

TEACH RESPECT



NOT RACISM

**Wisconsin Indian Education Association “Indian” Mascot and Logo Taskforce
Invites You to Join the Effort to
Stop the Use of “Indian” Mascots and Logos in Wisconsin Schools.**

It is imperative that schools teach respect for America’s indigenous cultures by removing stereotypes in the form of “Indian” logos, mascots and nicknames. If we are to have any meaningful dialogue about eliminating racism in our society, we must first stop teaching this form of overt racism in our schools.

Wisconsin Indian educators want **all** children to receive a high quality education that prepares them for the challenges of adulthood. We want **all** children to learn accurate and authentic historical and contemporary information about their own cultures and those of other people. We want **all** children to fully participate in the educational process in Wisconsin schools, and we oppose **all** barriers to learning that create an intimidating or offensive school environment for **any** child. “Indian” mascots and logos interfere with learning by creating, supporting and maintaining oversimplified, and inaccurate views of indigenous peoples and their cultures. Along with other societal abuses and stereotypes, “Indian” mascots and logos separate, marginalize, confuse, intimidate and harm American Indian children, thereby creating a barrier to learning and making the school an inhospitable place. Schools must be places where children are allowed equal opportunity to participate in learning. The use of “Indian” logo caricatures denies full and welcome participation to Wisconsin’s American Indian children, while at the same time teaching **all** Wisconsin school children to tolerate discrimination against Indian people, their heritage and cultures. Any high school with an “Indian” logo is teaching a course in hands-on racism. It is teaching students how to stereotype a group of people on the basis of race, religion, ancestry and cultural ethnicity. It is teaching students to maintain these stereotypes and to promote them by carrying them into other school districts at interscholastic sports competitions.

Regardless of original intent, relative attractiveness, or degree of cherished attachment, an “Indian” logo and the school traditions that grow up around it present harmful stereotypes of living people and living cultures to students in the school environment. “Indian” logos do not honor Indian people; these logos are nothing more than outmoded, culturally demeaning symbols of oppression.

Icons of discrimination, including “Indian” logos, are slowly and surely following Sambo’s restaurants and blackface minstrel shows into the realm of cultural oblivion. At question is not **whether** “Indian” mascots and logos will be removed from school settings across the nation, but **when** and **how**. Rising awareness that these archaic symbols are teaching children how to do racism is resulting in the removal of “Indian” logos in elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities throughout the nation. In October of 1997, the Los Angeles School District, the second largest in the nation, banned the use of Indian mascots and logos. In May of 1998, the Dallas Public Schools followed LA’s lead. The National Congress of American Indians, the National Indian Education Association, Indian people and their allies from coast to coast are asking that schools eliminate “Indian” mascots and logos so our children and our cultures endure no further damage from this form of institutionalized racism. On April 13 of 2001, the United States Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR) issued a statement urging education institutions throughout the nation to effect change.

Finally, one particular logo image, that of a Plains Indian religious leader is insulting because it is associated, not with a religious place or ceremony, but with a sporting event - as part of a game. Not only does this icon misrepresent and trivialize American Indian religions, but an equivalent characterization from another culture - an Archbishop, Minister, Rabbi, the Dalai Lama, or the Pope - would not be tolerated because it insults our religious sensibility, and simultaneously promotes a particular religion in a public school setting.

Twenty-one Wisconsin School Districts have become models of respect for human dignity by changing their “Indian” logos. For the benefit of **all our children**, we hope the forty that still harbor these vestiges of racism will effect change as soon as possible.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- ◆ **Raise awareness. Talk to friends, relatives, neighbors and colleagues about this issue.**
- ◆ **Ask civic or religious organizations you are affiliated with to support or endorse efforts to change “Indian” logos.**
- ◆ **Speak with your own local school board about changing the districts “Indian” logo or adopting the policy of preventing other school districts from bringing stereotypes in the form of “Indian” logos, mascots, nicknames, cheers, or other depictions or cultural references into your school at interscholastic events.**
- ◆ **Consider inviting members of the WIEA Taskforce to present information at a forum in your area.**
- ◆ **Ask Assembly and Senate members from your area to support legislation to eliminate the use of Indian logos in public schools.**

For more information contact:
Wisconsin Indian Education Association “Indian” Mascot and Logo Taskforce
231 Steeple Road ◆ Mosinee, WI 54455
Phone (715) 693-6238 ◆ FAX: (715) 693-1756 ◆ e-mail: Barb@Munson.net