

PROFESSIONAL PLANNING ETHICS

A scenic view of a rocky coastline, likely a tide pool area. The foreground is dominated by dark, layered rock formations with numerous small, shallow tide pools reflecting the sky. The background shows a dense forest of evergreen trees under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is bright and natural.

Planners finding the right path...
(or at least trying to!)

Actual West Coast Trail Section

Introduction

Glen Grismer, BSc., MA, RPP, MCIP (just retired!)
Professional planner for four decades. Professional Associate
in the RUD/RUP Program for two decades. Since people learn
well from their mistakes, I am very qualified.

Webinar Objective

To stimulate curiosity and future conversations about
professional ethics... about right and wrong

Just a start!

*We can't condense centuries of thought, decades of experience, years of
study, and endless contemplation (sometimes frustration) into one hour.*

So, lace up your boots and let's get out of here!



Webinar
Preparation!

Webinar Outline

Introduction

One Hour!

5 min.

Some Basic Background

and a few

15 min.

Interesting Considerations

10 min.

Typical Challenging Situations

and

10 min.

Questions, Comments, Stories

15 min.

Recommendations and Resources

5 min.



You won't always know exactly where you are, but you won't be too far off track!

Let's Start Up the Trail

Ethics, values, and standards

"Planning Ethics' and rediscovering the idea of planning", Heather Campbell, 2012, [Planning Theory](#) 11/4 SAGE

Society, legislation, SPPI bylaws, professionalism

Endless resources from CIP, SPPI, PSB, other provincial and international planning organizations.

Where ethical obligations come from Ian Wight...

"Ethics in Professional Planning Practice, Four Sources of Ethical Obligation", Ian Wight, [Plan Canada](#) Vol 53 No1

Deciding right and wrong

"Acting on Principle: Dilemmas in Planning Practice", Campbell and Marshall, in [Planning Practice & Research](#), Vol.13 No.2

CIP/SPPI Code of Professional Conduct

CIP "Code of Professional Conduct", <https://www.cip-icu.ca/Membership-/Codes-of-Professional-Conduct>

*You will have ethical climbs, scrambles, and stumbles
or your career isn't professional planning!*



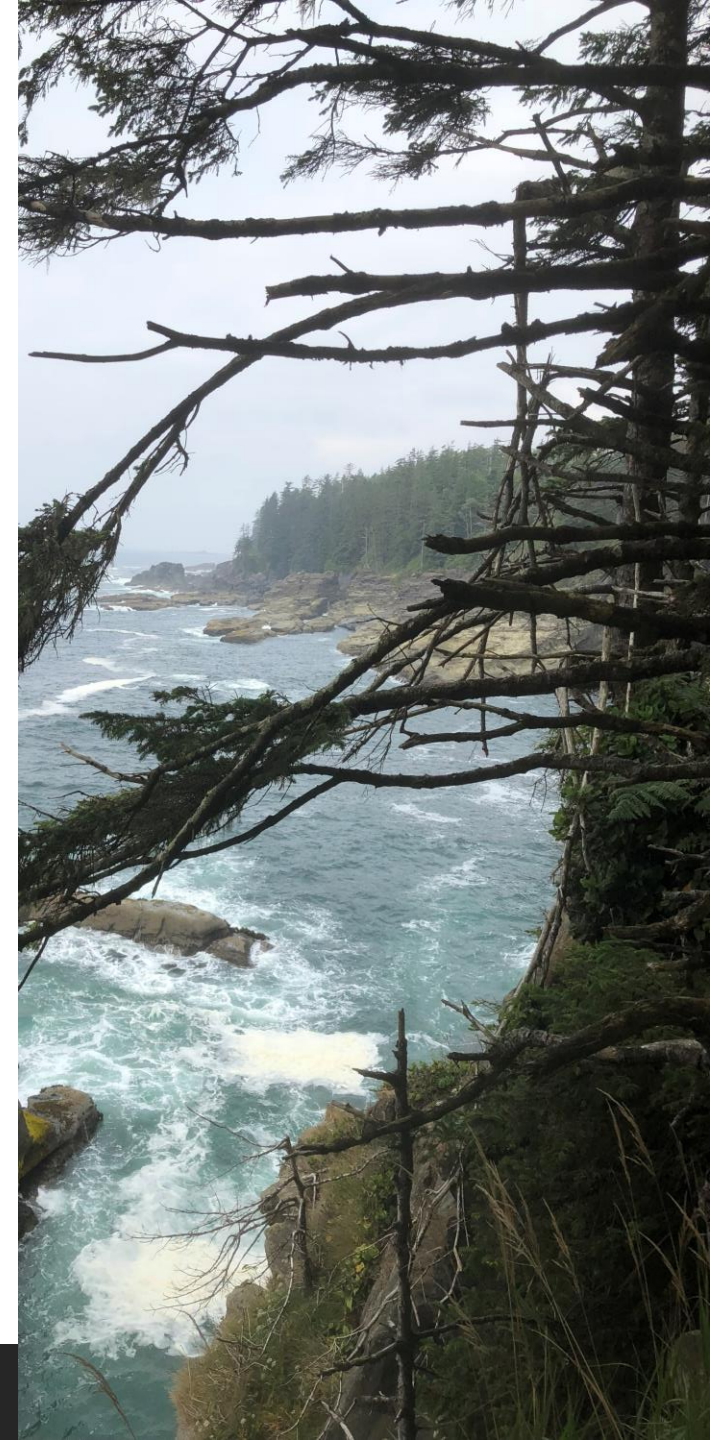
Ethics?

