

MISTAKEN POINT ECOLOGICAL RESERVE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE DESIGNATION: PATHWAYS TO ENGAGE PEOPLE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

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2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- For the presence of the world’s oldest and largest fossil assemblages known, Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve (MPER) has been included in the Canadian Tentative list of potential UNESCO world heritage sites (WHS). To engage communities in the designation of MPER as a UNESCO WHS, visitors and residents attitudes toward the reserve were explored and facilitated workshops were carried out in 2010 and 2012.
- The scope of this research was to expand the engagement process initiated in the reserve in 2010 by better understanding the implications behind the designation of MPER as UNESCO WHS. The specific objectives were to 1) monitor attitudes of visitors to address concerns as things change; 2) develop in-depth research-oriented public involvement with stakeholder groups to document their attitudes, beliefs and values, and their expectations in regard to the MPER UNESCO designation; and 3) provide specific recommendations for regional planning to enhance MPER’s likelihood to become a UNESCO WHS.
- Personal interviews were carried out with visitors at the Edge of the Avalon Interpretative Center between July and August 2013. The questionnaire administered to visitors was composed of 39 items, entailed both, open-ended and close-ended items and was modeled after the questionnaire used in 2010. By using the same items of the 2010 survey we aimed to monitor if visitor attitudes and awareness had changed since the start of the public involvement process.
- “Mistaken Point Ambassadors Inc.” was identified as the key stakeholder group to be involved in the research-oriented public involvement work as they play an important role in the UNESCO WHS designation process. A questionnaire with 24 open-ended and close-ended items was used to explore stakeholders’ attitudes, beliefs and values, and expectations about the MPER UNESCO designation. The questionnaire was modeled after the research instruments already administered by the principal investigator to visitors and local residents in MPER in 2010-2012. Face-to-face interviews were carried out between August 2013 and January 2014.
- Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20 (SPSS 20) (2012). The qualitative data obtained through open-ended items were re-coded to understand which key words stakeholders and visitors associated with the reserve and its designation as UNESCO WHS. Quotes from respondents are also reported in this document to better characterize participants feelings toward the MPER and the UNESCO process. The results presented in this report are divided per group interviewed (i.e., visitors, stakeholders) and based on descriptive statistics.

- In 2010 and 2013, participants were mainly from Newfoundland and Ontario and of 55 years of age or more. While local residents tended to have visited the area before, respondents from out-of province were coming to the area for the first time. They had heard about MPER from a friend or a family member and came to the reserve while driving the Irish Loop, exploring the area and/or for seeing the fossils.
- In comparison to 2010, participants of the 2013 survey were more aware and knowledgeable about MPER and the UNESCO WHS nomination. It is encouraging to see that the educational and communication efforts undertaken to increase public knowledge about MPER and the UNESCO WHS designation have resulted in visitors' enhanced awareness about the area. Nevertheless, there is a need to keep improving communication strategies and develop messages targeted to specific sections of society.
- With the 2013 survey, we were able to gather more information on visitors' attitudes toward MPER and the UNESCO WHS by adding a section to the questionnaire focused on perceptions. Visitors strongly supported statements related to the importance of MPER (e.g., wonder of the world, natural environment value, geological value, beauty, historical value, cultural value, educational value and recreational value), recognized the need to protect the area and restrict the access to the fossils. Most respondents welcomed the UNESCO WHS designation as it could lead to world recognition of the site, and enhance funding and economic benefits to the area. Nevertheless, an increased visibility of the site could also result in more visitors, hence more damages to the area.
- Similar to the visitors, stakeholders recognized the importance of MPER and strongly valued this site. Their attachment to the place, however, varied depending upon the personal use and relation each individual had toward the reserve. Participants felt that through heritage status, MPER would obtain world recognition and better protection, develop economic opportunities, enhance local communities' livelihood and foster education. While talking about issues currently jeopardizing the UNESCO WHS application process, four recurring issues were identified by stakeholders: the preparation of the dossier, lack of funding and resources, long-term community involvement and visitor expectations.
- Key actors recommended to: 1) write a strong UNESCO WHS prospectus and work plan by engaging experts with a strong professional background and by broadening the work perspective beyond the community approach; 2) develop a formal funding proposal to be

presented to oil companies that have already sponsored educational projects, such as Hibernia management group, Stam and Exxonmobil; 3) keep on carrying out the public involvement process to engage and educate the public and government representatives, and promote a long-term liaison between stakeholders, community and park representatives; and 4) make sure that tourists have a world class experience in MPER by implementing the interpretation activities offered in MPER.

- A fundamental requirement for any WHS designation and a necessary part of effective protected areas management is community and public support toward the conservation of the site. Being able to show that visitors do recognize the conservation value of the site and support its possible change in designation is a powerful tool to be used to enhance the site likelihood to becoming a UNESCO WHS. We therefore suggest including the results obtained from the engagement campaign carried out since 2010 in the dossier for the UNESCO committee.
- We believe that continuing monitoring visitors' perceptions about the UNESCO WHS designation is key to determine how support about the UNESCO WHS designation may change over time as visitation increases, awareness grows about the site, and differing management strategies are implemented. Such an understanding will provide hints of potential areas of conflict for managers in their future decision-making processes.
- If the aim of gaining UNESCO WHS status is to increase education, knowledge and visitation to the fossils, than a more proactive communication strategy is needed, one that makes this site well known across Canada and oversea. We suggest to improve the visibility of the site by designing a more interactive MPER website and by using social media (i.e., facebook, twitter). Increasing talks about the site through presentations, radio broadcasting and stewardship of well-known ambassadors should also be pursued.
- Continuing to work with local communities, visitors and stakeholders will be key while further engaging in the UNESCO WHS designation process. By supporting this research, the Harris Centre has promoted and played a distinctive role in enhancing regional public engagement in decision making processes in MPER. The outcomes of this research are instrumental in enhancing the likelihood of the reserve to become a UNESCO WHS and to ensure the social, economic and cultural survival of the Avalon rural region.

3 GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS

MPER = Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve

NL= Newfoundlander

OP= Out-of-province

UNESCO= United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WHS= World Heritage Site

