

# Mascots



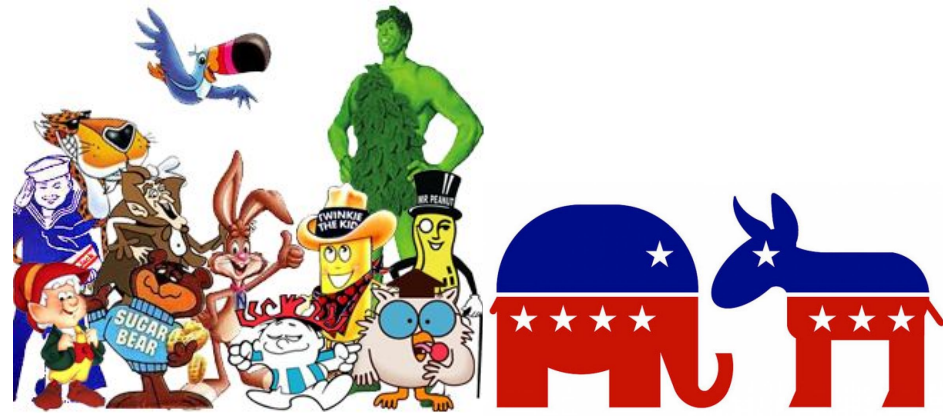
Fun? OR Offensive?

## Guidelines for Respectful & Safe Discussion

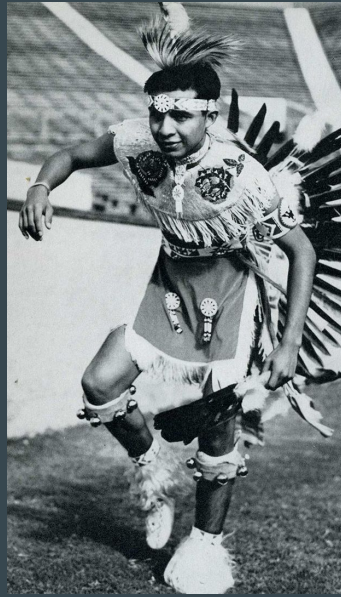
- Speak from your own personal experience (use "I" statements)
- Be willing to try on other people's opinions/perspectives
- It's okay to disagree; it's not okay to blame, shame, attack yourself or anyone else.
- Share air time (actively listen to other people)
- Your understanding of a situation is not the one true reality; it can coexist with someone else's.
- Be aware of the INTENT of what you're saying as well as the IMPACT it has on others.
- Pay attention to how the discussion is running as a whole, who's talking, and what is being        said.

# What is a mascot?

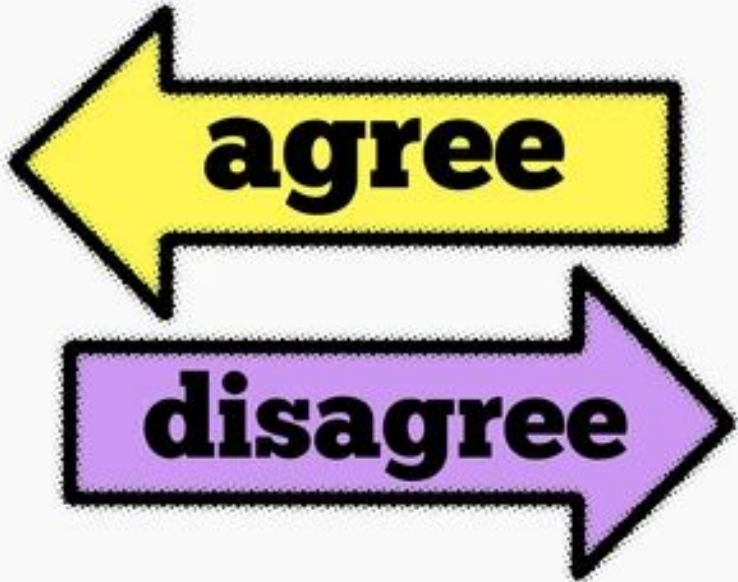
(noun) a person, animal or thing that people believe will bring them good luck, or that represents an organization or event



Context: For over a century, Native Americans' name, image and likeness have been used as the basis for team names & mascots at every level of sports (from high school teams to professional level organizations.)



Once I post the question, please move to the side of the room that you support.



- **I Agree** - stand on the side of the room by the door.
- **I Disagree** - stand on the side of the room by the windows.
- **I'm undecided or can see both sides** - stand in the middle of the room.

# What do you think?



Using a team name like the Blackhawks, the Seminoles, the Indians or mascot of a Native American does NOT hurt anyone.

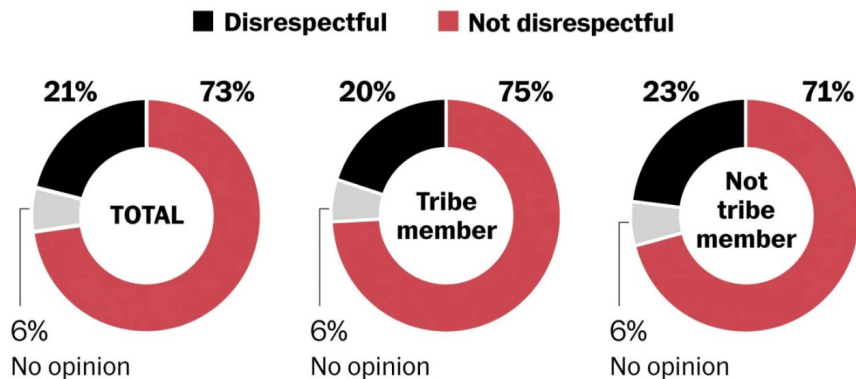
What do you think?