A course of study: objective and structured
Moral Philosophy
Ancient to contemporary

Any set of moral principles
Guides behavior and character building

Being ethical is believing in, being,
and behaving **good**, not **bad**!

“Justice, What’s the Right Thing to Do”, awesome lecture series by
Harvard professor Michael Sandel, <http://justiceharvard.org/justicecourse/>



Professional Planners are *Obligated* to be Ethical

Planners impact society and society trusts us!

Provincial legislation proclaims us

Section 4 "serve and protect the public"
 "practice in the **public interest**"

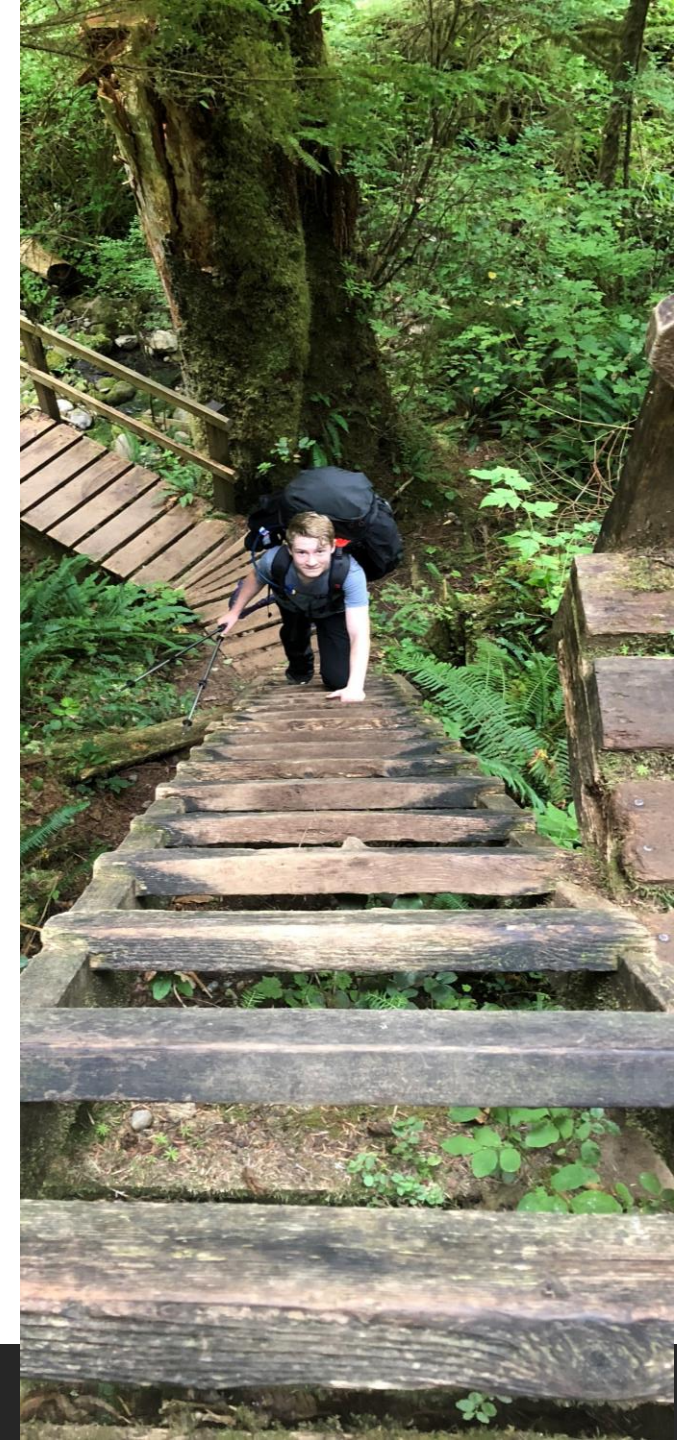
SPPI governs us

The SPPI Regulatory Bylaw, Section VI
"Ethics and Professional Conduct"

SPPI adopts CIP Statements

Code of Ethics
Code of Professional Conduct

PSB ensures (!) you know the codes to be a planner



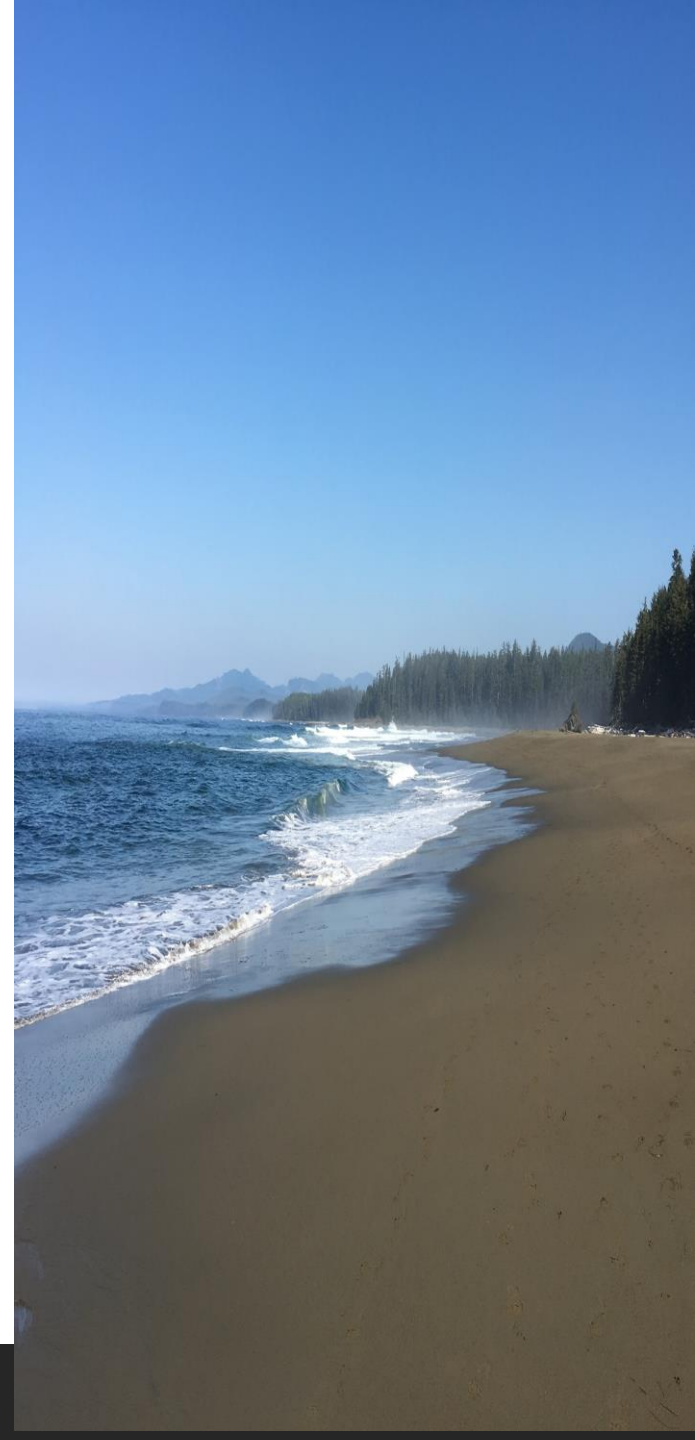
What is “the public interest” we *must* serve?