4 INTRODUCTION

4.1 Project Backgrounder

According to UNESCO's definition, World Heritage Sites (WHS) are places of sufficient cultural or natural importance to be the responsibility of the international community and that deserve conservation. The cultural and natural features of the site, however, are not the only criterion to be considered to make a site worthy of UNESCO status consideration. A fundamental requirement for any WHS designation and a necessary part of effective protected areas management is community and public support toward the conservation of the site. Nevertheless, few studies have focused on communities' engagement in UNESCO WHS designation. The main focus of the literature on this topic has targeted tourists (Shackley, 1998; Hall and Piggin, 2003; Leask and Fyall, 2006; Kim et al., 2007; Li et al., 2008; Rakic and Chambers, 2008), tourism development (Garrod and Fyall, 2000; Boyd, 2002), conservation and visitor management (Airey and Shakley, 1998; Muresan, 1998; Johnson, 1999; McIntosh and Prentice, 1999; Waitt, 2000; Dicks, 2000; Grimwade and Carter, 2000; Herbert, 2001) interpretation of heritage attractions (Moscardo, 1996; Nuryanti, 1996; Stewart et al., 1998; Grimwade and Carter, 2000), pricing issues of heritage attractions (Garrod and Fyall, 2000), and marketing of heritage sites (Nuryanti, 1996). More recently, research has focused on UNESCO WHS designation impacts on communities (Jimura, 2011), resident's and tourist perceptions (Andereck et al., 2005; Mason and Kuo, 2008; Nicholas et al., 2009; Nyaupane et al., 2010; Nicholas and Thapa, 2010; Poria et al., 2013), and community engagement (Grimwade and Carter, 2000; Lenik, 2013). Some studies have also explored visitors' and communities values toward WHS (Bentrupperbäumer et al., 2006; Hazen, 2009; Mydland and Grahn, 2012). Hazen (2009) reported that the major values identified for a WHS were: (1) aesthetic, (2) cultural, (3) educational, (4) environmental, (5) recreational and (6) spiritual. Despite understanding that the public plays a fundamental role in the establishment of WHS, little is known about the views and values held by people living in and around UNESCO sites (Jimura, 2011). In-depth public engagement research is rarely used to document attitudes or to integrate the perspective of multiple actors while establishing a UNESCO WHS.

For the presence of the world's oldest and largest fossil assemblages known, Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve (MPER) has been included in the Canadian Tentative list of potential

UNESCO WHS. To engage communities in the designation of MPER as a WHS, a series of public involvement activities has been funded to enhance public participation in the decision-making process. A first study to assess the underlying attitudes of visitors toward the reserve and the WHS process was carried out in 2010 (Bath, 2011). This study provided insights about the attitudes and beliefs of visitors to the reserve and established baseline data for monitoring how beliefs and attitudes may change as visitation increases, awareness grows about the site, and differing management strategies are implemented. A second public involvement study was carried out in 2012 in Portugal Cove South and Trepassey. The project objectives were to assess local residents' attitudes, knowledge and support toward MPER and the UNESCO WHS designation and to address communities concerns toward the possible economic development of the area (Bath and Frank, 2012). The data collected in this second study have been instrumental for planning a series of interactive facilitated workshops targeted to implement local residents' engagement in the UNESCO designation decision-making process. Local community involvement through facilitated workshops initiated in 2012 and continued until March 2013 in both communities (Bath 2013). The outcomes of these engagement sessions helped local communities in developing a vision about their community and surrounding area, and assisted community groups in their local decision-making process.

Documenting public opinions and engaging residents through facilitated workshops in the early phase of the UNESCO nomination represents a first step in local decision-making processes; such public involvement research work though cannot be a one-shot process. Partial understanding of public opinions on heritage sites represents a constraint in the designation of UNESCO areas. Misunderstandings and tension between local people and park authorities can rise if residents believe that the establishment of the WHS will affect their livelihoods or modify their norms, values and traditions. Understanding public attitudes toward the designation of protected areas as WHS is a fundamental requirement for successful UNESCO designation and a necessary part of effective engagement in the decision-making process.

4.2 Objectives

The scope of this research was to expand the engagement process initiated in the reserve in 2010 by better understanding the implications behind the designation of MPER as UNESCO WHS. The specific objectives were to:

1. monitor attitudes of visitors to address concerns as things change;
2. develop an in-depth research-oriented public involvement approach with stakeholder groups to document their attitudes, beliefs and values, and their expectations in regard to the MPER UNESCO designation;
3. provide specific recommendations for regional planning implementation to enhance MPER's likelihood of becoming a UNESCO WHS.

4.3 Rationale

To ensure the social, economic and cultural survival of rural regions, innovative and inclusive ways to engage people in policy-making processes are necessary. The MPER WHS designation can impact local communities' life by increasing the international, national and provincial visibility of the site. It can result in more tourism and economic revenues for the site and the Avalon Peninsula, thus possibly enhancing the sustainable livelihoods of rural areas. An increase in tourism and visibility can also have negative effects on communities' livelihoods (e.g., pollution, crowding) and on the fossils preservation (e.g., erosion, vandalism). To avoid the potential rise in conflicts about possible changes in the reserve designation, it is key to keep the public, local communities and stakeholders engaged and informed. By integrating their opinions in the decision-making processes and by monitoring how their support toward the UNESCO WHS nomination changes over time, it will be possible to reduce and tackle conflicts as they arise. An inclusive approach will also strengthen the links and promote partnership between the academic community, government departments and local communities, while helping local authorities in achieving the UNESCO WHS status.

4.4 Research Methodology and Approach

4.4.1 Research sample, design and data collection

For objective 1: the questionnaire designed in cooperation with NL Parks and Provincial Tourism staff and used for the survey conducted in 2010 was applied to interview visitors of MPER (Appendix I and II). The instrument was implemented with the value concepts suggested by Hazen (2009). The questionnaire was composed of 39 items and entailed both, open-ended and close-ended questions. By using many of the same items, it was possible to monitor if visitor

attitudes and awareness had changed since the start of the public involvement research. Data were collected through on-site personal intercept surveys on weekdays and weekends, beginning on July 18th and ending September 3rd, 2013. Visitors were contacted during their visit to the Edge of the Avalon Interpretive Centre at an imaginary point before or after seeing the exhibit. Only one individual per group was contacted for their participation. As soon as one interview was completed, the next individual to cross the intercept point was interviewed. A single research assistant conducted all face-to-face interviews to reduce possible interviewing biases. The assistant received a short training session on the nature of interviewing and a brief orientation session to MPER. Before administering the questionnaire, the interviewers introduced themselves and presented the study. The in-person interviewing technique enabled the researcher to include complex themes, to clarify specific questions and to answer questions posed by visitors after collecting data. Depending upon the level of interest of participants, the length of the interview varied from 15 to 30 minutes.

For objective 2: the “Mistaken Point Ambassadors Inc.” group, key players in the UNESCO WHS designation process, were engaged in the research-oriented public involvement work. Such participants were identified by consulting MPER authorities and through a snowball sampling technique (Sheskin, 1985). A questionnaire with open-ended and close-ended items was designed to explore stakeholders’ attitudes, beliefs and values, and expectations about the MPER UNESCO designation (Appendix III). The questionnaire was composed of 24 items and was modeled after the research instruments already administered by the principal investigator to visitors and local residents in MPER (Bath, 2011; Bath and Frank, 2012). The instrument was implemented with the value concepts suggested by Hazen (2009) and with items on place attachment (Williams et al., 1992; Sharpe and Ewert 2000; Williams and Vaske, 2003). The principal investigators conducted in-person interviews during Mistaken Point Ambassadors Inc. meetings or in places suggested by the participants (e.g., work place, MUN). The face-to-face technique was selected as it allows building trust through personal contact and results in a high response rate (Sheskin, 1985). When it was not possible to interview participants in person, a phone survey was carried out. Data were collected from August 21th 2013 to January 30th 2014. Depending upon the level of interest of participants, the length of the interview varied from 30 to 45 minutes.

4.4.2 Data analysis

Data entry was carried out during data collection. Quality control and checking procedures were applied while coding and preparing data for analysis. No relevant problems were detected with these examination techniques. The qualitative data obtained through open-ended items were re-coded to understand which key words stakeholders and visitors associated to the reserve and its designation as a WHS. Quotes from respondents are also reported in this document to better characterize participants feelings toward MPER and the UNESCO process. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20 (SPSS 20) (2012). The results presented in this report are divided per group interviewed (i.e., key player, visitors) and based on descriptive statistics. In order to check the accuracy of the data, descriptive screening was used following the guidelines recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001). A checking of value range, mean scores and standard deviations was also completed.