The term “redskin” IS offensive.

**POLL** Washington Post poll

**Q:** In general, do you feel the word 'Redskin' is disrespectful of Native Americans, or not?\*



\*Asked of 340 respondents Jan. 12-April 14, error margin 7 percentage points.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent because of rounding.

Source: This Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 16 to April 12 among a random national sample of 504 Native American adults. Interviews were conducted by live interviewers on conventional and cellular phones. The margin of sampling error for overall results is 5.5 percentage points. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by SSRS of Media, Pa. Full results and methodology are available at [wapo.st/pollarchive](http://wapo.st/pollarchive)

Data from a 2016 *Washington Post* poll (which mirrored a similar 2004 poll by the Annenberg Public Policy Center.)

# CONTEXT: Native Americans are not all of one mind on the issue.

“Native Americans are resilient and have not allowed the NFL’s decades-long denigration of us to define our own self-image,” said Oneida Nation Representative Ray Halbritter and National Congress of American Indians Executive Director Jacqueline Pata.

“However, that proud resilience does not give the NFL a license to continue marketing, promoting, and profiting off of a dictionary-defined racial slur — one that tells people outside of our community to view us as mascots.”



## What do you think?

If many Native Americans aren't offended by their name/likeness being used, the public **SHOULDN'T** be either.

What the fans and public think about team names should **NOT** matter. It shouldn't impact the outcome of the debate.

# Statement issued by the (former) Washington football team owner Dan Snyder in 2013:



Our franchise has a great history, tradition and legacy representing our proud alumni and literally tens of millions of loyal fans worldwide. We have participated in some of the greatest games in NFL history, and have won five World Championships. We are proud of our team and the passion of our loyal fans. Our fans sing "*Hail to the Redskins*" in celebration at every Redskins game. They speak proudly of "*Redskins Nation*" in honor of a sports team they love.

So when I consider the Washington Redskins name, I think of what it stands for. I think of the Washington Redskins traditions and pride I want to share with my three children, just as my father shared with me - and just as you have shared with your family and friends.

I respect the opinions of those who disagree. I want them to know that I do hear them, and I will continue to listen and learn. But we cannot ignore our 81 year history, or the strong feelings of most of our fans as well as Native Americans throughout the country. After 81 years, the team name "Redskins" continues to hold the memories and meaning of where we came from, who we are, and who we want to be in the years to come.

We are Redskins Nation ... and we owe it to our fans and coaches and players, past and present, to preserve that heritage.

With Respect and Appreciation,



Dan Snyder

PS. Wherever I go, I see Redskins bumper stickers, Redskins decals, Redskins t-shirts, Redskins ... everything. I know how much this team means to you, and it means everything to me as well. Always has. I salute your passion and your pride for the Burgundy & Gold.

What do you think?

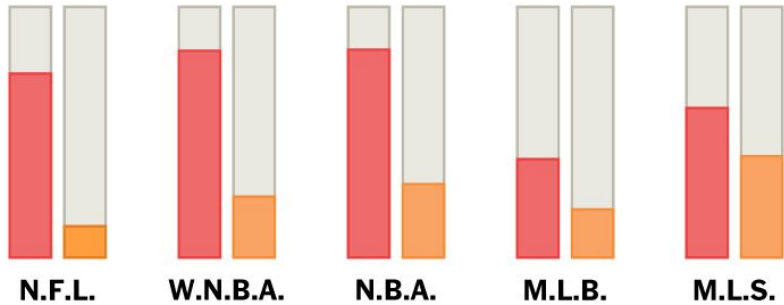
Sports team owners **SHOULD** be able to name their teams whatever they want.



# What do you think?

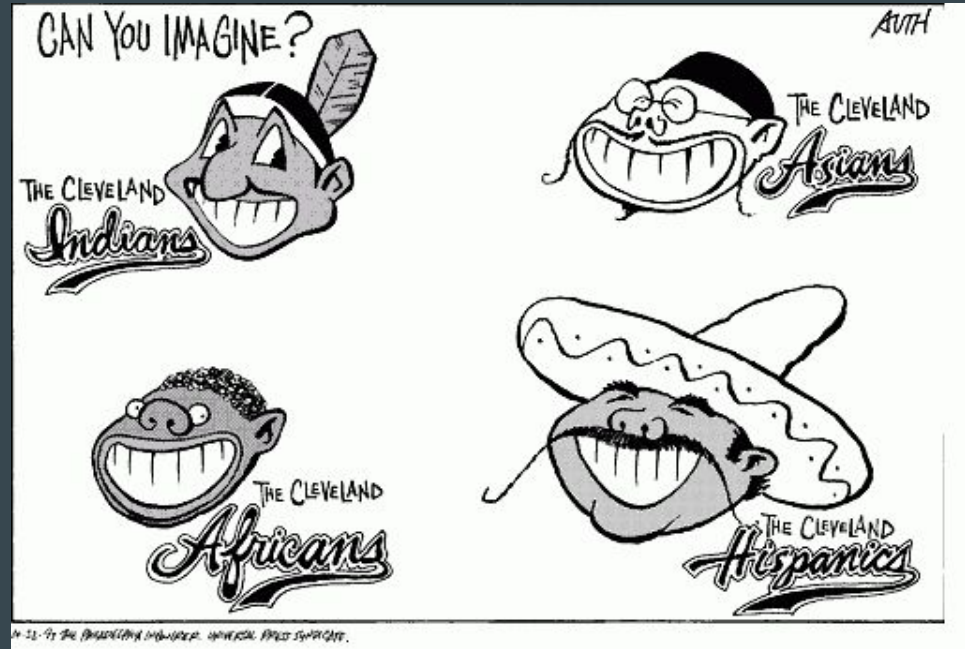
Does the fact that the majority of professional sports teams' owners are white men matter?  
(Should they be involving more people in the conversation?)

