



The Kansas Association for Native American Education applauds efforts across the state to remove American Indian mascots, branding, and imagery from our institutions of education. In 1998, KANAE voted on a resolution that called for the elimination of American Indian mascots and branding in our schools. In 2018, we reaffirmed that resolution. This recommendation is in line with similar resolutions from the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI).

Since KANAE passed the first resolution, a multitude of studies have been conducted on the impact of mascots. Overall, the research clearly demonstrates that American Indian mascots and branding continue to be detrimental to the learning and psychological well-being of not only Native students, but ALL students. Extensive literature exists on this topic and hundreds of professional organizations working across the larger American Indian community, including NIEA and NCAI, overwhelmingly favor eliminating American Indian mascots, branding, and imagery. For the purpose of keeping community conversations focused on substance, here we highlight key research and talking points that must be considered in any community dialogues:

- American Psychological Association (2005) recommended the immediate retirement of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams, and organizations. In this resolution, the APA cites research illustrating how mascots “undermine educational experiences of all communities—especially those who have had little or no contact with Indigenous peoples” and create “unwelcome and...hostile learning environments for Native Americans” (p. 1).
- Fryberg, Markus, Oyserman, and Stone (2008) found that American Indian students exposed to mascots reported lower self-esteem and community worth, and “fewer achievement-related possible selves” (p. 208). **This included exposure to imagery typically seen as honorable or positive.** Additionally, they assert that “American Indian mascots are harmful because they remind American Indians of the limited ways others see them and, in this way, constrain how they can see themselves” (p. 208).
- Kim-Prieto, Goldstein, Okazaki, and Kirshner (2010) combined two studies that show “participants primed with an American Indian sports mascot increased their stereotyping of a different ethnic minority group” (p. 534). This research demonstrates that mascots are bad for ALL students, and that they work against creating a positive school culture of belonging for every student, especially those in historically excluded or marginalized groups.
- Most recently, Fryberg, Eason, Brady, Jessop, and Lopez (2020) found, through empirical research, that Native people generally oppose American Indian mascots and branding. Additionally, they found that American Indians who are more highly engaged in their Native communities (“behavioral engagement and identity centrality,” p. 1) tend to oppose mascots more strongly. Too often during community mascot debates

educational leaders secure a statement from one or two Natives in the community that express apathy or claim that such imagery does not bother them. The larger Native community makes it critically clear that American Indian mascot branding and imagery must be eliminated.

While the Washington team’s moniker is getting considerable attention in this moment due to the franchise’s decision to drop the name, the research shows that ALL Native mascot branding and imagery should be retired. **This remains true even when imagery and branding are intended to be honorable and positive.** Therefore, to engage in community conversations that only focus on which Native branding terms are worse than others (R\*ds\*\*ns, Redmen, Savages, Indians, Chiefs, Chieftains, Warriors, Braves, etc.), is to overlook the more substantive impacts of all Native-related logos and branding outlined in the empirical research.

The vast majority of schools have mission statements, school improvement goals, and/or strategic plans that strive to create “culturally responsive,” “equitable,” and/or “inclusive” learning environments. The core values and beliefs expressed in these statements and school improvement processes are at odds with what research tells us about the negative effects of American Indian mascots, imagery, and branding. This reality must be discussed when schools engage community dialogues. As an example, the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) model prioritizes attention to social-emotional learning, diversity and equity, and physical and mental health. We agree with these priorities, and vigorously support school improvement processes that promote these important values and beliefs in schools. However, the presence of American Indian mascots in our schools goes against these core values.

Therefore, we strongly support students, teachers, leaders, and community stakeholders working to remove American Indian mascots and branding in our schools.

#### **The KANA Leadership Team:**

Alex Red Corn, EdD (Osage)

Executive Director

Jennifer Attocknie (Comanche)

Associate Executive Director

Debra Bolton, PhD (Ohkay Owingeh/Diné/Ute)

Communications Coordinator

Freda J. Gipp, EdD (Apache Tribe of Oklahoma)

Event and Education Resource Coordinator

Tai Edwards, PhD

Secretary

#### **References**

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