

National Society of Indian Psychologists Holds 39th Annual Convention at USU

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SIP convention attendees, including USU psychology honor student Sandra Benallie (third from right), gather for a photo in the David B. Haight Alumni House garden on the USU campus.

The Society of Indian Psychologists (SIP) held its annual convention at Utah State University in June. The event brought together American Indian and Alaska Native psychologists, practitioners, students, and other individuals to advocate for mental health in Indigenous communities.

Founded in 1978, SIP is a national organization that aims to advance Indigenous psychology and promote understanding of the experiences of American Indian communities through education, training, and research. This mission is reflected in its annual retreat and convention, which creates spaces for connection and collaboration.

USU has hosted the SIP Convention since 1987 with the Department of Psychology, which has graduated nearly 10 percent of the nation's American Indian psychologists. Melissa Tehee, Ph.D., professor of psychology and member of SIP, shared, "Through SIP, our department creates opportunities for students to build connections, gain hands-on experience, and engage with a broader community that supports their growth inside and beyond the classroom."

The theme of this year's convention was "Sacred Narratives: Reclaiming Identity Through Psychology," emphasizing the power of sharing personal stories. Keynote speakers included Stephanie Fryberg, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Northwestern University; and

Delores BigFoot, Ph.D., child psychologist at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

"The speakers at the convention emphasized the importance of honoring identity, story, and belonging," shared SIP President Mark Standing Eagle Baez. "They reminded us that growth begins with understanding one another, and that our individual and collective narratives can be powerful tools for healing and resilience."

Vicky Lomay, SIP president-elect, added, "The SIP conference fosters a meaningful environment for community-building. Its impact goes beyond the sessions themselves, reinforcing the strength found in coming together."

The SIP Convention started as a small gathering of American Indian and Alaska Native psychologists committed to advocating for mental health. The first convention, attended by about 30 participants, was organized by Carolyn Barcus, Ph.D., emeritus professor of psychology at USU. Today, the event draws hundreds of participants from different professional backgrounds.

"Not only does this retreat and convention unite students and professionals from across the nation, but it also deepens learning within the Utah community," Tehee said. "We welcome attendees from colleges and universities throughout the state, health providers seeking to better understand how to serve Indigenous peoples, and practitioners already doing this work who generously share their knowledge and best practices."

To learn more about SIP and the convention, visit the [Society of Indian Psychologists](#) website.