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What's in a Name?

A Historical Look at Native American-Related Nicknames and Symbols at Three U.S. Universities

"Hoyas" . . . "Leathernecks" . . . "Dons" . . . "Hoosiers"—the colorful and sometimes peculiar nicknames of college athletic teams have long been a source of identity and affection for students, staff, faculty, and alumni. Such nicknames are frequently accompanied by equally compelling logos, such as the University of Notre Dame's scrappy leprechaun, the unmistakable Michigan "M," and the silhouette of the Texas Longhorn (Franks, 1982; Lessiter, 1989; Sloan & Watts, 1993). Athletic nicknames and logos are powerful cultural symbols because they not only evoke allegiance to an institution's athletic teams but also may be instrumental in shaping the image of the entire college or university (Gilbert, 1998; Slowikowski, 1993).

However, some nicknames are not so uniformly appreciated. At most recent count, more than 60 colleges and universities currently use nicknames—such as "Indians," "Braves," "Chiefs," "Tribe," and "Savages"—that are deeply disliked because they either refer to Native Americans or are associated with institutional symbols (e.g., logos or mascots) that depict Native Americans in denigrating ways (Rodriguez, 1998).¹ The use of such nicknames and symbols, say their critics, demeans Native Americans by reducing them to caricatures and stereotypes. Yet, to alumni, students, and other faithful supporters of these institutions and their athletic teams, the nicknames and logos represent

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long-standing traditions. And they agree that rather than denigrating Native Americans, such nicknames serve to honor tribes that might otherwise be forgotten.

As a result of such passionate and contentious opinions about Native American-related nicknames for collegiate athletic teams, many colleges and universities find themselves responding to critics of these symbols as well as to boosters who dearly embrace them (Monaghan, 1992; Shea, 1993). For these institutions, what was originally chosen as a clever nickname for a college sports team often prompts rancorous debate and pitched battles that reach even beyond the campus to involve state and federal policymakers. How can a nickname or image that once seemed innocuous and played a key part in fostering institutional affiliation become so divisive? To understand the importance of these nicknames to an institution and its stakeholders, more must be learned about the history of these nicknames—namely, how they were chosen and how they evolved to occupy a place in the institution's culture. Such analysis might provide useful insights into not only what social attitudes may have influenced the selection but also to what extent attitudes toward the use of Native American-related nicknames have changed.

In this article I examine the origins of three postsecondary institutions' Native American-related nicknames and symbols, trace their evolution, and discuss the controversies that have surrounded them during the past three decades. These three particular U.S. universities were selected for study because the particulars of each case promised to be illuminating (Stake, 1995).

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) is the largest university in the nation with a Native American-related nickname, the "Fighting Illini." The U of I, which enjoys national prestige for both its academic and athletic endeavors, has been steadfast in its refusal to change its nickname or discontinue the performances of its well-known mascot, "Chief Illiniwek," at athletic events. The second institution, Miami University in Ohio, is distinctive in that, up until recently, the nickname "Redskins" was formally sanctioned by the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma. The university deflected criticism of its use of the nickname and related images by pointing to its unique relationship with the Miami Tribe, which in 1972 issued a statement formally proclaiming its support for the "Redskins" nickname. However, in 1996 the leadership of the Miami Tribe voted unanimously to withdraw its endorsement of the nickname, leading the university to change its nickname to "Red-Hawks." Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti was selected as the third case because it changed its nickname from "Hurons" to "Eagles" in 1991. EMU's decision to drop entirely its use of the "Hurons" nickname

and associated symbols was met with vociferous and persistent opposition, providing a glimpse of the resistance and consequences that may accompany institutional efforts to abandon Native American-related nicknames.

The following questions were used to focus the cases:

- When and how were these nicknames chosen, and to what extent did their selection reflect social attitudes of the age?
- How were logos and other symbols (e.g., an Indian head) developed and used over time to reinforce the identity suggested by the nickname?
- How have institutions responded to concerns of Native Americans and others who claim that such names and symbols are racist and can no longer be considered appropriate or honorable?

Historical data were gathered using archival documents located at UTUC, MU, and EMU that included yearbooks, newspaper articles, memoranda, and sports information publications. This information was supplemented by drawing upon sources of historical information about Native American tribes as well as current and historical information about the three institutions.

Because most people know so little about contemporary Native Americans and their history, some background information about the Native American tribe associated with the nickname introduces each case. Then, after a brief description of the institution, the selection of the nickname or mascot is examined. A summary of the controversy over ending the use of the nickname concludes each case. Following the review of the three cases is a discussion of the two social attitudes that likely influenced the selection and promotion of the institutions' nickname and symbols and how these attitudes still shape the justifications for keeping them. Finally, implications for institutional policy are discussed.

The University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign

The Illinois Tribes

Prior to the late 18th century, the mid-Mississippi River valley was dominated by the Illinois, or Illini,² a confederation of Algonquian-speaking tribes that included the Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Michigamea, Peoria, and Tamaroa. As a result of intertribal conflicts spurred by European encroachment, the Illini were nearly eradicated by 1769, and their lands were claimed first by other tribes and then by White settlers moving westward. After ceding their remaining land to the U.S. government in

1803, remaining members of two Illini tribes, the Peoria and the Kaskaskia, were relocated first to Kansas, then to Oklahoma. Although the Peoria's status as a federally recognized tribe was terminated by the federal government in 1950, it was eventually restored in 1978. Today, the Peoria Tribe of Oklahoma owns 39 acres in northeastern Oklahoma and has a tribal enrollment of nearly 2000, 400 of whom live in the trust area. The Peoria maintain what little of Illini culture remains, presenting traditional songs and dances of Illini people at tribal ceremonials (Davis, M. B., 1994; Grant, 1994; Sultzman, 1997b).

The University

The University of Illinois, the state's land-grant institution, was founded in 1867 as Illinois Industrial University in a field halfway between the Urbana courthouse and the Illinois Central train station in Champaign (Ebert, 1967; Rudolph, 1965/1990). It adopted its current name in 1885, and in 1895 the U of I was one of seven founding institutions of the Intercollegiate Conference of Faculty Representatives, an organization now known as the Big Ten Athletic Conference (Eubanks, 1976; Hyman & White, 1977). Today, the U of I in Urbana-Champaign is the state's flagship campus and among the nation's largest universities. It enrolls almost 28,000 undergraduates and 9,000 graduate and professional students (UIUC Office of Public Affairs, 1998), and its alumni association has more than 122,000 members (J. Rank, personal communication, December 16, 1999).

"Chief Illiniwek"

The adoption of the nickname "Illini" by the University of Illinois has an uncertain origin. It first appeared on the campus in 1874 when the student newspaper changed its name from the *Student* to the *Illini*. When this name was first used by the university's athletic teams is not clear, according to the University Archives (R. Chapel, personal communication, April 6, 1996).³ However, although Native American activists and supporters have been critical of the nickname "Fighting Illini," they have tended to focus more of their effort on ending the appearances of "Chief Illiniwek," the university "symbol." Its history at the institution is more certain and its symbolic significance under greater debate.

Although published accounts describing the first appearance of "The Chief" disagree on minor details, they all claim that Chief Illiniwek first appeared on October 30, 1926, during half-time of a football game between Illinois and the University of Pennsylvania (Borchers, 1959; Pearson, M., 1995).⁴ As part of a stunt, an Illinois student, Lester Leutwiler, appeared in a homemade Indian costume and met at mid-field another

Illinois student dressed in a Quaker outfit as Pennsylvania's founder, William Penn. After the two shook hands, Leutwiler became the first to perform what would become an Illinois tradition: the dance of Chief Illiniwek.⁵ The stunt was so well received that Leutwiler was asked to perform the half-time dance at subsequent football matches, which he did through the 1927 season, when Illinois claimed its fourth national football championship in 13 years, and until his graduation in 1929 (Eubanks, 1976).

