**Native American mascot controversy**  Wikipedia

The propriety of using **Native American** names and images in sports has been a topic of debate in the [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) and [Canada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada) since the 1960s. Numerous civil rights, religious, educational, athletic, and academic organizations consider the use of native names or symbols by non-native teams to be a harmful form of [ethnic stereotyping](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_stereotyping) which should be eliminated.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-APA2010-1) [Surveys of public opinion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_poll) indicate that the majority of people in the United States support retaining the names and images in current use, while at the same time there has been a steady decline in the number of teams doing so. Many individuals admire the heroism and romanticism evoked by the classic [Native American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_in_the_United_States) image, but others view the use of [mascots](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mascot) as offensive, demeaning, or racist. Further complicating this issue is the varying levels of offensiveness with team names and mascots. For example, while the [Washington Redskins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Redskins) use the slang term "[redskin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redskin_%28slang%29)" which is currently defined in dictionaries as derogatory,[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-2) the [Florida State Seminoles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florida_State_Seminoles)' use of the [Seminole](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seminole) name is officially sanctioned by the [Seminole Tribe of Florida](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seminole_Tribe_of_Florida).[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-3) The controversy has resulted in many institutions changing the names and images associated with their sports teams. Native American images and nicknames nevertheless remain fairly common in American sports, and may be seen in use by teams at all levels from elementary school to professional.

**History**

Americans have had a history of drawing inspiration from native peoples and "playing Indian" that dates back at least to the 18th century.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-Calloway-4) This practice led directly to the origins of many nicknames and mascots. Like the Boy Scouts (in particular, the [Order of the Arrow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_Arrow)) and many summer camps, university students in the late 19th and early 20th centuries adopted Indian names and symbols for their group identities, not from authentic sources but rather as Native American life was imagined by Euro-Americans.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-Spindel-5)

Professional team nicknames had similar origins. Founded as the Boston Red Stockings, the team became the [Braves](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Boston_Braves) for the first time in 1912. Their owner, [James Gaffney](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_E._Gaffney), was a member of New York City's political machine, Tammany Hall, one of the societies originally formed to honor [Tamanend](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamanend), a chief of the Delaware. The success of the Braves in the [1914 World Series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1914_World_Series) may have been the reason for the Cleveland team, which was looking for a new nickname, to become the [Indians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleveland_Indians#1894.E2.80.931935:_Beginning_to_middle) in 1915. The story that the team is named to honor [Louis Sockalexis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Sockalexis), the first Native American to play major league baseball, cannot be verified from historical documents.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-6) The Redskins in Washington, DC was originally also the Boston Braves when formed in 1932, since it was the custom at the time to have the same team names when baseball and football shared the same stadium. Moving to the home of the Boston Red Sox, the name was changed to the Boston Redskins in 1933 before moving again to Washington. Thus the use of Native American names and imagery by this team began before the hiring of [Lone Star Dietz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Henry_Dietz) as coach in 1933.[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-7)

In the 1940s the [National Congress of American Indians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Congress_of_American_Indians) (NCAI) created a campaign to eliminate negative stereotyping of Native American people in the media. Over time, the campaign began to focus on Indian names and mascots in sports.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-8) The NCAI maintains that teams with mascots such as the [Braves](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Braves) and the [Redskins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redskins) perpetuate negative stereotypes of Native American people, and demean their native traditions and rituals.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-NCAI-9) 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 gaining prominence during the [civil rights movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_rights_movement), it still continues today as many teams continue to possess mascots with controversial names and images.

The stereotyping of Native Americans must be understood in the context of history which includes conquest, forced relocation, and organized efforts to eradicate native cultures, such as the [boarding schools](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_boarding_schools) of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which separated young Native Americans from their families in order to educate them as Euro-Americans.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-10) As stated in an editorial by Carter Meland (Anishinaabe heritage) and David E. Wilkins (Lumbee) both professors of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota: "Since the first Europeans made landfall in North America, native peoples have suffered under a weltering array of stereotypes, misconceptions and caricatures. Whether portrayed as *noble savages*, *ignoble savages*, *teary-eyed environmentalists* or, most recently, simply as *casino-rich*, native peoples find their efforts to be treated with a measure of respect and integrity undermined by images that flatten complex tribal, historical and personal experience into one-dimensional representations that tells us more about the depicters than about the depicted." [[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-11)

**Arguments opposing the use of Native American mascots**

Opponents of Native American mascots assert that the mascots breed insensitivity and misunderstanding about native people. Opponents also highlight the seeming double standard for human beings as mascots where there are no mascots based on African Americans, or Asian Americans depicted in sports.[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-AICS-12)

The [University of Notre Dame](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Notre_Dame) [Fighting Irish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Notre_Dame_Fighting_Irish) and the [University of Louisiana at Lafayette](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Louisiana_at_Lafayette)'s "[Ragin' Cajuns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisiana%E2%80%93Lafayette_Ragin%27_Cajuns)" are sometimes cited as counterpoints to this argument.[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-morgan-13) These team names are exceptions in that they represent ethnic groups with an active stake in the organization, and the teams employ symbols that Euro-American cultures have historically used to represent themselves. The [University of Notre Dame](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Notre_Dame) mascot, the [UND leprechaun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Notre_Dame_Leprechaun)[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-ND-14) is a mythical being that represents the Irish, which is both an ethnic and a national group.[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-fearson-15)[[16]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-16) The [University of Louisiana at Lafayette mascot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cayenne_%28mascot%29) is an anthropomorphic [cayenne pepper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cayenne_%28mascot%29), an ingredient frequently found in [Cajun cuisine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cajun_cuisine). Opponents also see this argument as a false equivalency because it ignores systemic inequality and serves to discount the Native American voice by saying that if one group isn't hurt by a particular portrayal, then no group has the right to be hurt, regardless of vastly different backgrounds, treatment, and social positions.[[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-17)

