



National Indian Education Association



GLITC



## A Special Message and Invitation on School Mascots

Greetings Wisconsin school leaders, school board members, and community members:

*We, the undersigned Tribal Nations and local and national Native organizations, call upon you – the 26 applicable K-12 schools in the state of Wisconsin – to retire your Native “themed” school mascots.*

Recent events, including the name changes of two professional sports franchises – the Cleveland Guardians and the Washington Commanders – cast a spotlight on the harms caused by race-based mascots. Given the corresponding increase in related discussions at the school district level, we are impelled to share Indian Country’s long-standing opposition to their continued use.

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), as the oldest, largest, and most representative national organization serving the broad interests of Tribal Nations and their citizens, has helped lead Indian Country’s consensus-driven movement to retire harmful Native “themed” mascots from sports and popular culture for decades. NCAI resolutions – passed via consensus among member Tribal Nations – addressing the issue of inappropriate and stereotypical Native representation date back to 1950. These resolutions, which present the unified voice of hundreds of Tribal Nations throughout the United States, consistently convey Indian Country’s desire to see Native “themed” mascots retired as an important and necessary step toward creating inclusive and welcoming learning environments for *all* students.

As documented in [a comprehensive review of decades of social science research](#), Native “themed” mascots have serious psychological, social and cultural consequences for Native people, particularly Native youth. The intolerance and harm promoted by these mascots, logos, and associated fan behaviors and school traditions perpetuate negative stereotypes and [contribute to a disregard for the personhood of America’s first peoples](#). You can read a summary of the research review [here](#).

Critically, the formal position of the Wisconsin Indian Education Association (WIEA) and its Indian Mascot and Logo Taskforce categorically supports “[eliminat\[ing\] the use of ‘Indian’ mascots, logos and nicknames from all Wisconsin state supported educational facilities.](#)” The [Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council \(GLITC\)](#), a consortium of federally recognized Tribal Nations in Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, has taken a similar position against the use of Native “themed” names, imagery, symbols, and customs as school mascots. So, too, have several Native institutions and organizations that serve Native people residing in the state, including the Wisconsin Indian Education Association, Earth Partnership, College of Menominee Nation, and the National Indian Education Association.

Since the first State of the Tribes Address [in 2005](#), tribal leaders from Chairman Ray DePerry (*Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa*) to President Shannon Holsey (*Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians*) [in 2022](#) have repeatedly used the platform to call for an end to the use of Native “themed” mascots in Wisconsin public schools. Further, the Wisconsin Association of School Boards passed [Resolution 2021-](#)

10 which “encourages school boards and districts to identify imagery, practices or processes that may create a school environment that is not safe and welcoming to all students, regardless of their race, ancestry or ethnicity, and to initiate discussions at the district level that would lead to the retirement of mascots, logos, imagery, practices or processes that may create a hostile, divisive or unwelcoming school environment.”

Out of respect for tribal sovereignty, we ask that you heed the voices of tribal leaders representing hundreds of Tribal Nations and the organizations that serve their citizens when assessing where Indian Country stands on this issue. To that end, we invite you to begin a dialogue with us to learn about contemporary Tribal Nations and Native peoples and why these mascots degrade us, misrepresent who we are, and dismiss the many important contributions we have made – and continue to make – to this country. Moreover, know that we are committed to working with you to expand and strengthen the curriculum your schools teach Wisconsin students about Tribal Nations and peoples, particularly the undersigned Nations.

To schedule a discussion, please email the National Congress of American Indians at [mascots@ncai.org](mailto:mascots@ncai.org). Please see the attached document for selected resources which provide additional details about our long-standing opposition to the use of these mascots, as well as the harms that they cause.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Ronald J. Corn, Sr.

Chairman

Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin



Shannon Holsey

President

Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians

[Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc.](#)



Bryan Bainbridge

Chief Executive Officer

[Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc.](#) (Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Forest County Potawatomi Community, Ho-Chunk Nation, Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, Oneida Nation, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Sokaogon Chippewa Community, Saint Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, Stockbridge-Munsee Community)



James E. Pete, DBA

President

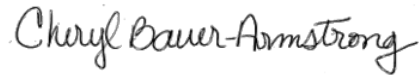
[Wisconsin Indian Education Association](#)



Barb Munson

Ambassador

WIEA "Indian" Mascot and Logo Taskforce



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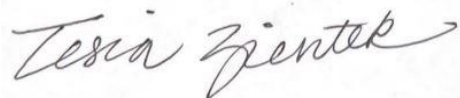
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