The second Chief Illiniwek, Webber Borchers, was the first to appear in a costume made by Native Americans. After hitchhiking to the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota in the summer of 1930, Borchers was put in contact with "an old Indian woman" who agreed to oversee the making of an "authentic" costume. When the University of Illinois' football team traveled to New York City to play Army in Yankee Stadium in November 1930, Borchers appeared in the new costume as the Chief, leading the Illinois band down Fifth Avenue prior to the game and performing a dance at half-time (Borchers, 1959). Since then, students playing Chief Illiniwek have worn five different outfits made by Native Americans, the most recent of which was presented to the university in 1983 by Chief Frank Fools Crow of the Oglala-Lakota Sioux (Official Fighting Illini Sports Website, 1998).

Beginning in the late 1960s, increased Indian activism forced the United States to acknowledge the many concerns of Native Americans, and among them was the use of Native American-related nicknames and logos by both professional and collegiate sports teams. Institutions of higher education such as Stanford University and Dartmouth College, whose teams were called the "Indians," and the University of Massachusetts, whose teams were named the "Redmen," discontinued the use of their Native American-related nicknames during this era (Monaghan, 1992). The University of Illinois, too, was forced to confront this issue. Concern over the use of the Chief was first documented in 1975. Bonnie Fultz, an executive board member of Citizens for the American Indian Movement (AIM), was quoted in the *Illio*, the university's yearbook: "Chief Illiniwek is a mockery not only of Indian customs but also of white people's culture" ("A challenge to the Chief," 1975, p. 154). AIM member and U of I professor of anthropology Norma Linton added that Chief Illiniwek was an inaccurate composite: "The idea of symbols from several different tribes mashed together angers Indians" ("A challenge to the Chief," 1975, p. 154). Efforts to bring an end to Chief Illiniwek during this time had little support. The University's only response to AIM's demands was to remove the symbol of Chief Illiniwek from all official stationery ("A challenge to the Chief," 1975). However, this concession

became moot just a few years later when the university adopted a new official logo—a depiction of a male Native American head with a feather head dress and chest plate—that was used not only by athletic teams but also throughout the university (McGovern, 1995).

The controversy aroused in the 1970s eventually subsided, and public antipathy toward Chief Illiniwek and the “Fighting Illini” nickname remained muted until the late 1980s, when the movement to force the university to discontinue the use of the Chief again gained momentum. In 1989 a student-led group fought to raise the issue with the university’s administration (Chang, 1989). Charlene Teters, an UIUC student and Spokane Indian who performed traditional dances, explained in a public debate that the Chief Illiniwek dance was not an authentic Indian dance but “a gymnastics routine” (Anderson, 1989, p. 1). Although UIUC Chancellor Morton Weir decided to allow the Chief to remain, he did stipulate that “inappropriate derivatives” of the Indian symbol, such as war paint on the faces of cheerleaders and a painted Roman letter “I” on the Chief’s face would no longer be allowed (Davis, R., 1989; Monaghan, 1992). Weir also asked Illini fans to stop wearing costumes and war paint.

Because the UIUC chancellor’s decision did not quell the controversy, the university’s Board of Trustees agreed to address the issue and set university policy regarding the use of the Chief. After hearing testimony in October 1990 from two Native American groups that objected to the use of Chief Illiniwek, the United Indian Nation of Oklahoma and the Indian Treaty Rights Committee of Chicago, the board voted 7–1 to keep the Chief (Griffin, 1990; Jouzaitis, 1990; Lederman, 1990). In an effort to articulate its own stance in the campus debate, the UIUC Student Government Association voted 34–2 in March 1991 to approve a resolution stating that the university should cease using the Chief as its symbol (Sherman, 1991).

By this time, the controversy over Chief Illiniwek reached beyond the UIUC campus. Fellow Big Ten institutions Minnesota and Wisconsin enacted policies in 1993, stating that their football teams would no longer play teams outside the conference that had Native American nicknames, such as the Florida State Seminoles. Although the policies did not apply to these institutions’ contests with conference rival Illinois, they nevertheless sent a message about the propriety of such types of team nicknames and symbols (“U. of Wisconsin,” 1993). In the same year, the University of Iowa forbade images of Native Americans—including Chief Illiniwek—on its campus during its homecoming football game with Illinois because American Indians were offended during a

homecoming event two years earlier when students drew pictures of Indians being stabbed ("Two Campuses Debate," 1993).

In 1994 a group of Native Americans affiliated with the university filed a discrimination complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR), claiming that the use of the Chief contributed to a racially hostile environment for them (Pearson, R., 1992). In December 1995 the Office of Civil Rights concluded a 20-month investigation and ruled that the use of offensive symbols by universities did not by itself constitute illegal discrimination against Native Americans by the University of Illinois (McGovern, 1995). Although the OCR acknowledged the "perceived offensiveness" of the Chief Illiniwek symbol, the OCR said this was irrelevant to the legal issues in the case, which rested upon finding sufficient evidence that Native Americans were subjected to a racially hostile environment at the Urbana-Champaign campus. Because this case was the first the OCR had considered regarding a college or university mascot, it was viewed as a test of how the Education Department would balance free-speech rights against the complaints of minority students. University officials, in praising the decision, acknowledged that "some are offended" by the use of the Chief and added that the university would make every effort to continue the tradition "in a respectful manner" (Jaschik, 1995, p. A29).

Debate over the continued presence of the Chief has persisted in various forms. A documentary titled *In Whose Honor?*, produced and directed by an Illinois alumnus who favored the elimination of Native American-related nicknames and mascots, introduced the university's controversy to a national audience (Rosenstein, 1997). In March 1998 the Urbana-Champaign Faculty-Student Senate voted 97-29 to pass a non-binding resolution to retire the Chief (Olson, 1998). In spite of this and numerous other efforts by students and faculty to demonstrate growing support for dropping the Chief (Farnell, 1998; Gunderson, 1998), the UIUC trustees have remained resolute, indicating they will not consider any further action on the matter of Chief Illiniwek until "substantive, important, and new information" is brought before them (Hendricks, 1998, p. 1).

Miami University of Ohio

The Miami Tribes

The Miami Indians, like the Illini, once were an Algonquin-speaking association of tribes who lived around the Great Lakes, primarily in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.⁶ The Miami first made contact with Euro-

peans in 1668; later, they provided the scouts who guided Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet to the Mississippi River in 1673. Like other tribes, the Miami were pushed from their homelands as White settlers moved westward. The Miami lost most of their homeland in Ohio (11.8 million acres) with the signing of the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, and in 1809 (the year Miami University was founded) they ceded another 3 million acres in southern Indiana and Illinois to the United States government. By 1840 the Miami had lost nearly all of their remaining land in Indiana. In 1846 the U.S. government forcefully divided the Miami into two groups. One group of more than 600 Miami were relocated to Kansas territory in 1846 and then moved again to Oklahoma in 1867. The second group of between 500 and 1,500 Miami remained in Indiana, where they gradually lost their land to land speculators and tax sales by 1900. Although both the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma and the Miami Tribe of Indiana were initially accorded federal recognition, an administrative order by the assistant U.S. attorney general terminated the federal recognition of the Indiana Miami in 1897, claiming that the Miami who had been relocated to Oklahoma were the "official" Miami nation. The Oklahoma Miami, with a tribal roll of more than 1,600, currently have 160 acres held in trust near Miami, Oklahoma, where the tribe maintains its tribal headquarters. However, the Indiana Miami, concentrated principally in Allen, Huntington, and Miami counties and numbering more than 6,000 members, have been denied recognition by the U.S. government as recently as 1992 and consequently do not share the education, health care, and legal rights given their Oklahoma kin (Davis, M. B., 1994; Grant, 1994; Sultzman, 1998).

