies and nature, and thus they reveal new strategies/tools for conservation (Verschuuren and Wild 2012). Bunkikowski and Dillon remind that indigenous customary laws, like the cultural ecological relations outlined earlier, are based on the principle of reciprocity: a constellation of mutual relationships, obligations and duties among people in a given community. Therefore, the self-determination of indigenous peoples is both a right and a duty and a call for sustainable practices in managing the traditional lands and SNSs. This idea has been emphasised by the concept of the bio-cultural rights.

In many Arctic communities Elders are culture-bearers who are holding in-depth knowledge gained over the course of their lifetimes in relation to SNS. However, the last generation of elders who lived a 'traditional life on the land', is passing away very quickly, and their role is getting endangered. Hence, there is an urgent need for Indigenous peoples to be provided with the resources to record the knowledge, language, experiences and history, that only the elders possess, and provide examples of education projects linked to the transmission of knowledge, beliefs and practices linked to sacred sites and territories. The Conference Statement, strongly emphasises the role of Elders as culture-bearers to support the education of youth regarding the values, role, beliefs of their culture as well as the development of skills to protect sacred sites by using appropriate tools (e.g. storytelling).

The Conference Statement calls for better recognition, legally protection and management of the Sacred Sites and sanctuaries of IPs in the Arctic region. Conclusion on Newman et al's chapter (Chap. 2) is that we actually do not lack international legal tools for the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples or SNSs. Only have these tools been so far inadequately red in relation to the protection of indigenous peoples. With a contemporary reading, taking into account UNDRIP and collective rights aspect in the case of indigenous peoples, present international legal tools can be much more effectively and meaningfully used and implemented than has happened so far. This volume has focused mainly on international protection with only some national examples. The case of Finnish legislation, as explained by Ojanlatva and Neumann (Chap. 6), however, demonstrates the overall situation in many Northern and Arctic countries. National legislation is not yet sufficient to protect SNSs and related cultural heritage of indigenous peoples.

The Conference Statement acknowledges an urgent need to address growing threats to sacred natural sites such as: climate change, industrial development, extractive industries such as mining, forestry, hydro-electrics, oil and gas, and their associated operations (such as helicopters and transport corridors), unsustainable tourism, military operations and (related) infrastructural developments (such as low level flying), State dominated educational curricula, religious imposition and vandalism.

Vandalism is a rather common but very little discussed or researched phenomenon. Joy, in Chap. 9, brings to a reader's attention what has become an escalating problem of vandalism which has been caused primarily by deliberate destruction of sacred sites in Finland that host pre-historic rock paintings belonging to an ancient rock painting tradition which has links with Sámi culture and history. One important element in terms of the protection of heritage sites within this legislation which is lacking concerns national legislation. Taking Finland as an example, there is no specific written guidance or direction which provides particular instructions for example, regarding rock climbing activities which is a major sport in Finland, not only for native Finns but also foreign visitors as well. Joy also reminds how recent ethical considerations have been put forward according to which the protection of indigenous peoples' heritage, these peoples themselves must exercise control over research conducted within their territories, or which uses their people as subjects of study. It seems however, according to Joy, that this has not yet taken root in southern Finland where a large chapter of Sámi history has been recorded through rock paintings. In other words, the Sámi have not been considered or involved in the decision making of policies or the management of rock painting sites, and most of the research has been undertaken by persons from outside the culture. Joy calls for an educational aspect in terms of rock paintings. For example, in local educational establishments where awareness of the value and treatment of rock paintings might give the children a greater sense of responsibility in terms of protecting local history and indigenous heritage.

