



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Summary of the APA Resolution Recommending Retirement of American Indian Mascots

"The use of American Indian mascots as symbols in schools and university athletic programs is particularly troubling because schools are places of learning. These mascots are teaching stereotypical, misleading and too often, insulting images of American Indians. These negative lessons are not just affecting American Indian students; they are sending the wrong message to all students."

- Former APA President Ronald F. Levant, EdD

Retirement of American Indian Mascots

In 2005, the APA called for the immediate retirement of all American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams and organizations. APA's position is based on a growing body of social science literature that shows the harmful effects of racial stereotyping and inaccurate racial portrayals, including the particularly harmful effects of American Indian sports mascots on the social identity development and self-esteem of American Indian young people.

Research has shown that the continued use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities has a negative effect on not only American Indian students but all students by:

- **Undermining the educational experiences of members of all communities-especially those who have had little or no contact with indigenous peoples.** The symbols, images and mascots teach non-Indian children that it's acceptable to participate in culturally abusive behavior and perpetuate inaccurate misconceptions about American Indian culture.
- **Establishes an unwelcome and often times hostile learning environment for American Indian students that affirms negative images/stereotypes that are promoted in mainstream society.**

According to Stephanie Fryberg, PhD, University of Arizona, this appears to have a negative impact on the self-esteem of American Indian children, "American Indian mascots are harmful not only because they are often negative, but because they remind American Indians of the limited ways in which others see

them. This in turn restricts the number of ways American Indians can see themselves."

- **Undermines the ability of American Indian Nations to portray accurate and respectful images of their culture, spirituality and traditions.** Many American Indians report that they find today's typical portrayal of American Indian culture disrespectful and offensive to their spiritual beliefs.
- **Presents stereotypical images of American Indians.** Such mascots are a contemporary example of prejudice by the dominant culture against racial and ethnic minority groups.
- **Is a form of discrimination against American Indian Nations that can lead to negative relations between groups.**

"We know from the literature that oppression, covert and overt racism, and perceived racism can have serious negative consequences for the mental health of American Indian and Alaska native people. The discontinued use of American Indian mascots is a gesture to show that this kind of racism toward and the disrespect of, all people in our country and in the larger global context, will not be tolerated," said Lisa Thomas, PhD, APA Committee on Ethnic and Minority Affairs.

To eradicate the hurtful presence of stereotypical imaging of American Indians, the APA encourages continued research on the psychological effects that these mascots, symbols, images and personalities have on American Indian communities and others.

The APA is calling upon all psychologists to speak out against racism, and take proactive steps to prevent the occurrence of intolerant or racist acts and recommends the immediate retirement of American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams and organizations.

This document is based on the APA American Indian Mascot Resolution adopted by the APA's Council of Representatives in September 2005.

[READ THE FULL TEXT OF THE OFFICIAL APA AMERICAN INDIAN MASCOT RESOLUTION](#)

For more information

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