by Joe Watkins (Outgoing Chair)

The Committee on Ethics (COE) had a busy year during 2002 along two major fronts -- education of the Association's membership on issues relating to the ethical practice of anthropology and the Darkness in El Dorado controversy.

Education of the Association's Membership
The Committee continued working within its primary goals of providing education to the anthropological community on the importance of ethics in the discipline. In order to fulfill its educational mission, the Committee continues its work in four major areas:
1. Encouraging departments to teach anthropological ethics;
2. Assessing who teaches anthropological ethics;
3. Presenting workshops and sessions at meetings; and,
4. Encouraging discussion on ethical issues through the Committee's "Ethical Currents" column in the Anthropology News.

In relation to its goals in area 1 above, the Committee has provided educational material to departments of anthropology for use in developing or continuing classes on teaching ethical issues in anthropology. The Committee collected course syllabi from anthropological ethics courses as samples for course development as a result of its workshop provided at the 2001 Annual meeting in Washington, D.C., and is currently seeking permission from the syllabus developers for posting on the web.

The Committee is continuing to develop ways of assessing who teaches ethics courses in Anthropology programs. In 2002, the Committee provided questions for the 2002 Departmental Survey concerning the teaching of ethics within Departments of Anthropology in United States colleges and universities. However, due to funding problems, the Departmental Survey has not been undertaken as yet.

In spite of commitments by all committee members in the general portions of the 2002 Meetings of the AAA in New Orleans, the Committee on Ethics was also active in ethics education during the meeting: Committee Chair Watkins moderated a session on Human Research Protections and Committee member Whiteford did a presentation on teaching ethics for the Annual Institute on Teaching Anthropology at the meetings.

The Committee continued to use its "Ethical Currents" column of the Anthropology News to encourage open discussion of the types of problems that anthropologists encounter not only in field situations but also in the workplace. Five columns were published in 2002 under the editorship of April Sievert and addressed such issues as the relationships between ethics and
fieldwork across anthropology's subfields; proposed guidelines on ethical issues in fieldwork; and the relationship between research ethics and regulatory procedures.

The Committee continued to develop case studies for posting on its website. The case studies present hypothetical situations (usually based on real situations) that force the anthropologist to make decisions regarding ethical problems that might arise in the course of the practice of anthropology. The Committee intends to present a series of these case studies in its Ethical Currents column, then posting the responses and generating more discussion. Following publication, the case studies will be posted on the web in a format similar to the cases that currently exist.

The Darkness in El Dorado Controversy
Perhaps the most visible action of the Ethics Committee was as representatives of the initial Task Force on the Darkness in El Dorado controversy chaired by Ex-AAA President James Peacock. After that Task Force decided there was enough material questions to warrant an examination of some of the allegations contained in the Patrick Tierney book, a second Task Force chaired by Ex-AAA President Jane Hill was convened with the Committee on Ethics Chair as a member. The Task Force completed its charge and posted its findings on the AAA Website.

Two side issues of the Darkness in El Dorado controversy also required Committee action. As a result of issues raised in the book, the Committee was asked to draft guidelines and other materials concerning ethical behavior for conducting research in field situations and the ethical implications regarding sexual relationships between anthropologists and members of communities or organizations with whom research is being conducted. The February and March 2002 Ethical Currents columns by the Committee Chair and a representative of the AAA's Committee on Lesbian and Gay Issues in Anthropology, respectively, not only introduced the Committee's Briefing Paper for Consideration of the Ethical Implications of Sexual Relationships between Anthropologists and Members of a Study Population but discussed its implications for fieldwork. Comments regarding the other Working Papers on the issues were also collected from AAA members. At present, it is proposed that these issues regarding ethical problems in conducting research in field situations, along with the issues regarding sexual relationships with study populations be developed into a more general handbook on field situations, with discussion continually being sought from the Association's membership.

Secondly, the Committee on Ethics was asked by the Executive Board to respond to letters from two AAA members concerning the actions of other members in the Darkness in El Dorado controversy as well as the actions of the AAA itself in establishing the Task Forces to examine issues raised. The Committee drafted letters for the President's signature to those members, and those letters were sent.

Additionally, the Committee on Ethics responded to a request for information from another AAA member concerning the ethical practice of anthropology relating to a scholarly issue. A letter was sent to that individual, as well.

Finally, in answer to its charge by the Board of Directors to follow up on a recommendation to adopt international declarations and covenants as integral elements of the AAA corpus of ethical
The Committee on Ethics submitted a proposal at the November 20th Board meeting. It called for the inclusion of numerous international declarations, covenants, and conventions such as the 1995 Annex to the UN Declaration on Discrimination Against Indigenous Peoples (Principle 9); the 1994 International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations; the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights Fact Sheets on the rights of children ("Fact Sheet No. 10, revision 1, the Rights of the Child") and the rights of women and the girl-child ("Fact Sheet No. 22, Discrimination against Women: the Convention and the Committee"), that relate directly to human cultures across the world. These declarations and covenants and others too numerous to list individually do not take the place of a professional Code of Ethics but rather expand the responsibilities of anthropologists to human populations on a world-wide scale as well as to the people with whom they work and, taken as a whole, form an integral corpus of guidance on the rights of human populations. The Committee will attempt to develop a listing and library of such documents for provision to the anthropological discipline as integral elements of the American Anthropological Association's corpus of ethical guidance, recognizing that there are areas where these international declarations, covenants, and conventions might conflict with one another, and to provide further guidance to the Board on those conflicts.