

**Title of Session:** AIS - Native American Heritage Month

**Moderator:** Christine Rose

**Title of File:** 20071025ais

**Date:** October 25, 2007

Room: American Indian Studies Group

**MichaelDW:** Hello all.

**ChristinR2:** Hi Michael. :-)

**BJB2:** Christine, Michael is the original owner of the group

**ChristinR2:** Wow! Hello there! It's an honor to meet you.

**BJB2:** so nice to see you again, Michael :-)

**ChristinR2:** Where are you from?

**MichaelDW:** Nice to e-meet you as well!

**ChristinR2** -) e-meet....I like that!

**MichaelDW:** Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. I live near Milwaukee.

**ChristinR2:** No kidding!

**ChristinR2:** I have been to Milwaukee...don't they hold Indian Summer there? I attended a few years ago when a friend of mine was up for a NAMMY.

**MichaelDW:** Yes, they have Indian Summer here. That Nammy event was quite something.

**ChristinR2:** Yes, it was. Were you there?

**MichaelDW:** Yes, I was.

**ChristinR2:** Do you happen to know Richie Plass? His band was nominated under Country Music...the Wolf River Band...Menoms.

**ChristinR2:** Kinda cold up there isn't it?

**DavidW** joined the room.

**ChristinR2:** Hello David.

**DavidW** waves to Christine

**DavidW:** Hi, Christine

**MichaelDW:** I don't know Richie Plass. The only Menom musician I know is Wade Fernandez. I know of Bill Miller of course.

**MichaelDW:** Hi David.

**DavidW:** Hi, Michael

**ChristinR2:** Well, lets wait another minute and see if we have any more guests.

**MichaelDW:** It got into the 40s last night.

**ChristinR2:** Michael, I have an agenda that I generally teach from, but I hope you will jump in and add anything you might have to say about what I am teaching.

**ChristinR2:** So David, have you taken an eclass with me before?

**MichaelDW:** That's fine. I just happened to be at my computer when I saw the announcement for this. I thought I would check it out. It's been awhile.

**ChristinR2:** That's fine.

**DavidW:** I think I've been in one of your discussions, Christine - I'm one of the HelpDesk volunteers

**ChristinR2:** I thought you looked familiar. :-)

**DavidW** smiles

**DavidW:** just wanted to give you a little bit more of an audience

**BJB2:** Christine, I know you have a busy schedule....how about presenting the information you have on your agenda and then ending early?

**BJB2** . o O ( or maybe just half the info you wanted to share? )

**MichaelDW:** Even if there aren't many people here, it's very helpful for the archive.

**BJB2** agrees. Thanks, Michael

**ChristinR2:** I appreciate that tremendously. Last week we had a novice teacher who was so enthusiastic.

**ChristinR2:** Okay, BJ...

**ChristinR2:** Okay, let's bump this up a notch since we don't have novices here tonight.

**ChristinR2:** Okay then....I assume everyone here is familiar with stereotypes and the problems they can cause.

**DavidW** nods

**ChristinR2:** Can I have the opinion of those present about Am. Indian Team Names?

**BJB2:** I know that their use is disrespectful to the Indian culture.

**ChristinR2:** Does anyone ever get into discussions with people who defend the use of them?

**MichaelDW:** Which ones were you thinking of?

**ChristinR2:** Redskins or Braves...take your pick.

**ChristinR2:** Basically any. Because we are going to be talking about the fact that stereotypes are NOT harmless.

**MichaelDW:** The Redskins, the team name at the national capital -- kind of says something.

**DavidW:** Certainly they can be derogatory to some people - but, I wonder why they were chosen as names in the first place - most sports teams want to have a positive associations

**ChristinR2:** They can actually be proven to cause violence.

**DavidW** . o O ( Cleveland Indians )

**ChristinR2:** OOOOOOOOHHHHH David, thanks so much for opening up.

**MichaelDW:** What is the proof, Christine?

**DavidW:** Any idea WHY those names were chosen in the first place?

**ChristinR2:** I was honored to be at this year's Cleveland Indians protest in the middle of a snowstorm... Vernon Belcourt, who just passed away was there...I think that may be where he got pneumonia.

**ChristinR2:** Yes.

**ChristinR2:** I am going to direct you to a website...everyone go to [www.racismagainstindians.org](http://www.racismagainstindians.org)

**ChristinR2:** Then go to Understanding the Am In Mascots

**ChristinR2:** People do get mad at these kinds of things...its always interesting to see reactions..

**ChristinR2:** Okay, as I was saying Michael I will give you proof.

**ChristinR2:** Okay, please read the cover page and then we'll talk about some real life situations I have been involved with.

