

## INTRODUCTION

This project came from a dream of Carolyn Barcus, Ed.D., who is one of our elders in the Society of Indian Psychologists.

We all have to live with the American Psychological Association's (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, including 2010 Amendments (hereinafter referred to as the Ethics Code) in order to maintain our licenses. But many of us have been raised in cultures and work in cultures that were not included when the Ethics Code was written.

All of us have rubbed up against this Ethics Code and have the stories to prove it. A LOT of animated discussion has been generated at almost every SIP Conference on this issue whether or not it was on the formal agenda. Informal discussions indicated that some practitioners might be comfortable skirting the Ethics Code in their individual practices without considering the potential consequences. Whether we think it is relevant or not, the Ethics Code does apply to us and skirting it has the potential to cost a psychologist their career.

Because of this, Dr. Barcus decided that it was time to examine how the APA Ethics Code negatively impacts the practice of psychology with Indigenous populations. In 2011, she invited members of the APA Ethics Office and the APA Ethics Committee to attend our annual SIP Conference, held every June at Utah State University in Logan, Utah. The first formal panel presentation at SIP included members from SIP as well as Steve Behnke, from the APA Ethics Office, and Linda Forrest, Ph.D., then a member of the APA Ethics Committee. This effort was so well received and generated so much discussion, that it was decided to continue the effort in 2012.

After the general discussion following the second panel presentation in 2012, options to influence the APA Ethics Code were considered. It was decided: 1) there are many ways in which the APA Ethics Code is not helpful to psychologists in Indian Country; 2) it was up to the people in that room to do something about it; 3) we did not have the resources to write an alternative Ethics Code; 4) if we waited for other Ethnic Minority Psychological Associations to join in a common effort, we could be waiting for a very long time; and 5) we had the resources to write a formal commentary that would bear the SIP imprint.

The SIP process was carefully and purposefully designed from Community Psychology and Organizational Psychology perspectives. I did not accept the work to develop the Commentary until the organization had been struggling with this issue for two years and members had finally decided on a direction and a goal. The SIP membership agreed to do the Commentary and to participate in producing the material for it. Our Ethnic Minority Psychological Associations are volunteer organizations; there has to be buy-in at the membership level before anyone proceeds, otherwise there are not sufficient resources to do the work.

We, in SIP, come from oral traditions. A vision came to me as soon as I was asked to spearhead this project. My vision was for a Commentary that would speak to providers of Indigenous services all over the country and all around the world. In order to do that, we had to go beyond the linear, abstract, Cartesian logic of our European colonizers. In order to do that, we had to embrace who we are and communicate in the language of stories. Stories bring the abstract to life. Stories bring our struggles to life. Stories communicate across cultures. Our healthy respect for how we think and how we communicate is an example of what post-colonial self-esteem looks like.

Now we have the stories to bring the heat, and the light, and the life to this Commentary. We have the stories to illustrate what is missing in the APA Ethics Code: our relationships to ALL our relations including the elements, all other living things, Mother Earth, and Spirit.

Some people happen to be bilingual and fluent in the written language of abstract logic. They have done an outstanding job in identifying the conceptual and language difficulties with the Ethics Code. Their critiques are also included in this commentary.

Following the conference of 2012, I put out a description on the SIP list serve of how stories were going to be collected. A timeline was included in the description. It was made clear that everyone who sent in stories would be acknowledged in the final product and that identifying details would be changed to preserve confidentiality. The Commentary was designed from the beginning to be a collection of stories that could be relevant anywhere in Indian country. As could have predicted from both the Community Psychology and the Organizational Psychology perspectives, once away from the Conference, members lost the description and the timeline, ignored them, and in general did not respond after the first couple of standards except to send good wishes.

