

International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE)

Code of Ethics

Preamble

This Code of Ethics has its origins in the Declaration of Belem agreed upon in 1988 at the Founding of the International Society of Ethnobiology (in Belem, Brazil).

It is acknowledged that much research has been undertaken in the past without the sanction or prior consent of indigenous and traditional peoples and that such research has resulted in wrongful expropriation of cultural and intellectual heritage rights of the affected peoples causing harm and violation of rights.

The ISE is committed to working in genuine partnership and collaboration with indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to avoid these past injustices and build towards developing positive, beneficial and harmonious relationships in the field of ethnobiology.

The ISE recognises that culture and language are intrinsically connected to land and territory, and cultural and linguistic diversity are inextricably linked to biological diversity. Therefore, the right of Indigenous Peoples to the preservation and continued development of their cultures and languages and to the control of their lands, territories and traditional resources are key to the perpetuation of all forms of diversity on Earth.

Purpose

The Purpose of this Code of Ethics is:

i.to optimise the outcomes and reduce as much as possible the adverse effects of research (in all its forms, including applied research and development work) and related activities of ethnobiologists that can disrupt or disenfranchise indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities from their customary and chosen lifestyles; and

ii.to provide a set of principles to govern the conduct of Ethnobiologists and all Members of the International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE) engaged in or proposing to be engaged in research in all its forms, especially collation and use of traditional knowledge or collections of flora, fauna, or any other element found on community lands or territories.

The ISE recognises, supports and prioritises the efforts of indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to undertake and own their research, collections, databases and publications. This Code is intended to enfranchise indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities conducting research within their own society, for their own use.

It is hoped that this Code of Ethics will also serve to guide ethnobiologists and other researchers, business leaders, policy makers, and others seeking meaningful partnerships with indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities and thus to avoid the perpetuation of past injustices to these peoples. The ISE recognises that, for such partnerships to succeed, all relevant research activities must be collaborative. Consideration must be given to the needs of all humanity, and to the maintenance of robust and vigorous scientific standards.

It is desirable that scientists, international citizens and organisations, and indigenous peoples and local communities collaborate to achieve the purpose of this Code of Ethics and the objectives of the ISE.

Principles

The Principles of this Code are to embrace, support, and embody the many established principles and practices of international law and customary practice as expressed in various international instruments and declarations including, but not limited to, those documents referred to in Appendix 1 of this Code of Ethics. The following Principles are the fundamental assumptions that form this Code of Ethics.

1.Principle of Prior Rights This principle recognises that indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities have prior, proprietary rights and interests over all air, land, and waterways, and the natural resources within them that these peoples have traditionally inhabited or used, together with all knowledge and intellectual property and traditional resource rights associated with such resources and their use.

2.Principle of Self-Determination This principle recognises that indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities have a right to self determination (or local determination for traditional and local communities) and that researchers and associated organisations will acknowledge and respect such rights in their dealings with these peoples and their communities.

3.Principle of Inalienability This principle recognises the inalienable rights of indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities in relation to their traditional territories and the natural resources within them and associated traditional knowledge. These rights are collective by nature but can include individual rights. It shall be for indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to determine for themselves the nature and scope of their respective resource rights regimes.

4.Principle of Traditional Guardianship This principle recognises the holistic interconnectedness of humanity with the ecosystems of our Sacred Earth and the obligation and responsibility of indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to preserve and maintain their role as traditional guardians of these ecosystems through the maintenance of their cultures, mythologies, spiritual beliefs and customary practices.

5.Principle of Active Participation This principle recognises the crucial importance of indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to actively participate in all phases of the project from inception to completion, as well as in application of research results.

6.Principle of Full Disclosure This principle recognises that indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities are entitled to be fully informed about the nature, scope and ultimate purpose of the proposed research (including methodology, data collection, and the dissemination and application of results). This information is to be given in a manner that takes into consideration and actively engages with the body of knowledge and cultural preferences of these peoples and communities.

7.Principle of Prior Informed Consent and Veto This principle recognises that the prior informed consent of all peoples and their communities must be obtained before any research is undertaken. Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities have the right to veto any programme, project, or study that affects them. Providing prior informed consent presumes that all potentially affected communities will be provided complete information regarding the purpose and nature of the research activities and the probable results, including all reasonably foreseeable benefits and risks of harm (be they tangible or intangible) to the affected communities.

8.Principle of Confidentiality This principle recognises that indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities, at their sole discretion, have the right to exclude from publication and/or to have kept confidential any information concerning their culture, traditions, mythologies or spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, such confidentiality shall be guaranteed by researchers and other potential users. Indigenous and traditional peoples also have the right to privacy and anonymity.

9.Principle of Respect This principle recognises the necessity for researchers to respect the integrity, morality and spirituality of the culture, traditions and relationships of indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities with their worlds, and to avoid the imposition of external conceptions and standards.

10.Principle of Active Protection This principles recognises the importance of researchers taking active measures to protect and to enhance the relationships of indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities with their environment and thereby promote the maintenance of cultural and biological diversity.

11.Principle of Precaution This principle acknowledges the complexity of interactions between cultural and biological communities, and thus the inherent uncertainty of effects due to ethnobiological and other research. The Precautionary Principle advocates taking proactive, anticipatory action to identify and to prevent biological or cultural harms resulting from research activities or outcomes, even if cause-and-effect relationships have not yet been scientifically proven. The prediction and assessment of such biological and

cultural harms must include local criteria and indicators, thus must fully involve indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities.

12.Principle of Compensation and Equitable Sharing This principle recognises that indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities must be fairly and adequately compensated for their contribution to ethnobiological research activities and outcomes involving their knowledge.

13.Principle of Supporting Indigenous Research This principle recognises, supports and prioritises the efforts of indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities in undertaking their own research and publications and in utilising their own collections and data bases.

14.Principle of The Dynamic Interactive Cycle This principle holds that research activities should not be initiated unless there is reasonable assurance that all stages of the project can be completed from (a) preparation and evaluation, to (b) full implementation, to (c) evaluation, dissemination and return of results to the communities, to (d) training and education as an integral part of the project, including practical application of results. Thus, all projects must be seen as cycles of continuous and on-going dialogue.

15.Principle of Restitution This principle recognises that every effort will be made to avoid any adverse consequences to indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities from research activities and outcomes and that, should any such adverse consequence occur, appropriate restitution shall be made.

Adoption of Principles by ISE

The above Preamble, Purpose and Principles ('the Principles') of the ISE Code of Ethics were adopted by resolution of the Annual General Meeting of the ISE held at Whakatane, Aotearoa/New Zealand on Saturday 28 November 1998.

The resolution was in these terms:

1.Resolved that the ISE adopts the Preamble, Purpose and Principles of the Code of Ethics as amended (at the ISE AGM at Whakatane, War Memorial Hall on 28 November 1998) with the understanding that the Ethics Committee receive and review any further proposed changes or amendments to the Principles of the Code which will be collated and presented to the AGM of the next ICE Meeting to be held in the Year 2000 in Athens, Georgia, United States of America.

2.Noted by the AGM that the Principles form the first part of the ISE Code of Ethics and that the second part comprising the more detailed Standards of Practice are to be developed by the Ethics Committee for discussion and presentation at the next ICE.