The University

Chartered by the Ohio General Assembly in 1809 and established in the town of Oxford, Miami University enjoys the distinction of being the second oldest state-assisted institution of higher learning west of the Allegheny Mountains and the seventh oldest in the nation. Known as "Miami University" from the time of its inception, the institution was named in honor of the Miami Tribe, who had occupied southwestern Ohio prior to 1795 and were yet living in what would later become the state of Indiana. The Miami were closely associated with the area where the campus was established; to construct one of the university's first halls in 1812, Miami burial mounds had to be leveled (Havighurst, 1969; Rudolph, 1990).

Today, MU enrolls more than 20,000 students, including 16,000 at its Oxford campus and more than 2,000 at each of its Hamilton and Middletown campuses. Considered a "public ivy," MU has been earned na-

tional recognition for its outstanding undergraduate instruction (Miami University, 1998).

The “Redskins” Nickname

Intercollegiate athletics started at MU in 1888. Through the first twenty years of organized competition, MU teams had no nicknames, although they adopted their team colors of red and white during this time. For the next two decades, sports teams at MU were known by a variety of nicknames—“the Miami Boys,” “the Big Reds,” “the Reds,” and “the Red and Whites” (“A Chronology,” 1993; Miami University Office of the President, 1996). In 1928, forty years after MU athletics were first organized, publicity director R. J. McGinnis began calling the MU teams “Redskins.” An alumni newsletter offered this explanation for the choice:

Since the state is overrun with Bearcats, Wildcats, Bobcats, Musketeers, and other such-like small deer, members of the Athletic Department went into a huddle not long ago and decided that Miami teams ought to have a moniker and a symbol. As the very name of Miami is taken from an Indian tribe and the term “Big Reds” smacks of Redskins and the warpath, an Indian brave in warlock and feathers was thought to be a suitable insignia. This will be found displayed at appropriate places and on appropriate occasions. It is hoped that with the injection of the Big Reds into the Buckeye forests some of the wildcats, bearcats, and other cats will be exterminated or at least tamed. (“‘Big Reds’,” 1930, p. 22)

During the 1950s the use of Indian caricatures at athletic events became more prominent. Students dressed as Indians appeared as part of the marching band, and the band’s bass drum featured a cartoonish depiction of an Indian. In the 1960s, the band’s Indian mascot was replaced with “Hiawabop,” a student dressed as a Plains Indian in a war bonnet and painted face who wielded a tomahawk and helped lead cheers (“A Chronology,” 1993).

Spurred in part by the increase in Indian activism during the late 1960s, the university established a formal relationship with the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma. In 1972, when other institutions including Stanford and Dartmouth were eliminating their Native American-related nicknames, MU president Phillip Shriver appointed a task force to examine the ways in which the university was using Indian symbols and consider whether the “Redskins” nickname should be abandoned. Although the review committee voted 5–2 to retain the “Redskins” nickname, it acknowledged the importance of eliminating derogatory caricatures of American Indians. In its report dated August 1972, the committee’s recommendations included eliminating all derogatory caricatures of Indians

(including Hiawabop), using only authentic Indian symbols and artifacts, changing the name of a campus dining hall to something other than “The Redskin Reservation,” and creating scholarships for qualified applicants from the Miami tribe (“Report of Ad Hoc,” 1972; “A Chronology,” 1993).

To show its support of the university and its decision to retain the “Redskins” nickname, the Miami tribe passed a resolution in September 1972 affirming the emerging relationship between it and the university. The resolution stated, in part, the following:

Whereas, it is our counsel that the name Redskins is a revered and honored name in the eyes and hearts of the people of Miami University, and that it signifies to them as to us the qualities of courage, self-discipline, respect, kindness, honesty, and love exemplified by generations of young athletes, therefore, know all peoples that we of Miami blood are proud to have the name Miami Redskins carried with honor by the athletic representation of Miami University on the playing fields of Mid America and in the arena of the world in international Olympic competition. (Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, 1972, n. p.)

Throughout the 1970s the university implemented many of the recommendations made by the task force, such as the establishment of full scholarships for qualified members of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma and the creation of a formal liaison between MU and the tribe (“Effort To Dignify,” 1972). Hiawabop’s replacement, “Chief Miami,” made his debut in 1977 at a basketball game between MU and the Eastern Michigan “Hurons” (“Chief Miami To Make,” 1977). The MU student who first played the Chief had prepared for his performance by visiting the Miami tribe in Oklahoma and appeared during the MU-EMU game wearing a red-and-white costume created with the assistance of the head of protocol and dance instruction for the Miami Tribe. Like Chief Illiniwek, Chief Miami was considered a dignified representative of an American Indian tribe who performed a ceremonial (and purportedly authentic) dance during athletic competitions.

The Miami Tribe’s 1972 endorsement appeared to allay some concerns over the University’s use of the “Redskins” nickname. However, the issue reemerged on campus in the early 1990s, when the appearance of both the Cleveland Indians and the Atlanta Braves in the 1993 World Series brought national attention to the issue of using Native American-related nicknames. MU President Paul G. Risser, perhaps influenced by a bill introduced in the Ohio legislature seeking to force teams such as MU’s and the Cleveland Indians to drop their American Indian nicknames, promised to address the university’s use of the nickname (“Ohio Hopes,” 1993). In 1993 the MU campus community discussed whether

to replace the “Redskins” nickname, and a university task force was convened to examine the issue. The compromise that President Risser subsequently suggested to the university’s Board of Trustees reflected the difficulty of crafting a solution that would please all concerned groups. Emphasizing the importance of each individual’s personal choice to use a term that may or may not be considered disrespectful, Risser asked that

(a) Only those University athletic organizations and athletic publications currently using the nickname “Redskin” may continue to use the nickname. . . . The use of the nickname “Redskin” shall not be expanded beyond representations where it currently appears. . . . [and] (b) All other organizations sponsored by the University and official publications of the University not covered above will use the term ‘Miami Tribe’ as the nickname of the athletic teams. . . . The University’s linkage with a proud Native American people, even in the very name of the institution, can be preserved with dignity indefinitely through the use of the words “Miami Tribe.” (Risser, 1993)

Rather than mandating that the “Redskins” nickname no longer be used, which ran the risk of angering MU alumni and possibly the Miami Tribe, Risser’s plan sought to offer a different yet related nickname as an attractive alternative and then encourage individuals to adopt it (Risser, 1996). In time, the president hoped, a collective choice of “Tribe” would lead to the eventual disintegration of “Redskins.” In December 1993 the Board of Trustees approved President Risser’s plan in a vote of 4–3 (“Board Votes to Accept,” 1993; Wolff, 1993). The Miami Tribe, which had been consulted during the decision-making process, had agreed in advance to support the university’s decision regardless of the outcome (Leonard, 1993). With the trustees’ approval of the president’s plan, official campus debate was closed.

However, Risser’s attempt to craft a “win-win” solution satisfied few in the campus community. The director of the Miami Valley Council for Native Americans called the trustees’ decision “a cop-out” (Wolff, 1993, p. 1), and an MU professor said “Risser left everyone despairing at the sheer wishy-washyness of his non-resolution” (Lesniewski, 1996). The time and energy expended by the campus community to resolve this issue seemed to have borne little meaningful change.