The [U.S. Commission on Civil Rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Commission_on_Civil_Rights) has called for an end to the use of Native American mascots, but only by non-native schools.[[18]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-USCCR-18) In cases where universities were founded to educate Native Americans, such mascots may not be examples of [cultural appropriation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_appropriation). Examples include the [Fighting Indians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haskell_Indian_Nations_Fighting_Indians) of the [Haskell Indian Nations University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haskell_Indian_Nations_University) and the [University of North Carolina at Pembroke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_North_Carolina_at_Pembroke), which continues to have a substantial number of native students, and close ties to the [Lumbee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lumbee) tribe. Their nickname is the Braves, but the mascot is a [red-tailed hawk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red-tailed_hawk).[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-19)[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-20)[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-21)

**Civil rights[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Native_American_mascot_controversy&action=edit&section=3" \o "Edit section: Civil rights)]**

The [NAACP](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NAACP) passed a resolution calling for the end of the use of Native American names, images, and mascots in 1999.[[22]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-22)

In 2001, the [U.S. Commission on Civil Rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Commission_on_Civil_Rights) released an advisory opinion calling *for an end to the use of Native American images and team names by non-Native schools.* The opinion made the following points:

* The use of Native American images and nicknames in school is insensitive and should be avoided, and may violate anti-discrimination laws.
* These references.. are particularly inappropriate and insensitive in light of the long history of forced assimilation that American Indian people have endured in this country.
* It is particularly disturbing that Native American references are still to be found in educational institutions ... where diverse groups of people come together to learn not only the "Three Rs," but also how to interact respectfully with people from different cultures.
* The use of stereotypical images may create a hostile environment that may be intimidating to Indian students. American Indians have the lowest high school graduation rates in the nation and even lower college attendance and graduation rates. The perpetuation of harmful stereotypes may exacerbate these problems.
* Schools that continue [these practices] claim that their use stimulates interest in Native American culture and honors Native Americans but have simply failed to listen to the Native groups, religious leaders, and civil rights organizations that oppose this behavior.
* Mascots, symbols and team names are not accurate representations of Native Americans. Even those that purport to be positive are romantic stereotypes that give a distorted view of the past. These false portrayals prevent non-Native Americans from understanding the true historical and cultural experiences of American Indians. Sadly, they also encourage biases and prejudices that have a negative effect on contemporary Indian people. These references may encourage interest in mythical "Indians" created by the dominant culture, but they block genuine understanding of contemporary Native people as fellow Americans.[[23]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-usccr-23)

In February 2013 the State of Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) filed a complaint with the US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR). MDCR's complaint asserts that new research clearly establishes that use of American Indian imagery negatively impacts student learning, creating an unequal learning environment in violation of Article VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-MDCR-24) In June 2013 the OCR dismissed the case on the basis that the legal standard required not only harm, but the intent to do harm, which was not established.[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-25)

In a report issued in 2012, a [United Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations) expert on Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples cited the continued use of Native American references by sports team as a part of the stereotyping that "obscures understanding of the reality of Native Americans today and instead help to keep alive racially discriminatory attitudes.”[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-26)

**Religious organizations**

In 1992, the [Central Conference of American Rabbis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Conference_of_American_Rabbis) issued a resolution calling for the end of sports teams names that promote racism, in particular the Atlanta Braves and the Washington Redskins.[[27]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-27) In 2004, the [United Methodist Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Methodist_Church) also passed a resolution condemning the use of Native American team names and sports mascots, which was highlighted in a meeting of the Black caucus of that organization in 2007.[[28]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-28)[[29]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-29)

*A child once asked me why Indians were "mean." Where did he get that idea? By schools such as the* [*University of Illinois*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Illiniwek) *"honoring" my ancestors?* -- Rev. Alvin Deer (Kiowa/Creek), United Methodist Church [[30]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-30)

A group of sixty-one religious leaders in Washington, D.C. sent a letter to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and team owner Dan Snyder stating their moral obligation to join the Change the Mascot movement due to the offensive and inappropriate nature of the name which causes pain whether or not that is intended.[[31]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-faith-31)[[32]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-32)

In a meeting March 1, 2014, the Board of Directors of the Central Atlantic Conference of the [United Church of Christ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Church_of_Christ) unanimously passed a resolution proposing that its members boycott Washington Redskins games and shun products bearing the team’s logo until the team changes its name and mascot. Team spokesman Tony Wyllie offered a response, saying, “We respect those who disagree with our team’s name, but we wish the United Church of Christ would listen to the voice of the overwhelming majority of Americans, including Native Americans, who support our name and understand it honors the heritage and tradition of the Native American community.”[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-33)

**Education and school board action**

In a 2005 report on the status of Native American students, the [National Education Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Education_Association) included the elimination of Indian mascots and sports team names as one of its recommendations.[[34]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-34)

The Seattle school district adopted a policy banning symbols based on racial stereotypes; resulting in a change of the [Issaquah High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Issaquah_High_School) team from the "Indians" to the "Eagles" in 2003 over the protest of some students.[[35]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-35)

In 2010 a law was passed in [Wisconsin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisconsin) to eliminate race-based nicknames, logos and mascots in schools; but allowing retention if they have the permission of local Native American tribes.[[36]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-36) In October 2013 a bill passed the Wisconsin assembly that would make it more difficult to remove Indian mascots by requiring the complainant to collect signatures of 10% of the school district's population and prove discrimination. Under the 2010 law only one petitioner is needed, and the burden of proof is on the school to disprove racism.[[37]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-37) Wisconsin’s Chippewa tribes have urged the Governor to veto the bill,[[38]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-38) Although initially stating that he had no interest in the issue,[[39]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-39) Governor [Scott Walker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scott_Walker_%28politician%29) signed the bill into law on December 19, 2013; also sending a letter to tribal leaders in the state citing free speech as a justification for allowing use of names and mascots many find offensive.[[40]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-40) Professors of Law and Journalism contest this interpretation of free speech, since citizens have the right to free speech but not schools which are government entities. The Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association, which runs state sporting tournaments, already has a policy against spectator behavior or displays that are offensive, including ones based on race and national origin, bans that are similar to but less restrictive than NCAA rules.[[41]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-41) Although now allowed to do so, some schools that have already made a change have decided not to restore their prior mascots.[[42]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-42) Addressing the Wisconsin legislature, Laurie Boivin, the [Menominee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menominee) Nation's new chairwoman criticized the new mascot law, saying the changes will damage native children.[[43]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-43)

