Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy Professional Development Day

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Native American Mascots & Prejudice

- Americans have had a history of drawing inspiration from native peoples and "playing Indian" that dates back at least to the 18th century.
- This practice led directly to the origins of many nicknames and mascots.
- Summer camps and university students in the late 19th and early 20th centuries adopted Indian names and symbols for their group identities, not from authentic sources but rather as Native American life was imagined by Euro-Americans.
- Professional team nicknames had similar origins.
Native American Mascots & Prejudice

- There is considerable controversy over team names and mascots derived from indigenous peoples because various activist groups, including some of American Indian background, view them as disrespectful and offensive.

- Most notably, the National Congress of American Indians has issued a resolution opposing continued usage of Native team names, mascots, and logos.
Some tribal entities have issued resolutions opposing usage as well.

Conversely, certain tribes have granted permission to use their names for sports teams, as in the case of the Chippewa and Seminole tribes for Central Michigan University and Florida State University, respectively.

According to a 2002 Sports Illustrated article, 83% of American Indian respondents to a Sports Illustrated poll said that professional teams should not stop using Indian nicknames, mascots, or symbols.
Native American Mascots & Prejudice

Chief Illiniwek

- The official mascot and symbol of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- The mascot is portrayed by a student dressed in Sioux regalia to represent the Illiniwek, the state's namesake associated with the University's intercollegiate athletic programs since 1926
- Chief Illiniwek is not based on an actual American Indian chief, nor did a historical figure with this name ever exist
- The Illiniwek were a group of twelve to thirteen Native American tribes in the upper Mississippi River valley
Native American Mascots & Prejudice

Chief Illiniwek

- For more than 20 years, Chief Illiniwek was the center of a controversy
- Several American Indian groups and supporters view the mascot as a misappropriation of indigenous cultural figures and rituals and that it perpetuated stereotypes about American Indian peoples
- As a result of this controversy, the NCAA termed Chief Illiniwek a "hostile or abusive" mascot and image in August 2005 and banned the university from hosting postseason activities as long as it continued to use the mascot and symbol
- The University of Illinois retired Chief Illiniwek as mascot in 2007, with his last official performance on February 21, 2007
The athletic logo, a Native American figure, was recently dropped. Due to the NCAA's perception that the term "Fighting Sioux" and the accompanying logo are offensive to native Americans, the NCAA pressured the university to discontinue use of the logo. When UND moved in the fall of 2009 to change its nickname, one of the two Sioux tribal councils in the state sued to have the name retained.
Chicago Blackhawks

- Irene Castle, designed the original version of the team's logo which featured a crudely drawn black and white Native head in a circle and the design went through several significant changes between 1926 and 1955

- The Blackhawks mascot is Tommy Hawk, a hawk who wears the Blackhawks' four feathers on his head, along with a Blackhawks jersey and hockey pants
Native American Mascots & Prejudice

Chicago Blackhawks

- The team name is derived from Black Hawk (1767 – October 3, 1838), a leader and warrior of the Sauk American Indian tribe
- Black Hawk served as a war leader of a band of Sauk at their village of Saukenuk
The Grand Rapids Rustlers was founded in Michigan in 1894 and in 1900 the team moved to Cleveland and was named the Cleveland Lake Shores and renamed the Cleveland Bluebirds in 1901. Following the 1914 season the club owner changed the name to “Indians” in deference to the Boston Braves (now the Atlanta Braves), the media chose "the Indians". Common nicknames for the Indians include the "Tribe" and the "Wahoos", the latter being a reference to their logo, Chief Wahoo. The mascot is called Slider.
Atlanta Braves

The club is one of the National League's two remaining charter franchises (the other being the Chicago Cubs) and was founded in Boston, Massachusetts in 1871 as the Boston Red Stockings.

