

School Mascots

Greetings Iowa school leaders, school board members, and community members:

We, the undersigned Tribal Nations and local and national Native organizations, call upon you – the 66 K-12 schools in the state of Iowa with Native “themed” school mascots – to retire your mascots.

With recent events casting a spotlight on the well-documented harms caused by race-based mascots and a corresponding increase in related discussions at the school

district level, we believe it appropriate to share with you Indian Country's long-standing opposition to the continued use of Native "themed" mascots.

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), as the oldest, largest, and most representative national organization representing Tribal Nations and their citizens, has been leading Indian Country's consensus-driven movement to eradicate offensive Native "themed" mascots from sports and popular culture for more than 50 years. NCAI's resolutions – which present the unified voice of hundreds of Tribal Nations – have consistently conveyed Indian Country's clear desire to see these mascots retired so that the schools our children attend may provide an inclusive, equitable, and supportive learning environment for *all* students.

Critically, the formal position of the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa (Meskwaki Nation), the only federally recognized Tribal Nation in the state, is categorically "against the use of Native American terms or images or symbols for sports or other marketing uses."

Additionally, other federally recognized Tribal Nations – including the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska – with ties to the state of Iowa have taken similar positions against the use of Native American names, imagery, symbols, and customs as school mascots. So, too, have key Native organizations that serve Native people residing in the state, including the **Iowa Commission on Native American Affairs**.

As the Meskwaki Nation has publicly addressed, if supporters of these mascots look hard enough, they will be able to find individuals who support their cause. However, when taken as a whole, **the will of Indian Country is clear – Native “themed” mascots and the dehumanizing stereotypes they perpetuate must go.**

Out of respect for tribal sovereignty, we ask that you heed the voices of tribal leaders representing hundreds of Tribal Nations and the organizations that serve their citizens – not the voices of a few select individuals – when seeking to understand where Indian Country broadly stands on this issue.

To that end, we invite you to begin a dialogue with us so you can learn about

contemporary Tribal Nations and peoples and why these mascots degrade us, misrepresent who we are, and dismiss the many important contributions we have made – and continue to make – to this great country. Moreover, know that we are committed to working with you to expand and strengthen the curriculum your schools teach future generations of lowans about Tribal Nations and peoples, particularly the undersigned Nations.

If you wish to have such a discussion, please email the National Congress of American Indians at mascots@ncai.org. Meanwhile, please find below selected resources that provide additional details about our long-standing opposition to the use of these mascots, as well as the harms that they cause:

NCAI “Ending ‘Indian’ Mascots” Initiative

**NCAI “Ending the Legacy of Racism”
Report**

**NCAI Native “Themed” School Mascot
National Tracking Database: The Current
Numbers**

**Study finds only harmful effects from
Native themed mascots**

**NCAI Commends Announcement by
Major League Baseball's Cleveland
Franchise of Its New Name "Guardians"**

**NCAI Statement on Washington Football
Team's Retirement of Racist Mascot**

**American Psychological Association
Resolution: Retiring American Indian
Mascots**

**National Education Association
Resolution: Supporting Removal of
Native Themed Mascots**

**National Indian Education Association
Resolution: Elimination of Race-Based
Indian Logos, Mascots, and Names**

**NCAI 2020 Resolution: Support for the
Elimination of Race-Based Native Logos,
Mascots, Names, Behaviors and Practices**

**NCAI 2014 Resolution: Urging the U.S.
Secretary of Education to Take
Substantive Action Regarding Schools
with "Native" Sports Stereotypes**

NCAI: Learn About Tribal Nations,

Citizenship, History, and Contemporary Issues

National Museum of the American Indian: Changing the Narrative about Native Americans (Webinar)

National Museum of the American Indian: Native American Is Not a Costume

Why Educators Can't Ignore Indian Mascots

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Judith Bender

Chairwoman

Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa (Meskwaki Nation)

Larry Wright

Chairman

Ponca Tribe of Nebraska

Dante Desiderio

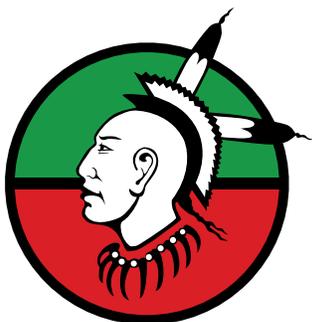
Chief Executive Officer

National Congress of American Indians

Christine Campbell

Executive Director

American Indian Council



TRIBAL CENTER

Address: 349
Meskwaki Road,
Tama, IA 52339

Phone: (641) 484-
4678

Toll Free:

Careers

Staff Links



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