4.5 Clearances

Ethical clearance for this research was obtained from Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR 20140166-AR).

5 PROJECT DETAILS AND RESULTS

5.1 Visitors

5.1.1 *Characteristics of the respondents*

A total of 338 personal on-site interviews were completed in MPER. Most participants were between 55-64 (36%) and 65-74 (21%) years old. Slightly more males (56%) participated in the study than females. Visitors tended to arrive in groups of two (67%), three (11%) or four (12%) individuals. Few participants came with children (11%). The visitors of MPER were mainly Canadians (86%) residing in Newfoundland (NL) (36%). Visitors from out-of-province (OP) came predominantly from Ontario (28%), British Columbia (6%) and Alberta (5%) or from international destinations (14%). Most likely, the higher number of visitors coming from Ontario is due to the leading role played by Waterloo University and the Royal Ontario Museum in enhancing the site visibility, the large population and the tourism advertising targeted to central Canada. Both institutions display a cast of Mistaken Point primordial organisms in their facilities and advertise the fossil site through their webpages. Foreigners arrived in the province by plane at St. John's International airport mainly from the United States (10%), England (2%) or Germany (1%). While more than half of the Newfoundlanders (54%) interviewed had already been in the reserve, only few visitors from out-of-province (12%) had visited the area before. When asked who had influenced their decision to come to MPER, Newfoundlanders often responded a previous visit (24%) or the advice of a friend (25%). The other participants were convinced by friends (21%) or by a tourist guidebook (21%) to come to the reserve.

5.1.2 *Visitors reason to visit MPER*

Sightseeing was the primary reason stated by all participants to be in MPER (NL=12%; OP= 18%). Visitors from the province (9%) and from out-of-province (8%) also arrived to the area while driving along the Irish loop or just by driving around (NL=9%; OP=5%). Participants mentioned also seeing the fossils (NL=7%; OP= 9%) and tourism (NL=7%; OP= 6%) as reasons to stop at the Edge of the Avalon Interpretive centre. While Newfoundlanders mentioned to explore the reserve (7%) and spend a day out of St. John's (7%) as other motivations to be in Mistaken Point, respondents from out of province wanted to see the reserve to learn more about the province (5%). Independently from their location of residency, visitors were attracted to

MPER because of the presence of the “oldest fossils in the world” (NL=34%; OP=29%), since Mistaken Point was on their route (NL=13%; OP= 15%) or because this attraction was located on the Irish loop (NL=4%; OP= 12%). The unique scenery and the beauty of the landscape were also mentioned as main drivers to visit the area (NL=12%; OP=11%). When asked what participants expected by visiting MPER, responses varied from increasing their knowledge and awareness about MPER (NL=17%; OP= 13%), to seeing the fossils (NL=16%; OP=18%) or just to enjoy the unique scenery (NL=12%; OP=9%). Nevertheless, some visitors did not have any expectations about MPER (NL=27%; OP= 26%).

5.1.3 Visitors experience and knowledge about MPER

Human dimension literature recognizes knowledge and experience as important predictors of attitudes. The main activities undertaken by participants in the area were visiting the Edge of the Avalon Interpretative Centre (NL=25%; OP=21%), taking part to the guided tour to the fossil site (NL=15%; OP=14%), hiking (NL=15%; OP=19%), sightseeing (NL=17%; OP=19%) or driving around (NL=14%; OP=8%). Visitors (NL= 50%; OP=44%) who were aware of the need to make a reservation to participate in the guided hike to the fossils, got this information directly from the reserve (NL=22%; OP=14%) or did not specify where they acquired this knowledge (NL=25%; OP=27%).

Most visitors, when asked “what do you know about MPER”, responded either nothing (NL=29%; OP=51%), mentioned the fossils (NL=53%; OP=35%) or talked about Cape Race and the ship wreck (NL=7%; OP=7%). While approximately 33% of residents and 22% of out-of the province visitors correctly identified NL Provincial Parks as the agency in charge of the site, many respondent did not know who managed MPER (NL=38%; OP=47%). On a positive note, the vast majority of participants correctly identified as “true” that the reserve was being considered for UNESCO WHS designation for the presence of the fossils (NL=63%; OP=48%). Nevertheless, 25% of Newfoundlander and 33% of out-of-province visitors were not aware of the reasons behind the nomination of the reserve as UNESCO WHS.

5.1.4 Feelings and attitudes toward MPER becoming a UNESCO WHS

A series of statements related to the importance of MPER were read to respondents. Independently from being local or from out-of-province, most participants believed that Mistaken Point was a wonder of the world (NL=77%; OP=57%) with a valuable natural

environment (NL=97%; OP=94%). Participants agreed that the reserve was important for its geological characteristics (NL=98%; OP=90%), beauty (NL=88%; OP=85%), historical value (NL=90%; OP=79%), cultural value (NL=83%; OP=61%), educational value (NL=83%; OP=87%) and recreational value (NL=77%; OP=64%). Visitors also supported the statement that the place could be easily damaged (NL=91%; OP=93%) and needed to be protected for future generations (NL=99%; OP=98%).

Overall, visitors were positive about the establishment of the site as UNESCO WHS. When asked which benefits would result from the reserve becoming a UNESCO WHS, participants responses ranged from a better protection of the area (NL=33%; PO=44%) and enhanced world recognition (NL=20%; PO=14%), to economic benefits from increased funding (NL=7%; PO=11%) and tourism (NL=15%; PO=8%). Enhanced education and awareness about the fossils and the reserve (NL=8%; PO=7%) were also listed as possible positive outcomes of site designation.

Some participants (NL=47%; OP=52%) believed that impacts to the area will rise if the site obtains UNESCO status. Damages from higher numbers of visitors (NL=13%; OP=21%), vandalism and robbery from “fossil hunters” (NL=6%; OP=2%), access restriction to the area (NL=6%; OP=5%) and pollution related to traffic and waste (NL=6%; OP=6%) were the main disadvantages mentioned by such participants. When asked if “no one should be allowed on the fossil surface if visitors significantly increased”, the majority of respondents did agree (NL=72%; OP=74%) with the statement. Participants suggested also to “*find a new way to let people see the fossils without damaging*” them. Some participants (NL=21%; OP=15%), however, were against restricting people on the fossil surface as they believed that natural erosion caused by wind and sea would damage the site faster than human pressures.

5.1.4 Monitoring visitors attitudes: a comparison between the 2010-2013 survey

A survey on visitors’ attitudes toward MPER UNESCO WHS designation was conducted in 2010 in the reserve (Bath 2011). To compare the data obtained during this research with the one collected in 2013, we administered in both years a similar questionnaire using the same method (i.e., in-person survey), timeframe (i.e., July-September) and location of survey (i.e., Edge of the Avalon Interpretative centre). The same code book and approaches were used by the principal researcher to enter the data, create the 2010 and 2013 survey database and analyse the outcomes.

