



Statement on Native American Mascots

Authored by: Drs. Stacey Pearson-Wharton, John Garland, & Chris MacDonald-Dennis

PREAMBLE

The misrepresentation of Native Americans has been an issue the United States of America has struggled with for some time. While this has been a problem in the media and our national discourse in general, this issue has impacted higher education as well. In particular, inter-collegiate and intra-collegiate athletics teams have used demeaning, disrespectful, and racist images of Native Americans to promote sports team. This document attempts to examine this issue by delineating the history of the struggle against racist sports imagery and reviewing relevant research on the impact of using Native American mascots.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

During the 1960s, the National Congress of American Indians created a campaign to eliminate negative stereotyping of Native American people in the media. They focused mainly on cartoons and movies; however their protests of sports organizations garnered the most attention. The National Congress of American Indians has long been opposed to mascots that portray Native Americans in a negative light. They feel that teams with mascots such as the Braves and the Redskins perpetuate negative stereotypes of Native American people, and demean their native traditions and rituals. Proponents of Native American mascots, however, believe that Native American mascots pay respect to these people and promote a better understanding of their cultures. Despite this issue emanating during the civil rights movement, it still continues today as many teams continue to possess mascots with controversial names and images.

In 1968, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) began a campaign to address stereotypes found in media. The organization quickly called for the elimination of Indian mascots as one of the most egregious examples of this stereotyping.

During the years 1969-1980, colleges and universities such as Dartmouth, Stanford, and Southern Oregon University dropped Native American sports team nicknames and logos.

In 1989, Charlene Teters, a Native American graduate student, began efforts to eliminate mascot "Chief Illiniwek" at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. In 1997, her work was featured in the acclaimed documentary "In Whose Honor."

In 1991 and 1992, The National Education Association (NEA), the largest education organization of its kind in the world, passed resolutions denouncing the use of ethnic-related sports team mascots, symbols, and nicknames.

In 1993, NCAI issued Resolution #MID-GB-58 which "denounces the use of any American Indian name or artifice associated with team mascots."

In April 2001 the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights called for an end to the use of Native American images and team names by non-Native schools, stating "the stereotyping of any racial, ethnic, religious or other

group, when promoted by our public educational institutions, teaches all students that stereotyping of minority groups is acceptable, which is a dangerous lesson in a diverse society.”

In 2005, the NCAA took a momentous step by announcing that any school with a nickname or logo considered racially or ethnically “hostile” or “abusive” by the NCAA would be prohibited from using them in post-season events

In 2005, the American Psychological Association called for the immediate retirement of all Native American mascots, symbols, images, and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams and organizations.

In 2010 a law was passed in Wisconsin to eliminate race-based nicknames, logos and mascots in schools. Schools can argue to keep their race-based mascot if they have the permission of local Native American tribes. It is the first law of its kind in the country and during the same year a similar law was proposed in Colorado and Minnesota.

In May of 2012 Oregon joined Wisconsin, which banned them in 2010, as the second state to ban Native American mascots in public schools.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS AND NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS

The impact of stereotypes and demeaning marginalizing deceptions of any social identity group has been widely proven to be problematic for the people being stereotyped along with the perpetrators of that stereotype. This problem of stereotype threat is particularly salient in the life of Native American students and Native American student affairs professionals. According to the American Psychological Association, continued use of the American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities undermines the educational experiences of members of all communities especially those of little to no contact with Indigenous communities. In addition, they indicate that the use of a Native American mascot establishes an unwelcoming, hostile learning environment for American Indian students. Fryberg (2008) in her study found that Native Americans are seldom portrayed or described as contemporary people with everyday social roles (e.g. students, teachers, doctors, lawyers, taxi cab drivers, plumbers, firemen). Thus the presence of American Indian students in the mainstream are likely to be paired with images of sport mascots that are irrelevant and antithetical to the academic success of students. Fryberg and Oyserman (2008) also examined the impact of American Indian social representation, in particular, the impact of American Indian mascots on White students. Two of Dr. Fryberg’s studies revealed that after exposure to various American Indian representations, the Whites reported a higher self-esteem compared to the control condition, and to a non-native mascot, namely, The University of Norte Dame Fighting Irish. Kim-Prieto (2010) indicated that participants were more willing to endorse stereotypes about a different minority group after being exposed to stereotypes about a different racial minority group. For example, when Caucasian students are shown stereotypical Native American images, they are more likely to process endorse stereotypes about other ethnic minority groups (e.g. African Americans).