Major sports leagues have many **players of color**, but very few people of color **in management positions**



# What do you think?

Choosing to feature a Native American as the basis of a team's mascot is DIFFERENT from one of these other examples.



**What do you think?**



**Do you see any issue with the Dallas Cowboys, Minnesota Vikings or Notre Dame's Fighting Irish as representations.**

# CONTEXT TO CONSIDER:

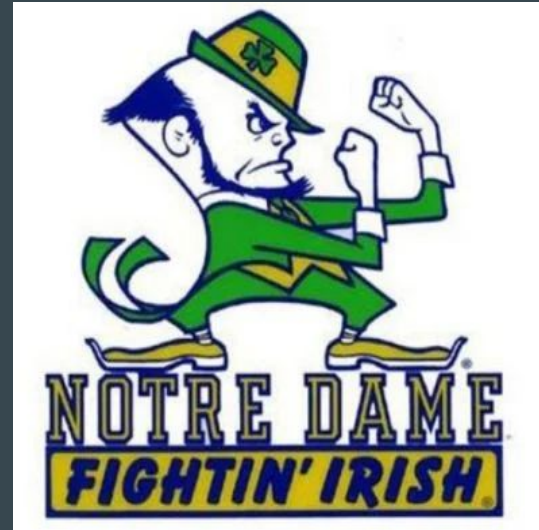


How is the “Fighting Irish” different from these late 19th century representations of the Irish as rowdy drunks?

## CONTEXT TO CONSIDER:

❖ Notre Dame is a Catholic-controlled institution with Irish representation throughout the college. They chose their name themselves. Does that make it ok?

- Do you think Irish people be upset if a school serving a predominantly black or Latinx population were to adopt the Fighting Irish as their mascot?
- What about if they were representing all Irish people in very stereotypical manners and unintentionally mocking Irish culture?





What do you think?



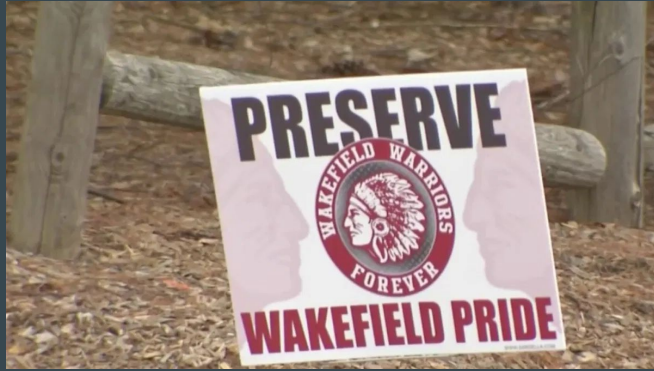
Sports teams **SHOULD** be allowed to take the field with their mascot dressed in full tribal dress if their school has a Native American mascot.

What do you think?



Fans should be **DISCOURAGED** from gesturing in a tomahawk chop at games like they commonly do at Atlanta Braves or Kansas City Chiefs games.

What do you think?



I **WOULD** be upset if my favorite team or my school changed its mascot.

**What do you think?**

**There is nothing  
offensive about the  
Warriors as a mascot.**



CONTEXT:



Did you know that LS' Warriors today is intended to represent a Roman warrior?

That was not always the case...

# Our focus for this unit:



- How do societal debates about race & ethnicity play out in the arena of sports?
- How does one's identity or perspective shape one's perception of mascots?
- How is it that mascots mean different things to different people?
- In what way does the debate over mascots reflect the evolving debate over America's racial past?



How well do you know your mascots?

Kahoot!





# Sports Mascots

A history



What are your thoughts on Boston's sports mascots?