**ChristinR2:** let me know when you are ready to move forward.

**MichaelDW:** Ready.

**ChristinR2:** David?

**DavidW:** Go ahead, Christine

**ChristinR2:** Okay, thanks!

**ChristinR2:** For the last six years, I have been working with Indian families in over 25 states, more than 11 tribes, taking their Civil Rights complaints.

**ChristinR2:** Many complaints are based on the fact that kids are called by the team name. Basic bullying.

**ChristinR2:** In fact, I am now working with an African Am family whose kids are being called the N word in school.

**ChristinR2:** Most people are stunned that kids would do that in this day and age, but redskin should be as offensive as the N word.

**BJB2** nods

**ChristinR2:** Because teachers do not have the same reaction to Redskin, which is not nice, that they do to the N word, which is grounds for suspension, the harrassment is not contained.

**ChristinR2:** The harassment continues. And sometimes get violent.

**DavidW:** Christine, do you have any thoughts on WHY sports teams chose "Braves, Indians, Redskins"?

**ChristinR2:** In one case that I worked on, children in a family were tormented by the kids in town by being called all kinds of things...Dirty Indian was typical.

**MichaelDW:** But is this proof that mascots create violence? If this could be proved, this information would be very useful for my classroom.

**ChristinR2:** These kids ended up getting beaten up and because we filed CR complaints and put it in the paper, a Native boy was found hung on a school swing set.

**ChristinR2:** Later, do a search for Faith South Dakota and see what comes up.

**ChristinR2:** Yes, because what happens is that by allowing children to use negative comments, negative behavior is not stopped. Its permission to be disrespectful

**ChristinR2:** I have more information that you can even imagine.

**ChristinR2:** I will send you an article I wrote called Racism in the schoolyard.

**ChristinR2:** Okay, I will send it after the class...I may have even posted it in the archives of this group.

**ChristinR2:** We'll look later.

**ChristinR2:** Okay, now here is an interesting statistic...

**ChristinR2:** Keep that website up for a bit.

**MichaelDW:** Indians are subject to violence where there are not mascots in schools though.

**ChristinR2:** 70% of violence against Indians is perpetrated by another race...60% white, 10% black

**ChristinR2:** yes, that's true...Michael, why do you think that is?>

**DavidW:** but, Native Americans must almost always be in the minority, right?

**ChristinR2:** I believe it's because racism was the basis of this country and the removal of racism has never been formally ended

**ChristinR2:** People think it is still patriotic to be racist against Indian

**DavidW** agrees

**ChristinR2:** The team names are part of this...it perpetuates the hatred, the abuse, the mocking.

**MichaelDW:** I imagine the usual race/power issues. There are places/schools where Indians are not the minority.

**ChristinR2:** Look at that Cleveland Indians face...GEEZ!

**ChristinR2:** Michael, even when they are the MAJORITY it is STILL a problem.

**DavidW:** But, again, don't most sports teams want a POSITIVE association with their name?

**MichaelDW:** Oh yes, of course. That's why the "minority" part of this issue is not always the cause.

**ChristinR2:** This is because the teachers are white and they retain negative feelings about Indian...they also believe they are there to teach Indian kids to be white.

**ChristinR2:** They WANT a positive association but the problem is, it's THEIR positive association, i.e. appropriation/

**ChristinR2:** Last week I used an awesome quote. I would like to use it again. Please bear with me while I type it. I can't cut and paste for some reason.

**ChristinR2:** "Cultural property includes not only land and other tangible property, but ideas, traditions, and other non-tangibles. Cultural property belongs to the cultural group, rather than to an individual.

**ChristinR2:** As an individual has the right to control use of his/her property, the cultural group has the right to control the use of its property. Not all people recognize cultural property. As a result some individuals will use another group's cultural properties without permission;

**ChristinR2:** often that use is offensive to the cultural group, because their property is used in a way that distorts or is disrespectful to the group's beliefs."

**ChristinR2:** That being said, there is respect in the use of the team names.

**ChristinR2:** There is no consideration about how the Am In community might feel about the way they are portrayed.

**ChristinR2:** Any questions about this?

**MichaelDW:** What would be an example of a native group's cultural property?

**ChristinR2:** Feathers...sacred objects used as decoration...Names, which may be so sacred some Native people will not even speak them in public..used as art projects in

elementary classrooms.