PSB suggests “the public interest” is an outcome of the Code of Professional Conduct

Others suggest:

- found in policies adopted by elected bodies
- a fair balance of competing interests
- determined by total costs and benefits
- in the visions and goals of their clients
- in Human Rights codes and social movements
- others call it Smart Growth or New Urbanism

In “Rethinking the Public Interest as a Planning Concept” ([Plan Canada](#), summer 2005), Jill Grant reconsiders “the public interest” as myth, process, substance, and practice ...discourages using this variably-defined concept to justify planning recommendations!



It's 2 am and "I wish the ocean would shut the f--- up!"

Ethical Obligation Sources

My thoughts on Ian Wight, [Plan Canada](#) vol 53 no 1

1. From being human
(human needs, expectations, and feelings)
2. From being a citizen
(part of an organized, formalized community)
3. From being democratic
(community-based values, roles, trust)
4. From being certified (RPP)
(legal, planning system maintenance, evolving practice)

Being Ethical is Complex

We do diverse and demanding work

We produce diverse, powerful, long-term outcomes

We work in complex circumstances (place, culture, society, politics)

We work with other professionals having diverse values and codes

We work with (some say to create) complex, local to global futures

...and moral philosophy is complex

So deciding is complex

"Acting on Principle: Dilemmas in Planning Practice",
Heather Campbell and Robert Marshall, Planning Practice
and Research, 13/2 1998.

*Regardless, failing to try is not an
option, failure we can deal with!*



How do people decide?

Basically (!), there are three approaches to deciding.

1. Based on consequences/outcomes (not our strength except judging historic planning trends)
2. Based on virtue (fundamental beliefs, human rights, justice, etc., where we prefer aspirations)
3. Based on duty/accepted rules (Ten Commandments, laws, technical standards, CIP/SPPI codes)

You and I switch from one approach to another, resolved or frustrated. Our profession emphasizes duty and codes, in part to facilitate judging professional conduct issues.

“A Just Code of Ethics for Planners: A Priority for Planners Network”, Peter Marcuse, Progressive Planning, http://www.plannersnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/PPM_W14_Marcuse.pdf



CIP Code of Ethics, a bridge over...

(my abbreviations)

Ethical planners ideally governed by two basic concepts:

1. You must be **competent** (in area of expertise)
2. You must have **integrity** (responsible, independent)

To comply with these two basic concepts, members shall:

1. Practice **sustainable** development planning
2. Value interrelated **natural and human environments**
3. Acknowledge **inter-jurisdictional** effects
4. Balance **community and individual interests**
5. Offer **objective and informed** planning advice
6. Grow planning **theory and practice knowledge**
7. Foster **inclusive, meaningful public participation**

Does not mention and barely hints at values!



CIP Code of Professional Conduct (about doing professionally)

Instead of Wight's responsibility from... responsibility to

A tool to assist ethical actions decision-making

Planners' responsibility to **the public interest**

Planners' responsibility to **clients and employers**

Planners' responsibility to **the profession/members**

A good guide to study before heading out

A good "stop and think" when the footing gets iffy

A good, set of standards for others to judge your falls

So, let's see how it works!