In July 1996 the long-standing foundation beneath the university’s justification for keeping the “Redskins” nickname—the explicit endorsement of the nickname by the Miami tribal leadership—was suddenly withdrawn. In a formal resolution that rescinded its earlier statements of support, the leadership of the Miami Tribe unanimously declared:

Whereas: We realize that society changes, and that what was intended to be a tribute to both Miami University and to the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, is no longer perceived as positive by some members of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, Miami University, and society at large;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma can no longer support the use of the nickname Redskins and [we] suggest that the Board of Trustees of Miami University discontinue the use of Redskins and other Indian related nicknames, in connection with its athletic teams, effective with the end of the 1996–97 academic school year. (“Miami Tribe No Longer,” 1996; “Miami U. Abandons,” 1996)

In order to comply with the Miami Tribe’s wishes and maintain what the university had long described as its deeply respectful relationship with the Tribe, the MU Board of Trustees voted 7–1 in September 1996 to discard the “Redskins” nickname, following the Tribe’s July proclamation by less than two months. However, in keeping with a particular request of the Miami Tribe, the university acknowledged it planned to keep its Indian-head logo, such as that appearing on its football stadium (Lesniewski, 1996). Newly appointed president James Garland was charged by the trustees with overseeing the selection of a new nickname. In April 1997 the MU trustees voted unanimously to accept “Red-Hawks” as the new nickname for its athletic teams (“Miami U. To Shed,” 1997). Although the university began using the new nickname in Fall 1997, a lawsuit was filed in county court seeking to block the nickname change on the grounds that the MU trustees violated Ohio’s sunshine law by secretly discussing the nickname change (“Miami U. To Shed,” 1997).

Eastern Michigan University

The Huron Tribes

The Huron/Wyandot nation once was a powerful federation of four Iroquois tribes that occupied a small portion of the northern banks of the Saint Lawrence River in central Ontario.⁷ However, their numbers began to drop precipitously following European contact as a result of epidemics of hitherto unknown diseases and a series of trade-related conflicts with other tribes. After being nearly wiped out in 1647 in a fierce Iroquois attack, the remaining Wyandot spent the next 50 years wandering as refugees through Wisconsin, Minnesota, and upper Michigan. By 1701 the few Hurons who had not been either captured by Iroquois tribes or given refuge by other tribes had settled in the Ohio Valley between what are now the cities of Detroit and Cleveland; there they were known as the Wyandot. In March 1842 the Wyandot were forced to cede their lands in Michigan and Ohio to the U.S. government and were relo-

cated to Kansas in 1845 and later to Oklahoma in 1857. Today, there are two tribes, Oklahoma Wyandot and Kansas Wyandot; only the Oklahoma Tribe has federal recognition, having regained it in 1978 after it was terminated in 1956. The Oklahoma Wyandot have a tribal enrollment of nearly 4,000 and collectively own 192 acres (Davis, M. B., 1994; Grant, 1994; Hinsdale, 1930; Sultzman, 1997a).

The University

Michigan State Normal School was founded in 1849 in the town of Ypsilanti, a site on the Huron River where Wyandot burial grounds were located until about 1851, when White residents disinterred “relics” such as skeletons, weapons, and jewelry (Colburn, 1923). Chartered as a teachers college, the institution underwent subsequent name changes in 1899 (Michigan State Normal College), 1956 (Eastern Michigan College), and 1959 (Eastern Michigan University). As Michigan’s fifth-largest state-assisted institution, EMU currently offers more than 200 undergraduate and graduate programs to an enrollment of more than 23,000 students. Ninety percent of their students are Michigan residents, and roughly 1,500 are graduate students. The alumni association claims more than 110,000 known members. EMU’s athletic teams compete at the NCAA Division I-A level (Eastern Michigan University, 1998a; Eastern Michigan University, 1998b).

The “Hurons” Nickname

Like those of Miami University, EMU’s athletics teams were first known by a number of unofficial nicknames such as “Men from Ypsi” and “Normalites.” In 1929 the Men’s Union of the Michigan State Normal College, in cooperation with the Women’s League, initiated a contest to choose an official nickname for the college’s sports teams. The nickname “Hurons” was selected from student suggestions by a committee of three faculty members; the second-choice nickname was the “Pioneers” (“Nickname Contest,” 1929; “Hurons Is Chosen,” 1929; Lessiter, 1989).

The “Hurons” nickname remained in use by athletic teams at the Ypsilanti campus despite two subsequent changes of the institution’s name. Eventually, a logo depicting an Indian was created and used as a graphic identity for both the athletic teams and the institution. How EMU responded to complaints about its “Hurons” nickname during the early 1970s is unclear, but like Illinois and Miami, EMU opted to keep its nickname (Franks, 1982).

In 1988 the Michigan Civil Rights Commission recommended that all state educational institutions, including four colleges and universities,

discontinue their use of Indian names and logos, which they said were "stereotypic, racist, and discriminatory" ("EMU Drops Nickname," 1991; McLean, 1991). At the request of EMU President William Shelton in February 1989, a campus committee surveyed students, staff, faculty, and alumni and organized debates and discussions regarding a change in the use of the nickname and logo. After nearly a year, the committee voted 8–6 to keep both the "Hurons" nickname and Indian-head logo. At a September 1990 meeting, the EMU Board of Regents received the committee's recommendation and asked President Shelton to provide them with a final decision on the matter (McLean, 1991).

In January 1991 Shelton subsequently asked the regents to approve the discontinuation of the "Hurons" nickname and authorize the adoption of a new identity. As Shelton explained in a statement to the regents, "There was really only one dominant issue which steadfastly drew my attention: What is the responsibility of an institution of higher learning? Is there a higher obligation entrusted to the academic community in a democratic society?" His answer: "As an educational institution, I do not believe that we can justify the continued use of symbols which we now know offend and denigrate, however unintentionally, members of our community" ("Use of the Huron," 1991). On January 30, 1991, the regents voted unanimously to drop the nickname and the logo ("EMU Drops," 1991; "EMU To Change," 1991).

At their May meeting, the regents selected "Eagles" as the university's new nickname, and in August 1991, they approved a design for a new athletic logo that was created by several EMU students ("EMU Committee Selects," 1991; "EMU Logo Unveiled," 1991).

The decision to replace both the "Hurons" nickname and the Indian-head logo was met with vociferous and persistent opposition. Among those protesting their elimination were two representatives of the Huron-Wyandot tribe, Grand Chief Max Gros-Louis and Chief Leaford Bearskin. Gros-Louis said in a letter to President Shelton, "I can assure you the Huron logo of EMU is viewed by our nation as a symbol of honor and integrity." Stating his case more strongly, Bearskin said, "The action taken to discontinue the Huron logo was much more degrading to the culture of my people than leaving it alone and viewing it as a symbol of honor and integrity" ("Once A Huron," n. d.). Following the decision in May to adopt the "Eagles" nickname, a group known as EMU Huron Restoration, Inc. mounted a campaign to restore the tribe's name and even attempted to secure a legal injunction to prohibit the university from using the "Eagles" nickname and logo ("Huron Fans Consider," 1991; Eshenroder, 1991). Within several months of the decision, more than 75 alumni canceled their memberships in the EMU alumni associa-

tion, and several alumni angrily removed EMU from their will. According to records obtained by Huron Restoration, EMU's total donations dropped from \$2.3 million in fiscal 1990 to \$1.9 million in fiscal 1991. As one graduate said, "No Hurons, no money" ("Hurons Become Eagles" 1991; "Eastern Michigan U. Alumni " 1991). In early 1995, more than three and a half years after the trustees' decision, the university administration warned the Huron Restoration Alumni Chapter to stop using the "Hurons" nickname and logo, saying its continued use amounted to copyright infringement ("Cheer Eagle, Not Indian," 1995). As late as 1996, heated letters about the nickname issue continued to appear in the student newspaper at least weekly. Although the controversy diminished in magnitude, many angry alumni and students continue to promise that "Huron restoration is not a matter of if, but when."

What's in a (Nick)Name?