Slightly more individuals agreed to be interviewed in 2010 (n=356) than in 2013 (n=338). In both studies, more males (in 2010, 54%; in 2013, 56%) participated in the survey than females. Respondents tended to be 55 years of age or older (in 2010, 63%; in 2013, 72%). Consistent with the data of provincial tourism, most participants came from Newfoundland (in 2010, 37%; in 2013, 36%), other Canadian provinces (in 2010, 45%; in 2013, 47%) and the United States (in 2010, 12%; in 2013, 10%). In respect to 2010 (64%), in 2013 fewer Newfoundlanders had visited MPER before (46%). Most Newfoundlanders (in 2010, 14%; in 2013, 25%) and out-of-province respondents (in 2010, 16%; in 2013, 21%) stated that a friend or a family member had influenced their decision to visit MPER.

Independently from the year in which the study was conducted, the majority of respondents from out-of-province were visiting the reserve for the first time (in 2010, 90%; in 2013, 87%). Despite the motivations to visit the area were the same across years (i.e., diving the Irish loop, driving around, seeing the fossils, sightseeing), the frequencies of mentioning such reasons greatly varied between the survey of 2010 and 2013 (Figure 1).

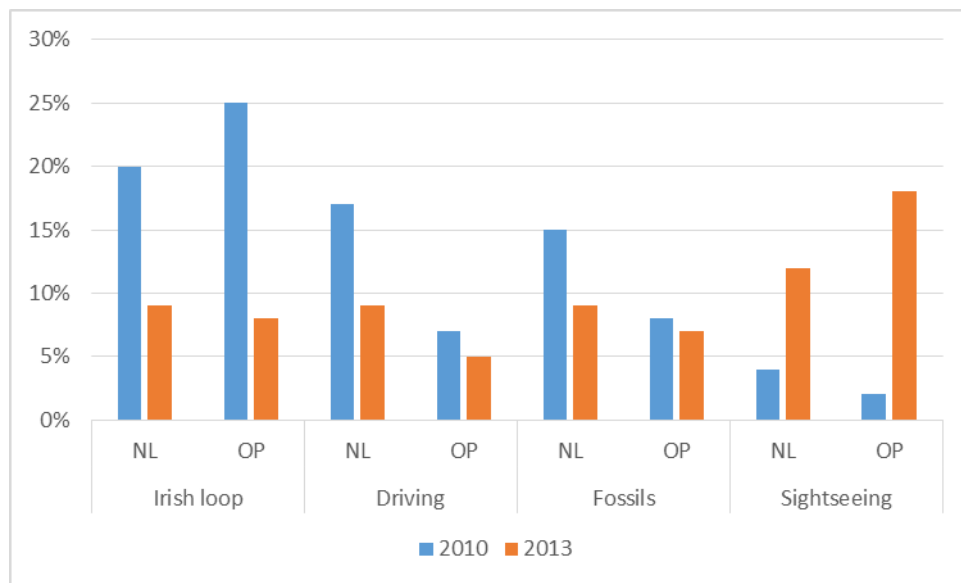


Figure 1. Visitors from Newfoundland (NL) and from out-of-province (OP) reasons to visit MPER in 2010 and 2013.

On a positive note, public knowledge about MPER has increased over the past three years. In 2013 fewer participants from the island (in 2010, 59%; in 2013, 29%) and from out-of-province (in 2010, 71%; in 2013, 51%) stated “nothing” when asked what did they know about

MPER. Participants' answers spanned from mentioning the fossils, to talking about the reserve and its scenery or wildlife, to stating that MPER had something to do with UNESCO WHS. Independently from being local (in 2010, 12%; in 2013, 33%) or not (in 2010, 15%; in 2013, 22%), an increasing number of respondents knew that Newfoundland Provincial Parks manages the reserve. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Newfoundlanders (in 2010, 79%; in 2013, 38%) and out-of-province visitors (in 2010, 75%; in 2013, 47%) were unsure who was the management authority. Another significant change in knowledge concerned the UNESCO WHS nomination. While in the first survey 59% of Newfoundlanders and 49% out-of-province visitors identified as true that "MPER is being considered for UNESCO WHS", in the second research 72% of local and 60% of foreign participants agreed with this statement (Figure 2).

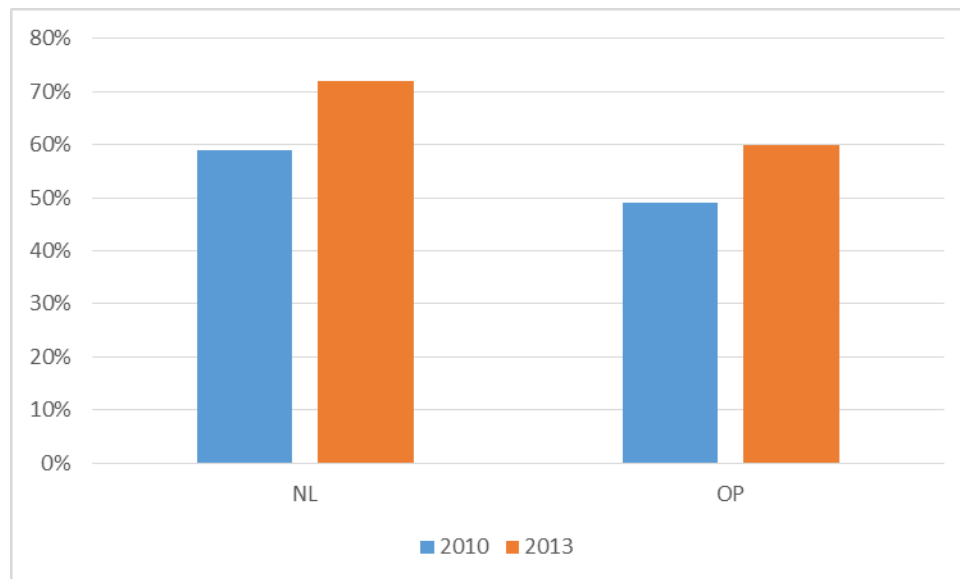


Figure 2. Visitors from Newfoundland (NL) and from out-of-province (OP) agreeing with the statement "Mistaken Point is under consideration to become a UNESCO world heritage site" in 2010 and 2013.

The section of the questionnaire concerning perceptions about MPER becoming a UNESCO WHS was developed based on the data collected during the visitor survey of 2010 and the resident survey of 2011. Comparison in perceptions about MPER UNESCO WHS designation across surveys was therefore not possible.

5.2 Stakeholders

5.2.1 *Characteristics of the respondents*

The majority of key players (63%) belonging to the “Mistaken Point Ambassadors Inc.” agreed to be interviewed about the UNESCO WHS process. The other members of this group refused to take part in the survey (3%) or simply never responded (34%). Slightly more females (54%) than males (45%) were interviewed, however this is consistent with the composition of the group. The sample age ranged from 30-64 years old (90%), with the highest percentage of participants between 55-64 years old (35%).

5.2.2 *Feelings and attitudes toward MPER*

Strong emotional connections are one of the key drivers determining public attitudes and behaviours. They can influence the intensity with which a person may be attached, identifies with and values a place. In the case of MPER, key actors expressed strong feelings toward the reserve by agreeing with the statement of being attached (80%), identifying strongly with the place (80%) and valuing (85%) MPER. Many participants also felt that no other place could be compared to this reserve (75%). Nevertheless, fewer respondents agreed that they got “more satisfaction in visiting MPER than any other place” (40%) or “no other area could be substituted for doing the types of things they do at MPER” (45%). For both of these statements, 35% of the key players did express neutral feelings. Despite the majority of actors perceiving the area as valuable, their place attachment varied depending upon their personal use and relation to MPER.

