



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #PDX-20-042

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TITLE: Support for the Elimination of Race-Based Native Logos, Mascots, Names, Behaviors and Practices

WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and,

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and,

WHEREAS, NCAI has long held a clear position against derogatory and harmful stereotypes of Native People—including sports mascots—in media and popular culture. In 1968 NCAI launched a campaign to address stereotypes of Native peoples in popular culture and media, as well as in sports, and,

WHEREAS, the intolerance and harm promoted by these “Indian” sports mascots, logos, or symbols, have very real consequences for Native people. Specifically, rather than honoring Native Peoples, these caricatures and stereotypes are harmful, perpetuate negative stereotypes of America’s first peoples, and contribute to a disregard for the personhood of Native Peoples; and,

WHEREAS, NCAI has passed a number of resolutions calling for the elimination of race based mascots, logos, symbols and stereotypes, including publishing a report (“Report”) in October 2013 entitled, “*Harmful “Indian” Sports Mascots: Ending the Legacy of Racism in Sports & the Era of Harmful “Indian” Sports Mascots*”; and

WHEREAS, the Kansas City Chiefs are specifically listed on page 9 of the Report as one of the American sports businesses that “continue to profit from harmful stereotypes originated during a time when white superiority and segregation were common place”; and,

WHEREAS, the recent decision of the Kansas City Chiefs to prohibit fans from wearing “headdresses and face paint styled in a way that references or appropriates American Indian cultures” in an attempt to distance themselves from blatant racism while keeping established brand identity, indicates that management understands the negative social impact of their brand; and,

WHEREAS, national sports franchises, such as Kansas City, Missouri’s National Football League organization, the Chiefs, should not be a vehicle of institutionalized racism; and,

WHEREAS, NCAI Resolution #TUL-13-050, *Commending Efforts to Eliminate Racist Stereotypes in Sports and Calling on the U.S. President and Congress to Combat These Continuing Affronts to Native Peoples*, resolved that NCAI “condemns the Washington NFL franchise and all other offending team owners who are engaged in the time-dishonored practice of “chief-making,” as if the voice of individuals who support their continuing offense, and who may or may not be Native or chiefs, offsets those of the major organizations representing every segment of Native Peoples in the United States today”; and,

WHEREAS, the Heart of America Indian Center d/b/a Kansas City Indian Center, an Urban-Indian organization located in Kansas City, Missouri, has provided a multitude of services to the Native community in Kansas City since 1971; and,

WHEREAS, the Region VII American Indian Council has provided a Department of Labor Employment and Training Program to the Native community in Kansas City, Missouri, since 1974; and,

WHEREAS, the National Center for Indigenous American Cultures (Thidaware) has provided services in Kansas City, Missouri, since 2001; and,

WHEREAS, Not In Our Honor, an advocacy group formed in 2005 by Native students at the University of Kansas and Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas,, has advocated against the use of Native imagery in sports and cultural appropriation, and Kansas City Chiefs’ use of mascots and imagery specifically; and,

WHEREAS, the Heart of America Indian Center d/b/a Kansas City Indian Center, Region VII American Indian Council, National Center for Indigenous American Cultures (Thidaware), and Not in Our Honor, are all local, Native-led organizations serving the community and all are adamantly opposed to the Kansas City team’s continued use of a race-based mascot, the associated logos, imagery, and stereotypical behaviors; and,

WHEREAS, the leaders of the above organizations are keenly aware of the serious psychological, social and cultural consequences of race based mascots, logos, symbols and stereotypes for Native Peoples, especially the Native youth we serve in the Kansas City metropolitan area; and,

WHEREAS, the harmful effects of the Kansas City NFL franchise’s use of race-based stereotypes and appropriated names, symbols, mascots and behaviors, including those for the team and stadium and related “Indian” clubs, permeate every facet of society in and around Kansas City. Kansas City Native youth are subjected to advertisements on radio, TV, and marketing displays in every grocery store, including pork chops advertised as the “tomahawk chop” and “Can’t Stop the

Chop” ads featuring football fans singing the stereotypical song and doing the tomahawk chop. Additionally, fast food advertising features statements that they will “feed the tribe,” and a local Sonic’s sign stating, “KC CHIEFS’ WILL SCALP THE REDSKINS FEED THEM WHISKEY SEND – 2 – RESERVATION,” add to dehumanizing propaganda our youth are bombarded with, leading to lowered self-esteem and self-worth, and potentially leading to increased violence against American Indian youth; and,

WHEREAS, there has been scientific research conducted to determine the harmful psychological effects of these “Native” sports mascots on our Native youth; and,

WHEREAS, according to studies conducted by Dr. Stephanie Fryberg and her colleagues, Native high school and college students had a consistent, negative reaction to stereotypical mascots, such as Chief Wahoo of the Cleveland “Indians,” because these images and names remind actual Native youth of the limited ways in which others see them, which in turn restricts how they see themselves; and, importantly, non-Native youths’ self-esteem rose when presented with the same images; and,

WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association has determined that these representations also undermine the ability of Native nations and people to portray themselves accurately as distinct and diverse cultures, and that stereotypical images are a dominant culture’s prejudiced representations of a racial or ethnic minority group; and,

WHEREAS, the above Kansas City-based Native organizations have issued a statement calling on the Kansas City Chiefs to cease their use of racialized Native branding by eliminating all imagery of or evocative of Native culture, traditions, and spirituality from their team franchise by changing their name including the logo. This includes the use of Native terms, drum, arrows, or titles that assume the presence of Native culture and apply the NFL’s “zero tolerance” for on-field use of racial and homophobic slurs to all races and ethnic groups, especially Native Peoples.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that NCAI reaffirms its position in support of the elimination of race-based mascots, logos, symbols, and stereotypes; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI does hereby reaffirm its call for national sports franchises to cease their use of such race-based Native logos, mascots, names, behaviors and practices; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI does hereby call for national sports franchises to cease recruiting Native people to act in ways that undermine the interests of all native children in discontinuing the mascots and practices; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2020 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held Nov 8, 2020 - Nov 13, 2020, with a quorum present.



Fawn Sharp, President

ATTEST:



Juana Majel Dixon, Recording Secretary