Scenario #1 (a classic!) The Boss and You

You finished, signed, and submitted a report. You used thorough research, best practice analysis, and presented clear conclusions and informed options and recommendations. Your employment remains probationary but you clearly deserve your recent RPP designation!

Your very experienced Planning Director knows the elected council well and respects its priorities. Some conclusions and recommendations in your report challenge these priorities.

To your surprise, the report going to council has some information and analysis omitted and conclusions adjusted to reflect council's priorities. Your name is on the report and it needs your signature or stamp. You have a bad feeling about this! *What do you do?*

Code Use Suggestions

Allow that the other planner(s) involved may agree with your concern and the problem can be quickly resolved. The outcome may be positive and mutually respectful... or not.

1. Personally offended and professionally offended are different
2. Trust your instincts, relax, know you are part of a profession
3. Indicate your concern, say you need to think about it
4. Sort out what matters and what does not
5. Identify what code statements apply
6. Keep in mind that duty to the public is paramount
7. Write out your thoughts, options, etc. (like a good planner)
8. Perhaps discuss with a trusted colleague
9. Decide if, and how, the Code of Prof. Conduct is breached
10. Decide what you should and will or will not do
11. Be confident, positive, and flexible when you take action



...back to Scenario #1

The Boss and You

You finished, signed, and submitted a report. [1.2][2.1] You used thorough research, best practice analysis, and presented clear conclusions and informed options and recommendations. Your employment remains probationary but you clearly deserve your recent **RPP** designation!

Your very experienced Planning Director knows the elected council well and respects its priorities. Some conclusions and recommendations in your report challenge these priorities. [2.3]

To your surprise, the **altered report** [1.2][2.1][2.2][3.2][3.5] going to council has some information and analysis omitted and conclusions adjusted [2.2] to reflect council's priorities. Your name remains on the report and it needs **your signature or stamp**. [3.7]...and [3.8]!

So, what do you think? What should and will you do?

Scenario #2 Being You

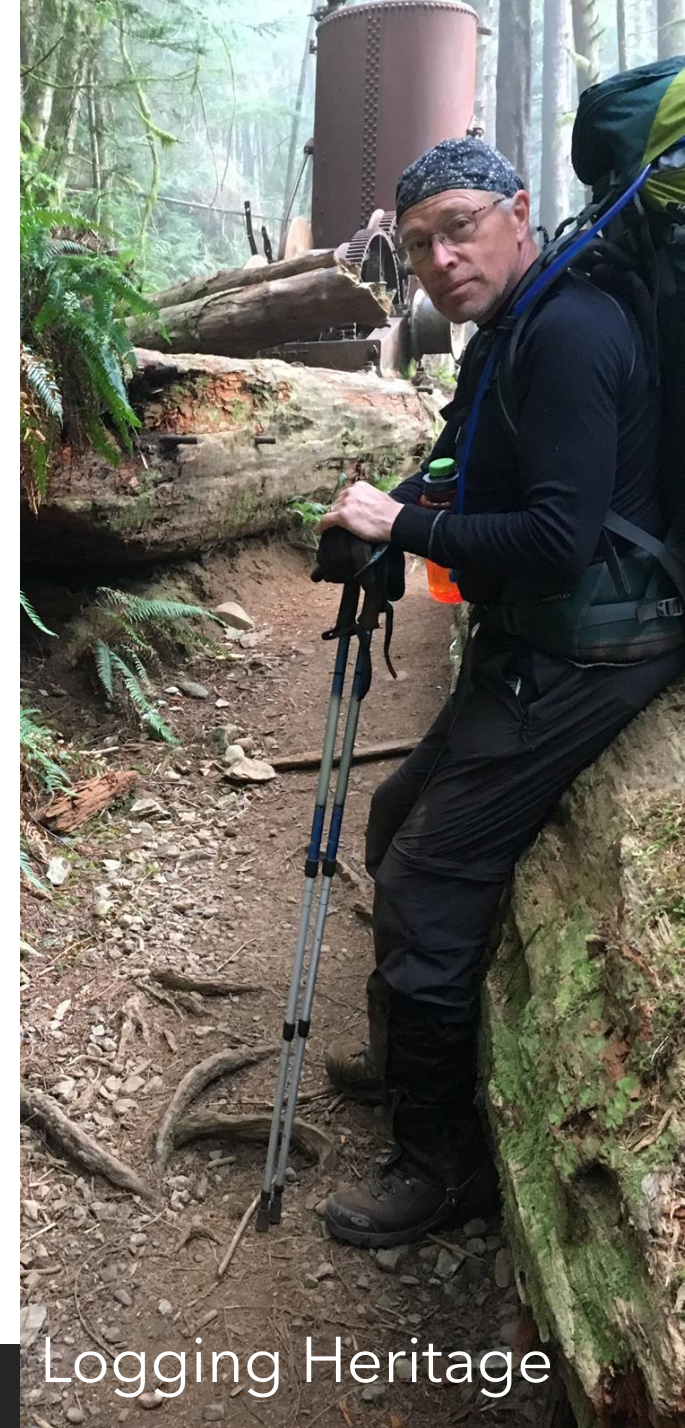
You began volunteering for the Heritage Society as a student and still participate in community heritage events, including social media petitions and activism.