Similar to the visitors’ survey, a series of statements on the importance of MPER were administered to key players. Most participants agreed that MPER is a wonder of the world (90%) and has a valuable environment (95%). The reserve is important for its beauty (95%), educational value (95%), historical background (70%), recreational opportunities (70%) and cultural context (65%). Most stakeholders believed that this area can be easily damaged (90%). Hence, it is their responsibility to future generations to preserve MPER (95%).

5.2.3 *MPER UNESCO WHS designation*

The “Mistaken Point Ambassadors Inc.” group is a key player in the UNESCO WHS designation process. All members of this group are working together to make sure that the site obtains the UNESCO status for different reasons. Indeed, when asked what it would mean for them if the reserve would become a UNESCO site, participants answers spanned from achieving

world recognition, to obtaining better protection, to developing economic opportunities, to enhancing local communities livelihood, to fostering education and increasing tourism (Figure 3). As stressed by a participant *“inscribing MPER as a WHS means attaining the highest possible standards in site protection and visitor management in the reserve. It also is an opportunity for environment and conservation staff to develop a close working relationship with community of Portugal Cove South and residents of nearby communities to enhance understanding of the reserve and build local stewardship of the site”*.

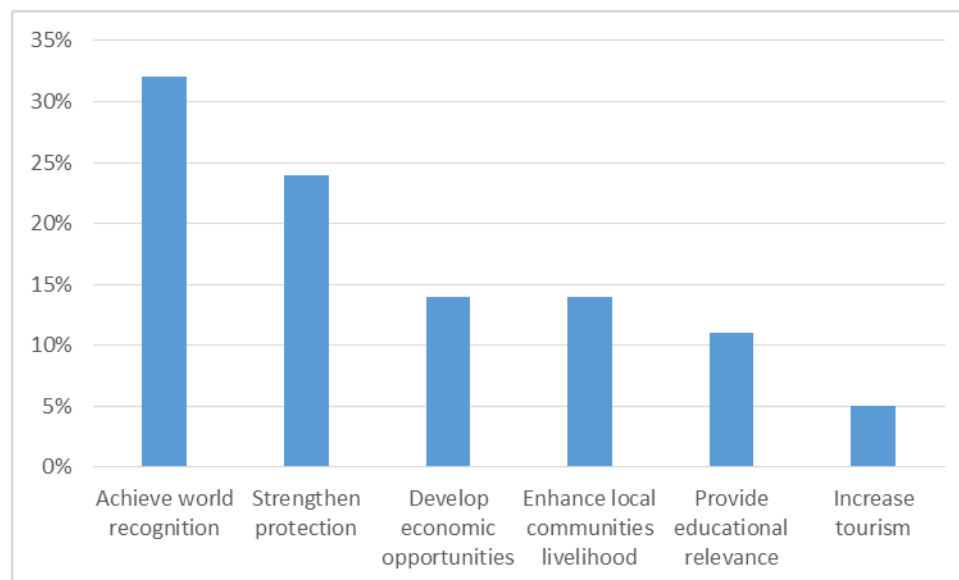


Figure 3. Key words extrapolated from the qualitative answers provided by participants about what would it mean for them if the reserve becomes a UNESCO WHS. The numbers in the graph represent the times in percentage the key word was mentioned by participants. Often, more than one key word was mentioned by the same participant.

5.2.3 Obstacles, concerns and impacts related to the UNESCO WHS designation

To obtain UNESCO WHS status, a site needs to reach specific standards and maintain them over time. To understand what type of difficulties MPER may encounter while applying for UNESCO WHS status, we asked key actors what obstacles could hinder the reserve to become a worldwide recognized fossils site. Participants perceived limited funding, community involvement and resources (e.g., staff) as the biggest barriers currently jeopardizing the UNESCO WHS application process (Figure 4). A participant stressed that *“volunteer effort is enormous, but there is a need for more support to volunteers. [...] The project is underfunded and under resourced, it needs according resources and there is not enough right now”*. Interestingly, recently significant

government funding has been allocated to the site toward understanding land ownership issues, interpretation activities and infrastructure and improving communication. When discussing about community involvement, it was perceived that decisions were taken from authorities without consulting local people (e.g., changes in regulations for the guided hike to the fossils). As stated by a respondent: *“there is a need to set up a structure whereby local residents have an ongoing opportunity to be involved with and have input into the management of the reserve and development of the WHS components”*. Limited infrastructure and facilities were another constraint identified by respondents, who were afraid that the road to the fossils, the Edge of the Avalon Interpretive centre, and the hotels and restaurants in the area would not be able to withstand a growth in tourism. Less frequently mentioned, but still reasons of worry were the limited support offered from the government, existing conflicts between stakeholders, coordination and leadership in pursuing the UNESCO WHS status, issues related to access and landownership, and the lack of educational and interpretative activities within the reserve.

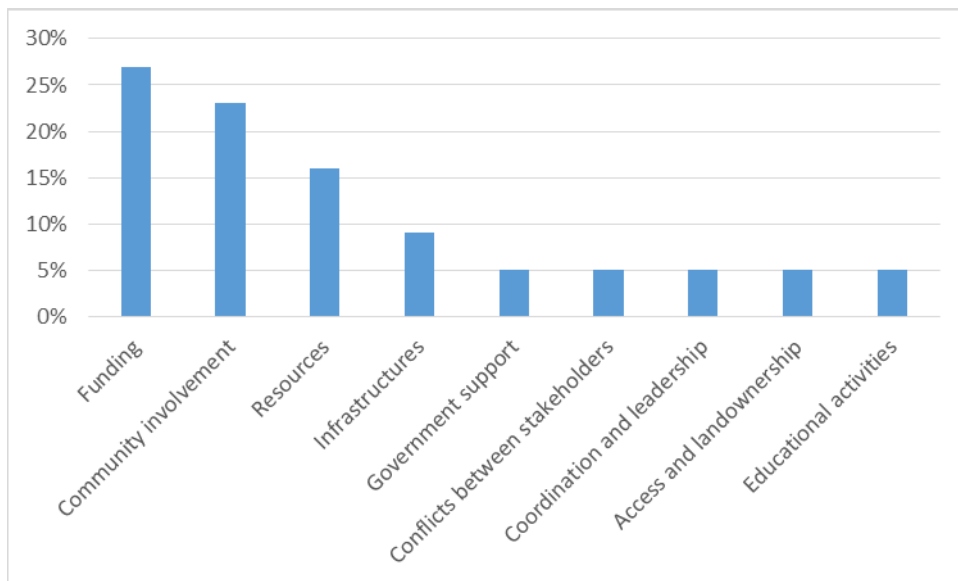


Figure 4. Key words extrapolated from the qualitative answers provided by participants on the biggest obstacles for MPER to become a UNESCO WHS. The numbers in the graph represent the times in percentage the key word was mentioned by participants. Often, more than one key word was mentioned by the same participant.

