Introduction

The debate regarding the use of American Indian logos, nicknames and mascots for junior and senior high schools, institutes of higher education and professional sports teams has escalated in the last ten years. Recently, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) asked thirty-one colleges and universities in its conference to conduct a self-evaluation of their use of American Indian athletic nicknames, logos and mascots. The University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNCP), a university founded to train American Indian teachers, was included in the NCAA’s list of universities and colleges that use a potentially racist and/or offensive athletic logo and nickname. The research project described in this paper will attempt to determine whether UNCP’s athletic logo and nickname degrades the American Indian population and/or causes offense to its seven-county region.

Authors of all races and genders have written journal and magazine articles, books and position papers on the offensive portrayal of American Indians in athletic logos, mascots and nicknames. In every reviewed work, the authors all made a case against the use of American Indian mascots, nicknames and logos. Elizabeth M. Delacruz details Florida State University’s mascot, Chief Osceola in her article “Racism American Style and Resistance to Change.” In her work, Delacruz states that Chief Osceola appears at the University’s football games, “…riding bareback on an Appaloosa to throw a flaming spear into the ground at midfield…” as the crowd war-woops and “tomahawk chops.” Mark Connolly’s article “What’s in a Name?” describes the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s mascot, Chief Illiniwek. Chief Illiniwek’s first appearance in 1926 was that of a student dressed in a homemade Indian costume who ran unto the field during halftime dancing wildly. Chief Illiniwek has appeared at every University of Illinois football game since his first appearance. Kelley R. Taylor sums-up the issue in her article by stating that the use of such stereotypical American Indian images “mock and trivialize Native American religion and culture.”

Galvin Clarkson, an American Indian, made remarks in February 2002 at the Symposium on Traditional Knowledge, intellectual Property and Indigenous Culture. In his comments, Clarkson differed with most published opinion on the end of all use of American Indian images and team names across the county. Instead, he suggested a compromise be made that athletic teams should seek permission and endorsement by a tribe to use its political identity, allowing tribes to determine its culturally appropriateness. He contended that the use of American Indian mascots, logos and nicknames were only harmful if these symbols portrayed stereotypical images of American Indians instead of images that support the historical and cultural experiences of American Indians today. Clarkson was not the first to
suggest an exception for the broad ban against all American Indian imagery in athletic promotions. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights made an April 2001 declaration asking for the “end of the use of Native American images and team names by non-Native schools.”

The arguments outlined by numerous authors indicate that universities, colleges and schools continue use of their American Indian mascots, logos and nicknames for two key reasons: 1) to continue tradition; and 2) to honor American Indians and their culture. A *Sports Illustrated* reporter interviewed the Washington Redskins’ (a professional football team) vice president, Karl Swanson, about the continued use of the team’s name despite the word’s use as a slur based on skin color or referring to the term used by whites who paid and received bounties for dead Indians. Swanson’s reply sat firmly in the “tradition” argument as he commented that after using the name for over 70 years, the term had “taken on a meaning independent of the word itself.” Robert and Hope Longwell-Grice argue strongly against the popular defense of honoring American Indians and their culture while using American Indian athletic logos, mascots and nicknames. In their article, “Chiefs, Braves, and Tomahawks: The Use of American Indians as University Mascots,” they argue that common portrayals via athletic promotions are rarely based on firsthand interactions with American Indians. Instead, they contend, the images are based on Hollywood’s and fiction authors’ accounts boxing Indians into four groups: “the noble savage, the generic Indian, the living fossil and the savage.” The two popular arguments in support of continuing the use of American Indian imagery in athletic promotion continue to dissatisfy many aggrieved Native and non-Native individuals throughout the county.

As the debate becomes more hostile, it begs the question of why entities continue to use American Indian logos that they acknowledge may offend people. Authors Pamela Henderson and Joseph Cote describe logos as “powerful cultural symbols” in their article “Guidelines for Selecting or Modifying Logos.” Athletic logos are sometimes more instrumental in shaping the image of a university, college or school than the institution’s formal logo. Athletic logos build allegiance to a sports team, its fans and the institution it represents. Henderson and Cote offer guidelines in creating logos to articulate the mission, goals and/or history of an entity. The University of North Carolina at Pembroke believes its athletic logo and nickname exemplifies the institution’s history and that its community, particularly the predominantly Lumbee Indian population, reveres its usage.