- After various name changes, the team eventually began operating as the Boston Braves, which lasted for most of the first half of the 20th century.
- The "Braves" name, which was first used in 1912, originates from a term for a Native American warrior.
- In 1953, the team moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin and became the Milwaukee Braves, followed by the final move to Atlanta in 1966.
Chief Noc-A-Homa was the original mascot of the Milwaukee and Atlanta Braves from 1950s until 1986

- The name was used for the "screaming Indian" sleeve patch worn on Braves jerseys
- The name was intended to be a playful variation of "Knock a Homer"
- The mascot's job was to exit his teepee and perform a dance whenever a Braves player hit a home run
Lamar Hunt established the American Football League and started his own team, the **Dallas Texans**, to begin play in 1960.

The franchise relocated to Kansas City on May 22, 1963 and on May 26 the team was renamed the Kansas City Chiefs.

Kansas City’s overlapping initials appear inside a white arrowhead.

Arrowhead Stadium has been the Chiefs' home field since 1972.
Washington Redskins

- The team originated as the Boston Braves, based in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1932.
- The team played in Braves Field, home of the Boston Braves baseball team but the following year the club moved to Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox, whereupon owners changed the team's name to the Boston Redskins.
- Some consider the namesake and logo of the Washington Redskins to be racist.
- However, a 2013 USA Today poll found widespread support for the redskins name with 79 percent of Americans in favor.
Chief Zee, real name Zema Williams, is a well-known fan and unofficial mascot of the Washington Redskins of the National Football League.

Dressed in a faux American Indian headdress, rimmed glasses, and a red jacket, Chief Zee has been attending Redskins games since 1978.
Florida State Seminoles

- The "Seminoles" name, chosen by students in a 1947 vote, alludes to Florida's Seminole people who in the early nineteenth century resisted efforts of the United States government to remove them from Florida.

- Since 1978 the teams have been represented by the symbols Osceola and Renegade.

- The symbol represents an actual historical figure, Seminole war leader Osceola, whose clothing represents appropriate period dress.
Central Michigan Chippewas

- The school, its students and alumni are referred to as *Chippewas* or *Chips*
- The nickname is used with the consent of the nearby Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, who have a positive relationship with the university
- The school's athletics logo has changed over time; once featuring an Indian spear, it is now a stylized block letter "C"
Native American Mascots & Prejudice

- Marquette University changed their team name from the Warriors to the Golden Eagles in 1994.
  - The school’s president stated: "We live in a different era than when the Warriors nickname was selected in 1954. The perspective of time has shown us that our actions, intended or not, can offend others. We must not knowingly act in a way that others will believe, based on their experience, to be an attack on their dignity as fellow human beings."

- Also in 1994, St. John's University (New York) changed the name of its athletic teams from the Redmen to the Red Storm after the university was pressured by American Indian groups who considered Redmen a slur.
There is little doubt that, within the context of product branding and corporate positioning, the use of the American Indian image does not, in the greater majority of cases constitute negative stereotyping but, it is stereotyping nonetheless.

The use of ethnic and racial images in advertising, the reinforcement and popularization of racial and ethnic stereotypes, effectively constraining the ability of most to see, or try to understand members of these groups beyond the meaning inherent in popular commercial images and, importantly, commercializes and objectifies members of these groups.
What do Crazy Horse Malt Liquor, Cherokee brand jeans, and Washington Redskins jackets have in common? All of these products are marketed through the use of Native American images—and all of their parent companies have been asked to stop using these images.

Companies often attach these images to their products because they feel people associate certain characteristics with Native Americans such as being equated to nature; bravery; strength; wisdom; or even an aggressive, war-like attitude and they want consumers to associate these same qualities with their products or teams.
Auto makers over the years have named their cars after Native American tribes or associations with Native Americans: Dodge Dakota, Pontiac Winnebago motor home, Ford Thunderbird, and Jeep Cherokee.

Many of the vehicles claim to be able to take you to places that ordinary cars cannot take you; through the "miracle" of off-roading - they can, in fact, get you back to nature; through these vehicles you can journey to become one with the natural world around you.