On May 17, 2012, the Oregon State Board of Education voted 5-1 to adopt a rule prohibiting Oregon public schools from using Native American names, symbols, or images as school mascots. Schools have until July 1, 2017 to comply. Fifteen schools using the nicknames Indians, Warriors, Braves and Chieftains were affected.[[44]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-44) However Native American response was not unanimous; out of nine tribes, two voiced opposition to the statewide ban on the basis of tribal sovereignty. Leaders said that there might have been an opportunity for developing an educational program for all students to learn about true native culture.[[45]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-45) As of March, 2013, the Oregon legislature was considering bills that would modify the Board of Education's decision. One would allow for retention of a mascot or nickname with tribal approval, the other would remove the financial penalty for non-compliance.[[46]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-46) The bill that was passed was vetoed by Governor [John Kitzhaber](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Kitzhaber) as being too broad, allowing most schools to retain their names and mascots.[[47]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-47) In 2014 a revised bill is expected to become law that would allow schools to keep Native American mascots under certain conditions, including the approval of an appropriate tribe and the Board of Education.[[48]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-48)

On September 26, 2012 the Washington State Board of Education (WSBE) passed a resolution calling for the end of Native American mascots in state schools.[[49]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-49)[[50]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-50) The Seattle Human Rights Commission passed a resolution supporting the WSBE in November, 2012.[[51]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-51)

In December, 2013 the [Houston Independent School District](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houston_Independent_School_District) by unanimous vote passed a preliminary plan to eliminate all ethnically sensitive names and mascots, one of which is the [Lamar High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamar_High_School_%28Houston%2C_Texas%29) Redskins. The Washington NFL team issued a statement repeating its position that such names are not offensive to many Native Americans, but rather are a source of pride.[[52]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-52)

There has been backlash, however. In response to the Tennessee Commission of Indian affairs seeking a similar ban though the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, the legislature passed a law allowing only elected officials (themselves) to take any action banning school teams using American Indian names and symbols.[[53]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-53)

**Social sciences**

The harm done by the use of Native American mascots particularly in an academic context was stated by the Society of Indian Psychologists in 1999:

*Stereotypical and historically inaccurate images of Indians in general interfere with learning about them by creating, supporting and maintaining oversimplified and inaccurate views of indigenous peoples and their cultures. When stereotypical representations are taken as factual information, they contribute to the development of cultural biases and prejudices, (clearly a contradiction to the educational mission of the University.) In the same vein, we believe that continuation of the use of Indians as symbols and mascots is incongruous with the philosophy espoused by many Americans as promoting inclusivity and diversity.*[[54]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-54)

In 2005, the [American Psychological Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Psychological_Association) issued a resolution "Recommending the Immediate Retirement of American Indian Mascots, Symbols, Images, and Personalities by Schools, Colleges, Universities, Athletic Teams, and Organizations" due to the harm done by creating a hostile environment, the negative impact on the self-esteem of American Indian children, and is discrimination that may violate civil rights. It also impacts non-natives by reinforcing mainstream stereotypes, preventing learning about Native American culture. Stereotyping is disrespectful of the beliefs, traditions and values of Native Americans.[[55]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-APA-55) Similar resolutions have been adopted by the [American Sociological Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Sociological_Association) [[56]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-56) and the [American Counseling Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Counseling_Association).[[57]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-57)

Social science research gives weight to the perceptions of those directly affected. In particular studies support the view that sports mascots and images are not trivial.[[58]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-58) Stereotyping directly effects academic performance and self-esteem, which contribute to all of the other issues faced by Native Americans, including suicide, unemployment, and poverty.[[59]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-59) Euro-Americans exposed to mascots are more likely to believe not only that stereotypes are true, but that Native Americans have no identity beyond these stereotypes.[[60]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-bias-60)

Research also demonstrates the harm done to society by stereotyping of any kind. Two studies examined the effect of exposure to an American Indian sports mascot on the tendency to endorse stereotypes of a different minority group. A study was first done at the University of Illinois, and then replicated at The College of New Jersey with the same results. Students were given a paragraph to read about Chief Illiniwek adapted from the University of Illinois' official website; while the control group was given a description of an arts center. In both studies the students exposed to the sports mascot were more likely to express stereotypical views of Asian-Americans. Although Chief Illiniwek was described only in terms of positive characteristics (as a respectful symbol, not a mascot), the stereotyping of Asian-Americans included negative characteristics, such as being "socially inept". This was indicative of a spreading effect; exposure to any stereotypes increased the likelihood of stereotypical thinking.[[61]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-61)[[62]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-62)

**Trend toward the elimination of mascots**

**Colleges and universities**

Some college teams voluntarily changed their names and mascots. [Stanford University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanford_University) had "The Stanford Indian" as its mascot from 1930 to 1972. Today "[Stanford Cardinal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanford_Cardinal)" honors the university athletic team color. The mascot of the [Stanford Band](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanford_Band) is the "[Stanford Tree](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanford_Tree)." Another early change was the "[Saltine Warrior](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saltine_Warrior#Mascot)" that represented [Syracuse University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syracuse_University) from 1931 until 1978. After a brief attempt to use a Roman warrior, the mascot became Otto the Orange for the school color.