These three institutions share noteworthy similarities. All three are Midwestern, state-assisted institutions that currently provide a large number of degree programs to enrollments of at least 20,000 students. At all three universities, their nicknames and symbols sparked bitter and persistent debate between campus stakeholders, leaving the president and institution's governing board with the impossible task of making a decision that would satisfy them all. Finally, and perhaps most telling, all three institutions chose and popularized their nicknames (in the case of MU and EMU) or mascot (in the case of UIUC) about the same time, the late 1920s and the early 1930s. What was it during this era that permitted, if not encouraged, the adoption of this type of nickname?

Two social trends likely contributed to the selection and development of these institutions' nicknames and symbols. The first was the objectification of Native Americans as "good Indians," and the second was the rise of the collegiate "booster culture." Although both social phenomena existed at a national level of consciousness, the latter trend affected postsecondary institutions in particular.

Objectification of Native Americans

Since the arrival of Columbus, Euro-Americans have consistently portrayed Native Americans stereotypically (Berkhofer, 1978; Mihesuah, 1996). Whites' misrepresentations of Native Americans were often dualistic, portraying them either as bloodthirsty, "uncivilized" savages or as friendly, subservient "noble" innocents. How Native Americans were represented depended largely on the hegemonic objectives of Whites. When Euro-Americans sought to dominate the North American conti-

ment, their portrayal of Native Americans as being aggressive, wild, godless, and duplicitous justified Euro-American efforts (usually aggressive and duplicitous themselves) to “civilize” the native inhabitants. However, around the turn of the 20th century, when the national project to remove Indians was largely completed, Whites grew nostalgic for this “vanished race.” Consequently, sympathetic (yet nevertheless stereotypical) representations of Native Americans became more common in popular entertainment, beginning with Wild West shows and continuing in movies and other popular media that featured “sidekick” characters such as the Lone Ranger’s, Tonto, who epitomized White notions of Indian trustworthiness, stoicism, stamina, natural athleticism, and dignity in bearing (Berkhofer, 1978; Davis, L. R., 1993). These romanticized representations were in turn exploited by commercial businesses to sell products such as Red Cloud chewing tobacco, Indian motorcycles, and Kickapoo Indian medicinal salve (Green, 1979).

It was during an era when popularizing and merchandising the “good” Indian had become commonplace that the nicknames of Miami and Eastern Michigan and the Illinois mascot were chosen. In fact, many college sports teams that have adopted Native American nicknames did so during the 1920s (Davis, L. R., 1993; Franks, 1982). Whether consciously or unconsciously, choosing these nicknames capitalized on the objectification of the Native Americans and the admiration for the idealized traits associated with Indian stereotypes, such as “endurance, rhythm, time, coordination, sense perception, an uncanny ability to get over any sort of terrain at night, and . . . an enthusiasm for fighting” (Ickes, as cited in Takaki, 1993, p. 389). As the explanation given for Miami’s adopting the “Redskins” nickname suggests, these institutions wanted names and symbols that reflected desirable characteristics associated with “good” Indians: natural athleticism, stamina, stoicism, modesty, bravery, and just enough aggression and ferocity to satisfy the competitive nature of athletics (“‘Big Reds’,” 1930, p. 22).

What this practice meant, however, is that the only Native Americans most Whites ever “knew” were stereotypes appearing in movies, dime novels, and on commercial products. Instead of seeing *Native Americans* as fellow human beings who were struggling to resist marginalization, mainstream America saw only *Indians*, frozen in time, a face on an Indian head nickel. Rather than dealing with the painful reality of Native Americans’ marginalization, Whites preferred to cling to “the White man’s Indian”—sentimentalized stereotypes and caricatures of their own construction. Indian-related symbols—including product names, nicknames and symbols—did not represent Native Americans; rather, they were souvenirs of White cultural domination.

Regional Pride and Booster Culture

The second significant social trend that likely influenced the selection and legitimization of the three institutions' nicknames and symbols was the rise of collegiate athletics and its role in fostering regional pride. The decades of the 1920s and 1930s were a propitious time for U.S. higher education. Not only did student enrollments swell by nearly five times between 1917 and 1937, but America also fell in love with college life and especially collegiate athletics (Michener, 1976; Thelin, 1994). Successful football programs brought national recognition to otherwise undistinguished institutions (e.g., the University of Notre Dame, Centre College in Kentucky), and at public universities and colleges, winning football teams also fostered regional pride. According to one historian of higher education, "The state university came increasingly to be seen by ambitious governors, state legislators, and mayors as a conscious instrument of aspiration. And intercollegiate athletics joined agricultural extension services as a means by which the state university could extend real and symbolic affiliation to all citizens of the state or region" (Thelin, 1994).

As a result of the growing popularity of intercollegiate athletics—first football and later basketball—citizens who had never attended the state university were cheering for its sports teams and claiming them as their own. Over time there emerged a group of people who not only shared an outward and enacted affection for their region's university sports teams but also often felt an implicit pride in the region itself. Membership in this group of enthusiastic athletic boosters had no admission requirements other than to belong to or affiliate with the region or state, believe in and perpetuate the team's saga or myths, and participate in the group's various rituals, be they attending the team's games, wearing or displaying emblems of support, or simply talking positively and passionately with others about the team's fortunes. Because groups of boosters shared values, assumptions, practices, and beliefs, they constructed and participated in what might be called *booster culture*.⁸

Although university alumni, often known for their enduring affection and zeal for an institution's athletic teams, were perhaps the most obvious and largest segment of booster culture, others who may have adhered to the culture's tenets and participated in its activities included high-level administrators, undergraduate students, community members, politicians, influential business officers, members of the news media, university staff, and faculty. Frequently, those most invested in the booster culture were White upper- and middle-class men. Because of significant overlap among their members, booster culture typically shared many values and assumptions, such as prejudices and stereotypes

about persons of color, with dominant social groups or cultures (namely, Whites, males, upper-SES, Christians, and heterosexuals). And, booster culture, like dominant social cultures, acted in ways that ensured its survival, although often in unacknowledged or unseen ways. When plans to discontinue Native American-related nicknames or symbols became evident, it was those who adhered to booster culture who rose to defend what were to them beloved traditions, in the process making explicit their culture's fundamental values and tacit assumptions.

During the 1920s and 1930s, politicians and college administrators both capitalized on the fervor of their region's or state's variation of booster culture. Politicians hoping to gain political advantage from being associated with a "winner" regularly directed the attention of their constituency to the successes of their regional teams, and universities benefitted from increased national prestige and regional affiliation in the form of increased financial assistance from state government and other financial supporters. Because the valuable resources gained from enthusiastic supporters could be used to build up an institution and enhance its prestige, universities encouraged booster culture, sometimes by picking a nickname such as "Buckeyes," "Sooners," or "Hoosiers" that would appeal to and ostensibly represent the citizens of the entire state.

Based on the historical evidence, booster culture appeared to have affected the adoption of the three institutions' nicknames and symbols to different degrees. At Michigan State Normal College (i.e., Eastern Michigan), where the nickname was selected in a week's time by a faculty committee and did not include input from administrators, alumni, or athletics staff, the process for selecting the school's nickname did not necessarily suggest the direct involvement of "members" of the booster culture. Yet, choosing a regionally distinctive nickname like "Hurons" did provide the residents of Ypsilanti and Eastern Michigan with the sort of symbol that could establish and reinforce a region's booster culture. At Miami University, the "Redskins" nickname was simply coined by the university's publicity director, and considering the university took its name from the Miami tribe, the nickname then seemed a sensible way to emphasize a distinctive characteristic of the university as well as acknowledge the history of the region and the institution.