- Student Disengagement (Major, et. al, 1998; von Hippel, et. .al., 2005)
- Lower self-esteem (Cohen & Garcia, 2005)
- Decreased aspirations for careers and leadership (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005; Murphy, Steele, & Gross, 2007)
- Poor academic performance (Cole, et.al, 2007; Godo, Arnonson & Jayne, 2007)
- Disrespectful behavior toward sacred practices

RESOLUTION

ACPA Resolution Supporting the Immediate Retirement of American Indian Mascots, Symbols, Images, and Personalities by Colleges, Universities, Collegiate Athletics, and Affiliated Organizations

Presented by ACPA's Equity and Inclusion and Advisory Committee in partnership with the Native American Network

Approved (12/20/2012) by Native American Network

Approved (11/10/2012) by ACPA Governing Board

Effective date: Immediately

WHEREAS ACPA's mission is to support and foster college student learning through the generation and dissemination of knowledge, which informs policies, practices and programs for student affairs professionals and the higher education community;

WHEREAS ACPA's Core Values include:

- a. Education and development of the total student.
- b. Diversity, multicultural competence and human dignity.
- c. Inclusiveness in and access to association-wide involvement and decision-making.
- d. Free and open exchange of ideas in a context of mutual respect.
- e. Advancement and dissemination of knowledge relevant to college students and their learning, and to the effectiveness of student affairs professionals and their institutions.
- f. Continuous professional development and personal growth of student affairs professionals.
- g. Outreach and advocacy on issues of concern to students, student affairs professionals and the higher education community, including affirmative action and other policy issues;

WHEREAS ACPA continually seeks to align its vision, mission, and values with established evidence and best practices for supporting college student development and inclusive campus environments;

WHEREAS the American Psychological Association has recognized that racism and racial discrimination are attitudes and behaviors that are learned and that threaten human development (American Psychological Association, June 2001);

WHEREAS the continued use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities undermines the education experiences of members of all communities, especially those who have had little or no contact with Indigenous peoples (APA, 2001; Kim-Prieto et. al, 2010);

WHEREAS the ongoing use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities on college campuses and in educational settings fosters an unwelcome and hostile learning environment for American Indian students by affirming harmful stereotypes (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005; Fryberg 2003; Fryberg & Markus, 2003; Murphy, Steele, & Gross, 2007);

WHEREAS the ongoing use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities on college campuses and in educational settings undermines American Indian college students' ability to portray respectful images of their culture, spirituality, and traditions. (APA, 2001);

WHEREAS the ongoing use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities on college campuses and in educational settings is a form of discrimination against Indigenous Peoples that can lead to negative relations between groups (APA, 2001);

WHEREAS the ongoing use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities on college campuses fosters an environment inconsistent with the vision, mission, and values of ACPA and its members;

WHEREAS the ongoing use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities on college campuses must be eradicated because their use is harmful to all college students and their positive psychosocial development (APA, 2001; Fryberg, 2003; Fryberg & Markus, 2003);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that ACPA recognizes its role in taking leadership with issues negatively affecting college students and campus environments by seeking to promote its mission, vision, and values;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that ACPA recognizes the negative impact with the ongoing use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities on college campuses has on its American Indian membership, college students, and Indigenous peoples;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that ACPA seeks to support research and best practices to support American Indian college students and their campus environments to include increased awareness of how American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities may be harmful to college student development.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that ACPA believes all college students, including American Indians, have a right to a safe, inclusive, and equitable campus environment free from institutionalized racism and general disrespect for human rights;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that ACPA supports and recommends the immediate retirement of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities by colleges, universities, collegiate athletics, and affiliated organizations.

*Note: There were many similar resolutions from which to take inspiration. As such, portions of this Resolution were inspired by the American Psychological Association's and Oregon Indian Education Association's resolutions on American Indian mascots.

References

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