[Marquette University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marquette_University) changed their team name from the Warriors to the Golden Eagles in 1994. The school’s president stated:"We live in a different era than when the Warriors nickname was selected in 1954. The perspective of time has shown us that our actions, intended or not, can offend others. We must not knowingly act in a way that others will believe, based on their experience, to be an attack on their dignity as fellow human beings."[[63]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-63) Also in 1994, [St. John's University (New York)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._John%27s_University_%28New_York%29) changed the name of its athletic teams from the Redmen to the Red Storm after the university was pressured by American Indian groups who considered Redmen a slur.[[64]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-64)

[Miami University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miami_University) began discussion regarding the propriety of the Redskins name and images in 1972,[[65]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-65) and changed its team nickname to [RedHawks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miami_RedHawks) in 1996.[[66]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-66)

In late 2002, The Strategic Planning Committee of [Stonehill College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stonehill_College) determined that the then-current mascot, the chieftain, was disrespectful to American Indians and decided that it would be changed. After discussion, the mascot was changed to the Skyhawk in 2005.[[67]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-67) Jim Seavey, associate director of athletics stated: *Twelve years ago, the college discarded the logo that depicted the Indian with the headdress and feathers and stuff. We really did not have anything to represent our identity that we were comfortable with. We felt . . . that it wasn't appropriate to have a physical representation of a Native American as our mascot,"* [[68]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-68)

Additionally, teams that are not directly affected by this controversy have issued their opinions. The [University of Wisconsin–Madison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Wisconsin%E2%80%93Madison)[[69]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-69) and the [University of Iowa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Iowa) have both refused to schedule non-conference games against schools with Native American mascots. The University of Iowa's own nickname, "Hawkeyes", has Native American origins (Iowa is the "[Hawkeye State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawkeye_State)"), although the team uses a [hawk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawk) as its symbol rather than an Indian. The [University of Oregon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Oregon), following the example set by [*The Oregonian*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Oregonian) newspaper, declined to refer to the [University of Illinois](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Illinois) team as the "Illini" in a basketball game in 2005. The [Central Michigan University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Michigan_University) nickname, the [Chippewas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Michigan_Chippewas), was originally placed on the “hostile or abusive” list but was removed when the [Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Nation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saginaw_Chippewa_Tribal_Nation) of Michigan gave its support to the nickname.

[Seattle University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle_University) changed the nickname of their mascot from Chieftains to [Redhawks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle_Redhawks) in 2000.

In 2012, the [University of California, Berkeley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_California%2C_Berkeley) called for the student-run [University of California Marching Band](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_California_Marching_Band) to discontinue performances of "[California Indian Song](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Indian_Song)" after complaints from alumni. Currently, the Cal Band is attempting to rename the song and rewrite its lyrics.

**National Collegiate Athletic Association**

The [National Collegiate Athletic Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Collegiate_Athletic_Association) (NCAA), the ruling authority on college athletics, distributed a “self evaluation” to 31 colleges in 2005, for teams to examine the use of potentially offensive imagery with their mascot choice.[[70]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-70) Subsequently 19 teams were cited as having potentially "hostile or abusive" names, mascots, or images, that would be banned from displaying them during post-season play, and prohibited from hosting tournaments.[[71]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-71) Since then, all of the colleges previously using the nickname *Indians* changed them; [Arkansas State University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arkansas_State_University) to [Red Wolves](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Wolves), [Indiana University of Pennsylvania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indiana_University_of_Pennsylvania) to Crimson Hawks, [McMurry University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McMurry_University) to [War Hawks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_Hawks), [Midwestern State University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midwestern_State_University) to Mustangs, [Newberry College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newberry_College) to Wolves, [University of Louisiana at Monroe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Louisiana_at_Monroe) to Warhawks, and [Catawba College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catawba_College) to Catawba Indians with approval of that tribe.[[72]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-72)

[California State University, Stanislaus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_State_University%2C_Stanislaus) eliminated Native American references to their Warrior nickname, initially using a Warrior Hawk mascot which never caught on;[[73]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-73) it has been replaced by a Roman Warrior, Titus.[[74]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-74) The [College of William and Mary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College_of_William_and_Mary) (W&M) had previously changed from "Indians" to The Tribe, but was cited due to two feathers in its logo, which were removed. After a brief period of having the frog-like character [Colonel Ebirt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonel_Ebirt) as its unofficial mascot, W&M selected the [Griffin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Griffin_%28mascot%29) in 2010. Both [Alcorn State University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcorn_State_University)[[75]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-75) and [Bradley University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bradley_University) kept the nickname Braves but change their mascots, while the [Chowan University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chowan_University) Braves became the Hawks. The [Carthage College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carthage_College) Redmen became the Red Men, and the [Southeastern Oklahoma State University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeastern_Oklahoma_State_University) Savages changed to Savage Storm.

The [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Illinois_at_Urbana-Champaign) Fighting Illini kept the nickname as referring to the state, not Native Americans, but officially stopped using the [Chief Illiniwek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Illiniwek) image and mascot in 2007, although an attachment remains among many students and alumni;[[76]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-76)[[77]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-77)[[78]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-78)[[79]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-79) but not all.[[80]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-80) The "Honor the Chief Society" filed an application with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in 2009 to register the Chief Illiniwek symbol, which the university opposed. In October, 2013 an agreement was reached that will allow limited private use of the name as long as accompanied by a disclaimer stating that the university is not involved in such use. A new chief cannot be named, and the university retains control of the name.[[81]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-81)

The [University of North Dakota](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_North_Dakota) initially challenged the NCAA policy in court, but settled in 2007 when it was given three years to obtain consent from the Sioux tribes in the state.[[82]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-82) When one tribe refused permission,[[83]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-83) the state Board of Higher Education proceeded with plans to eliminate the Fighting Sioux name and logo. In 2011 the State Legislature voted that the university should retain the name but in a 2012 referendum the voters decided to proceed with the change, which has been completed but no alternative nickname or logo has been selected.[[84]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-84)[[85]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-85) The NCAA has agreed to allow some of the logos to remain in the sports stadiums, while removing the larger and more obvious ones.[[86]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-86) Additional legal cases have run their course, leaving the Fighting Sioux name and logo officially retired.[[87]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-87)

Four additional colleges originally on the "hostile and abusive" list: [Central Michigan University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Michigan_University) (Chippewas),[[88]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-88) [Florida State University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florida_State_University) (Seminoles), [Mississippi College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi_College) (Choctaws)[[89]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-89) and [University of Utah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Utah) ([Utes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utah_Utes))[[90]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-90) were granted waivers to retain their nicknames after gaining support from those respective tribes.

