National Indian Education Association

MM22

NIEA issues resolution calling for end of race-based mascots

02 November 2009 Barbara Munson, Wisconsin Indian Education Association 'Indian' Mascot and Logo Taskforce

User Rating: / 3
Poor Best Rate

National Indian Education Association calls for immediate elimination of race-based Indian logos, mascots, and names from educational institutions throughout the nation

MILWAUKEE – The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) issued a resolution calling for the elimination of race-based Indian logos, mascots, and team names from educational institutions throughout our country. The resolution was passed at the NIEA's 40th annual national convention, which was held in Milwaukee October 22-25.

The NIEA is our nation's oldest and largest Indian education organization. NIEA works to increase educational opportunities and resources for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students while protecting cultural and linguistic traditions.

Like hundreds of other educational, professional, and human rights organizations such as the National Education Association, the American Psychological Association and the NAACP, the NIEA has adopted resolutions about this issue in past years.

NIEA concluded that in recent years there has been enough change to warrant a new resolution, in light of current issues, recent scientific findings, and national sentiment continuing to move toward a more diverse society.

The convention also included sessions investigating current scientific research, by Dr. Stephanie A. Fryberg, University of Arizona, which shows that exposure to race-based Indian stereotypes harms American Indian Students.
The resolution was presented to NIEA by the Wisconsin Indian Education Association "Indian" mascot and Logo Taskforce.
Michele LaRock, Chairperson, of the Wisconsin Indian Education Association affirmed the resolution and the efforts of the taskforce stating, "It's wonderful that people are standing up for our children. Because that's the bottom line of our sovereignty, protecting our most valuable resource - our children, our future."

Nearly 30 school districts in Wisconsin have changed a race-based Indian logo, mascot or team name in recent years and AB35/SB25, a bill authored by Representative Jim Soletski and Senator Spencer Coggs to improve the process by which school districts navigate challenges to their use of these images, is moving through the legislative process in Wisconsin.
Students from several UW-system campuses attended the conference. After speaking in support of passing the resolution from the convention floor, Palmer Hall (NE Winnebago) a student at UW-LaCrosse, said; "I came to the conference for enlightenment - I was engaged with fulfilling, inclusive involvement." Dr. Lisa Poupart (Lac du flambeau Ojbiwe) Chair, First Nations Studies at University of Wisconsin-Green Bay stated, "This is a crucial moment as NIEA passes this resolution. It signifies that, like the First Nations Studies program at UWGB, American Indian educators across the US agree that race-based stereotypes and images are harmful to our children and no longer have a place in our schools."

Richie Plass (Menominee and Stockbridge/Munsee) Curator/Caretaker of "Bittersweet Winds," a travelling educational display about Indian stereotyping had the display up throughout the convention stated, "This resolution passed and supported by NIEA [points to] the importance of policy in eliminating the mascots and logos. As our traditions teach us, 'united we stand.' And we will continue our work to keep our names and images in strong, historical correctness."
This is a national issue in Indian education with approximately two-thirds of Indian mascots and logos having been retired in recent years. Barbara Munson (Oneida), Chair of the Wisconsin taskforce stated "Indian educators have been in the forefront of change. Our native scholars are conducting research studies and providing educational advocacy across the nation." Currently the issue is being contended on the collegiate level at the University of North Dakota and Suzan Shown Harjo's long-standing case against the Washington NFL team is soon to be presented before the US Supreme Court. "The issue of race-based stereotypes of Indian people is being addressed throughout our nation on many levels and it affects all of us." Munson states.

Elimination of Race-Based Indian Logos, Mascots, and Names

WHEREAS, the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) was established in 1970 for the purpose of advocating, planning, and promoting the unique and special educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; and

WHEREAS, NIEA as the largest national Indian organization of American Indians, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian educators, administrators, parents, and students in the United States, provides a forum to discuss and act upon issues affecting the education of Indian and Native people; and

WHEREAS, through its unique relationship with Indian nations and tribes, the federal government has established programs and resources to meet the educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiians, residing on and off their reserved or non-reserved homelands; and

WHEREAS, self-representational use of American Indian logos, mascots and names remains a cherished tradition in many American Indian communities; and

WHEREAS, NIEA has advocated for the elimination of Indian logos, mascots and names in educational settings by providing workshops,

presentation of professional papers, adopting resolutions, providing legal briefs, and forums organizing networks of Indian educators as advocates; and

WHEREAS, years of advocacy on this issue has resulted in the elimination of Indian logo, mascot, and name symbolism from hundreds of educational facilities across the nation; and

WHEREAS, educational institutions choosing to use race-based Indian logos, mascots, and names harm children, exposing graduating class after graduating class to these stereotypes, and indoctrinating them with the idea that it is acceptable to stereotype an entire race of people; and

WHEREAS, institutions choosing to retain such imagery negatively impact students, faculty, and parents from other schools by exposing them to race-based imagery in interscholastic competitions; and
WHEREAS, the limited and sparse representations of American Indians in media and popular culture comprise a significant portion of what children learn about American Indian people and thereby impact the identity formation of Native students while reinforcing stereotypes about American Indian cultures, past and present; and

WHEREAS, there is a growing base of support calling for the elimination of Indian logos, mascots and names as evidenced by endorsements from professional organizations, for example the American Psychological Association; educational advocacy organizations, such as the National Education Association; human rights organizations, like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; and sports regulatory agencies, i.e. the National Collegiate Athletic Association; and

WHEREAS, research conducted by Stephanie A. Fryberg finds:

- Exposure to race-based Indian stereotypes harms American Indian Students,
- Attractive stereotypes cause as much harm as cartoon caricatures,
- American Indian students who approve the use of Indian logos, mascots and names experience more harm that do American Indian students who oppose the use of such imagery,
- Euro-Americans experience a boost to self-esteem when exposed to the same race-based Indian stereotypes; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Fryberg's research has been expanded upon and replicated in the social psychological arena and the research base has grown in other academic fields; and

WHEREAS, educational institutions should not be the vehicles of institutionalized racism.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Indian Education Association calls for the immediate elimination of race-based Indian logos, mascots, and names from educational institutions throughout the Nation;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the National Indian Education Association supports the creation and dissemination of resources and research, and commits its members to assist educational institutions in the elimination of these stereotypes.