A local developer has appealed restrictions placed on a proposed development based on heritage conservation policy and standards.

You know the developer well because they give annual donations to the Heritage Society. This developer also sits on the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee that you serve.

You are asked to process the appeal.

What do you do?



Logging Heritage

Scenario #2

You began volunteering for the Heritage Society [2.5][2.6] as a student and still participate in community heritage events, including recent social media petitions and activism.[3.2]

A local developer has appealed restrictions placed on a proposed development based on heritage conservation policy and standards.

You know the developer well because they give annual donations [2.5][2.7] to the Heritage Society. This developer also sits on the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee that you serve.

You are asked to process the appeal.[2.1]

What do you do?

Scenario #3 The Lunch Meeting

As a senior planner in a big city planning department you deal regularly with Uptown Development Corp and other developers. Uptown's CEO calls and invites you to a lunch meeting at Chez Ritzi. They want to discuss a potential future project.
What do you do?

As a senior planner[2.3][2.4]in a big city planning department you deal regularly with Uptown Development Corp and other developers. Uptown's CEO calls and invites you to a lunch meeting[1.4][2.7] at Chez Ritzi. They want to discuss a potential future project.

So, what do you think? What should and will you do?



Your Thoughts?

Resources

Available resources are endless!

Ethics, or moral philosophy, is a discipline.

I highly recommend the Sandel series - worth the time!

Numerous TED Talks "How to See Past Your Own Perspective and Find Truth", Lynch, TED2017
"Significance of Ethics and Ethics Education in Daily Life", Burroughs, TEDx

Work ethically, but "the public interest" can be complex and uncertain.

"How to Define The Public Interest", Methot, Presentation 2003.

<https://ustpaul.ca/upload-files/EthicsCenter/activities-How to Define Public Interest.pdf>

Our profession prepares and supports us (CIP, SPPI, PSB sites)

Take another look at RPP exam prep materials.

Our colleagues may challenge or support our efforts.

Plan Canada and other professional journals. Google Scholar "ethics-city- planning"

Peter Marcuse, Heather Campbell, Vanesse Watson, Sue Hendler, Martin Wachs, Jill Grant

If you want to find it your problem will be choosing where to start!

Recommendations

Our profession does not prescribe values, but I recommend:

1. See what is suggested in CIP positions
2. Know what your fundamental values are
3. Consider what planning would be like if it was premised on broadly accepted values

Take time to learn more and talk about this stuff

Early career, I bought into Udy's (1980) conclusion:
planning based on a simple values model of...
...truth, goodness, beauty, and love

Not sure what you believe, make yourself small, take a long walk in the wilderness!



Thanks. Take care out there.