Ojanlatva and Neumann, in their Chap. 6, identify the gaps in Finnish legislation and its ability to protect SNSs. Although fixed relics or sites of Sámi culture are mentioned as 'ancient monuments' under the Antiquities Act, they are, however,

not otherwise specified thereunder. As maintained by the previous authors, in order to recognise and determine Sámi sacred sites it is vital to have expertise in Sámi culture and languages. Also, it is always vital to take into account Sámi participation and to respect the local indigenous knowledge when dealing with Sámi sacred sites. It is a key to understand and interpret the Sámi cultural landscape. Since most Sámi sacred sites under the Antiquities Act are interpreted and determined by archaeologists, it imposes a huge challenge to define the protective area around the site on field. Only a few of them have education in Sámi culture and archaeology. Thus, there is an immanent risk of misinterpretation and disregard of protection if the archaeologists, researches, and the officials dealing with Sámi sacred sites lack the necessary knowledge.

One considerable element for the protection of the SNSs and related cultural heritage, as becomes evident in several chapters of this volume is a lack and a need to educate actors that are, in a way or another, in relationship to SNS's. As described by Dudeck, Rud', Havelka, Terebikhin and Melyutina (Chap. 10), SNSs have been or still continue to be influenced by different non-indigenous groups and their interest in the protection of sacred sites. Different groups: tourists, Christian missionaries, oil and gas workers, scientists, journalists and politicians have nowadays an impact on different forms of land use on sacred sites – religious activities, tourism, ethnographic and archaeological research and extractive industries. Dudeck et al focus on three case studies from Northern Russia, namely Kenozero National Park (Arkhangelsk Region), and the Forest Nenets and Eastern Khanty in the middle Ob River region in Western Siberia. As shown by Dudeck and others, different SNS's are approached differently by State and other agencies, dependent on varied purposes and circumstances.

The chapter includes a story of “success“: Kenozero national park is as an institution established by the state directed towards preservation of the cultural landscape. The Kenozero National Park established a «roadmap» of paths for ecological tourism and religious pilgrimage to access the network of natural sacred sites. As described by the authors, in the case of the Kenozero national park, the protection of the SNSs and joint work with indigenous custodians and local communities is a core policy of the parks administration. They consider the indigenous custodians of the sacred heritage as the ones that should take a leading role in the recognition and safeguarding of the sacred sites. The park administration organises joint activities aiming at the identification, archiving, mapping, protection, conservation and restoration of the sacred natural sites in the park. The collaboration between scientific personal of the national park with local custodians of sacred sites plays therefore a fundamental role for the maintenance of sustainable cultural and biological diversity.

On the contrary and opposed to the protection idea, Dudeck et al. present also examples for the impact of oil-production on Forest Nenets sacred sites. The hillock-shaped sacred place *Ivai-Sale-Ijyivei-Syadya* west from the town of Tarko Sale was the only elevation in an otherwise absolute flat landscape and severely damaged due to the construction of a pipeline. The case of the sacred place *Kapi-Tyakhan-Nyotu* is also very instructive. The site is located at the territory of the Povkh oil

field licenced to the company Lukoil. The forest and surface was removed for the construction of roads and pipelines leaving the pure sand open. It was once a narrow but rather long and high sand dune with some pine tree on its top lying on otherwise very flat ground. The main god of this place was *Tyaptu kahe*. No known religious events are taking place there nowadays, maybe except leaving a coin or a cigarette by bypassing indigenous workers.

Religious imposition and assimilation policies have been playing a significant role in the loss of traditional spiritual practices attached to the SNSs. As described by Dudeck et al, in Russia, the Soviet times the condemnation and persecution of religious activities took place the most violently in the thirties and becoming less strict during and after WWII. West Siberia experienced a wave of persecution of religious specialists called summarily shamans by the state after the incidence of local resistance that became known as the Kazym war in 1933, when several members of a soviet cultural brigade were killed after defiling the Num-To sacred site. In a similar way, christianisation had impacts on indigenous religions, spiritual worldview and practices. Myrvoll (in Chap. 7) describes how the Christian mission and the assimilation policy had severe and often irretrievable consequences for survival of Sámi belief and religious practices. Eradication of Sámi place names from official maps was a part of policy of Norwegianization of Sámi landscapes. Place names are important cultural heritage, correct names on maps and road-signs are therefore important. Myrvoll concludes that the Sámi sacred mountains are an endangered cultural heritage. The visible, physical mountains still rise in the visible landscape, but in many places the invisible, sacred mountains as well as the invisible landscape have disappeared. The connection between the visible and invisible reality is no longer functioning. She argues that the narratives have to be told to maintain and confirm ideas about the world, and to give continuity to the knowledge and perception of the invisible reality.

