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University Loses Sioux Mascot War

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By JOE BARRETT

The Fighting Sioux mascot will no longer be the face of the University of North Dakota, but the warrior's visage will still play a prominent role in the school's sports program.

The North Dakota State Board of Education on Thursday ordered the university to drop its Fighting Sioux mascot, prompting student protests on the Grand Forks campus and leaving many there feeling glum.



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University of North Dakota

The University of North Dakota hockey team's privately owned arena, which will continue to feature the banned mascot prominently.

controversy since at least the 1970s.

"Now, we can all work together, instead of some of us feeling left out," said Gregory Gagnon, a professor in the Department of Indian Studies and a citizen of the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa.

The board's order to drop the logo follows a years-long court battle with the National Collegiate Athletic Association, which moved in 2005 to ban college logos and nicknames it considered "hostile and abusive" from use during post-season play.

Under a 2007 deal with the NCAA, the school had until Nov. 30 of this year to win approval to use the Fighting Sioux name from the state's two Sioux tribes. Members of the Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe agreed, but leaders of the Standing Rock Sioux balked, preventing the matter from being put to a referendum.

The state board had voted once before to drop the name, but Spirit Lake Tribe members sued to block the move. Earlier this week, the state Supreme Court turned down the tribal members' appeal, clearing the way for Thursday's board action.



"It's a very difficult day," said men's hockey coach Dave Hakstol, a 1996 graduate of the school, in a somber news conference Friday morning.

He won't have to look far if he finds himself in a nostalgic mood, though. The arena where the school's powerhouse hockey team plays is privately owned and will continue to house thousands of Fighting Sioux pictures, statues and other paraphernalia.

While some Native Americans had fought to keep the logo, others were glad to see it go, noting that it had been a source of

In a statement, the NCAA said, "We're pleased this issue has been resolved."

With the NCAA dispute behind it, the university expects to proceed with plans to

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The University of North Dakota hockey team's goalie during the NCAA tournament in April 2008 in Denver.

join the Summit League, a Midwest-based league for Division 1 schools.

The school expects to keep the current logo next season. But even as officials began formulating a process to pick a new logo, it was clear some aspects of the Fighting Sioux tradition wouldn't be going away any time soon.

The University of North Dakota hockey team has been playing in Ralph Engelstad Arena, the Home of the Fighting Sioux, since 2001. The arena, which seats 11,600 and cost more than \$104 million to build, is considered one of the finest hockey venues in the country.

It also features 2,400 Fighting Sioux logos. They are etched into glass, woven into carpets, embedded in granite floors and emblazoned at the end of seat rows. The effort to permanently imprint the facility with the Fighting Sioux is the brainchild of Mr. Engelstad, an eccentric alumnus and Las Vegas entrepreneur who died in November 2002.

"He had absolutely strong feelings about it," said Chris Semrau, director of events and media relations at the arena. He said any attempt to remove all the logos—which hasn't been required and isn't expected to be—would be very expensive.

"Our desire is to keep the facility as it was constructed," Mr. Semrau said. "I would be very surprised if any permanent changes were made."

University officials said they have no control over the hockey arena, but hope to work with the facility and the NCAA to continue playing there.

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