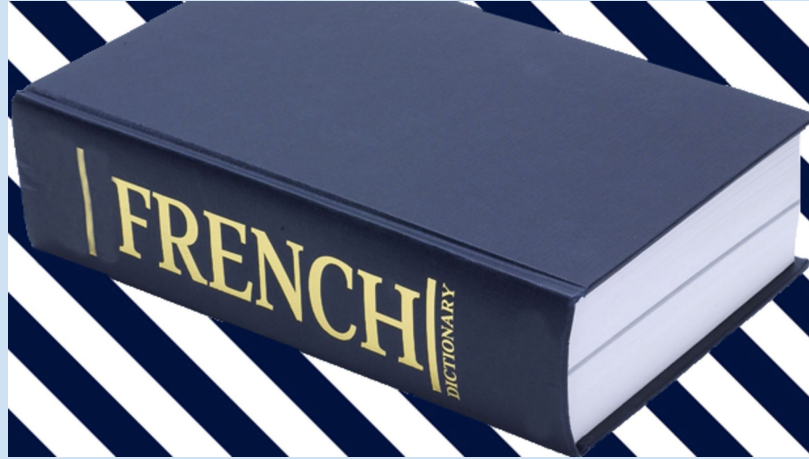


# What is the purpose of a mascot?

- The team mascot is one of the most cherished traditions in sports.
- Mascots:
  - are a point of pride
  - help to connect and unify the team and the fans
  - give sports teams a personality (a well-chosen mascot represents the team's identity)
  - give fans a sense of belonging and attachment to the team



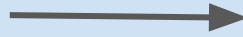
# What is the history of mascots?



- Many believe that mascots are uniquely American, but the word "mascot" actually comes from the French term "masco" or "mascotte," roughly translated to mean a **symbol, emblem or lucky charm**.

Mascots have long been used as a tool to unite groups of people who are fighting for a cause.

- During the Civil War, the soldiers would rally beside animals who followed them to battle.
- During WWII, fighter pilots in the U.S. air force worked with artists from Disney studios to develop mascots which were emblazoned on patches and on the noses/tails of airplanes.





# Early Sports Mascots - Animals

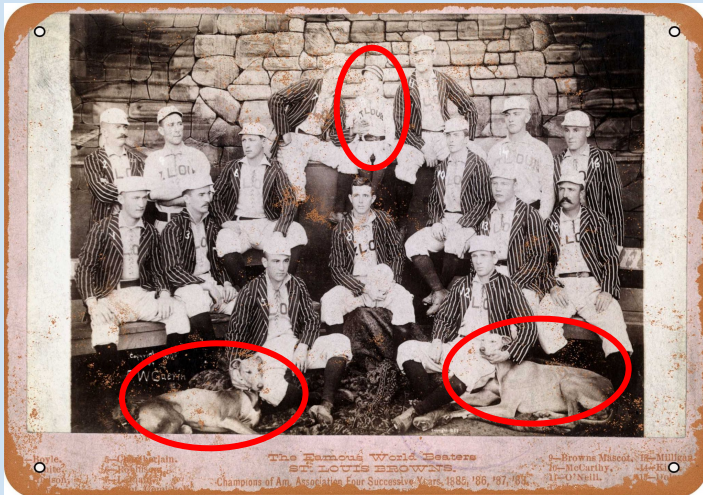
- The first mascot in American sports history was Handsome Dan, Yale's bulldog, who became the school's mascot in 1892.
- Handsome Dan attended every football game and was believed to bring good luck to the team through his ferocious attitude & winning spirit.
  - Rituals:
    - Handsome Dan's favorite trick is to "speak to Harvard" (the dog "barks ferociously & works himself into physical contortions of rage never before dreamed of by a dog.")
    - Dan's been known to run the bases at baseball games, run alongside swimmers barking to cheer them on, etc.



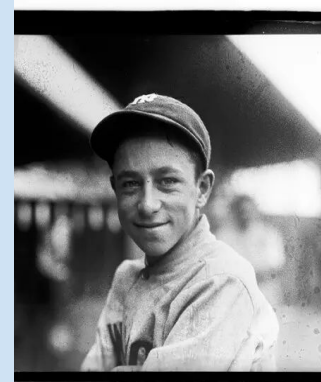
The original Handsome Dan died over 100 years ago and was stuffed and displayed on campus. Since then, 18 others have assumed the role.

# Early Sports Mascots - Children

In the late 19th - early 20th century, nearly all sports mascots were children or animals.



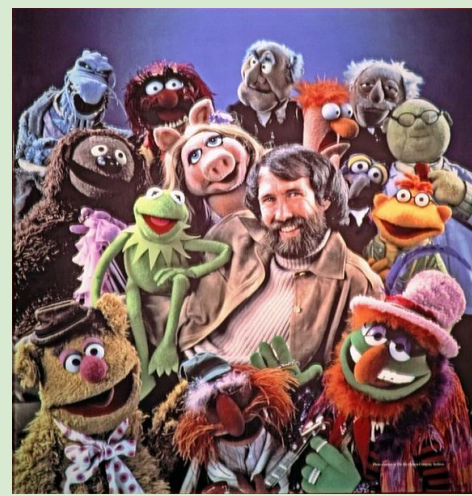
The St. Louis Browns team photo (1888)



The 1919 Chicago White Sox had a disabled orphan, Eddie Bennett, who came to every game and was thought to be responsible for their winning season because he was a good luck charm.

# Muppets change the game

- In the 1960s, Americans' obsession with the Muppets helped to lead to the wave of fuzzy and animated team ambassadors we know today.
  - EXAMPLE: Mr. Met, the New York Mets man with a baseball head. Introduced in 1969, Mr. Met is one of the oldest continual mascots in America.





# The San Diego Padres' Chicken

- The Padres' Chicken started as an animated TV commercial for a radio station in San Diego in the mid-1970s.
- A young journalist, Ted Giannoulas, was given the opportunity to wear the chicken suit for \$2/hour on TV.
  - The combo of the colorful chicken and Giannoulas' gimmicks (wrestling players, hosing down fans, etc.), dance moves, pranks on umpires (i.e., raising his leg to pee on them), cartwheels into splits over home plate, and the famous "Grand Hatching," led this mascot to be one of the most famous influencers in baseball history.