Overall, participants stated that they were not concerned about MPER becoming a UNESCO WHS. Most key actors saw the heritage status as a beneficial opportunity for the reserve to increase fossil protection. Nevertheless, the management of the site was perceived as potentially

troublesome in the short and long term (Figure 5). As clearly stated by a participant *“I do have concerns that visitor numbers and demand for trips into the reserve will greatly increase if MPER is inscribed as a WHS and that this could lead to difficult management issues (safety, erosion, site protection) within the protected area. Once a site is recognized as a WHS, there may be a tendency to focus on the possible financial benefits and this could lead to disagreements about the approach to site management.”* When describing their concerns, participants pinpointed damages caused by visitors to the fossils and local communities, the lack of patrol enforcement, limited services and amenities to accommodate tourists and lack of long-term funding for the preservation of the heritage status as possible management issues. The long-term commitment of interest groups and volunteers, along with the expectations of both visitors and local communities toward the heritage site also represented a reason of concern for participants.

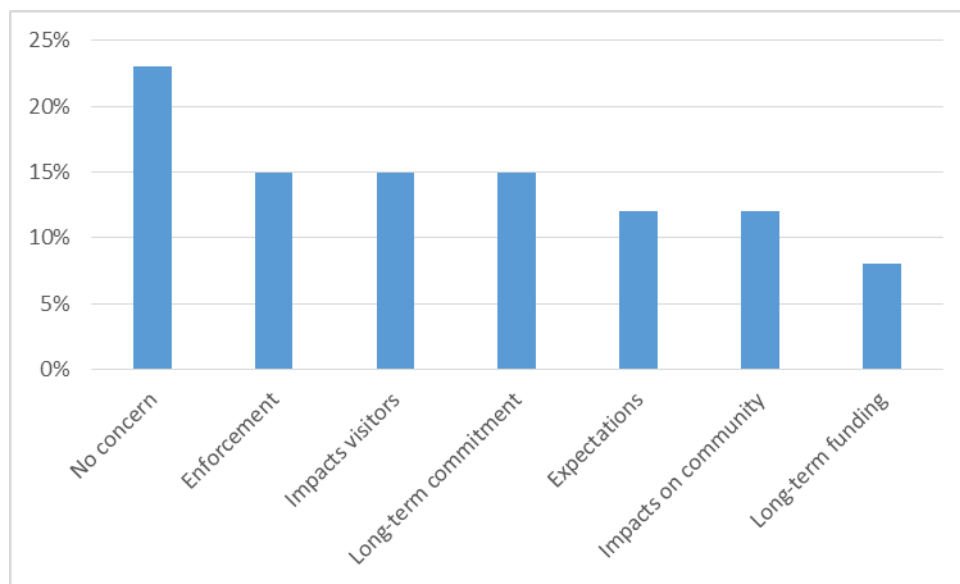


Figure 5. Key words extrapolated from the qualitative answers provided by participants on concerns about MPER becoming a UNESCO WHS. The numbers in the graph represent the times in percentage the key word was mentioned by participants. Often, more than one key word was mentioned by the same participant.

Respondents, when asked, mentioned positive and negative impacts resulting from the UNESCO WHS designation (Figure 6). Stakeholders believed that by reaching this internationally recognized status, windows of economic opportunities will open up in the area, generating jobs and leading to more facilities for visitors and local communities (e.g., restaurants, grocery stores, gas stations). Other possible positive outcomes of the UNESCO WHS designation were enhanced protection, education about the fossils and management. As

summarized by a participant: “*positive: increase protection, education, visibility, appreciation of the region and publicity as tourism destination. Negative: not really*”. The main repercussions of the designation mentioned by the key actors were damages caused by enhanced visitation, uncontrolled hikes to the fossils, vandalism and effects of growing tourism on local communities. As clearly expressed by one of the stakeholders: “*the likely impacts are an increase in visitor foot traffic within the reserve and an increase in visitor demand for guided tours. This could likely lead to erosion of the heathlands where there is no formal prepared road or walking path. With increased publicity of the site, there is also a greater risk of damage to the fossil surfaces - either knowingly or unknowingly by visitors, people accessing the site when they should not, or fossil collectors.*”

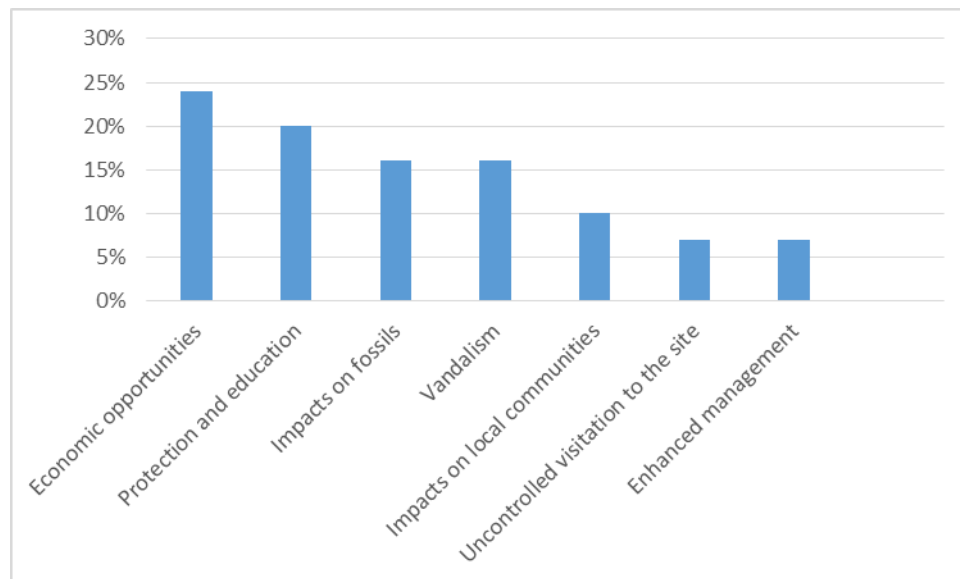


Figure 6. Key words extrapolated from the qualitative answers provided by participants on impacts caused to MPER from becoming a UNESCO WHS. The numbers in the graph represent the times in percentage the key word was mentioned by participants. Often, more than one key word was mentioned by the same participant.

5.2.4 Recommendations to enhance the UNESCO WHS designation success

Researchers and experts are often appointed to provide objective and unbiased judgments about a specific issue and to suggest policy recommendations that address challenges on the ground. In our case, instead, we sought recommendations from the key stakeholders working on the MPER UNESCO WHS designation. Their commitment and continuous effort toward the

establishment of the heritage site has made these actors experts about the causes affecting the UNESCO WHS nomination process. Their knowledge is indeed key to identify pathways that increase the likelihood of MPER becoming a UNESCO WHS.

Four main recommendations were offered by stakeholders when asked: in which specific ways could the reserve enhance its possibility to become a worldwide-recognized heritage site?