However, it is at the U of I—which clearly had the most established "big-time" athletics program of the three institutions—where the influence of the booster culture is most evident. A founding member of the Big Ten athletic conference, the University of Illinois was regularly playing other well-established football teams such as Chicago, Michigan, Notre Dame, and Penn during the 1920s. Illinois attracted a national audience during this era, largely as a result of the remarkable ath-

letic accomplishments of its star football running back Harold “Red” Grange and winning its third and fourth national football championships in 1923 and 1927.

It was thus significant to the history of Chief Illiniwek and his role in fostering Illinois booster culture that he debuted before a standing-room-only crowd in a large Eastern city while playing the University of Pennsylvania, a well-respected and formidable opponent that also had a sizable national following. The stunt of having “Chief Illiniwek” greet “William Penn” was more than half-time entertainment; it was “East meets Midwest.” Making his first appearance during a decade that represented a critical time in the history of both the institution and its athletic programs, “Chief Illiniwek” was given special symbolic significance by the booster culture, for the Chief represented not only the institution, but—like William Penn—he also represented the state that took his name. Consequently, the Chief became a booster icon—a cultural symbol ardently embraced by the U of I boosters that represented the pride they felt for the Illinois athletic teams (and, indirectly, the state and the institution).

These two social trends of the 1920s—romanticized depictions of Native Americans and the emergence of regional boosterism—not only provide a context for better interpreting the institutions’ decisions to adopt Native American-related nicknames and symbols during that era, but they also appear to explain why these institutions defended their nicknames and symbols for so long. The reasons used by supporters of the Native American nicknames and symbols at all three institutions were consistently similar and can be distilled into three themes.

Claims of respect and cultural sustenance. Unlike many institutions that used Native American-related nicknames and symbols, each of the three institutions profiled in this case study associated its nickname and symbols with a particular Native American tribe that formerly lived in the geographical region where the institution is located.⁹ However, historical records suggest that, other than in name, these universities made no effort to portray the tribes realistically or authentically; rather, these institution’s symbols were nothing more than virtually interchangeable amalgams of headdresses, war paint, fringed buckskin suits, and red-skinned faces. Because all Native Americans were obscured by these stereotypes, Whites considered any differences between tribes to be insignificant. Such an example is found in Chief Illiniwek’s “authentic” costume, made by Lakota-Sioux, a Great Plains tribe, to wear by someone who is supposedly a chief of an Illini tribe, which belonged to a different culture area (Woodlands) and language family (Algonquin)(Farnell, 1998; Gone, 1995).

When such inaccuracies were exposed, boosters responded by *authenticizing* the symbols, or imbuing them with a false, manufactured authenticity. For example, when Chief Hiawabop was exposed as a degrading representation of the Miami tribe, the university responded by making its new mascot, Chief Miami, supposedly more “authentic” with a more realistic costume. Likewise, the University of Illinois responded to complaints that the Chief was nothing more than an institutional invention by authenticizing Chief Illiniwek (i.e., removing the Chief’s inappropriate face paint and giving him a more “realistic” dance). The process of authenticization also included making the spurious distinction between authenticized symbols and traditional team mascots and equating public exhibitions of human mascots with cultural performances, not cheerleading. Boosters attached only the noblest intentions to authenticized symbols, saying in effect, “See how respectful and proud we are of Native Americans that we would make such efforts to portray the tribe more realistically.” Oftentimes, boosters not only claimed that Native American cultures were being remembered and sustained with authenticized symbols, but they also suggested that doing away with these symbols would encourage forgetting Native Americans’ history as well as overlooking their current political interests (Gone, 1995).

However, authenticizing symbols proved not to be a reliable defense for boosters. In many cases, protesters asserted that making a mascot or logo less cartoonish and more realistic only emphasized how humiliating and oppressive using a Native American image as a sports logo or half-time cheerleader feels to living Native Americans. When defending human mascots, such as Chief Illiniwek, boosters sometimes attempted to dodge this charge by claiming the mascot, although authenticized, was nevertheless fictitious and should not be interpreted as the misrepresentation of an actual human being (Fontenot, 1997). An Illinois state representative and UIUC alumnus implied why an invented mascot was nevertheless important to keep:

I realize that there was probably no such person as Chief Illiniwek, and to some extent, it’s mythological, I suppose. It’s an attempt, I think, by people in Illinois to try to remember a vanished tribe, the Illini tribe, that was apparently annihilated by an opposing Native American tribe in the 1760s—to try to remember their heritage, to do it in a way that’s respectful. (Rosenstein, 1997)

Defending Native American-related nicknames and images as being respectful of Native Americans was a tactic used most often by boosters holding positions accountable to public constituencies (e.g., trustees,

legislators, administrators) who wanted to appear sensitive and inclusive while at the same time seeking to retain symbols that objectified Native Americans.

Comparing Native Americans with other groups. One of the most frequent responses given to Native Americans' complaints about being used as nicknames and mascots is that U.S. ethnic groups did not protest being represented by nicknames such as "Fighting Irish" or "Quakers" or "Britons."

Should ranchers get upset about the Dallas Cowboys? . . . Scandinavians about the Minnesota Vikings? Greeks about the [Michigan State] Spartans? Should people of Irish Catholic descent get upset over the silly fighting leprechaun of Notre Dame? Should the Audubon Society fight over names like the Lions, Tigers, Cardinals, and Orioles? (Begnoche, 1991)

Because Native Americans appeared to be the only group protesting, their concerns were consequently portrayed as being nothing more than cases of "political correctness" and over-sensitivity. Thus, it was suggested, particularly in the popular press, that acknowledging the legitimacy of complaints about Native American nicknames would unleash a flood of similar objections from other over-sensitive groups. In an effort to trivialize the complaints of Native Americans, critics of political correctness made their cases with extreme arguments, as illustrated by one college president's response to nickname controversies:

Our struggle with the PC Police must surely be nearing its zenith. How else can we justify a serious debate about the political correctness of sports mascots. . . . Let's settle this once and for all. I suggest that all college football teams adopt the names of flowers so that we will not offend anyone, anything, or any political movement, correct or otherwise. How about the Florida State Forget-Me-Nots? Who could be offended by the Illinois Fighting Chrysanthemums? Or the UABegonias? The Ole Miss Marigolds would be far less offensive, as would the UMass Hollyhocks. Let's try the Arkansas State Statice! (Jones, 1993)

To Whites, such arguments, while patently absurd, seemed justifiable, because Whites often did not recognize or acknowledge the uniquely oppressive conditions for Native Americans in the United States. As opponents of Native American-related nicknames were fond to point out, the objectification of other ethnic or religious groups as sport nicknames and mascots (e.g., the Detroit Junglebunnies, the Phoenix Wetbacks, the Boston Popes, the New York Shylocks) would seem unimaginable, especially in light of the efforts people of color had made to eliminate other harmful stereotypes (e.g., "Little Black Sambo"). Yet, the Washington Redskins, Kansas City Chiefs, and Cleveland Indians were considered defensible and "harmless" nicknames. The difference with Native Amer-

icans, it appeared, is that they were, as Ward Churchill (1993) writes, “(falsely) perceived as being too few, and therefore too weak, to defend themselves effectively against racist and otherwise offensive behavior” (p. 45). The seeming invisibility of Native Americans was perpetuated by popular media that usually represented historical or contemporary Native Americans as “vanished” mythic figures. In spite of their continued efforts to dispel invidious stereotypes held by the dominant White culture, contemporary Native Americans were nevertheless overlooked in favor of manufactured misrepresentations of them—replicas with no original—that White Americans used to satisfy their nostalgia for a past that never occurred (Davis, L. R., 1993). Speaking to the importance of giving White Americans authentic—not authenticized—representations, one Native American explained:

It will only be when American people realize that Indians are living, twentieth century, honest-to-goodness human beings that our lives, hopes, ideas, and lands will be respected and appreciated. As long as we are stereotyped and abstracted into college and product names, cowboy movie backgrounds, advertising gimmicks and tourist attractions, we will continue to be unreal shadows on the American scene. Even if our request to abandon the use of our names for college teams is irrational and emotional, we ask that it be honored for one reason that should be sufficient if it is really true that you give us respect: We, the people you call Indians, ask that you not use our name that way. That should be reason enough. (Akwesane Notes, as cited in “Report of Ad Hoc,” 1972)

Divided opinions among Native Americans. Not all Native Americans agreed that the institutions’ nicknames and symbols were inappropriate. In the cases involving both Miami University and Eastern Michigan University, leaders of federally recognized tribes endorsed the use of nicknames and symbols that national organizations such as the American Indian Movement and National Congress of American Indians called offensive and racist. Because the University of Illinois claimed that the Illini were extinct (and also would not acknowledge the Peoria Tribe of Oklahoma as the Illini’s cultural heirs), the university could not consult with the tribe it was purportedly representing. Although both national and local Native American advocacy groups pressed the U of I to drop the Chief, the university ignored their protests and instead featured the opinions of a few Native Americans not affiliated with the institution who were willing to state publicly they found nothing offensive about the Chief.

When a particular tribe authorized the continued use of a nickname, or when a Native American individual said publicly that nothing was wrong with such nicknames, boosters would smugly claim, “If even the

Indians themselves are for this, then who can be against us?" The fact that not all Native Americans held identical opinions on the matter of nicknames and symbols was routinely exploited by boosters, who said that the symbols need not be discontinued as long as some Native Americans agreed they were not objectionable. Implicit in this argument seemed to be the assumption that only when *all* Native Americans were in agreement would the institution have to acknowledge the legitimacy of their complaint; thus, the institution need not act until Native Americans resolved the matter for themselves first. Yet, as EMU's Shelton demonstrated, institutional leaders did not need to be immobilized by different opinions among Native Americans; like Shelton, they could comply with the wishes of national representative organizations and take the risk of ignoring or defying other Native Americans who may be more immediately involved in the controversy (Shelton, 1991). However, to disregard Native American opinions in order to make a decision that was supposedly "for their own good" appeared patronizing and further reinforced the power disparity between the predominantly White institution and the Native Americans. Thus, while it was essential to include Native American voices when addressing these controversies, it was a mistake for institutional leaders to rely on getting "the" Native American perspective. And, although numerous organizations and tribes that represented Native Americans nationally said unequivocally that Indian nickname and symbols must be eliminated, boosters continued to focus selectively on dissident voices.

The reasons the three institutions used to justify keeping their Native American-related nicknames and symbols were sorted into three general themes that might be summarized as thus: (1) using such nicknames and symbols is a way of respecting and remembering Native Americans; (2) Native Americans are no different from other groups used for nicknames and symbols; and (3) only a militant minority of Native Americans has a problem; the rest of them do not take offense. These themes revealed that the same social attitudes that shaped the selection and popularization of these nicknames and symbols at the three institutions still lay beneath the arguments used to defend them. That is, booster culture, by arguing that Native American-related nicknames did no harm, continued to objectify Native Americans, trivialize their complaints, and ignore their efforts to be recognized and respected. At the heart of the boosters' defense of objectionable nicknames and symbols was a pervasive belief that Native Americans should be invented and not heard.

Moreover, the powerful positive feelings—e.g., pride, affection, nostalgia—that boosters associated with such misconstrued Native American *symbols* as Chief Illiniwek and the Miami Indian-head logo were

clearly not felt about Native American *people*, as boosters often claimed. What these symbols actually represented—and what boosters defended so vehemently—was the strong sense of pride and affiliation boosters felt toward the traditions and values of their *own* culture—of boosterism. Thus, to threaten these dearly loved symbols was to threaten how boosters constructed their own cultural identity.

Why Native American-related Nicknames and Symbols Persist

Over the past decade, numerous institutions—including Miami University and Eastern Michigan University—have replaced Native American-related nicknames and symbols over the objections of their boosters. Although there was some variation, the processes by which institutions arrived at a decision to drop the nickname or symbol followed a consistent pattern: the administration acknowledged the problem, gathered history and input on the issue from an array of campus stakeholders, reviewed the evidence, and following what was often represented as dispassionate and logical deliberation, the administration announced that as an institution of higher learning it must disassociate itself from what was now seen as offensive. However, if discarding a racist nickname was only a matter of implementing this ostensibly linear, rational process, then what explains the continued resistance at nearly sixty institutions?

To understand why some institutions feel justified in their continued use of Native American-related nicknames, important clues can be found in looking at how booster culture strives to preserve itself. To every institution's booster culture, athletic nicknames, colors, and mascots are important cultural symbols that represent shared values and assumptions (e.g., belief in the goodness of the team and university) and foster group affiliation (e.g., fans wear clothing with team colors to indicate team loyalty). Although nicknames and mascots are intended for use by athletic teams, at institutions composed of increasingly heterogeneous groups and perspectives they may be one of the few things that constitute a common institutional identity. In some cases, distinguishing for which group the symbols are meaningful or symbolic is difficult, as when an institution adopts a logo that is used outside of athletic contexts (e.g., on official stationery and publications), paints campus structures with "school colors," or uses a nickname to refer to members of the campus community who are not student athletes. Thus, to the booster culture and perhaps to the entire institution, nicknames, mascots, logos, and other symbols play a fundamental role in constructing a common culture.

However, to Native Americans, Native American-related nicknames and other images also have highly symbolic meanings that are largely offensive and demeaning; same symbol, very different interpretations. The often emotional conflict over Native American-related nicknames and symbols, then, is like a “custody battle,” a cultural struggle over who is rightfully entitled to control these nicknames and symbols. On one hand, the movement to eliminate Native American-related nicknames and symbols is an effort to end the use of racist stereotypes and return control to Native Americans over a cultural element crucial to their survival: authentic images and representations of themselves in U.S. society. On the other hand, these same symbols have become embedded within the culture of the boosters, who (1) do not consciously associate the nickname or symbol with modern-day Native Americans, and (2) embrace the nickname or symbol for their own group. Thus, it seems inconceivable to boosters that they must sacrifice a central part of their cultural identity and “return” those symbols and images to a group that they hardly recognize. As long as boosters of Native American-related nicknames and symbols are unable to “see” Native Americans as they truly are—and not as the stereotypes that are incessantly promoted—then they see little reason to make such a significant cultural sacrifice.

Furthermore, although many boosters may hold positions of formal authority at the institutions (e.g., campus administrators, trustees, athletics personnel), alumni are boosters who often wield tremendous yet unacknowledged influence in forming institutional policy. For, not only do alumni threaten to end their generous contributions when campus leaders begin discussing dropping a controversial nickname, but state-assisted institutions may face the additional pressure of public policymakers (many of whom are true-blue alums) who seek to resist institutional changes, either through force of law or with threats of decreased state allocations. Even at institutions (such as UIUC) where faculty and student governance bodies have formally supported efforts to retire its nickname or mascot, the power exercised by booster culture may be nearly impossible to overcome. Indeed, in spite of what might cautiously be called a trend among numerous institutions to drop or change Native American-related nicknames or symbols, there is no compelling evidence that this study’s lone holdout—UIUC—will join their ranks anytime soon, in spite of continued opposition by numerous students, faculty, staff, and even alumni.¹⁰ Because of the tremendous influence booster culture holds at large, state-assisted (in some cases, flagship) institutions as well as in the regions they serve, it is quite likely that large public universities with Native American-related nicknames and symbols (e.g., UIUC, Florida State University, the University of Utah) will face the most stub-

born and widespread resistance, leaving them among the last to change—if ever.

