

(Excerpts from the State of the Tribes Address delivered March 8, 2005  
by Ray DePerry, President of the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council)

## **STATE OF THE TRIBES ADDRESS**

Wisconsin State Assembly

March 8, 2005

... This is indeed a most exceptional and significant day in the relationship between the state of Wisconsin and the Tribal Nations of Wisconsin. ... But first, I must tell you, that the voice you hear is not just that of Ray DePerry, no my friends, it is the voice of these 10 other tribal leaders as well. It is their words and voice also. I am only a conduit through which passes the message the tribes have asked me to deliver.

That's what this day is all about. ...

This is a day of hope and belief that through cooperative efforts we will be able to resolve issues such as discrimination, health needs, economic considerations, educational opportunities and respect for one another. ...

We cannot begin to mention our successes or failures without first knowing who the "Wisconsin tribal nations" actually are. We are approximately 50,000 in number, located primarily on the 11 reservations in this fine state. Several thousand more live in the city of Milwaukee. We are your neighbor and our children attend the same schools that your children do. ...

My friends, approaching the last issue we wish to leave with you is not easy. It never is when you are trying to eliminate conditions which contribute to blatant discriminatory practices.

It is up to all of us gathered here today, especially the elected representatives of this great state, to enact legislation that will eliminate from our public school system, once and for all, the use of Indian logos, mascots and any other sort of stereotypical images of American Indians. While we applaud the numerous school boards and school districts that have voluntarily took the corrective steps in eradicating this type of institutional discrimination against our native brothers and sisters, there still are approximately 40 public schools that retain some reference to American Indians. It is unfortunate that we must ask our state legislature to enact legislation outlawing such practices in our public schools, but it is even more painful that local school boards and public school administrators allow such a practice to continue. As tribal leaders, we are strong proponents for local control, but when local control becomes a device used by school boards to preserve discriminatory practices, then it's time for our state legislators to end such discrimination. ...