- 1. Strengthening the application:** participants stressed the need to prepare an exhaustive dossier. They pointed out that the UNESCO nomination process is rigorous. Hence, the limited resources currently committed to the UNESCO WHS application process are not enough to put together a proposal that reaches the world heritage standards and expectations. More dedicated resources with specific role/responsibilities and a task force engaged in providing support to MPER is needed. Specifically, participants suggested to engage external resources with a strong professional background and experts capable to speak with government representatives. With such a task force, the likelihood to achieve the UNESCO WHS status will be enhanced as broadening the work perspective beyond the community approach is key to writing a strong UNESCO WHS prospectus and work plan.
- 2. Engaging interested industries:** respondents felt that the provincial government was not providing enough financial and political support for the proposition of this site as UNESCO WHS. There is a need to look for other sources willing to help the reserve in achieving this status. Oil industries have sponsored and committed money to developing education and geology projects across Newfoundland. These companies could provide money to enlarge the Edge of the Avalon Centre, as well as supply experts to help designing and planning a strong UNESCO WHS prospectus and work plan. Thus, respondents suggested to develop a formal funding proposal to be presented to oil companies that have already sponsored educational projects (e.g., Suncor Energy Fluvarium,). Specifically, MPER could start exploring funding opportunities by contacting the Hibernia management group, Stam and Exxonmobil. Recently the group did prepare a funding proposal to the federal government and was successful; these obtained monies may negate the need for pursuing industry support at this time.

- 3. Involving and educating:** key actors recognized the importance of public involvement activities carried out in the area. They strongly supported the engagement efforts undertaken so far and proposed to develop more meetings with ambassadors to engage and educate the public and government representatives. Furthermore, communication was perceived as a key component to promote a long-term liaison between stakeholders/community/parks and to engage young people in the preservation of the site in the future. It is therefore important to keep the involvement process ongoing and possibly expand it to a broader area (e.g., Bay Bulls, Witless Bay, Ferryland and St. John's).
- 4. Providing a world-class experience:** participants pinpointed the need to implement high quality interpretation activities offered to visitors in MPER, especially if the area becomes a WHS. The modification of the guided hike regulation (e.g., no more access to the current fossils surface) has already created conflicts and dissatisfaction, as this change has been made without consulting local communities and stakeholders. Furthermore, no alternative recreational activities have been proposed since the change in regulation. The exploration of a new site and the need for steps to access the site needs to be completed. In addition, some stakeholders suggested revisiting the decision to ban the access to the main fossil surfaces. Respondents suggested to develop better interpretation facilities to make sure that tourists have a world class experience in MPER. For example, a casting of the fossils of MPER was created through the collaboration of the Provincial Government of Newfoundland, the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), Johnson GeoCentre, Queens University and the University of Oxford. This casting, currently exposed in the Johnson GeoCentre in St. John's, could be displayed in the Edge of the Avalon Centre or by the fossil surface, enabling visitors to touch and experience these primordial organisms without deteriorating the original site. Additionally, the documentary taken while creating the casting of MPER fossils could be shown in the centre. Nevertheless, to implement such interpretation exhibits will require: 1) an upgrade and enlargement of the existing Edge of the Avalon Centre, or 2) the construction of a new building focused on the fossils. The current structure is too small to host a bigger exposition or a significant increase in visitors.

6 Conclusion

Understanding public attitudes toward the designation of protected areas as a WHS is a fundamental requirement for successful UNESCO nomination and a necessary part of effective engagement in decision-making. This human dimension study has applied multiple public involvement techniques to provide insights into the attitudes and beliefs of visitors to MPER, integrate stakeholders' perspectives in the decision-making processes and propose recommendations to enhance MPER's likelihood to become a UNESCO WHS. It has also fostered a flow of communication between researchers, visitors and community groups/organizations as the in-person interview approach has enabled to share and discuss topics concerning UNESCO WHS with visitors and key stakeholders.

An in-person survey was administered at the Edge of the Avalon Interpretative centre in 2010 and 2013 to assess and monitor visitor's attitudes toward MPER. In both years, participants were mainly from Newfoundland and Ontario and had 55 years of age or more. While local residents tended to have visited the area before, respondents from out-of province were coming to the area for the first time. They had heard about MPER from a friend or a family member and came to the reserve while driving the Irish Loop, exploring the area and/or for seeing the fossils. In comparison to 2010, participants of the 2013 survey were more aware and knowledgeable about MPER and the UNESCO WHS nomination. It is encouraging to see that the educational and communication efforts undertaken to increase public knowledge about MPER and the UNESCO WHS designation have resulted in visitors' enhanced awareness about the area. Nevertheless, there is a need to keep on working on communication strategies and develop communication messages targeted to specific sections of society, such as the youth. Broadening the targeted audience beyond Newfoundland and Ontario is also key to enhance the fossils visibility and to spread the voice about the UNESCO WHS designation. We suggest to improve the visibility of the site by designing a more interactive MPER website and by using social media (i.e., facebook, twitter). Implementing talks about the site through presentations, radio broadcasting and stewardship of well-known ambassadors should also be pursued. For example, Sir David F. Attenborough broadcast about Mistaken Point was mentioned by visitors as a reason why they knew about the area. Mistaken Point is a remote area. If the aim of gaining the UNESCO WHS status is to foster education, knowledge and visitation to the fossils, than a more

proactive communication strategy is needed, one that makes this site well known across Canada and overseas. In addition, longitudinal human dimensions studies would prove useful in monitoring attitudes and beliefs and addressing concerns as soon as they surface; it would be important to have another assessment of visitor and stakeholders opinions in 2015.

With the 2013 survey, we were able to gather more information on visitors' attitudes toward MPER and the UNESCO WHS by adding a section on perceptions to the questionnaire. Visitors strongly supported statements related to the importance of MPER (e.g., wonder of the world, natural environment value, geological value, beauty, historical value, cultural value, educational value and recreational value), recognized the need to protect the area and restrict the access to the fossils. Most respondents welcomed the UNESCO WHS designation as it could lead to world recognition of the site, and enhance funding and economic benefits to the area. Nevertheless, an increased visibility of the site could also result in more visitors, hence more damages to the area (e.g., vandalism, restrictions, pollution). A fundamental requirement for any WHS designation and a necessary part of effective protected areas management is community and public support toward the conservation of the site. Being able to show that visitors do recognize the conservation value of the site and support its possible change in designation is a powerful tool to be used to enhance the site likelihood to become a UNESCO WHS. We therefore suggest endorsing these positive results in the dossier for the UNESCO committee. Furthermore, we believe that continuing monitoring visitors' perceptions about the UNESCO WHS designation is key to determine how support about the UNESCO WHS designation may change over time as visitation increases, awareness grows about the site, and differing management strategies are implemented. Such an understanding will provide hints of potential areas of conflict for managers in their future decision-making processes that still lies ahead.

Similar to the visitors, stakeholders recognized the importance of MPER and strongly valued this site. Their attachment to the place, however, varied depending upon the personal use and relation each individual had toward the reserve. Participants felt that through the heritage status, MPER will obtain world recognition and better protection, develop economic opportunities, enhance local communities' livelihoods and foster education. While talking about issues currently jeopardizing the UNESCO WHS application process, four recurring issues were identified by stakeholders: the preparation of the dossier, lack of funding and resources, long-term community involvement and visitors expectations. Key actors recommended to: 1) write a strong UNESCO WHS prospectus

and work plan by engaging experts with a strong professional background and by broadening the work perspective beyond the community approach; 2) develop a formal funding proposal to be presented to oil companies that have already sponsored educational projects (e.g., Suncor Energy Fluvarium,), such as Hibernia management group, Stam and Exxonmobil; 3) continue the public involvement process of engaging and educating the public and government representatives, and promote a long-term liaison between stakeholders, community and park representatives; and 4) make sure that each visitor has a world class experience in MPER by implementing high quality interpretation activities in MPER (e.g., display the cast of the fossils, enrich the exhibit, upgrade the Edge of the Avalon Centre, improve hiking experience to a fossil site).

