

Full Apology to the Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian People, drafted by  
Psychoanalysis for Social Responsibility, Section IX of Division 39 (Psychoanalysis), American  
Psychological Association

The United States is a settler colonial nation that grew wealthy, in part, by the theft and despoiling of Native American land and culture. The Standing Rock protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline is a movement resisting the further theft, loss and despoliation, which makes the present moment an important one in which to speak out against the longstanding harm afflicted on native peoples, including much psychological harm. As representatives of several American Psychological Association Divisions and Sections, we respectfully offer a full apology to Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, and we stand in solidarity with the Standing Rock resistance movement.

The discrimination and traumas Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians have suffered include abusive assimilation efforts, such as forced relocation and boarding schools, and lack of voting rights and religious freedom well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The larger culture has remained silent about the harm done to Native Americans, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians. Psychological science and practice, with few exceptions, have also remained silent. Disparities, on a range of different factors, between the treatment and welfare of Native populations and of white members of The United States of America are well documented. Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians experience higher rates of psychological distress, chronic disease, and incarceration than many other groups of U.S. citizens. They manage many stressors inflicted by dominant culture on a daily basis and, although suicide did not exist in their cultures prior to colonization, it now manifests in a tragically inflated statistic reflecting the effects of both the intergenerational transmission of trauma and the ongoing traumas these peoples face. The fact that such harm occurs in a first world nation, and that it is so longstanding, is deplorable and unacceptable.

As we try to understand these challenging issues in relation to well-being and health, we must also listen to and tell the stories of the strengths and resilience of Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian peoples and communities. Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians are the proud custodians of the longest surviving cultures on our planet. Their resilience and resourcefulness could make a significant and positive impact on U.S. society should they have the opportunity to contribute routinely in their areas of expertise. We, as psychologists, social workers and licensed mental health providers, have not always listened carefully enough to our Native peoples. We have not always respected the skills, expertise, world views, and unique wisdom that they have developed over thousands of years. Earlier this year, The Australian Psychological Society offered an unprecedented full apology to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders for the harm done by psychology to those peoples. With that event as inspiration, and drawing on their statement as a model for our own, we sincerely and formally apologize to Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian People for:

Our use of diagnostic systems that do not honor cultural belief systems and world views;  
The inappropriate use of assessment techniques and procedures that have conveyed misleading and inaccurate messages about the abilities and capacities of Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian peoples;  
Conducting research that has benefited the careers of researchers rather than improved the lives of the Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian participants;  
Developing and applying treatments that have ignored Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian approaches to healing and that have, both implicitly and explicitly, dismissed the importance of culture in understanding and promoting social and emotional well-being; and,  
**Our silence and lack of advocacy on important policy matters, such as the policy of forced removal and policies of deliberate systemic assimilation.**

To demonstrate our genuine commitment to this apology, we intend to pursue a different way of working with Native American people that will be characterized by diligently:

**Listening more and talking less;**  
**Following more and steering less;**  
**Advocating more and complying less;**  
**Including more and ignoring less; and,**  
**Collaborating more and commanding less.**

Through our efforts, in concert and consultation with Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian People, we envisage a different future.

This will be a future where these populations control what is important to them rather than having their lives and well-being controlled by others.

It will be a future in which there are greater numbers of Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian psychologists, social workers and mental health providers and more positions of decision making and responsibility held by Native Peoples.

Ultimately, through our combined efforts, this will be a future where Native Americans, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians enjoy the social and emotional well-being that all U.S. citizens deserve.

Sincerely,

Section IX, Psychoanalysis for Social Responsibility, a section of Division 39 (Psychoanalysis)

Division 24, Executive Committee, Division of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology

Division 27, Society for Community Research and Action

Division 45, Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Race and Ethnicity

Division 26, Executive Committee, Society for the History of Psychology

Division, 35, Society for the Psychology of Women