Similary, Näkkäljärvi and Kauppala (Chap. 8) with respect to Sámi SNSs in Finland stress the impacts that Christianity and the assimilation policy had on survival of Sámi religious practices. Yet, as they point out, we would be mistaken to think of the Sámi sacred sites in only as historical places. On the contrary, as they clearly state, the emotional affinity of the Sámi towards these sites in Finland remains strong until today. People are proud of these living places, identify with them, find them important for themselves and call for their preservation. With respect to Finland, and in a time when extractive industry development in the Finnish Arctic is accelerating and thus might becoming a major threat for SNSs, the authors highlight the importance of the ratification of the ILO Convention 169 on the rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, by Finland, and the other Barents States. This Convention stresses the rights of all indigenous peoples to maintain their traditional cultures and livelihoods, and thus prevents destruction of any sacred sites in the current Sámi lands without their consent.

The *Conference Statement and Recommendations on: "Recognizing and Safeguarding Sacred Sites of Indigenous Peoples in Northern and Arctic Regions"* includes those and other concrete recommendations to states and political decision-makers at different levels, to the general public, civil society and media, to

environmental and conservation organisations, to religious associations and faith groups, to businesses, corporations and the private sector (real-estate, mining, forestry, fisheries), as well as to the academia, researchers and the education sector. These recommendations aim to provide tools from knowledge to action, and are created by the Conference participants, including many of the authors of this volume.

The Conference Statement recommends that States, government and political parties (1) respect and implement the 2007 UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples; (2) ratify and implement the ILO No. 169, (3) acknowledge and implement the recommendations of the global Indigenous preparatory conference for the United Nations high level plenary meeting of the general assembly that will be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (UNGA, 13. Sept. 2013, A/67/994); (4) recognize the customary laws, systems and practices, traditional knowledge as well as cultural protocols of Indigenous Peoples, including those regarding the management of Indigenous sacred sites and territories and the implementation of positive measures in order to prevent any violation thereof; (5) adopt pluri-legal approaches and establish mechanisms with the active participation of Indigenous Peoples, to effectively promote the implementation of Indigenous protection, conservation and restoration of Indigenous sacred sites; (6) establish processes for Free, Prior and Informed Consent at all levels of decision making regarding sacred natural sites, taking into account the recent related jurisprudence of international human rights monitoring bodies, – execute continuous assessments and reviews of national laws, policies and practices that support and/or hinder the protection, conservation and restoration of Indigenous sacred sites and adjust national laws and policies to the latest international developments; (7) respect the principle of cost internalization as codified by general international law regarding any environmental damage which can have an impact on Indigenous Peoples' lifestyle; (8) recognise Indigenous Peoples as rightful benefit-sharers of any project on their sacred sites and the dissemination of their cultural heritage, – recognise Indigenous Peoples as rights-holders and duty bearers in any decisions, projects and benefit sharing affecting their sacred sites and cultural heritage; (9) develop and implement restitution measures of historical injustices committed towards Indigenous Peoples related to the sacred places and cultural heritage; (10) develop studies of best practices and policies on the protection, conservation and restoration of Indigenous sacred sites with full participation of the indigenous communities involved.

To the general public, civil society and media the Conference Statement calls to: (1) respect and seek the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples to any decisions regarding their sacred sites; (2) respect confidentiality, access to and dissemination of culturally sensitive information and indigenous custodians' control over Indigenous sacred sites; (3) respect, recognise and where appropriate support the protection, conservation and restoration of sacred natural sites; (4) recognise Indigenous Peoples as beneficiaries of any projects and/or exploitation of Indigenous sacred sites; (5) adopt and promote a fundamental value of mindfulness – a continual willingness to evaluate one's own understandings,

actions, and responsibilities in relation to Indigenous Peoples and their sacred sites; (6) recognise the historical injustices and the previous harm and destruction that Indigenous Peoples have suffered regarding their sacred sites and related cultural heritage, and construct processes of reconciliation.

