

PRESS RELEASES

Wis. Indian Education Association: Endorses Resolution Requesting Wisconsin School Boards to Change Names, Logos and Mascots Having American Indian References

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On January 30, 2006 the Wisconsin Indian Education Association sent a letter endorsing a new resolution by the Great Lakes Inter Tribal Council requesting Wisconsin school boards to change names, logos and mascots having American Indian references. The two Wisconsin Indian organizations sent the resolution and letters to all 426 school districts asking for change. LaRock says that, "The 39 Wisconsin school districts that still have these mascots, affect all 387 neighboring districts when they engage in interscholastic events and competitions."

The mailing supports a late December memo by State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Elizabeth Burmaster urging all Wisconsin public school districts to discontinue the use of American Indian logos, mascots and nicknames and "to find appropriate alternatives." Burmaster is the third Wisconsin State Superintendent to call for the elimination of these symbols from Wisconsin schools. Michele LaRock, President of WIEA points out that what has changed since earlier appeals is that research studies have been completed and the American Psychological Association has added the weight of its resolution to the movement for elimination of these stereotypes from schools. LaRock states, "Over the years the case for change has gained support of research proving what Indian people knew from experience, 'Indian' mascots harm our children, reinforce stereotypes that keep us marginalized, refer to us in the past tense, and prevent us from being included as community members and neighbors involved in working toward common goals and solutions with the rest of society."

WIEA's letter states that, "icons of discrimination, including 'Indian' mascots, logos and team names are slowly and surely following Sambo's restaurants and blackface minstrel shows into the realm of cultural oblivion. At question is not if this form of archaic race-based symbolism will pass from our schools, but when and how each school will achieve change." Twenty-four school districts in Wisconsin have changed an Indian mascot, logo and/or team name since 1991.

Since its inception in 1997, the Wisconsin Indian Education Association "Indian" Mascot and Logo Taskforce has been a national leader assisting change through education and advocacy. Believing that the time has come to embrace this change, WIEA encourages school districts to be thorough and thoughtful in their deliberations in the hope that the Indian logo issue will not have to be revisited again. LaRock offers WIEA's "support and expertise to Wisconsin public school districts as each strives to develop a process that will prepare its children for a better future in schools free from racial and ethnic stereotypes."

Submitted by

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