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Society of Indian Psychologists

Written by the President of the Society of Indian Psychologists, Dr. Jacque Gray, who is an American Indian psychologist at the University of North Dakota Center for Rural Health and Director of the National Native American Center on Elder Abuse. Dr. Diane J. Willis has been a mentor of Dr. Gray and made many contributions to American Indian mental health.

Dr. Jacqueline S. Gray wrote: Dr. Diane J. Willis is a member of the Kiowa Tribe, a psychologist, and a longtime member and leader of the American Psychological Association (APA). She has been my friend, teacher, colleague and mentor for many years. She has provided leadership through APA governance and has encouraged American Indian participation in APA as a mechanism for addressing the needs of American Indians/Alaska Natives over the years. Dr. Willis leads by example. She has served on the APA Council of Representatives, Policy and Planning Board, Board of Professional Affairs, and the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs. She has also served as president of The Society of Pediatric Psychology; Society of Clinical Child Psychology; Division of Child, Youth and Family Services; Division of Clinical Psychology; and Division of Psychotherapy. Not only does she encourage, but she provides opportunities for AI/AN psychologists and students to learn, train, publish, and grow into leaders. In recognition of her long history of mentoring psychologists, the American Psychological Association Division of Child, Youth and Family Services established the "Diane J. Willis Early Career Award" in 2008. The award is funded by contributions from her colleagues in psychology, former students, and those whom she has mentored as early career psychologists over many years.

Dr. Willis has also been instrumental in training medical personnel in the signs of child abuse and neglect, develop family treatment for abuse and neglect, and working with children with learning and developmental disabilities. She has been an advocate of better mental health care for American Indian families and children and an advocate on the local, state, and national level for prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Dr. Willis has worked to bring attention nationally to these needs. She has provided assessment, treatment, training and leadership to mental health clinics in southwestern Oklahoma and nationally provides consultation and training for Indian Head Start programs. Diane J. Willis was named Indian Woman of the Year by the Oklahoma Federation of Indian Women in 2000. She has testified before U.S. Congress on several occasions regarding the mental health needs of American Indians. Dr. Willis has received state and national awards for advocacy including the APA Division of Child, Youth and Family Services Nicholas Hobbs Award for Distinguished Child Advocacy and from APA the first Karl F. Heiser Presidential Award for Advocacy.

Although Diane J. Willis has received great honors, advocated for children and families at the highest levels, and acknowledged for her leadership, she continues in her retirement to provide

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guidance, teaching, mentoring, and encouragement for those who are willing to learn. She continues to provide opportunities for others and establish a foundation for other Indian Psychologists to follow in her path. I always know I can call on her for guidance, support and a push in the right direction.

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