**High schools**

High schools in both the US and Canada have had histories similar to colleges, some making voluntary changes while others resisting. Twenty-eight high schools in 18 states have dropped the redskins name during the past 25 years as a result of a combination of state legal action, protests from Native American groups, or voluntarily. However, there remain 62 high schools in the United States that continue to use the redskins name, three of which have a majority of Native American students.[[91]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-91) [Frontier Regional School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frontier_Regional_School), in [Deerfield](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deerfield%2C_Massachusetts), [MA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massachusetts) removed its [Redskin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redskin_%28slang%29) mascot in 2000. The school now goes by the moniker of the [Redhawks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red-tailed_hawk). Mountain Empire High School in [Pine Valley, CA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pine_Valley%2C_CA) changed their mascot from the Redskins to the Red Hawks in 1998.[[92]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-92) Turners Falls High School of Turners Falls, MA changed its fight song, known as the tomahawk chop, but did not change its mascot. [Blacksburg High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blacksburg_High_School) in Blacksburg, VA changed their mascot from the Indians to the Bruins, and the corresponding middle school mascot of the Braves was changed to the Titans. On the other hand, [Union High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_Public_Schools) in [Tulsa, Oklahoma](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulsa%2C_Oklahoma), a high-profile high school athletic program,[[93]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-93) has consistently opposed protests and proposed legislation intended to change its "Redskins" nickname.[[94]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-94) [Savannah High School (Missouri)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Savannah_High_School_%28Missouri%29) has been criticized for their mascot, Savannah Savages.

Controversy over the name and logo of the [Bedford Road Collegiate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bedford_Road_Collegiate) "Redmen" in [Saskatoon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saskatoon), Saskatchewan began in the 1990s, with a vote by students in 1996 choosing to keep things as they are. One alumni of the school is using social media to advocate for a change.[[95]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-95) In 2013, a group of protestors of the name and logo where blocked from entering a high school basketball tournament at Bedford Road, the school and police citing safety concerns.[[96]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-96) In March 2014, the Saskatoon public school board passed a motion to have the school drop the name "Redmen" and use a new name by the beginning of the new school year in September.[[97]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-97) In Ontario, there is debate over the [Thorold Blackhawks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thorold_Blackhawks) junior hockey team and the [Denis Morris Catholic High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis_Morris_Catholic_High_School) "Redmen".[[98]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-98)

[Natick High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natick_High_School) in [Natick, Massachusetts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natick%2C_Massachusetts) was also the Redmen. An initial vote by the school committee to change the name was in 2007, prompting the formation of a "Redmen Forever" committee by alumni of the school.[[99]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-99) In spite of their activity, including a nonbinding town referendum in which 65% of the voters supported asking the school committee to reconsider the change, the name was dropped in 2008.[[100]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-100) The school team is now the Redhawks,[[101]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-101) however some continue to favor returning to the previous name.[[102]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-102) In contrast, the [Western Canada High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Canada_High_School) in [Calgary, Canada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calgary%2C_Canada) has decided to change its "Redmen" nickname and logo with strong support from the school's administration, students and parents for the decision.[[103]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-103)[[104]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-104)

The Department of Educational Foundations at the [University of Saskatchewan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Saskatchewan) passed a resolution calling for the retirement of all school mascots and logos that depict First Nations people.[[105]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-105)

The Cooperstown Central School Board of Education (NY) voted 6-1 on March 6, 2013 to remove the Redskins mascot from its interscholastic athletic, extracurricular and academic programs. The move was prompted by a vote by the student body, asking that the mascot be changed. The Oneida Indian Nation was so moved by the actions of the Cooperstown students, that a letter by Oneida Nation Representative Ray Halbritter was written to the students, commending their decision and offering to make a contribution to help offset the cost of changing mascots.[[106]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-106)

In June 2013 administrators of a high school in Driggs, Idaho announced that it will drop its longtime "Redskins" nickname, logo and mascot to show respect for Native Americans.[[107]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-107)

In June 24, 2013 school board members of the [Port Townsend High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Townsend_High_School) in Port Townsend, Washington voted to replace its "Redskins" nickname, logo, and mascot (used since 1926) due to its divisive nature.[[108]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-108) In April 2014 the students selected Red Hawks as their new team name. The next step will be to select new graphics to replace the old.[[109]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-109)

In December, 2013 the Houston, TX school district approved, in a preliminary vote, a new policy against any ethic mascots which would require a change for several schools.[[110]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-110)[[111]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-111) In April, 2014 the schools effected by the policy announced new names: the [Lamar High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamar_High_School_%28Houston%2C_Texas%29) Redskins will become the Texans, both the Hamilton Middle School Indians and [Westbury High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westbury_High_School_%28Houston%2C_Texas%29) Rebels will be the Huskies and the Welch Middle School Warriors will be the Wolf Pack. The initial cost of the change was $50,000 for new fall uniforms, and there will be additional costs such as changing names and logos on facilities.[[112]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-112) The total cost is estimated to be $250,000.[[113]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-113) However it was noted that team uniforms are periodically replaced anyway, so the cost is not due only to the name changes.[[114]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-114)