How does the Chicken as a mascot serve as:

- a point of pride
- help to connect and unify the team and the fans
- give the team a personality
- give fans a sense of belonging and attachment to their team


# How do teams come up with their mascots?






- Many times, mascots tie into the people, places and things the area is well-known for (like the Florida Gators)
- In other cases, they represent the team's identity, ideals or principles.
- EXAMPLE: Chicago Bulls' Benny the Bull.
  - Adopted in 1969 in recognition of the city's meatpacking tradition, the name also denotes strength and power. Benny the Bull is one of the longest-tenured mascots in all professional sports.

# How do teams come up with their mascots?

- Sometimes mascots don't have anything to do with the team name or region at all and instead are meant to be zany or fun.
- For example:
  - The Big Red is Western Kentucky University's fuzzy red blob of a mascot that portrayed the red towels waved around in the crowds.

**TRADITIONS THURSDAY** 



**BIG RED**

*Big Red has been entertaining the WKU fanbase since 1979. The mascot made its debut on December 1, 1979 at the first home basketball game of the season. Big Red embodies school spirit, and its origin is unlike any other mascot the nation has to offer. This fuzzy, red, blob-like character never fails to make fans smile and laugh at any event around campus.*

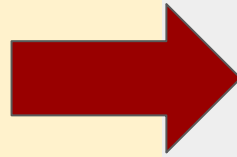
# How do teams come up with their mascots?



- The Phillie Phanatic was created in 1977 to replace the previous mascots (colonial children named Phil & Phyllis.)
- Working with Jim Henson, the Phillies built a mascot that would be a tribute to their fans and that would draw families to games with his playful antics.

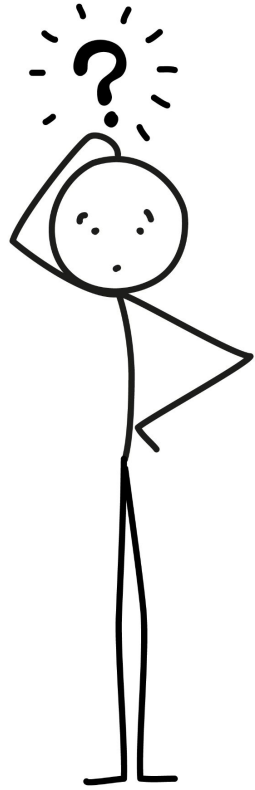
If the goal of a mascot is to be:

- a point of pride
- help to connect & unify the team and the fans
- give the team a personality
- provide fans with a sense of belonging and attachment to their teams



How then do Native American mascots play into the conversation?





Why do you think sports teams adopted Native American names/imagery for mascots?

How do you think teams explain this choice?





# Refresher

Look at page 1 of your notes from the last class.



What is the purpose or goal of a mascot?

# Native American Mascots

Since the **late 1800s**, Native American mascots, symbols and names have been used by high schools, colleges and professional teams.



Some say they rally team spirit, honor indigenous peoples and bring luck. Others argue that they are racist, dehumanizing and should be retired permanently.

# Native American Mascots

## Timeline of Native American team names

### Other teams

**1963**  
After a move, the Dallas Texans are renamed the Kansas City Chiefs; no professional team has adopted a Native American name since

**1986**  
Final year of Atlanta Braves outfield mascot "Chief Noc-A-Homa"

**1994**  
Marquette University changes its team name from "Warriors" to "Golden Eagles"; in addition, St. John's University in New York changes its "Redmen" team name to "Red Storm"



St. John's Redmen logo

**1997**  
Miami (Ohio) University changes the name of its mascot from the "Redskins" to the "RedHawks"

**2005**  
NCAA announces a ban on the use of Native American mascots during its postseason tournaments and championships; some schools — including Florida State (Seminoles), Central Michigan (Chippewas) and Utah (Utes) — appealed and were granted waivers because they have the support of the respective tribes

**2007**  
The University of Illinois retires its mascot, "Chief Illiniwek"



**2012**  
A statewide ballot initiative in North Dakota to keep the name "Fighting Sioux" at the University of North Dakota is defeated by a two-thirds vote



### A brief history of the Redskins

- **Founded** Franchise is purchased as the Boston Braves in 1932; takes the Redskins name in 1933 and moves to Washington in 1937
- **Logo** The Indian head logo has been used since 1972 and in various incarnations in the 1930s through the mid-'60s
- **Team value** \$1.7 billion
- **Value of brand** \$145 million

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

### Washington Redskins

**1992**  
Redskins Super Bowl appearance spawns protests; also a petition is filed before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to find the trademark disparaging

**1999**  
The trademark panel finds in favor of the petition

**2003**  
Federal District Court overturns the trademark panel decision, saying that the petitioners didn't file in time

**2006**  
Another petition on the trademark is made to the PTO

**June 18, 2014**  
The PTO finds the Redskins trademark disparaging

© 2014 MCT

Source: National Congress of American Indians, NCAA, Redskins, "Baseball in Atlanta," Forbes, Sportslogos.net, Chicago Tribune reporting  
Graphic: Jonathon Berlin, Phil Geib, Chicago Tribune Photo: Scott Strazz, Chicago Tribune

# The tide turns on Native American mascots

The formal campaign to retire Native American mascots, stereotypes and naming in sports began in the **1970s**.

