

Report of the President

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Summary of activities: An introduction

Try as I might, this report could not be shrunk to a single page, so gave up on it and decided to make it more readable...

SIP has experienced a year like no other this year, and that has kept your EC very busy. The EC typically meets on the phone once a month, but this year we had times when we would have calls more than once a month. Everyone is likely well-aware of the particular challenges we faced, mostly because of the assaults on our people and their treaty rights and human rights over the course of the year. The list serves were lit up with activity during the last year. Specifics will be discussed subsequently, but it is worth noting that EC members acted with heart and courage during this past year, and in many instances made personal sacrifices in order to stand up for our people during these challenges times.

It is worth noting the generosity of members here, not only in giving of themselves but also of monetary gifts. The Jollies this year presented SIP with a very significant monetary donation for which we are forever grateful. Thank you to all our members for their generous offerings of time and resources in defense of the psychological well-being of Native and Indigenous people.

Cheyenne River, Standing Rock, the Camps, and the Water Protectors

The EC worked very diligently to support the people of Standing Rock and Cheyenne River, the camps, and the Water Protectors against the assault of the black snake (DAPL). EC and other SIP members (including students) visited and volunteered mental health services to the camps during very challenging times, and their courage and resolve should be recognized. In particular, Kee Straits and Julii Green should be recognized for spearheading the efforts, although many others responded to the call for support as well. SIP developed mental health resources that were shared directly with the people on site, as well as disseminated on our web site. Our web site became an international resource for information about what was occurring in the camps. We also developed materials to support reintegration into communities after the camps were disbanded.

As part of the effort to support, SIP EC encouraged members to become “word warriors” in defense of the Water Protectors, water, and land. SIP EC began the process with an editorial published in *Indian Country Today*. SIP EC also wrote a statement in support of the tribes, the camps, and the Water Protectors that was broadly disseminated, and generated other similar responses by the other Ethnic Minority Psychological Associations (EMPA), picked up by prominent blogs and list serves, and eventually a response from APA (discussed subsequently).

SIP EC and members wrote countless letters to elected representatives in states impacted by DAPL, to elected representatives associated with the environment and Native American affairs, to the cabinet and to the president of the US (several times). Those letters may have had an impact along with other activities, and the previous president acquiesced, suspending the DAPL project temporarily. Unfortunately, those efforts were short lived as the new US president not only renewed construction but also encouraged innumerable other projects to be constructed on Native treaty lands, including the previously defeated Keystone XL. Because of these policy changes, our efforts to support camps (across the nation) and Water Protectors continues to this day, with increasing focus on efforts towards systemic change designed to address the sources of the injustice as well as the acute needs of the people. As part of that effort, we have been in contact with national and international groups defending Indigenous rights, including the United Nations Human Rights organization. As SIP president, I attended a summit meeting in Eagle Butte that laid the foundation for further cooperation in the future.

Additionally, SIP has been involved with Standing Rock and Cheyenne River in aiding their legal defense against the DAPL, with Gayle Morse and Dee BigFoot leading our efforts. Recently, a federal judge ruled that the Corp of Engineers may have violated the law by an inadequate environmental protection plan. We are hopeful that this ruling may reverse what has happened and perhaps shut down the DAPL. Time will tell. But it is clear that there may be many more challenges ahead with the trend towards business taking precedent over the interests of Native Americans and their treaty rights.

APA and the Water Protectors

At one point during the Fall, 2016, SIP EC became very puzzled and frustrated by the slow response to the issues at Standing Rock, even when some inside APA were encouraging action. In the context of this frustration, an email from a senior staff member at APA was received by a SIP EC member that suggested that perhaps addressing Standing Rock was not an APA priority, which generated a significant response from me when becoming aware of the message. There were a couple of back and forths between the organizations before APA seemed to somewhat grasp the significance of the concerns that we had. There was great tension between SIP and APA during this time, but the net result has been that APA became supportive and much more responsive than before (I believe as a result of this event). In the aftermath of the crisis, an article was published in the *Monitor* demonstrating continued support for Standing Rock after the election, which has continued. Gayle Morse and I were asked to review the article prior to publication, and to provide additional information for support efforts. In addition, the president of APA and I were able to publish an editorial in the *New York Times* that received a great deal of attention, including among psychologists in other nations. So although the relationship between SIP and APA has been stressed by these and other events over the last two years, there are hopeful signs that progress may occur slowly. However, our due diligence is required to make certain that APA continues to support and advocate for the psychological well-being of Native American people in the US.