There is much to be done to continue working effectively with people toward UNESCO WHS status. To be successful in the nomination process, MPER needs to address and tackle issues related to long-term funding, commitment of local communities and management. It is also important to remember that visitors and local communities expectations, if not met, may lead to unhappiness and disappointment, thus to a drop in public support toward MPER UNESCO WHS designation. Continuing to work with local communities, visitors and stakeholders will be key throughout the UNESCO WHS designation process. By supporting this research, the Harris Centre has promoted and played a distinctive role in enhancing regional public engagement in decision making processes in MPER. The outcomes of this research are instrumental in enhancing the likelihood of the reserve to becoming a UNESCO WHS and to ensure the social, economic and cultural survival of the Avalon rural regions.

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8 Appendices

APPENDIX I: BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT VISITOR ATTITUDES TOWARD MISTAKEN POINT STUDY

This study intends to understand your opinions about several issues regarding Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve. This research is a collaboration between Memorial University of Newfoundland and The Harris Centre. You have been chosen to participate because you are visiting Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve.

This interview will take you around 15 minutes. You can choose whether you want to answer the questionnaire on your own or if you would like to be interviewed. At any point, you are free to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the survey if you wish. Once the questionnaire is complete and returned to the researcher, it is impossible to withdraw from the survey. This questionnaire is anonymous and your answers will be kept confidential. The data collected during the interview will be securely stored for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

For additional information about the questionnaire, please contact Dr. Beatrice Frank (b.frank@mun.ca) or Dr. Alistair J. Bath (Telephone: 864-4733, abath@mun.ca).



We thank you for your time!

APPENDIX II: Questionnaire on visitors' attitudes toward Mistaken Point

Date: _____

Code: _____

1. Where do you live?

Town: _____

Province/State: _____

Country: _____

IF visitor is from out of province, then ask: If not skip to Question 7

2. Is this your first visit to Newfoundland and Labrador? Yes No

3. What is your main purpose in visiting NL?

a. Conference

b. Visiting Friends and Relatives

c. Other _____

4. When did you arrive in NL? Day of Week: _____

Date: _____

5. How did you arrive to the island?

a. Ferry - Argentia

b. Ferry – Port au Basques

c. Airport – St. John's

d. Airport – Deer Lake

e. Labrador

6. How many nights will you spend in NL? _____

7. What's your primary reason for coming to this area? _____

8. Is this your first visit to this area? _____ Yes No

9. Which of the following, if any, influenced your decision to visit this site?

- a. A previous visit
- b. Advice from friends/relatives
- c. Advice from a Tourist Information Centre or Brochure
- d. Tourist guidebooks
- e. TV/Newspaper/magazine articles
- f. Other: _____

10. What do you know about Mistaken Point?

11. What did attract you to Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve?

12. What do you expect from visiting Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve?

13. During your stay at Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve, what type of activities will you participate in?

14. Will you or have you visited:

- | | | | |
|----|--|-----|----|
| a. | Cape Race Lighthouse _____ | Yes | No |
| b. | Cape Race Lighthouse Museum _____ | Yes | No |
| c. | Edge of Avalon Interpretive Centre _____ | Yes | No |
| d. | Fossil site with guided hike _____ | Yes | No |
| e. | Any hiking trails within the reserve _____ | Yes | No |

15. Who manages Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve:

- a. Cape Race PCS Heritage Inc.
- b. Provincial Parks
- c. Parks Canada
- d. Don't know

16. Do you think the following statement is generally false, true or not sure. Mistaken Point is under consideration to become a UNESCO world heritage site.

- a. Generally True b. Generally False c. Not Sure

17. Do you know why Mistaken Point is being considered for UNESCO World Heritage status?

18. How do you feel about the following statement, related to Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve becoming an UNESCO World Heritage Sites?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
This place is one of the ‘wonders of the world’	1	2	3	4	5
The natural environment of this place is valuable	1	2	3	4	5
This place is important because of its geology	1	2	3	4	5
This place is important because of its beauty	1	2	3	4	5
This place is important because of its historical value	1	2	3	4	5
This place is important because of its cultural value	1	2	3	4	5
This place is important because of its educational value	1	2	3	4	5
This place is important because of its recreational value	1	2	3	4	5
This place could easily be damaged	1	2	3	4	5
We have a responsibility to our children to protect this place	1	2	3	4	5

19. What are the benefits of Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve becoming as UNESCO World Heritage Sites?

20. What are the disadvantages of Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve becoming as UNESCO World Heritage Site?

21. Did you know that you needed to make a reservation to do the guided hike to the fossils in Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve?

22. If yes, where did you make your booking for the guided hike to the fossils?

- a. Tourist information centre or tourist office
- b. Directly with the Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve
- c. Travel agent
- d. Other _____

23. If visitors significantly increase no one should be allowed on the fossil surface.

- a. Strong Disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree

Why _____

24. Would you be willing to pay to visit the fossils? _____ Yes No

25. If yes, how much ? _____

26. Are you: 1) male 2) female

27. In what age category do you fall?

- a) 18-24 b) 25-29 c) 30-34 d) 35-39 e) 40-44 f) 45-49 g) 50-54 h) 55-64 i) 65-74 l) 75 or over

28. How many are in your group? Adults _____ children: _____

APPENDIX III: Questionnaire on stakeholders attitudes toward Mistaken Point

1. How do you feel about the following statement, related to Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve? (Please choose the response that best describes your opinion)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
MPER means a lot to me	1	2	3	4	5
I am very attached to MPER	1	2	3	4	5
I identify strongly with MPER	1	2	3	4	5
No other place can compare to MPER	1	2	3	4	5
I get more satisfaction out of visiting MPER than any other place	1	2	3	4	5
I wouldn't substitute any other area for doing the types of things I do at MPER	1	2	3	4	5
This place is one of the 'wonders of the world'	1	2	3	4	5
The natural environment of this place is very valuable	1	2	3	4	5
This place is important because of its beauty	1	2	3	4	5
This place is important because of its historical value	1	2	3	4	5
This place is important because of its cultural value	1	2	3	4	5
This place is important because of its educational value	1	2	3	4	5
This place is important because of its recreational value	1	2	3	4	5
This place could easily be damaged	1	2	3	4	5
We have a responsibility to our children to protect this place	1	2	3	4	5

2. Mistaken Point wants to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site. What does this mean to you?

3. What are the biggest obstacles for Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site?

4. What, if any, concerns do you have about Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site?

5. What are the main impacts to Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve when becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site?

6. Are there any specific ways in which Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve can increase the likelihood of becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site?

7. At the UNESCO meeting held in Cambodia in 2013, Red Bay, NL, was nominated as UNESCO World Heritage Site. Do you believe that the establishment of Red Bay as UNESCO World Heritage Site will affect Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve nomination? If yes, how?

If you have any comments please feel free to tell us.