The Conference Statement further instructs the environmental and conservation organisations to: (1) implement the IUCN UNESCO sacred natural sites guidelines and practice the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent in policy and implementation that affect sacred sites; (2) make efforts to increase understanding and respect by conservationists for Indigenous sacred sites, and; (3) foster successful partnerships between indigenous communities and conservation agencies in support of the recognition of indigenous peoples and their sacred sites.

To religious associations and faith groups the Conference Statement recommends to: (1) acknowledge and where appropriate stop the damage done to Indigenous sacred natural sites and work towards a strategy of reconciliation and when possible, restitution; (2) give recognition to Indigenous Peoples, whose spiritualities have traditional as well as mainstream religious elements, and respect their right to self-determination and religious practice; (3) work towards constructive equal dialogue with Indigenous Peoples and communities, who are custodians of sacred natural sites.

Additionally, the Conference Statement advice businesses, corporations and the private sector (real-estate, mining, forestry, fisheries) to: (1) respect the right of Indigenous Peoples to Free, Prior and Informed Consent at all stages of the planning process of development projects that affect sacred sites; (2) undertake environmental, cultural and social impact assessments according to the CBD Akwé: Kon guidelines prior to undertaking any activities; (3) support responsible community based and community guided tourism at sacred natural sites that is considerate and respectful of the views and priorities of the communities and custodians; (4) seek respectful ways in cases of commercialisation of Indigenous sacred sites in the tourism market, according to, or improving on, the best standards of corporate governance and business ethics.

Finally, to the academia, researchers and the education sector the Conference Statement recommends to (1) ensure that any research on Indigenous sacred sites is carried out based on the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of the custodians, under their guidance and with the active participation of the site custodians and based on their own codes of conduct including respect of secrecy; (2) ensure that researchers support custodians and that research takes place through respectful partnerships and approaches of 'applied or participatory' research; (3) ensure that research takes an interdisciplinary approach involving different scientific disciplines, belief systems and ways of knowing; (4) prevent any damaging or exploitative research (methods); (5) ensure that educational systems and curricula, especially those of boarding schools, allow for Indigenous Peoples to continue their traditional cultural obligations and responsibilities to enable the transmission of traditional knowledge, (6) emphasise the role of museums collaborating with local Indigenous Peoples and sharing and providing access to information, especially in areas where there are very few archaeological findings; (7) where appropriate, address gaps in education

regarding culture and religion in national and local curricula where sacred natural sites are concerned, always respecting secrecy and cultural protocol; (8) emphasise the role of Elders as culture-bearers in many communities -they hold in-depth wisdom, knowledge, experience and historic memory gained over the course of their lifetimes- to support the education of youth regarding the values, role, beliefs of their culture as well as the development of skills to protect sacred sites by using appropriate tools (e.g. storytelling), (9) design and implement, with the guidance and active participation of Indigenous Peoples, balanced curricula that develop appropriate and fundamental knowledge and respect of Indigenous sacred sites and their indigenous custodians in younger generations and the general public; (10) respect the sacred and sacred natural sites in the context of their custodians' worldviews and natural environments and prevent de-sacralisation by removing specific aspects of the sacred outside this context.

This volume has been an attempt to articulate some of the challenges as well as possible solutions for the more effective protection of the SNSs and indigenous peoples' rights to their own cultural heritage. It invites to further research, particularly in relation to cultural revitalization, traditional knowledge, customary laws as well as studies concerning national legislations and implementation of international norms. The protection, conservation and revitalization of SNSs across the Arctic are complex but vital not only for the existence and maintainance of cultural diversity and biodiversity in the North but also for human well-being and life as a whole.

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