




International Conference

11-13 September 2013

Rovaniemi & Pyhä, Finland



*Protecting the Sacred:
Recognition of Sacred Sites
of Indigenous Peoples for
Sustaining Nature and
Culture in Northern and
Arctic Regions*

www.arcticcentre.org/sacredsites2013

Background

The conference brings together scientists, sacred natural sites custodians, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, policy makers, conservation and civil society leaders, to evaluate options for international and national law, policy and practice in order to better recognize, safeguard, conserve and manage Sacred Natural Sites (SNS) of Indigenous Peoples in Northern / Arctic regions.

SNS are being increasingly recognized as an important means for the conservation of biological and cultural diversity, and the transmission of culture and identity. Yet, legal protection of SNS and related policies are still often insufficient or absent. It becomes increasingly difficult for custodians in the North to protect these ancient sites, due to economic developments (tourism, mining, forestry) and infrastructural development (roads, dams, etc.). At the same time the need for protection may be challenged by some protection measures (identifying of location, mapping) and may raise the question of keeping intimacy and sensitivity of these places.

At international level, SNS have been receiving increasing legal attention; they are now mentioned in several international legal instruments (e.g., CBD, UNDRIP). Yet, effective and culturally appropriate implementation is often still lacking.

Core Themes

Multiple meanings of SNS.

- Identity, Ethnicity and transmission of culture
- Education
- Arts
- Economics

Legal recognition of SNS.

- International and national law, institutions
- Customary laws of indigenous peoples

Intangible cultural heritage connected to sacred sites.

- Mythology
- Ritual and other spiritually relevant practices
- Taboos
- Oral history
- The role of sacred sites for indigenous cosmologies

Biodiversity and SNS.

- Cultural and spiritual values of biological diversity
- Nature-Culture interlinkages
- Ecosystem conservation, Socio-ecological resilience

Contact & Deadline for Abstracts

28 February 2013

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Objectives

- develop strategies towards more effective protection and management of SNS in Northern and Arctic regions, taking into account indigenous peoples' own practices and customary laws;
- critically analyze current legal / political standards relevant to SNS, highlight best practices and identify gaps;
- network and contribute to efforts of oral historical and practical intangible cultural heritage preservation together with custodians in ways that they themselves find appropriate and case-sensitive;
- create a platform to establish a holistic, multidisciplinary approach to tackle multiple issues of SNS in the North;
- raise broader public awareness of the challenges and threats faced by SNS and their custodians in Northern and Arctic Regions.

Outputs

- increase the voice of SNS custodians in Northern and Arctic regions;
- dialogue between communities, scientists and decision makers to assure that social, cultural, religious and spiritual in addition to biological diversity are taken into account in law, policy and field action related to sustainable development in the North at all levels;
- provide recommendations and guidelines for policy-making related to SNS in the North;
- advance learning and legal / policy advocacy in support of SNS in the North;
- start a participatory educational research project to advance the transmission of spiritually relevant culturally embedded knowledge and practices related to sacred sites to younger generations, and advance effective legal recognition and sustainable management of SNS, in order to enhance SNS becoming a priority issue in national sustainable development planning;
- make a publication on the protection of the SNS in Northern and Arctic regions.

Venue

11–13 September 2013

Arctic Centre, Rovaniemi & Pyhä, Finland

Scientific Committee

Dr Leena Heinämäki

Dr Thora Herrmann

Dr Elina Helander-Renvall

Researcher, PhD Student Francis Joy

Dr Florian Stammer

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