

PLAINS ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY CODE OF ETHICS

General Statement: Anthropologists bear responsibility for the integrity and reputation of their discipline, of scholarship, and of science. The Plains Anthropological Society (the *Society*) is committed to sound professional standards of integrity and ethical conduct. This Code does not propose sanctions. Rather it is designed to promote discussion and set expectations for ethically responsible decisions on the part of all members of the Society.

The Anthropological sub-disciplines of Archaeology, Physical Anthropology, Linguistic Anthropology and Sociocultural Anthropology are united by a common focus: the study of human beings. The guiding philosophy relating to ethical issues can be applied across the board and summed up in one grand statement: Do No Harm. It is when we get into the specifics of application of ethical concepts that we see a need for divergence into sub-disciplines. The following ethical standards are adapted from a variety of sources; primarily the **Society for American Archaeology**, and the **American Anthropological Association** Codes of Ethics. They are intended to capture the shared ideals of ethical behavior and the binding philosophy of Anthropology, but in detail focus on the sub-discipline of Archaeology; the profession of the vast majority of our membership.

Stewardship: Anthropologists have ethical obligations to the people, species and materials they study and to the people with whom they work. Members of the *Society* agree to carry out their research with an *awareness* of the purpose, potential impacts, and sources of funding, and a respect for colleagues, those studied, those providing information, and all other relevant parties potentially affected by their work.

Members of the *Society* agree to work for the long-term conservation and protection of sites, records and collections. The membership recognizes that even systematic scientific archaeological excavations are inherently destructive. As a result, it supports the practice and promotion of stewardship for the benefit of present and future generations. Members should work with tribal representatives to ensure sensitive materials and information are treated and stored in a culturally appropriate manner.

Accountability, Reporting and Public Outreach: Anthropologists should make the results of their research available to sponsors, students, decision-makers, source communities, and other interested persons, while protecting the confidentiality and/or anonymity of people and information (as negotiated or understood) and the integrity of cultural resources, communities, and individuals being studied. In so doing, they should be truthful and responsible for the factual content of their statements, but they should also give consideration to the social and political implications of the information they disseminate. Where possible and where requested, researchers should provide copies of all publications, reports, and other documentation (data sets, photographs, and so forth) to source communities as a way of sharing the fruits of the research. They should, within their ability, insure that the information is clearly presented, properly contextualized, and responsibly used. They should make clear the empirical bases upon which their reports stand, be candid about their qualifications and philosophical biases, and recognize and make clear the limits of their expertise.

Members are encouraged to present the knowledge they gain through research, within a reasonable amount of time, to interested public and professional communities in an accessible form through publication or other means. This should be done with the consideration that information obtained through interview may be restricted, and that the cultural mores of the individual who provided

information must be respected. Information provided for a specific project or purpose should not be made available for public release without the expressed permission of the person interviewed.

Members of the *Society* should cooperate with interested public sectors in the preservation, protection, and interpretation of the archaeological and anthropological record. These activities may include stewardship; public education on methods, techniques, and theory; and public dissemination of research findings. In doing so members should make every reasonable effort to consult with groups affected by ongoing research and professional activities in order to establish beneficial working relations.

Commercialization: The commercialization of objects from archaeological and other anthropological contexts can result in the destruction of archaeological sites and valuable scientific information. Consequently, the *Society* discourages its members from participating in the appraisal, trade, sale, or purchase of these objects as commercial goods in manners not consistent with their field of anthropological practice. Such commercialization confuses scientific value with monetary value of the material and creates questions about the focus of our work. Professionals should, therefore, avoid taking actions for the purpose of establishing the commercial value of objects from sites or property that may lead to their destruction, dispersal, or misuse. Membership in the *Society* should not be used or represented as credentials in enterprises that encourage commercialization of objects, nor should the resources of the *Society*, such as the *Plains Anthropologist*, be used in furtherance of the commercial exploitation of such material.

Intellectual Property: Prior to initiating research activities, anthropologists should obtain the consent of persons being studied, providing information, owning or providing access to material being studied, or otherwise identified as having interests which might be affected by research. It is understood that the degree and breadth of informed consent depends on the nature of the project and may be affected by research procedures, codes, laws and ethics of the varying communities and countries in which we work. Informed consent is dynamic and continuous from project conception through implementation/completion. It is a dialog and negotiation with those involved in the study.

While anthropologists may gain personally from their work, they must not exploit individuals, groups, animals, or cultural or biological materials. They should recognize their debt to the societies in which they work and their obligation to reciprocate with people in appropriate ways.

The knowledge and generated documents that are created through study are part of the record and should be treated in a manner consistent with stewardship principals. Tribal members have unique and specialized knowledge applicable to Plains Anthropology. This knowledge is their intellectual property. Payment to interviewees is compensation for their help and time, but does not generally constitute a transfer of property: they are not selling their stories, information or history. When we work with tribal cultural specialists it is imperative that the specialist is made aware of what the information will be used for and how the information will be disseminated. It is also important to consider that an individual's knowledge about an object, concept, or social information doesn't necessarily translate into the cultural authority to speak about it. Members should consider the origin of the information and intent of the people providing it to them when engaged in their professional pursuits

Professionalism, Qualifications, Training and Resources: Anthropologists have a duty to be informed about ethical issues relating to their work, and should periodically receive training on

cultural sensitivity, current research activities and ethics. Departments offering anthropology degrees should include and require ethical training in their courses of instruction. Anthropologists are subject to the general moral rules of scientific and scholarly conduct and should not deceive or knowingly misrepresent their qualifications, work or the work of their colleagues.

In all dealings with employers, persons hired to pursue archaeological or anthropological research, or to apply that knowledge, should be honest about their qualifications, capabilities, and aims. In working for governmental agencies or private businesses, they should be especially careful not to promise or imply acceptance of conditions contrary to professional ethics or competing commitments.

Given the destructive nature of archaeological excavation, members should ensure they have adequate training, experience, facilities, and other support necessary to conduct proper research, to minimize impacts, and to proceed consistent with the foregoing principles. In addition, members of the *Society* should not agree to perform or attempt to perform work for which they are not qualified.

By applying for or renewing my Plains Anthropological Society membership, I agree to abide by the Code of Ethics of the Plains Anthropological Society as it exists or may be revised in the future.