**UNC Pembroke: A Brief History**

On March 7, 1887 the General Assembly of North Carolina enacted legislation to create the Croatan Normal School. The normal school was founded in the fall of 1887 to train Native American public school teachers. The school moved to its present location in Pembroke, the center of the Indian community, in 1909.
The General Assembly changed the name of the school in 1941 to Pembroke State College for Indians. It was around this time period when Pembroke College adopted the athletic nickname “Braves” and mascot, an American Indian. Until 1953 it was the only state-supported four-year college for Indians in the nation. The scope of the institution was widened in 1942 when non-teaching baccalaureate degrees were added, and in 1945 when enrollment, previously limited to the Indians of Robeson County, was opened to people from all federally recognized Indian groups. A few years later, in 1949, the General Assembly shortened the name to Pembroke State College.

The Board of Trustees approved the admission of white students up to 40 percent of the total enrollment in 1953 and, following the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision, opened the college to all qualified applicants without regard to race in 1954. In 1969 the General Assembly changed the name again to Pembroke State University, and made the institution a regional university. Three years later, in 1972, the General Assembly established the 16-campus University of North Carolina with Pembroke State University as one of the constituent institutions.

The University of North Carolina at Pembroke celebrated its centennial in 1987. In 1991, the University began using the Red-tailed Hawk as its mascot instead of an American Indian due to its “silly” portrayal of Indians during halftime. The athletic nickname “Braves” and logo remained the same. On July 1, 1996, Pembroke State University officially became The University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

**Problem**

The NCAA has identified The University of North Carolina at Pembroke as an institution that may support an offensive and/or racist American Indian athletic logo and nickname.

**Research Question**

Do UNCP’s American Indian athletic logo and nickname offend its seven-county population and/or degrade American Indians?

**Hypothesis**

UNCP’s American Indian athletic logo and nickname do not offend its seven-county population or degrade American Indians.
Variables

Selection of Subjects

Subjects will be self-selected to participate in the online survey within the seven-county region served by UNC Pembroke. However, two audiences will be heavily targeted: the Lumbee Tribe and UNCP’s faculty, staff and students.

Survey results may indicate a need for further research. For instance, it may be necessary to divide and/or identify people according to the length of their relationship to the University. In addition, the researcher may have to set-up groups of people according to their attitude toward or ability with computers.

Treatments

Subjects will be offered an online or hardcopy survey to voice their opinion about whether UNCP’s athletic logo and nickname are offensive or degrading to American Indians. The surveys will be available and submissible from March 11 through March 25, 2005.

Criterion

The researcher, representing the University, will encourage participation through the creation and distribution of a press release to major newspapers representing UNCP’s seven-county region. The press release will detail the purpose of the survey, provide the online survey URL and offer a hardcopy of the survey to be mailed-in by the participant.

The online survey will be created and published using Remark software. The researcher will tabulate results of the online survey on a daily basis to evaluate responses. Results from the hard-copy survey will be tracked as received using an Excel spreadsheet.

Outcomes Expected

The researcher believes that over 90% of survey respondents will respond stating UNCP’s athletic logo and nickname is neither offensive nor degrading to American Indians.

The majority of the seven-county region views the University’s athletic logo and nickname as honoring the history of the school. Founded by American Indians to train American Indian teachers, the University continues to maintain strong ties to the founding Lumbee Indian tribe.

Definition of Terms

Degraded: For the purpose of this research study, this term (used in the research question) indicates representing the American Indian culture in an insulting, cartoonish or manner not befitting the respect American Indians deserve.
Offensive: This term used in the Outcomes Expected means, for the purpose of this study, “to cause harm or embarrassment.”

Honor: This term used in the Outcomes Expected means, for the purpose of this study, “to remember the historic foundation of the institution and represent the founders and American Indian population in a respectful manner.”

Research Method and Design

Phase 1
The researcher, representing the University, will identify appropriate target audiences and vehicles to encourage participation in the survey. The following information will be gathered:

1. Contacts for the major newspapers in the seven-county region.
2. Listserv information for the Lumbee Tribe.
3. Listserv information for UNCP faculty, staff and students.

Phase 2
The following material items will be needed to conduct the survey and gauge the seven-county population’s response to the research question.

1. A press release covering the purpose of the survey and providing the online survey URL and hardcopy survey.
2. The creation of a survey to assess the opinions and beliefs of participants.
3. Remark software to publish and evaluate survey results.
4. An Excel spreadsheet to house results from the hardcopy survey.
Works Cited

Connolly, M.R. What's in a name? The Journal of Higher Education (Columbus, Ohio) v. 71 no. 5 (September/October 2000) p. 515-47.


Longwell-Grice, R., et. al., Chiefs, Braves, and Tomahawks: The Use of American Indians as University Mascots. NASPA Journal v. 40 no. 3 (Spring 2003) p. 1-12.


Additional Reading


Black, Sam. *I Am Proud to Be in Public Relations*. *Public Relations Quarterly* vol. 38 no. 2 (Summer 1993) p. 45-47.