In January 2014 the [Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nez_Perce_people) sent a letter to two northern Idaho school districts with American Indian mascots asking that they be changed. The mascots are the Sacajawea Junior High Braves in [Lewiston](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewiston_School_District) and the [Nezperce](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nezperce%2C_Idaho) High School Indians. The school officials state that they will have meetings and gather public opinions before making a decision.[[115]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-115)

The students of [Belmont High School (New Hampshire)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belmont_High_School_%28New_Hampshire%29) have begun to question the use of Native American imagery in connection to their name, the Red Raiders, saying that while it was never intended to be offensive it is time for a change. At a meeting on the subject there were equal, but respectful comments of both sides.[[116]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-116)

**Professional teams**

The [Golden State Warriors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_State_Warriors) retain the name but eliminated Native American imagery in 1971.[[117]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-117) Since that time, their logos have emphasized the state of California, with their current primary logo depicting the [new eastern span](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_span_replacement_of_the_San_Francisco%E2%80%93Oakland_Bay_Bridge) of the [San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco%E2%80%93Oakland_Bay_Bridge). The warrior depicted on secondary logos of the team is a generic, lightning-wielding figure. The [Edmonton Eskimos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmonton_Eskimos) are also exceptional, given that their only stereotypical element appears to be the name of one of their mascots, Nanook, a polar bear. The name Eskimo originated as a word used by the Cree to refer to the Inuit, who are few in the Edmonton area, and are ambivalent or supportive of the team name.[[118]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-118)

Some teams have made limited changes in recent years. In 1989 the Kansas City Chiefs switched from [Warpaint](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warpaint_%28mascot%29), a Pinto horse ridden by a man in a feathered headdress, to their current mascot [K. C. Wolf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K._C._Wolf). In 2009 the horse returned, but ridden by a cheerleader. However when photographs of fans attending games wearing feathers and warpaint, (and doing the tomahawk chop) are published in the [Kansas City Star](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kansas_City_Star), Native Americans write in to complain that this behavior is a mockery and racist.[[119]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-119)

The NHL's [Chicago Blackhawks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago_Blackhawks) use an [anthropomorphic hawk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NHL_mascots#Tommyhawk) as their mascot character although a Native American's profile appears on their jerseys and the team was named in honor of the [team's founder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederic_McLaughlin)'s [military unit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._86th_Infantry_Division), which was named the "Blackhawk Division" after [Black Hawk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Hawk_%28chief%29), a Native American chief.[[120]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-120)

However the other professional teams continue to use Native American names and mascots as they always have.

The [Atlanta Braves](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlanta_Braves) remain the home of the tomahawk chop (although it began at FSU).[[121]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-121) However, the mascot [Chief Noc-A-Homa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Noc-A-Homa) has been replaced.

The [Cleveland Indians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleveland_Indians#Nickname_and_logo_controversy) have replaced [Chief Wahoo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Wahoo) with a block letter "C" or script "I" in many situations, such as on their caps and batting helmets.[[122]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-wahoo-122) Perhaps this is a limited response to protests by Native Americans and others, which have gone on for more than twenty years.[[123]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-123) At the beginning of 2014 there was a decision to make the block "C" the team's primary logo, although Chief Wahoo will not disappear entirely, some see this as a first step toward inevitable elimination.[[124]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-124) Cleveland fans have a variety of responses to the issue. One fan attending a game dressed in face paint and feathers in imitation of the logo had an encounter with an anti-mascot demonstrator. It was soon noticed how much the photo of the event resembled the "But I'm honoring you, dude!" cartoon from 2001.[[125]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-125) However, some fans are quietly removing Chief Wahoo logos from apparel they've bought, which is being called "de-chiefing".[[126]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-126) One Native American group has asked [Nike, Inc.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nike%2C_Inc.) to stop making any items with the Chief Wahoo logo.[[127]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-127) Nike responded to the protest by issuing a statement that they have a contractual agreement with Major League Baseball (MLB) to manufacture apparel, and each MLB team is responsible for the logos they choose.[[128]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-128)

Since 1973, an Indians fan, [John Adams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Adams_%28drummer%29), has played a bass drum during games, usually doing a Hollywood tom-tom beat.[[129]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-129)

The appropriateness of the [Washington Redskins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Redskins) name and logo, which is a picture of a Native American, has been debated since it was officially registered in 1967. With "redskin" considered by many Native Americans to be a racial slur as offensive to them as "the n-word" is to [African Americans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Americans), there have been a few instances of the media refusing to use the name in sports reporting. *Kansas City Star* policy on Washington's NFL team's name as stated by the editor: "I see no compelling reason for any publisher to reprint an egregiously offensive term as a casual matter of course."[[130]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-130) *The Journal Star* in Lincoln, Nebraska and the *Portland Press Herald* in Maine took the same position.[[131]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-131) The team's unofficial mascot is Zema Williams ([Chief Zee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Zee)), an African-American man who began attending games in 1978 wearing an Indian costume including feathered headdress and rubber tomahawk. Other fans attend in costume, and are also celebrated by the team.[[132]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-132)

The name debate heated up in 1992, when Washington [made it to the Super Bowl](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Super_Bowl_XXVI) against the [Buffalo Bills](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo_Bills). The game was held in Minnesota, which has the nation’s largest Native American population. Prior to the game, more than 2,000 Native Americans stood outside the stadium and protested with signs that read “we are not mascots” and “promote sports not racism.” The American Indian Movement along with the National Congress of American Indians sponsored the protest. Shortly afterwards, the court case to cancel the trademarks used by the team began. [[133]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-133) The team continues to receive attention as the more egregious example.[[134]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-symposium-134) A bill was introduced in the US House of Representatives on March 20, 2013 by [Eni F.H. Faleomavaega](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eni_Faleomavaega), Delegate from [American Samoa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Samoa), and co-sponsoed by 19 others to amend the Trademark Act of 1946 to void any trademarks that disparage Native American Persons or Peoples, such as *redskins*. Ten members of congress also sent a letter to the NFL commissioner, all of the team owners including Dan Snyder, and [Fred Smith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_W._Smith), CEO of FedEx, a primary sponsor of the team; requesting that the name be changed due to the many Native American organizations that oppose the continued use of the name, and in order to fulfill the NFL's own policy regarding diversity.[[135]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-135) A co-sponsor, Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D - DC), stated she supports the local team but not the name.[[136]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-136) The [Council of the District of Columbia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_the_District_of_Columbia) passed a resolution November 5, 2013 stating its position that the name should be changed. Since the team plays in Maryland and practices in Virginia, it has no legal force.[[137]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-137)