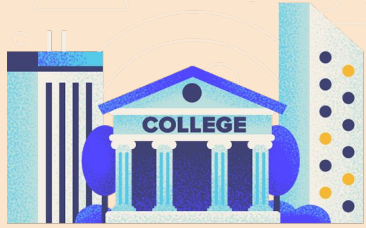
This was in part an outgrowth of **1960s-1970s activism among Native peoples**, including:

- Growth of the **American Indian Movement (AIM)**, the **Red Power movement** & broader activism for tribal **sovereignty**.
- **Suzan Harjo**, an activist & former Congressional liaison for Indian affairs, helped to draft legislation to protect Indian lands. She's been fighting for decades for teams/schools to change their mascots/names.



Suzan Harjo, the director of the Morning Star Institute, a group that promotes Native American causes, became a godmother to the cause of eliminating disparaging mascots.

# The campaign to change Native American mascots



→ began in the 1970s with colleges that had Indian mascots,



→ continued in the 1980s with high schools, and



→ moved into professional sports in the 1990s.

# Retiring of college mascots

1970 - Univ. of Oklahoma discontinued the use of its "Little Red" mascot

1971 - Marquette Univ. in Milwaukee retired their cartoon logo "Willie Wampum"

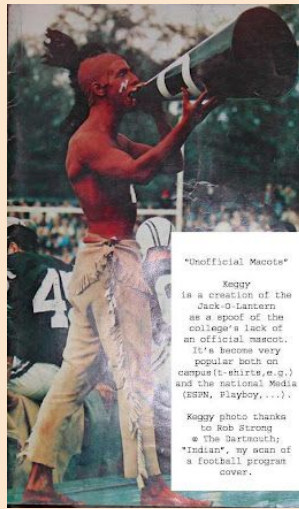
1972 - Stanford Univ. voted to retire their "Indian" mascot

1972 - Dickinson State dropped the Savages as the school's mascot following student protests



# Retiring of college mascots - Dartmouth

1974 - Dartmouth College retired its "Indians" mascot, in use since the late 1800s, and returned to its "Big Green."



*"We Native Americans at Dartmouth unequivocally declare that the 'Indian symbol' is a mythical creation of non-Indian culture and in no manner reflects the basic philosophies of Native American peoples," Dartmouth students wrote in a letter to the University in an effort to change their former mascot. "It is said that these "Indian" symbols represent 'pride' and 'respect,' yet pride and respect do not lie in caricatures of people, but in self-awareness of fallibility."*

[In 2003, the college's humor magazine introduced "Keggy" to fill the school's mascot void.]

## Retiring of college mascots (cont.)

1975 - Syracuse Univ. discontinued their "Saltine Warrior" mascot



1994 - Saint John's Univ. changed its team name from the "Redmen" to "The Red Storm"

1997 - Miami Univ. of Ohio discontinued use of the "R\*dskins" in favor of the "Redhawks"



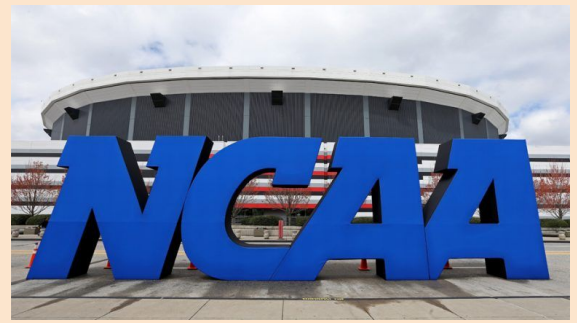


# The federal government weighs in on the matter...

"The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights calls for an end to the use of Native American images & team names by non-Native schools. The Commission deeply respects the right of all Americans to freedom of expression under the First Amendment and in no way would attempt to prescribe how people can express themselves. However, the Commission believes that the use of Native American images and nicknames in schools is insensitive and should be avoided. . . Schools have a responsibility to educate their students; they should not use their influence to perpetuate misrepresentations of any culture or people."

- U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, April 13, 2001

# NCAA Mascot Policy



- The NCAA announced in 2005 that any school with a nickname or logo considered racially or ethnically "hostile" or "abusive" by the NCAA would be prohibited from using them in post-season events.

*"The NCAA objects to institutions using racial/ethnic/national origin references in their intercollegiate athletics programs... As a national association, we believe that mascots, nicknames or images deemed hostile or abusive in terms of race, ethnicity or national origin should not be visible at the championship events that we control." - NCAA President Myles Brand, 2005*

- By 2008, band members and cheerleaders were also barred from wearing American Indians on their uniforms.

## Exceptions to the rule: Florida State



In August 2005 the NCAA granted Florida State a waiver due to an agreement between the university and the Florida Seminole Tribe.

- The Tribal Council, the tribe's chief governing body, passed a resolution which reads, in part, that the "Seminole Tribe of Florida has an established relationship with Florida State University, which includes its permission to use the name, 'Seminole,' as well as various Seminole symbols and images, such as Chief Osceola, for educational purposes and the Seminole Tribe of Florida wishes to go on record that it has not opposed, and, in fact, supports the continued use of the name 'Seminole.'" The resolution also supports the use of the Seminole head logo, which is endorsed by the university.

