

NOTES FROM FORMER CHIEF ILLINIWEK, IVAN A. DOZIER

This document is being sent out as part of a press release on behalf of Ivan A. Dozier and the Council of Chiefs. Ivan is graduating from the University of Illinois with his Master's degree in Crop Sciences, and as a student, has portrayed the Chief from 2010-2015, making him the longest serving chief since the tradition started in 1926. Included are some informational comments by Ivan about the selection process.

This document preceded a live press conference that occurred on Thursday, January 21, 2016 at 2:00 pm in front of the Alma Mater at the corner of Green and Wright Streets.

"On my time as the Chief":

I have filled the Chief Illiniwek role for five years, longer than any other student in history. During that time, I have felt the impact of several passionate people within the community, some supportive and some disparaging. To my critics, I would like you to understand that anger and pain are something we all go through, but we owe it to ourselves and each other not to pass on the hate. I have seen too many personal attacks and too much aggression fueled by nothing but a lack of education and understanding. If we focus on what is really important: doing what is best in the interest of campus and community unity, we can restore rather than destroy. To those who have supported me, I cannot thank you enough. You have shown me the power of human unity, the toughness and tenacity to never give up on yourself, your culture, and what you believe in. I have seen the Chief tradition persevere through adversity and it would not have done so without the strong and righteous character of the people of Central Illinois and all of Illini nation beyond. Keep your heads held high, stay focused on what we are trying to do in the community, and educate others so that this community can be the same beacon of hope for my successors that it has been for me.

All good things must come to an end, and I tried my best to make my time count. I hope my tenure as the Chief will be remembered for my focus on education, honor and unity . . . pillars of the Chief Illiniwek tradition, and noble reflections of the community we represent. I hope everyone in the community strives to learn as much as they can about not only this tradition, but also the rich cultural history that inspired it. I may no longer be the Chief, but I will continue to make myself available for speaking opportunities and fighting for what I believe in; perhaps even writing a book about my experiences.

We trained for about three months leading up to tryouts. Only about half of the people who initially signed up made it to the end, pretty standard for the rigorous workout and demanding schedule that is required. Our candidates worked both physically and mentally, needing not only to perform the dance, but also to fulfill the education and outreach perspective that the tradition now demands. Every one of our final candidates are excellent representations of the upstanding student body we strive for at Illinois.

Bennett J. Kamps of Barrington, IL has been selected as Chief #39. Bennett strives to make a positive impact in the community, and we feel his goals of local enrichment go hand-in-hand with the direction of the Chief tradition. Bennett is eloquent and polite, and his demeanor is exactly what we want to see representing our student body to alumni and local organizations. In practice, Bennett has never stopped

improving and I wish Bennett the best in his goal to reinvigorate the student body and entirety of Illini Nation behind our proud tradition.

Omar Cruz Aranda of Chicago, IL has been selected as the Assistant Chief, who will appear in tandem or in place of Chief Illiniwek when needed. Omar succeeds previous assistant Katie Birkel of Peoria, IL who served in the role from 2010-2013. Omar has the heart and enthusiasm to unite people and see the big picture. Omar is the type of person to put in the extra hours and extra effort to, not only keep improving himself, but also the people around him. His performance of the dance is live-action artistry and his respect for tradition truly inspiring. I can't wait to see the tradition's continued growth as a result of his support.

On the role of the Chief:

Bennett and Omar have been chosen to enter the Chief tradition, an elite fraternity open to only the most dedicated and passionate Illinois students. The Chief tradition takes hard work and demands upstanding character and strong spirit, and for Bennett and Omar to be selected, shows that they exemplify the best qualities our student body has to offer. Despite this, it is important to focus on the fact that the role is not about the individual. It is about the history and culture of our community. The Chief represents who we are and where we have been. The Chief stands for our fundamental goals of education and unity and the undeniable importance of our traditions.

The Chief's role on campus will be to work with the Students for Chief Illiniwek, keeping the student body informed about a controversial issue, and working to revive school spirit and unity amongst the student body. The Chief will continue to appear at sporting events such as basketball, football, and volleyball games; however, in the stands with the crowd, rather than dancing on the court. The dance will still be performed; however, as the Chief is available to work with local high schools and other community event centers. Additionally, the Chief(s) will be on call for speeches about the symbol and the culture, history, and tradition of Illinois that it represents.

On the future of the Chief:

Everyone should know that the Chief tradition is alive and well, albeit apart from the University, yet even now the hope for a return of our symbol is within reach. A dialogue between Chief supporters and University leaders is all we need to begin the movement of a return, but so far, campus leaders have ignored our requests to host a conversation. It is a tough fight to be ignored for so long, but worth nothing that many of the University leaders that have staunchly ignored the voice of the majority are no longer on campus. Hopefully, as new leadership enters our campus community, they will not make the same mistakes as their predecessors, and they will grant us an audience so that we might finally restore our rightful cultural symbol to this community. I have no doubt that Bennett and Omar are up to leading the charge in this task, and I have confidence that the community will rise up to support them. To any community members wanting to get involved, I ask you to check out the Honor the Chief Society. Students can get involved through our student organization, and those on social media can follow Chief Illiniwek on Facebook and Twitter. Our tradition will never cease as long as our collective strength and passion endure. The Chief lives! GO ILLINI!