

San Pedro Statement (ICAHM 2025)

The ICAHM 2025 conference in San Pedro de Atacama focused on seven key themes.

Principles of Archaeological Heritage Management

Archaeological heritage management is about preserving identity, fostering dialogue, and ensuring that the lessons of our ancestors continue to guide our collective future. Conservation, interpretation, and sustainable use of heritage sites calls for ethical practice and conduct. Good data drives good management. We need to first understand the heritage values of a site and develop management strategies based on these values.

Intersections of Archaeology, Astronomy, and Geoglyphs

National and international legislation is urgently needed to protect geoglyphs in arid zones of Chile and Peru, ensuring sustainable protection inclusive of Indigenous cultures and local communities.

Impacts of Climate Change on Heritage

Climate change represents one of the greatest threats to our archaeological heritage and the living heritage of communities. Climate change is resulting in the unprecedented loss and damage of archaeological and cultural heritage, and disproportionately impacts the lives and cultures of Indigenous peoples and marginalised communities. Climate change deprives future generations of their cultural inheritance. Archaeological and living cultural heritage attest to the resilience of past communities and is a powerful medium to inspire and inform sustainable and inclusive climate adaptation and action.

We call for greater support and resources for communities and archaeologists to support climate action in order to preserve archaeology and cultural heritage through locally appropriate climate adaptation.

Restitution Processes for Cultural Collections, with a special event from the Antiquities Coalition on “Archaeology, Antiquities Trafficking and Corruption”

We urgently need greater awareness and stronger political will for effective protection against looting, trafficking, and corruption. Laws are not enough, as loopholes and inconsistencies plague the legal frameworks for cultural heritage protection and repatriation.

The conference was held in the heart of Atacameño territory, a region whose history has been marked by collecting, looting, archaeological excavations, and the removal of ancestral human remains without the consent of local communities. Today, this legacy is being actively challenged and reversed through the work of Atacameño community members, in collaboration with researchers from various disciplines, to promote repatriation, inclusive and community-based museums, and the development of their own cultural protocols.

Innovative Technologies in Site Interpretation

“Just because we study the past, doesn’t mean we need to live in the past.”

New technologies and tools are critical for heritage preservation and interpretation, and pioneer pathways for relevance in a newly digital world. In the application of new technologies, we need to be vigilant that they are integrated ethically and do not transfer and exacerbate old problems

Sustainable Tourism Practices

We Celebrate Abundant Cultural Richness—Yet Recognise the Work Ahead. Integrated Tourism-Management Plans are required to protect and preserve the cultural wealth of archaeological sites.

Robust plans that blend conservation goals with clear economic strategies are vital for long-term sustainability and for generating local livelihoods.

We encourage engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. Genuine co-creation—ensuring communities participate in planning, decision-making, and benefit-sharing—strengthens both heritage protection and tourism quality.

We strive to create an “Archaeology of Memory”, which systematically documents and revives elders’ knowledge, oral histories, and living traditions to fuel compelling storytelling and deepen the bond between heritage sites and their surrounding communities.

Engagement with Indigenous Communities

A particularly significant theme of the meeting is the role of archaeology and Indigenous peoples in shaping ethical heritage practices. We recognize that Indigenous communities are not only stewards of cultural landscapes but also guardians of ancestral knowledge. Indigenous knowledge must guide archaeological policies and preservation efforts.

Recognizing the value of the Atacama region and San Pedro de Atacama and the rights of indigenous peoples while implementing preservation policies is an act of territorial justice, a gesture of respect toward its original communities that have protected these treasures for millennia.

We urge governmental institutions and civil society to safeguard its legacy for future generations through active and collective commitment.

San Pedro – Archaeological Capital of Chile

During the ICAHM 2025 conference, attendees experienced firsthand the profound archaeological richness that defines San Pedro de Atacama, while also becoming aware of the harmful effects of excessive collecting, looting, and archaeological practices carried out without the consultation or consent of local communities. In the past, this region proudly proclaimed itself the archaeological capital of Chile—a title that, over time, has been invoked with decreasing strength and clarity. After ICAHM 2025—where we explored its landscapes, studied its sites, and connected with its people—it is clear that this recognition must not only be reconsidered, but redefined. This redefinition should reflect a more inclusive and ethical archaeology, one that centres Indigenous voices, respects local knowledge and authority, and contributes to repairing the historical harms caused by extractive scientific practices. In this way, San Pedro de Atacama can be redefined as Chile’s archaeological capital—one that works with, for, and on behalf of Atacameño communities.