**Stereotyping by rival fans**

In addition to the behavior of the teams that have Native American names or mascots, their rivals often invoke racist stereotypes. In Alabama, at a game between the [Pinson Valley High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinson_Valley_High_School) "Indians" and [McAdory High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McAdory_High_School), the latter team displayed a banner using a disparaging reference to the *Trail of Tears* for which the principal of the school apologized to Native Americans, stated that the cheerleader squad responsible would be disciplined, and that all students would be given a lesson on the actual history of the Trail of Tears. Native Americans responded that it was an example of the continuing insensitivity and stereotyping of Indians in America.[[138]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-138)[[139]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-139) A similar sign was displayed in Tennessee by the [Dyersburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dyersburg%2C_Tennessee) Trojans when they played the [Jackson Northside Indians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Side_High_School_%28Jackson%2C_Tennessee%29).[[140]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-140) In December 2013 when the Washington NFL team played the [Kansas City Chiefs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kansas_City_Chiefs) an employee of a [Sonic Drive-In](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sonic_Drive-In) in Missouri placed a message outside that used scalping, reservations and whiskey to disparage the "Redskins". It was quickly removed with the owner's apologies.[[141]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-141)

**Varying degrees of offensiveness[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Native_American_mascot_controversy&action=edit&section=14" \o "Edit section: Varying degrees of offensiveness)]**

To further complicate this controversy, many feel that there are varying levels of offensiveness with team names and mascots. The nature and degree of stereotyping varies depending upon the name of the team, the logo, the mascot, and the behavior of fans. The greatest offense is taken when the logo and mascot are caricatures viewed as insulting, such as the [Cleveland Indians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleveland_Indians)' [Chief Wahoo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Wahoo);[[142]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-142) the name of the team is often regarded as a racial slur, such as [redskins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redskin_%28slang%29); or the behavior of the mascot or fans is based upon popular images of Indians which trivialize authentic native cultures; such as the tomahawk chop.

**Current status**

After decades of decline from over 3,000,[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-AICS-12) there remain less than 1,000 high school, university and professional teams that continue to have Native American mascots.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-NCAI-9) Though changes have been made at the high school and college levels, at the professional level there has been virtually no change. The topic remains an issue on a national level, with a hearing before the US Senate Committee on Indian Affairs in 2011,[[180]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-180) and a symposium at the Smithsonian [National Museum of the American Indian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Museum_of_the_American_Indian) in 2013.[[181]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_mascot_controversy#cite_note-181)

**Where is the honor??** http://www.aimovement.org/ncrsm/index.html

The **National Coalition on Racism in Sports and Media** exists to fight the powerful influence of major media who choose to promulgate messages of oppression. The impetus which formed NCRSM was the clear case of media coupling imagery with widely held misconceptions of American Indians in the form of sports team identities resulting in racial, cultural, and spiritual stereotyping. NCRSM formed in October of 1991 at a meeting of American Indian dignitaries and activists held at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota. NCRSM, while best known for its front-line demonstrations outside sports stadiums across America has been responsible for an educational effort which has made the issue of racial stereotyping a household discussion. NCRSM takes a long term view of the struggle against learned hatred and disrespect. We are in a fight for the very soul of the United States against long ingrained willful and self serving ignorance. Components of major media which from public and government opinion includes: film vido, sports entertainment, and educational institutions, publications, news organization, television, cable satellite, internet, retail practices and merchandising, marketing and radio.

**AMERICAN INDIANS ARE PEOPLE, NOT MASCOTS**

Charlene Teters, Spokane

On the verge of the millenium, Indian people are still involved in what Michael Haney has described as the longest undeclared war against the American Indian, here in our own homeland. This war, no longer on battlefields is now being fought in the courtrooms, corporation boardrooms, and classrooms over the appropriation of Native American names, spiritual and cultural symbols by professional sports, Hollywood, schools, and universities. The issue for us is the right to self identification and self determination this is the fight of the National Coalition on Racism in Sports and the Media.

The American Indian community for 50 years has worked to banish images and names like Cleveland's chief wahoo, Washington redskins, Kansas City chiefs, Atlanta braves. We work to remind people of consciousness of the use of the symbols resemblance to other historic, racist images of the past. Chief wahoo offends Indian people the same way that little black sambo offended African Americans and the frito bandito offended the Hispanic community and should have offended all of us. It assaults the principle of justice.

Last year during the media hype that surrounded the baseball playoff games between New York and Cleveland, the New York Post caught up in the hype covered its front page with the headline, "Take the Tribe and Scalp 'Em." Little concern was shown for the Indian children, or community living in New York City, or around the country. The American public has been conditioned by sports industry, educational institutions, and the media to trivialize Indigenous culture as common and harmless entertainment. On high school and college campuses Native American students do not feel welcome if the school uses as its mascot (not a clown, a mythical creature, or an animal) a Chief, the highest political position you can attain in our society. Using our names, likeness and religious symbols to excite the crowd does not feel like honor or respect, it is hurtful and confusing to our young people. To reduce the victims of genocide to a mascot is unthinking, at least, and immoral at worst. An educational institution's mission is to educate, not mis-educate, and to alleviate the ignorance behind racist stereotypes, not perpetuate them and to provide a nondiscriminatory environment for all its students, conducive to learning.