**MichaelDW:** Let's take feathers. Of course, actual feathers are federally protected. But what about representations of feathers. Are these the cultural property of Indian people?

**ChristinR2:** It depends on the way they are used.

**MichaelDW:** For example?

**ChristinR2:** For instance, if the image appears on the gymnasium floor, yes, it might be offensive to see someone playing basketball on eagle feathers which to some tribes are NEVER supposed to touch the ground.

**ChristinR2:** It can be offensive to use a plains headdress on an eastern Cherokee image..not to everyone, but to some people it is...

**ChristinR2:** Back to Civil Rights.

**ChristinR2:** I visited a school in South Dakota that had a team called the Redskins.

**ChristinR2:** In the 1960s they had a game called Scalp the Indians.

**ChristinR2:** and they would send the kids out to find an Indian kid=, chop off his hair and bring it back.

**ChristinR2:** The school even today retains the board that kids would come back and hang up their scalp locks.

**ChristinR2:** I have seen kids who are so tormented about being Indian, they turn their backs on their culture...n fact David Yeagley, if you know who he is, is probably the most well known example of that.

**ChristinR2:** He is a staunch republican who would like to dissolve the reservations

**ChristinR2:** I have seen school board meetings where the school insists they are honoring a tribe, even while the tribe stands there and says, Please give us our name back.

**ChristinR2:** The adults at those meetings are rude and crude to those tribal members.

**MichaelDW:** I certainly don't agree with Yeagley on anything I've seen from him, but I did not know he wanted to terminate tribes.

**ChristinR2:** Yup.

**ChristinR2:** well, reservations maybe not tribes.

**MichaelDW:** Well, terminating the federal trust status. Has he said this?

**ChristinR2:** I saw him speak in NY once and he spoke about being teased mercilessly as a kid. Can't beat em join em.

**ChristinR2:** I was there with a Lakota friend who just shook his head and said Pity him.

**ChristinR2:** Anyway, I see those kids who suffer today, and so often, the worst of it begins with the team names.

**ChristinR2:** I worked with a girl in Washington State who at 15 removed the tomahawk chop from her school activities.

**ChristinR2:** She was so threatened and her cousin was beat up

**ChristinR2:** eventually she had to leave the school.

**ChristinR2:** I will never forget her little voice,////"Or there'll be BIIIIIG Trouble."

**DavidW:** So, has there been a positive result for removing these mascots, Christine?

**ChristinR2:** Well, that's a good question David. I

**ChristinR2:** actually think that the positive result comes from the actual process of removing them.

**ChristinR2:** An educational process begins,

**ChristinR2:** The school attempts to change the entire image from the one previously stereotyped.

**ChristinR2:** Often Native speakers will come

**ChristinR2:** what happens is the kids see the school showing respect and it has an effect.

**ChristinR2:** I wish I could say that ALL the complaints come from team names, sadly they do not.

**ChristinR2:** Are there any other questions?

**MichaelDW:** I'm still lagging far back. When you gave the feathers on the gym floor example, I immediately thought of Haskell.

**ChristinR2:** It was published by a multicultural newsletter in Washington state.

**ChristinR2:** That's interesting!!!!!!

**DavidW:** Have professional teams made statements at least indicating that they understand the mascots can be taken by some people to be insulting?

**ChristinR2:** As I said, SOME tribes.

**ChristinR2:** I always say SOME because they can really have such different responses...

**ChristinR2:** No.

**MichaelDW:** It's a school that serves all tribal nations.

**ChristinR2:** They either give them up for that very reason, or they fight like the dickens to keep them.

**ChristinR2:** Well, it would be interesting to know if anyone ever complained.

**MichaelDW:** It has a very complicated history, that's for sure.

**ChristinR2:** I have been involved in situations where a school was successfully sued to remove them.

**ChristinR2:** I am sure...and of course there is always the argument that Indians can do what they want with their own image.

**ChristinR2:** I have always thought it weird for whites to want to be called Indians.

**MichaelDW:** Cultural property rights is likewise complicated. I think it was Wicaso Sa Review that did an entire issue on this topic. There some excellent essays about the question in that issue.

