HOW STRONG ETHICS ENHANCE TRIBAL GOVERNMENT:
Would you? Could you? Should you?

Maylinn Smith, Director
Margery Hunter Brown Indian Law Clinic
University of Montana School of Law
maylinn.smith@umontana.edu
The traditional values of the Tribes are the foundation for ethic standards for the Tribes

Tanana Chiefs Statement
Cultural Preservation

If Tribes do not articulate their own ethical standards, the ethical standards of non-Indian society will be imposed.
What common traditional tribal values should be included?

- Trust
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Respect
- Generosity
- Fairness
- Cooperative
- Humor
- Spirituality
- Support of Extended family
- Resilient
- Interconnectedness
A consultant for the [Deleted] Indian tribe was convicted on more than two dozen charges by a federal jury, after prosecutors said he provided kickbacks to tribal leaders in a scheme to defraud a $9.3 million mental health program.
What do you want the headline to read?

- Vice chairman from [Deleted] Tribe appears in court in theft case Tuesday, September 9, 2014
- Another guilty plea comes in [Deleted] Tribe corruption case Tuesday, August 19, 2014
- Unsettled Ch. 23: [Tribal] leader indicted for stealing Monday, July 21, 2014
- Leadership of [Tribal] Nation in dispute amid corruption cases Wednesday, October 23, 2013
Improving Images

Internally

Externally
Tribal Business versus Tribal Government

- Same
- Different
- Overlapping
- Hierarchical
Benefits to Business Reputations

- Build an ethical culture of doing the right thing most of the time
- Reduce risk and repercussions
- Commitment to integrity
- Establish professional conduct standards
Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

• Purpose
  • The tribe must maintain a reputation as a tribal government with high standards of fairness, honesty, and ethical conduct in its business affairs. To demonstrate this to all who are involved with the Tribe, the Code of Ethics is offered as a practical statement of our standards.
Benefits to Governance
Federal Contracts
Business Opportunities
Member Confidence
Building Reputations

Consistency

Transparency

Conflicts of Interest

Accountability
Breaking Down Barriers

Transparency

Fair and Informed Decisions

Independent
Changing Perceptions

- Tribes can be strong governments
- Tribes can be good businesses
- Tribes can be trusted to be fair and honest
How can Tribal Ethics Codes Help

- Explain tribal expectations for individuals facing situations with possible ethical implications
- Define acceptable behavior
- Clarify gray areas
- Identify steps for resolving ethical issues
- Promote high standards of practice
- Comply with applicable laws and regulations
Tribal Ethics Codes

• Defining the purpose:
  • The purpose of the Code of Ethics shall be to require the highest standards of ethical conduct of all tribal officials and member of tribal boards, committees and commissions, while providing a means whereby the Southern Ute Indian tribe may hold such official accountable for their actions in performing the duties and responsibilities of office. It shall further be the intent of the Code of Ethics to protect the Tribe from improper influence, conflicts of interest and improprieties and to place the interest of the Tribe above the personal and economic interests of tribal officials.

• 19-1-102 Southern Ute Indian Tribal Code, Code of Ethics
Purpose vs Policy

• Tribal Council Members shall maintain the highest standards of honesty, integrity, fairness and impartiality in their conduct as Council Members, and shall avoid any action which would adversely reflect on the Tribal Council or Pascau Yaqui Tribe. Council Members shall take action in the best interest of the Tribe and the tribal membership, not in their personal interest. Council Members shall not engage in behavior involving a conflict of interest, or acts that involve actual or apparent impropriety, as those terms are defined in this ordinance. Council Members shall carry out their duties and responsibilities in the highest ethical manner. Violation of this ordinance may constitute “neglect of duty” or “gross misconduct” as those terms are used in Article X, Section 1 of the Constitution.

• 2 PYCTC §1-22-20
Challenges of Media

- The press
- The internet
- Social Media
You saw what on Facebook

- Privacy is a whole new concept
- Taking steps to minimize ethical troubles
Simple Ethics Test

**Transparency**
Do you mind others know what you decided

**Effect**
Who does the decision impact and how

**Fairness**
Would others consider what was done to be fair?
A Framework for Ethical Decision Making

• Recognize an Ethical Issue
• Get the Facts
• Evaluate Alternative Actions
  • Which option will produce the most good and do the least harm? (The Utilitarian Approach)
  • Which option best respects the rights of all who have a stake? (The Rights Approach)
  • Which option treats people equally or proportionately? (The Justice Approach)
  • Which option best serves the community as a whole, not just some members? (The Common Good Approach)
  • Which option leads me to act as the sort of person I want to be? (The Virtue Approach)
• Make a Decision and Test It
• Act and Reflect on the Outcome
• See more at: http://www.scu.edu/ethics