Student leadership has played a significant role in bringing the mascot issue forward. In the 1970's students at Stanford and Dartmouth were successful in changing the athletic identity from Indians to a race-neutral name and symbol. Since 1988, the student-led struggle to retire the dancing Indian mascot/symbol at the University of Illinois continues with little chance of change against an arrogant and entrenched governor-appointed Board of Trustees.

Still, in recent years, significant contributions to this movement to eradicate racist mascots have been made. At least six Universities have changed their names, the Los Angeles Board of Education voted to ban Indian images and names. In schools across the country the mascot issues is being debated and these debates are being led by young Native people finding a new found pride in reclaiming themselves. The Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, a national interfaith organization of investors with combined portfolios worth an estimated 80 billion, have appealed to companies to discontinue using stereotypes that negativelyimpact Native American people of color and women. Also tribal leadership who once thought, there were more important issues in Indian country are now making the connection between mass media stereotyping and disrespect of tribal sovereignty. The tomahawk chop = the budget chop. Native artists, who reflect the consciousness of Native nations are addressing this issue of stereotyping in their paintings, installations, and writings. Arecent example is, Edgar Heap of Bird's public art pience commissioned by the Cleveland Institute of Art in 1996. The controversial billboard juxtaposed a likeness of the Cleveland logo, chief wahoo with the phrase, "Smile for Racism." The work was nearly banned by the commissioning agency because it was perceived as offensive to the Cleveland community. While the Cleveland American Indian community continues to protest outside the Cleveland baseball stadium, every home game because of the objectionable, red faced, big-nosed, buckteeth Cleveland Indian logo.

For Native leadership and allies working on the mascot issue, the call nationwide is to work towards the elimination of the misrepresentation and abuses of Indian images, names and spiritual way of life by the year 2000. And the rallying call is, American Indians are a People, Not Mascots for Americas fun and games. We are human beings.

# MASCOTS - [Racism](http://www.aics.org/mascot/racism.html) in [Schools by State](http://www.aics.org/mascot/schools.html) http://www.aics.org/mascot/mascot.html

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Many of these [schools](http://www.aics.org/mascot/schools.html) and school board members claim to be "honoring" Native Americans by their use of a mascot like "Braves", or "Chiefs", or "Indians", or "Warriors", and even the more obvious racial slur "Redskins". I ask of each of these [schools](http://www.aics.org/mascot/schools.html) and school board members - If the people being "honored" feel only degradation, pain, [racism](http://www.aics.org/mascot/racism.html), and disgust, then where is the "honor"?????!!!! One particular school in California who refer to themselves as "Apache", were told by the Apache students of a school on the Apache reservation that they felt it was an insult for this to continue. The Califorina school decided that *No matter what the Apache people feel and expressed to them*, the "Apache" mascot will continue. This is "HONOR"?
See; [Arcadia "Apache"](http://www.aics.org/mascot/arcadia.html)

Children are being harmed by these mascots, and not just the Native American children. Once the stereotype is established in a student's mind, it makes it very difficult for children of any race to learn about present day Native Americans. For instance, I have been asked by school children if I still live in a TiPi, and I have been told by a young school aged child that I can't possible be an Indian, because Indians were all killed a long time ago, and that's why the school mascot is an "Indian" - so Indians can be remembered. That is [racism](http://www.aics.org/mascot/racism.html). There does not have to be a feeling of hate to make it [racism](http://www.aics.org/mascot/racism.html). And, we aren't saying that these people are terrible people, we are saying that they have choosen a mascot that offends, and they might not even understand that it offends. We don't want a confrontation with them, we want to talk to them and convince them that for the good of all the children in the schools, the mascot should change. Many times I have seen the school boards or the school put the mascot issue to a vote - majority rules. Issues involving [racism](http://www.aics.org/mascot/racism.html) or civil rights CANNOT be solved by having them put to a vote. This should not be a situation where the majority dictates to the minority how things are going to be, it should be a situation where the RIGHT thing is done even if it is not the most popular opinion of the RIGHT thing to do.

I am NOT honored when the people in a stadium are encouraged by a white student on horseback and wearing what "they" think is Indian attire, to do the "tomahawk chop"!

I am NOT honored to hear the students of a rival school screaming "kill the Indians"!

I am NOT honored to see various racist depictions of what a "Brave" or "Warrior" or "Chief" are supposed to look like in the eyes of those who mock us!

I am ESPECIALLY NOT honored when we tell you it is not an honor but an insult to be depicted in this way - and it continues anyway!

Indians are real living people, and we are the ONLY living race of people to be used as mascots. Why? And, most importantly - why teach [racism](http://www.aics.org/mascot/racism.html) to children in school????? Why are there no schools with a mascot called the "Blackskins"? Why are there no schools with a mascot called the "Jews"? I think the answer is obvious, it would be an insult to Black people or to Jews - yet schools have a mascot of "Redskins" or "Indians" - why?

Here are a few quotes by people that these [schools](http://www.aics.org/mascot/schools.html) claim to "honor".

Vernon Bellecourt:"We are saying - start playing football and stop playing Indian. Stop this dehumanizing, degrading, and despicable exploitation of our culture and spiritual life."

Clyde Bellecourt, National Director, AIM:"We don't want to be mascots for America's fun and games."

Kathy Morning Star, Director AICS and Director VA AIM:"It is the responsibility of educators to set the example and teach the youth of today to respect other ethnic or minority peoples - NOT to exploit or disrespect them by using them as 'mascots' or stereotypical 'images' which purpetuates racism."

Mike Wicks, participating member AIM and AICS Co-director:"We need to educate the educators. Show them the harm that is being done to all children."

Barbara Munson (Oneida):"When someone says you are hurting them by your action, if you persist - then the harm becomes intentional."

And this one from a Washington Post Editorial:"Redskins is not a term fashioned by American Indians. The nickname was assigned to them just as the pejorative designation "darkies" was once imposed on African-American slaves.
That was wrong then - this is wrong now."