**What do you think?**

**Should there be exceptions to the rule?**



## Retiring of college mascots - post NCAA policy

2007 - Univ. of Illinois dropped the Chief Illiniwek logo & mascot following two decades of complaints that the logo & mascot's ceremonial dance performed during halftime perpetuated stereotypes.



Change is coming ... but some continue to resist.



- To date, more than 2/3 of the roughly 3,000 teams nationwide with American Indian mascots have dropped them, many voluntarily and without incident.
- However, some teams have insisted on keeping their names. This resistance comes at both the professional and local levels.

Consider how long the football team from Washington held out ...



## The Washington football team - initial resistance

While some teams began reconsidering their mascots, the R\*skins did NOT.

- R\*skins' owner in the 1960s, George Preston Marshall, opposed desegregation efforts.
- Edward Bennett Williams, who owned the team in the 1970s, met with American Indians to discuss the team's name, but no change followed.

In 2013, Daniel Snyder, the R\*skins' owner, echoed his predecessors when he vowed never to change the name.

- "We'll never change the name," Snyder said, "It's that simple. NEVER—you can use caps."
- Letter to fans: "The name was never a label. It was, and continues to be, a badge of honor."





One person's take  
on Washington's  
resistance... "Last  
Week Tonight"  
(2014)



Bob Costas weighs in on the air at halftime of the Washington/Dallas game.

*"If I were the owner of the team and I knew that there was a name of my team--even if it had a storied history--that was offending a sizeable group of people, I'd think about changing it,"*

President Obama said in an interview published by the Associated Press on Oct. 5, 2013.





# What changed with the Washington team in 2020?

While Snyder did not change his opinion right away, external pressure was placed on the team to consider a name change:

- Corporate sponsors (like FedEx, Pepsi, Bank of America & Nike) called publicly for a name change
- At the same time, other national sports franchises also formally began considering changing team names, including the Cleveland Indians

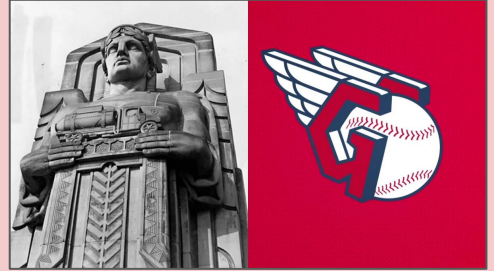
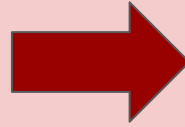
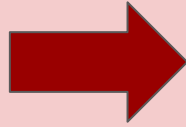


What Do  
YOU Think?

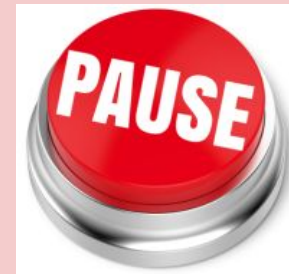
If the Washington team and NFL were not facing potential major financial loss through corporate sponsors pulling out, do you think they would have seriously considered changing the name?

Explain.

# The Cleveland Guardians (formerly the Cleveland Indians)



- Cleveland announced in the summer of 2020 that they too had begun discussions about the possibility of changing the team's name.
  - The name "Indians" was chosen based on a nickname the team was given when Louis Sockalexis' (one of the first players of Native American ancestry in the league) played in Cleveland.
- For years, the Indians name & the Chief Wahoo logo have come under fire as derogatory, racist, and offensive.
  - The team phased out use of the Chief Wahoo logo in 2018 but held onto the team's name.
  - Last summer, the team announced they would be the Cleveland Guardians for the 2022 season.



**Time to get up  
and move a  
little!**

# Mascot Interviews



Directions: Go out in the school and find 5 people to interview.

- Only 1 of your 5 interview subjects may be a friend (who is not currently enrolled in Sport!)
- You need to talk to at least 1 adult who works in the building, 1 family member and 2 people who you do not currently know.
- Take notes on each person's responses. When you finish talking to them, have them sign off on your interview.



1. The Stanford Tree – Stanford University
2. Wushock, the Wheat Stalk – Wichita State
3. Sammy the Slug – UC Santa Cruz
4. Fighting Okra – Delta State University
5. Fighting Pickle – University of North Carolina School of the Arts
6. Speedy the Geoduck – Evergreen State College
7. Keggy the Keg – Dartmouth College
8. Kernel Cobb – Concordia College
9. Artie the Artichoke – Scottsdale Community College
10. Big Red – Western Kentucky University
11. Battling Bishop – Ohio Wesleyan
12. Blue Blob – Xavier University
13. Weezy the Boil Weevil – The University of Arkansas at Monticello
14. Mortamer McPestle – St. Louis College of Pharmacy
15. Temoc, the Comet – University of Texas at Dallas

If you could, which of these "15 worst college mascots of all time" would you rescue & adopt from this list?





