



Statement of Indigenous Elders on Nomadic Ethics and Intercultural Dialogue

World Union of Indigenous Spiritual Practitioners

With the guidance of our ancestors and with the future of our peoples in mind we actively participated in the UNESCO Conference “Nomadic Ethics and Intercultural Dialogue”. We are the World Union of Indigenous Spiritual Practitioners (WUISP), a collective of wisdom-keepers and stewards of the Earth. Our alliance is composed of esteemed Indigenous spiritual practitioners, shamans, healers, sacred sites guardians, cultural activists, custodians of ancestral knowledge, values, and traditions, Indigenous organizations and clans from across the globe. As community Elders, we carry forth our ancestors’ voice and Mother Earth’s heartbeat, seeking to contribute to a dialogue that honors the past while forging a sustainable path forward. At this conference we are accompanied by young Indigenous scholars and creative youth, whose vibrant energies and fresh insights are integral to our shared vision and mission. Together, we reinforced traditional views while fusing youthful innovation and academic rigor into our united voice. With solidarity and hope, we offer this statement embodying our shared vision and aspirations.

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PERSPECTIVES ON NOMADIC ETHICS

Ethics for us is based on our worldview and is rooted in a spiritual dimension that cannot be easily measured by scientific methods. Despite criticism, scientific methods are still not far detached from positivist approaches. In our worldview, we are a small part of a larger Universe. Some call it Cosmos, some call it Nature, some call it the Divine, some call it God, and some call it Love. In our worldview, all beings—visible and invisible, natural and human, good and bad—are one. They are all interconnected and interdependent. For us, ethics transcends the realm of written laws that dictate external conduct. Instead, it is deeply intertwined with the qualities of the heart—compassion, sincerity, honesty, kindness, generosity, care, and warm-heartedness—which are the essence of how we build and navigate our relationships. Only by exercising qualities of heart can we nurture a living ethic, and only a living ethic upholds life on earth and our own lives. It unveils the divine, intricate, and multifaceted human nature, embodying what 'human agency' signifies to us. A living ethic enriches, deepens, and gives purpose to our lives. It enables us to connect with the sacred. It holds the potential to liberate us from the cages of conceptual frameworks, in which we confine ourselves and others. It brings healing to us and our relationships. A living ethic belongs to no single entity. We do not assert exclusive ownership over it. It belongs to those who practice and embody it. Simultaneously, we cannot disregard the fact that these original meanings and core values are reflected in our epics, folk, and ancestral narratives.

In our discourse on the qualities of the heart, we resist being pigeonholed into the dichotomy of mind versus heart. We acknowledge the indispensable role of both capabilities in today's world, as they not only complement but also enhance one another. The world's problems often reflect our personal and shared traumas, and it is through the application of living ethics that we seek healing. May the Divine guide and support us in this endeavor.

NEXT STEPS: DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTION ITEMS

- 1) The scholarly discourse on 'nomadic ethics' often diverges from the ways in which representatives of nomadic peoples describe their own ethics. We propose the development of holistic, nuanced, and compassionate methodologies that

surpass the constraints of limited and competing theoretical approaches, aiming to gain a deeper understanding and more accurate representation of the ethics of nomads and their cultures.

- 2) Recognize the importance of including oral, epic, and folk stories in the understanding of nomadic worldview/ethics and acknowledge the spiritual dimension within it.
- 3) Acknowledge the diversity of individuals within a unified worldview/ethics, recognizing the inner divine potential present in life and in every human being.
- 4) Create an environment where nomadic peoples can express their ethics authentically. Provide institutional support to integrate different aspects of "nomadic ethics" for a more comprehensive understanding. Focus on resolving confusions and embracing diverse perspectives, rather than fixating on contradictions that may arise from attempting to fit nomadic ethics into pre-existing intellectual frameworks.
- 5) Embrace a compassionate research approach that values human lives, recognizing and respecting the diverse voices, perspectives, and responsibilities of different cultures and their people in the collaborative creation of living knowledge and new methodologies. Prioritize new methodologies that focus on our shared humanity and future, moving away from outdated theories, concepts, and methods. This collective journey can be a healing process for all involved, contributing to our collective future and that of our children.
- 6) Place human lives above the production of scientific or any other forms of knowledge, remembering that knowledge should serve as a means to enhance the well-being of individuals and humanity, not the other way around.

We are committed to continuing our efforts to bridge the gap between Indigenous communities and the academic world, and we welcome the opportunity to contribute to future discussions on nomadic ethics and intercultural dialogue.