The Apology

In the context of the Australian Psychological Society's apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, some APA members, with guidance from Melinda García as Council of Representatives (CoR) rep from SIP, had been suggesting that an apology from APA would be an important step toward healing for Native American people. However, senior people in APA's governance were not taking these suggestions seriously. During the time of crisis with APA over Standing Rock, and in the context of the violence by legal authorities against the Water Protectors, we were contacted for ideas on how to support Standing Rock and cajole APA into action toward an apology by other entities within APA, including Section IX in Division 39. One was a personal friend, one who served with me on CEMA many years ago, and I suggested to her that a grassroots effort within APA to push the organization toward an apology might be helpful, perhaps with a division taking the lead by apologizing first. A few days later a confidential message arrived from leaders of Section IX that were wanting to write an apology and were asking for Joseph Trimble and me to serve as consultants during the process. Eventually others signed on to the final document, and the apology ceremony was held at the National Multicultural Conference and Summit. Division 39 has generously offered to sponsor a documentary film of the apology carried out in consultation with SIP and Native American film experts, which will be discussed later in the meeting. The grassroots effort continues toward encouraging APA for an apology to Native American people for harms caused by psychologists. Melinda may talk about her efforts in her report as CoR rep.

SIP Position Statements

During the last year, events in the larger social order have created the necessity to create position statements. The first has been discussed, the one regarding support for Standing Rock. As mentioned, the position statement generated a lot of peripheral support from other organizations. A second position paper was drafted and approved by SIP EC that opposed the building of a wall along the southern border of the US, noting the harm it would cause to tribal groups living on both sides of the "border". This particular position paper also received great attention outside of SIP nationally and internationally, and was reported in a blog sponsored by *Psychology Today*. A third position paper was on defending religious freedom in response to the travel bans that targeted specific religious groups, again noting how our religious freedoms were oppressed by the US government for many years as part of assimilation efforts.

The Alliance

The Alliance organization was originally created at a SIP conference with the intent of having an equal forum of EMPA presidents with the president of APA to carry out initiatives of mutual interest in the service of ethnic minority psychology. However, it became clear with time that the APA presidents were not interested in attending the Alliance meetings and the initiatives were not aligned well with Native American interests. The SIP EC voted to withdraw from the Alliance last year at the conference, but we remain committed to working with other EMPAs

and APA through Division 45 in CNPAAEMI. There had been some discussion of another National EMPA organization, but that seems to have subsided due to mixed levels of interest.

Reconstitution of the Council of Elders

During the recent crises facing Native American people, I thought it important to re-establish communication with our Council of Elders, some of which have not been active in SIP for some time. The effort had mixed success, with many being grateful for contact but with some not being located and others opting not to respond. It seems important to continue efforts to involve our Council of Elders in the current activities of SIP. I am certain that Gayle will be keen to continue this process.

30th Annual Convention

Melissa Tehee and Carolyn Barcus have produced an amazing conference that celebrates our 30 years. Please recognize their amazing efforts on behalf of SIP. And buy a t-shirt...

The Last Two Years

Thank you for your support during my presidency, and please commit to supporting Gayle over the next two years. The issues of the past two years have exposed our strengths as an organization, but they have also exposed our weaknesses as well. We simply need for more people to come off the bench and volunteer their services to SIP. Having a very few carry the water is not allowing SIP to do all it can for Native people. We could do so much more if even half of the people on our list serve committed a couple of hours a month to volunteering for committee work or other society activities. Many of us in leadership are exhausted by the activities of the last couple of years and would welcome new volunteers and their ideas and perspectives. Please make a commitment for the coming year to actively do something for Native people through SIP!!! Please. You are needed.

Yours in beauty and peace,

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