

## **SIP Organization Name Task Force Report**

The business meeting at the 2016 SIP annual convention included a discussion of the formation of organizational chapters. The possibility of creating a Canadian chapter resulted in a discussion of the organization's name. The term "First Nations" is used to refer to the indigenous peoples of Canada. According to some Canadian members, the term "Indian" is considered derogatory and therefore, it would be difficult to use the name for a Canadian chapter. This led to a conversation about the possibility of changing the organization's name. The "Society of *Indigenous* Psychologists" was suggested, as were other alternatives.

It became clear that this topic tapped into strong and diverse feelings and opinions, and a decision was made to form a task force to further explore the issue. The task force included: Karlee Fellner and Kyle Hill, co-chairs, and Carolyn Barcus, Angela Eno, Joe Gone, Carolyn Thomas-Morris, Joe Trimble, as members, and Janet Thomas the administrative assistant.

### **Summary of Task Force Meetings**

The task force held a total of four meetings in 2016. The following is a summary of each meeting. The complete meeting minutes and the archived listserv posts can be reviewed to obtain a more detailed and nuanced description of these events and discussions.

#### **August 22, 2016**

Task force members considered reasons for retaining the name and rationales for changing or modifying it. The members considered the possibility of conducting an online vote using the listserv. This raised questions about exactly who should and should not be able to vote. There are people on the list who may not be current with their dues and so not technically members. There are non-native members who are on the listserv but are not stakeholders. And there are many elders and founders of SIP who are not on the listserv and whose voices should be heard.

Ultimately, a decision was made to post a request to the listserv for input about the issue, and to consider those responses at the next meeting. This request appeared on the listserv with responses due by September 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### **September 23, 2016**

Many members offered opinions regarding whether or not to change the name. There were also many ideas about what the name might be, should it be changed. The task force considered two possible next steps:

- 1) Convene a talking circle at the convention to discuss the matter. Trust that the group will reach consensus.
- 2) Convene the talking circle, and then defer the decision to a council of elders.

Concern was expressed that those in attendance at the conference would not necessarily be representative of the whole organization. Because of the wide range of opinions, the task force

decided to ponder the possibilities and to reconvene in a month. One member offered to identify a graduate student to analyze the comments obtained on the list.

**October 13, 2016**

The member was not able to identify a graduate student to formally analyze the listserv responses, and so the task force considered the general themes reflected in the comments. The idea of a having a talking circle at the convention was further discussed. The group considered using technology to include those who could not be present and specifically inviting and encouraging elders to attend. The “elders” were defined to include all past presidents of SIP as well as others who have contributed over many years. The task force decided to begin by inviting those elders to participate in a conference call to discuss the issue and then to reevaluate the idea of a talking circle.

**November 30, 2016**

The task force members and invited guests (elders) discussed the meaning of the current name. The following is a summary of the main points made during that discussion.

## Reasons for changing the name

- The term “Indian” is considered by to some to be derogatory, offensive, or antiquated.
- The current name is confusing for South Asian Indians who periodically contact SIP seeking membership.
- Commitment to the term, “American Indian” feels like a rejection of Native people who live outside the current U.S. borders.
- The borders that divided tribes are artificial and drawn by the colonizers and so should not be a basis for deciding who should and should not be included.

## Reasons to retain the name

- The term Indian is used in government treaties, agencies, and programs (BIA, IHS) which may create legal reasons for using the term.
- Despite the affinity with other Indigenous groups, the interests of American (United States) Indians are different and could be diminished if the name is changed.
- The founders thought carefully about the name, and they feel a deep connection to it.
- Many elders worked hard to claim the term, and they feel proud to be Indian.
- Retaining the term would allow SIP to bring pride and accomplishment to the term.

The idea of holding a talking circle was dropped that this point. A decision was made to retain the name: American Indian and Alaskan Native Society of Indian Psychologists.

Submitted by Janet Thomas  
June 27, 2018