**ChristinR2:** Why don't they want to be Chinese?

**ChristinR2:** I did hear about a school called the Big Blacks..

**ChristinR2:** but it turned out their image was a bear.

**DavidW:** but, to be honest, it is metaphorical, isn't it?

**ChristinR2:** Boy, some people got really riled over that one.

**DavidW:** It's an association with, typically, a positive aspect of what the name of the mascot is

**ChristinR2:** Are you a metaphor, David? :-)

**DavidW:** not sure I follow you, Christine

**DavidW:** I'm not a Tiger, either, but in high school that was the mascot for our team

**ChristinR2:** I would love to see that article Michael!

**ChristinR2:** But it's different to take on an image of a fierce animal.

**ChristinR2:** Did you know that Indians are the only RACE of people to be portrayed as a mascot?

**MichaelDW:** It's the entire issue of the journal. I'm looking for the URL.

**DavidW:** but do you think that teams that took the mascot of Native Americans took it in a positive sense?

**ChristinR2:** David, when you have time, read this article:

**ChristinR2:** <http://racismagainstindians.org/STARArticle/IndiansAndAnimals.htm>

**DavidW:** maybe that is the wrong in any event, but, I'm just curious as to intention

**ChristinR2:** Whatever sense, it was stereotypical.

**ChristinR2:** Was it because they were environmentalists?

**ChristinR2:** Spiritual?

**ChristinR2:** Warriors?

**ChristinR2:** Many tribes were quiet peaceful people and do not associate themselves as warriors. That is an American stereotype of Indians.

**ChristinR2:** Someone sent me a tomahawk carved in Minnesota in the 40s.

**ChristinR2:** It say Indians scalp their enemies. Whitemen scalp their friends.

**ChristinR2:** Michael, do you want to add anything here?

**ChristinR2:** In closing, it seems the answer is to show respect and find out whether what you are doing is respectful or if you are doing it because you want to and are using honoring as an excuse.

**MichaelDW:** I certainly agree that the guy on the horse doesn't represent indigenous cultures.

**ChristinR2:** I have heard that the Indian head in the gymnasium celebrates genocide...Charlene Teters said that

**MichaelDW:** That figure really is a latecomer, a 19th century figure, who was really only part of the plains cultures. The vast majority of Indians were farmers, but that doesn't make a good mascot.

**ChristinR2:** severed head...

**ChristinR2:** LOL

**ChristinR2:** True.

**MichaelDW:** <http://www.haskell.edu/athletics/gallery/UserView.asp?ImageID=38>

**ChristinR2:** Of course, I don't get the red Socks thing either.

**MichaelDW:** Maybe not necessarily genocide.

**ChristinR2:** Interesting!!!!

**ChristinR2:** I wonder, can they play in NCAA tourneys?

**DavidW:** Christine, would you think there should be a law against the use of Native American images as mascots?

**ChristinR2:** I worked with the US Commission on Civil Rights when they were deciding on whether or not to issue the resolution

**ChristinR2:** They asked me to find out how people felt about it, they wanted to hear the Native voice on the issue.

**ChristinR2:** I put out a call for letters over the course of a week

**MichaelDW:** I don't know if they can play NCAA tourneys there. I imagine so, since these places need the approval of a tribe to be sanctioned.

**ChristinR2:** and the USCCR received 400 letters in favor of removing and 100 in favor of keeping

**ChristinR2:** Now of course, I put the call out to activist groups and that's who answered

**ChristinR2:** Many of those letters were copied to me

**ChristinR2:** and I read cries of pain that people had experienced their whole lives

**ChristinR2:** so to answer you Michael,

**ChristinR2:** Yes, I would.

**ChristinR2:** I even would in Native school.

**BJB2:** Christine, you did say you had to leave at 7:30 EDT...

**ChristinR2:** Even though it is not my place to say so

**ChristinR2:** BJ I do, I am all cranked up, though. :-)

**BJB2:** A reminder that Christine has scheduled these discussions for the next two Thursdays

**BJB2** grins...yeah, I noticed that!

**DavidW** smiles

**MichaelDW:** The Iroquois believe that the most power anyone should have over another is persuasion.

**MichaelDW:** That would be my first option.

**ChristinR2:** Well, I am passionate on the subject, but it's because the voice I hear is from children. :-)

**ChristinR2:** I do have to leave. I am sure I missed many posts, I look forward to reading the transcripts.

**ChristinR2:** Thank you all for coming.

**MichaelDW:** Take care, Christine.

**DavidW:** Thanks, Christine. Good discussion

**ChristinR2:** It was not my intention to offend anyone, I have expressed my opinion only and honor your right to retain your own. :-)

**ChristinR2:** You too.

**ChristinR2:** Thanks so much.

**MichaelDW:** Of course.