Implications

Native American-related nicknames will continue to be a contentious issue not only for the sixty or so institutions still using them but also for institutions that have recently changed them, such as Miami and Eastern Michigan, where members of the booster culture still feel angry, betrayed, and resentful toward the institution. Although each of these institutions may seek to meet the same short-term goal of replacing their nickname or mascot, the larger project of facilitating meaningful changes in campus cultures occurs in different ways at differing rates, particularly when such changes include the redistribution of institutional power and influence. It would be overpromising, therefore, to suggest any single recipe for change would work equally well amid the unpredictable and unique factors of each particular institutional context. Rather, it would be more helpful to offer campus leaders useful insights gleaned from the particulars of the cases covered in this study.

First, the case studies suggest that perhaps the most contentious method for addressing a controversial nickname or symbol is for an administration or governing board to uproot the nickname and symbols all at once, as Eastern Michigan did. This is not to say this sort of “shock therapy” might not be effective, but from a cultural perspective, this approach strips an important and influential campus constituency of a part of its identity, which, if taken, they will fight to retain. In contrast, a negotiated approach, characterized by some sense of give-and-take, may help the booster culture surrender shared symbols while giving them time to adapt to changes.

For example, changing the Miami University nickname while keeping the Indian-head logo indicated the institution’s willingness to change an offensive practice but also ameliorated boosters’ concerns about losing their cultural symbols. Bradley University kept its nickname “Braves” but discontinued using Native American-related symbols, a strategy other institutions have taken (“Bradley To Keep,” 1993). Perhaps one of the most creative solutions was crafted by the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, which had used an Indian logo with the nickname “Moccasins.” In 1996, UTC changed its nickname to that of the state bird, “Mockingbirds,” which not only provided a new nickname that could enhance regional affiliation but also allowed their sports teams to still be referred to as the “Mocs” (“Changes In Mascots,” 1997). Of course, the saying that compromise makes a good umbrella but a poor roof applies here as well. Aiming for a “win-win” situation may eventually leave all

concerned parties deeply dissatisfied and unwilling to cooperate. How much change to impose depends on the institutional context.

Second, gathering and disseminating historical information—about both the symbols and the Native Americans associated with them—is crucial to sustaining a change process. Boosters often cleave to inaccurate assumptions about the origin and longevity of their institution's nicknames and symbols. However, such misconceptions can be revised with historically sound data, perhaps demonstrating to boosters that nicknames and especially graphic identities (i.e., logos and mascots) are not as deeply rooted in the institution or as authentic as they might believe.

Likewise, getting boosters to understand how their symbols are stereotypical and racist depends on helping them gain more accurate information about Native Americans as both historical and contemporary peoples. As Stage and Manning (1992) explain in their cultural brokering approach to fostering multicultural environments, moving an institution from a predominantly monocultural perspective to one more multicultural depends on creating opportunities for persons to learn to think more contextually and span cultural boundaries. To truly respect Native American cultures and experiences, boosters must be encouraged when possible to “walk a mile in another’s moccasins,” which, however unpleasant, should include learning more about the injustices Whites have perpetrated against Native Americans.

Third, once institutional leaders concede that the institution’s nickname and symbols are indeed offensive and racist, they often believe (mistakenly) that eliminating the offending nickname will resolve the problem and end the conflict. However, to Native Americans, these nicknames and symbols are not causes of prejudice and stereotyping but instead they are reflections of a greater social disorder. Consequently, when administrators and trustees see the nickname as the only problem, they are treating only symptoms and not the oppressive attitudes and practices they reflect. Because the controversy surrounding a Native American-related nickname can easily become a statewide spectacle, it is not surprising that institutional leaders wish to focus primarily on bringing the controversy to closure. However, as an institution of higher education, the college or university should use the controversy as an opportunity to teach its staff, students and faculty how to identify and expose other emblems of discrimination and prejudice.

Conclusion

So, what *is* in a name? As far as Native American-related nicknames and associated symbols go, not enough to be concerned about, it seems. When ticking off the most urgent social concerns on U.S. college cam-

puses—the erosion of affirmative action, an increasing incidence of incivility, violence, and hate speech—offensive nicknames appear much less compelling. Presenting this issue to most people outside of higher education, even to well-meaning Whites, often elicits responses ranging from outrage to eye rolling. Within the academy, PC-fatigued faculty and students muster only polite indifference, and many persons otherwise sensitive to the problems of institutional racism may not think twice about sitting down to enjoy the sixth game of the World Series between the Braves and the Indians.

These responses reveal how difficult it can be even to direct attention to this issue, let alone reevaluate its priority on the issues “list.” However, one need only ask a president, alumni director, trustee, coach, or protester from an institution embroiled in conflict over a Native American-related nickname what it has meant to them and the institution for the importance of the issue to become more evident, on as well as off the campus. The strong feelings that surface in the midst of these controversies—Native Americans’ anger and embarrassment, boosters’ deep affection for their teams and disaffection for “troublemaking” activists, indifference toward Native American history—otherwise remain unacknowledged elsewhere in U.S. society. Thus, Native American-related nicknames and symbols are a challenge for all of higher education—not just because the nicknames themselves are offensive to Native Americans and their allies, but because the controversies surrounding them expose the lack of will that characterizes the ways in which numerous colleges and universities respond to complaints of institutional racism. In spite of the temptation for many campus leaders to give thanks that Native Americans mascots and nicknames are a problem only at *other* institutions, the persistence of institutionalized “isms” across higher education shows that the bell tolls also for them.

Notes

¹Although Rodriguez (1998) attempts to document which two- and four-year institutions use Native American-related nicknames, his list is a bit out of date. A more comprehensive and accurate list of college and university nicknames can be found at the web site <<http://www.afn.org/~recycler/sports.html>>.

²“Illinois” is the French variation of “Illiniwek” (pronounced ill-EYE-neh-wek), their name for themselves, which meant simply “men” or “people.” The tribes are sometimes referred to by a shortened form, “Illini.”

³Robert Chapel, UIUC University Archives technical assistant, confirmed that the origin of the athletic use of the nickname “Illini” is poorly documented. This claim also appeared in Lessiter (1989).

⁴The discrepancies between the accounts are generally minor. According to a letter written by the person who was the second “Chief Illiniwek,” the game was played in

Pittsburgh, not Philadelphia (Borchers, 1959). Pearson, M. (1995) says the game was played not in Pennsylvania but in Illinois at the U of I's brand-new Memorial Stadium.

⁵The mascot's name, "Chief Illiniwek," was supposedly suggested by legendary Illinois football coach Robert Zuppke (Lessiter, 1989).

⁶The Miami called themselves "Twightwee," their name for the cry of the crane and the symbol of the Atchakangouen (the Miami proper tribe). "Miami" is a French and English variation of their Ojibwe name, "Oumami," which means "people of the peninsula."

⁷The Huron called themselves "Wyandot" or "Wendat," an Iriquoisan word meaning "island people" or "dwellers on a peninsula." They were called "Hurons" by French explorers, a pejorative name derived from the French word *hure*—meaning "wild boar"—which alluded to the Wyandots' bristly hair. Today, members of this tribe living in Quebec still refer to themselves as "Hurons."

⁸Although culture is a concept with multifarious definitions, Kuh and Whitt (1988) provide a definition applicable to higher education organizations and settings that appears to justify applying the term "culture" to the shared practices and meanings of regional athletic boosters.

⁹This connection between an institution's Native American-related nickname and a particular tribe is not always the case. Most institutions using these kinds of nicknames are more generic (e.g., the Marquette Warriors, the Bradley Braves, the Arkansas State University Indians).

¹⁰Other institutions that have recently dropped their nicknames or symbols include Bradley University (IL), Knox College (IL), Marquette University (WI), Ripon College (WI), Saint John's College (NY), and the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga.

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