The compilation of the critical incident stories and the timeline for the writing of the Commentary was set internally by me and the SIP Executive Committee without regard to external demands. When the first effort of collecting stories fizzled after October 2012, a new effort was attempted in January 2013. This effort yielded another wave of material, but not enough for a Commentary, particularly for Standards 7-10. Linda Forrest, from the APA Ethics Committee, suggested collecting stories at the upcoming Conference in June 2013.

Since there had been a buy-in for the Commentary from SIP members and a year-long list serve process in which everyone could see that enough material had not been collected, the Conference organizers were confident in setting aside a substantial amount of time for the effort on both days of the Conference.

On Day 1 people were randomly assigned to groups (one table per standard) with a facilitator to generate stories of issues or incidents on the spot. Paper and writing implements were provided to each table along with a copy of their assigned Standard and comments received thus far. I roamed from table to table to ensure that abstract analysis

or oral story telling were contained and that industrious writing was encouraged. That evening, volunteers transcribed all the hand written stories into Word files.

On Day 2 participants convened in the same groups and identified the top three points that they wanted me to emphasize when writing about that standard. The small groups reported back to the big group. This helped to set the focus for the larger document. Most importantly, everyone at the Conference had a chance to participate in the Commentary process. **This is what makes the SIP Commentary community sourced.**

In this Commentary, individual names have not been linked to the stories. This is because many of us have experienced these stories or some variations of these stories. These stories illustrate the challenges that can arise when the ethics of one culture are imposed upon another. These stories illustrate WHY the APA Ethics Code cannot be universal.

The reader will see that the words Tribes and Tribal are capitalized in this document. This is because the words stand in for our many home communities. Were we to use the specific names, they would be capitalized. This is to differentiate these words from the popular usage that refers to a group of (primitive) individuals, a family group, or a group of people with similar points of view.

In this document, a general Values Statement introduces the point of view of the Commentary as a whole. Subsequently, the APA Standard begins each section, followed by the commentary from SIP members.

I owe a particular debt of gratitude to the following people for being so active in and so supportive of the community process (in alphabetical order): Carolyn Barcus, Steve Behnke, Art Blume, Linda Forrest, Daniel Foster, Rebecca Foster, Pat Garrison, Jacque Gray, Shaun Hains, Kimberly Miller, Carolyn Morris, Christopher Morris, Gayle Morse, Yolanda Neimann, Denise Newman, Wendy Peters, Carmen Romo, Marge Smith Zoeller, Jill Straits, Melissa Tehee, Janet Thomas, and Beau Washington.

All my relations.

*The following documents were disseminated on the SIP list serve as examples to help guide group discussion.*

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct* (2002, Amended June 1, 2010). Retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>

Canadian Institutes of Health Research. (2007). *CIHR guidelines for health research involving aboriginal people*. Retrieved from <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/29134.html>

Canadian Psychological Association. (2000). *Canadian code of ethics for psychologists* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Retrieved from

[http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Ethics/cpa\\_code\\_2000\\_eng\\_jp\\_jan2014.pdf](http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Ethics/cpa_code_2000_eng_jp_jan2014.pdf)

Henrich, J., Heine, S.J., Norenzayan, A., (2010). The Weirdest people in the world? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 33, 61-135.

International Association of Applied Psychology. (2008). *Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists*. Retrieved from [http://www.cpa.ca/cpsite/userfiles/Documents/Universal\\_Declaration\\_asADOPTEDbyIUPsySIAAP\\_July2008.pdf](http://www.cpa.ca/cpsite/userfiles/Documents/Universal_Declaration_asADOPTEDbyIUPsySIAAP_July2008.pdf)

Straits, K.J.E., Bird, D.M., Tsinajinnie, E., Espinoza, J., Goodkind, J., Spencer, O., Tafoya, N., Willging, C. & the Guiding Principles Workgroup (2012). *Guiding Principles for Engaging in Research with Native American Communities, Version 1*. UNM Center for Rural and Community Behavioral Health & Albuquerque Area Southwest Tribal Epidemiology Center.