



Nebraska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

Eliminating Native American Mascots - Policy Gap between research and practice in Nebraska

The use of Native American names, symbols and images, has been documented to adversely affect Native American children's mental health.

A report by the Nebraska Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights addresses the gap between recommendations by behavioral scientists and state policy for the use of these images. The committee provides a bi-partisan assessment of the testimony received over several briefings before the committee.

Are Native American Mascots a way to honor Native American Culture?

The Committee heard from one of the nation's leading researchers on the issue of Native mascots. Research has shown that exposure to Native Mascots increases stress and depression among Native students.¹ Most Speakers during the committee's briefings denounced the use of Native-themed mascots regardless of intent.

Does perpetuating stereotypes have a real impact on public policy, attitudes, and behaviors?

Curriculum in public schools lack coverage of Native American history and contemporary culture. The genocide and inhumane treatment of Native Americans is generally ignored or whitewashed. This lack of historical knowledge leads to a void allowing stereotypes and romantic imagery to replace the actual Native American community and the struggles they continue to endure.

Key points:

- A 2008 study published in Psychology Press examined the consequences of the continued use of Native mascots and concluded that such stereotypical images and names are harmful.
- Twenty two schools in Nebraska continue to use Native American themed mascots.
- Non-Native American ideas of "honoring" the Native culture through use of mascots are unaware of the religious and cultural misrepresentations of such imagery.
- Native themed mascots reflect, support, and perpetuate stereotypes.
- Retiring Native-themed mascots is the only equitable solution to this problem.
- The Nebraska legislature should authorize funds to assist schools in the expenses incurred in retiring their legacy offensive mascots.

What can the Nebraska Legislature do?

The Nebraska legislature can make a formal resolution statement that it is in favor of public schools in Nebraska abandoning Native American and Indigenous themed mascots. It should back this resolution with a measure authorizing state funds for the purpose of offsetting a portion of the costs to that end.

¹ Fryberg Testimony, Transcript III, p. 11 lines 34-41; *See also:* Wright Testimony, Transcript III, p. 3 lines 18-27; p 4 line 41 – p. 5 line 4; p. 5 lines 12-25; p. 5 line 40 – p. 6 line 9; Brumfield Testimony, Transcript II, p. 25 lines 22-29.

The United States Commission on Civil Rights maintains 56 State and U.S. Territory Advisory Committees (STACs), one for each state and territory, and the District of Columbia. Each is composed of citizen volunteers familiar with local and state civil rights issues. The members assist the Commission with its factfinding, investigative, and information dissemination functions.



For More Information

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Research Brief

This product is part of the Nebraska Advisory Committee's study on the civil rights implications of Native American Mascots in Nebraska. This policy-oriented summary of the published report is intended to aid stakeholders seeking solutions to this complex issue. The Committee report was adopted by a vote of ___ to ___ at a Committee meeting held _____. The dissenting member(s) was(were) provided an opportunity to prepare a dissenting statement. Any such statement(s) is (are) appended or otherwise incorporated into the report.



A Brief from the Nebraska Advisory Committee
March 2021

The Impact of Native American Names, Symbols, and Imagery in School Mascots

Summary Findings and Policy Implications

Background

In 2011 the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights issued a report on the use of Native American names and symbols in school mascots. The Commission's report was based on a study of Native American names, symbols, and imagery in school mascots. The Commission's report was based on a study of Native American names, symbols, and imagery in school mascots. The Commission's report was based on a study of Native American names, symbols, and imagery in school mascots.

A 2008 study published in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly* found that the use of Native American names and symbols in school mascots was associated with higher levels of racism and sexism. The Commission's report was based on a study of Native American names, symbols, and imagery in school mascots. The Commission's report was based on a study of Native American names, symbols, and imagery in school mascots.

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