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# Prominent professional team hold outs



Atlanta Braves



KC Chiefs



Chicago  
Blackhawks

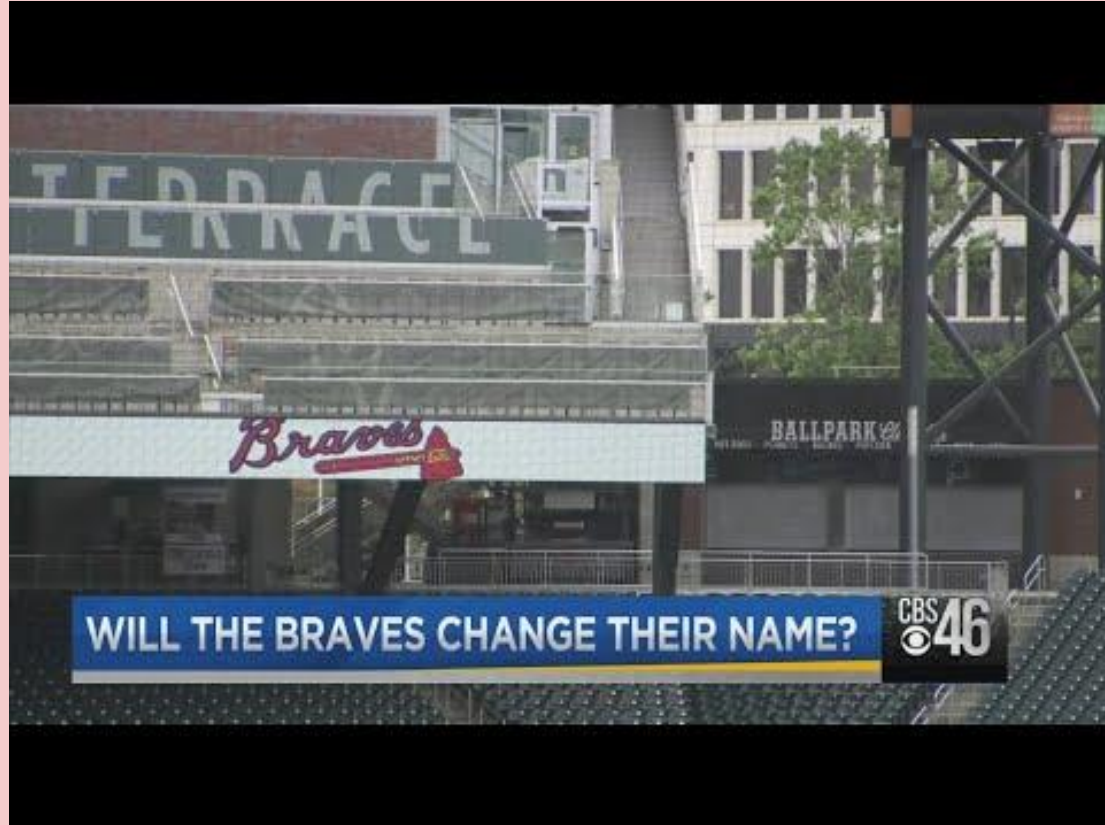
## The Holdouts: The Atlanta Braves

- The Atlanta Braves are represented by their famed mascot, Chief Noc-A-Homa, their logo featuring the tomahawk, and the stadium is home to a teepee in left field.



## The Holdouts: The Atlanta Braves

- At games, fans perform the "Tomahawk Chop" with their arms (or foam tomahawks) to simulate the tomahawk's slicing motion. (This motion is a feature at KC games as well.)



# The Holdouts: The Chicago Blackhawks

The Chicago Blackhawks maintain that their nickname honors a real life Native American, and therefore have said they do not plan to make any changes to their name and logo. The team was named after Black Hawk of Illinois' Sac & Fox Nation.

*"We celebrate Black Hawk's legacy by offering ongoing reverent examples of Native American culture, traditions and contributions, providing a platform for genuine dialogue with local and national Native American groups.*

*"We recognize there is a fine line between respect and disrespect, and we commend other teams for their willingness to engage in that conversation," the team said. "Moving forward, we are committed to raising the bar even higher to expand awareness of Black Hawk and the important contributions of all Native American people."*



NOTE: The Chicago Blackhawks Foundation had previously partnered with the American Indian Center of Chicago to educate the public about American Indians, but the AIC ended that agreement in 2019, citing the perpetuation of "harmful stereotypes."

What about  
mascots on the  
local level?



[Boston Globe article](#)





One more factor to consider...

The people who these mascots supposedly honor. How do mascots impact them?



# Impact of team names on Native Americans



Academic studies have been conducted analyzing the impact of names such as R\*dskin. Researchers did 4 separate studies on the psychological effects of Native American mascots on American Indian youth. They found that:

- "Social representations of American Indians undermine positive feelings of worth, whether the focus is the individual self or the communal self."
- Their research also "suggests that American Indian images, such as American Indian mascots and other fictionalized, idealized, and non-contemporary representations may be associated with low self and in-group ratings because they do not provide guidelines or images for how to realize positive and contemporary selves."

# Impact on Native Americans

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) corroborated the results of these studies, noting that:

*"Native peoples remain more likely than any other race to experience crimes at the hands of a person from another race. Native youth experience the highest rates of suicide among young people. With studies showing that negative stereotypes and harmful "Indian" sports mascots are known to play a role in exacerbating racial inequity and perpetuating feelings of inadequacy among Native youth, it is vital that all institutions—including professional sports franchises—re-evaluate their role in capitalizing on these stereotypes."*



Whose decision should it be to adopt or change a team's name or mascot?

Who should be involved in that decision-making process?

