

**Society of Indian Psychologists Statement on Retiring Native American Mascots (Approved 1999, Minor Updates and Revisions, 2015)**

**We, the undersigned members of the Society of Indian Psychologists, write this in support of "retiring" all Indian personalities as the official symbols and mascots of universities, colleges or schools, and non-professional and professional athletic teams. We support doing so because of a variety of concerns related to the ethical practice of psychology. As a professional society of psychologists we operate under these professional ethical guidelines.**

**We are concerned that the continued use of Indian symbols and mascots seriously compromises our ability to engage in ethical professional practice and service to the campus and community. We believe that it establishes an unwelcome academic environment for Indian (students, staff, and faculty) and contributes to the miseducation of all members of the campus and community regarding the cultural practices and traditions of an entire ethnic group. In our view, the use of a historically and culturally inaccurate, stereotypic image undermines the educational experience of all members of universities and communities. It seems especially problematic for those who have had little or no contact with Indian people and their cultures.**

**Stereotypical and historically inaccurate images of Indians in general interfere with learning about them by creating, supporting and maintaining oversimplified and inaccurate views of indigenous peoples and their cultures. When stereotypical representations are taken as factual information, they contribute to the development of cultural biases and prejudices, (clearly a contradiction to the educational mission of the University.) In the same vein, we believe that continuation of the use of Indians as symbols and mascots is incongruous with the philosophy espoused by many Americans as promoting inclusivity and diversity.**

**We understand that some affiliated with the institutions having a long history of use of these symbols may have a special attachment to them. We also understand and believe that this attachment may not have been formed out of maliciousness or negative intentions. To the extent, however, that tradition and/or economic issues are major obstacles to change, they should not usurp the principles of a society struggling to put an end to racism. What once may have been a unifying symbol for the various bodies using these symbols has become a source of cross-cultural**

**conflict. In light of all of these factors, we strongly support and encourage the all such entities to develop a new symbol consistent with and contributing to the positive realization of national principles (our educational mission.)**

**In support of our concern about the ethically problematic nature of this issue for the professional practice of psychology, we cite relevant portions of the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010) and the "Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic, Linguistic and Culturally Diverse Populations" (APA, 1992).**

#### **APA Code of Ethics:**

##### **Principle D: Justice**

**Psychologists recognize that fairness and justice entitle all persons to access to and benefit from the contributions of psychology and to equal quality in the processes, procedures and services being conducted by psychologists. Psychologists exercise reasonable judgment and take precautions to ensure that their potential biases, the boundaries of their competence and the limitations of their expertise do not lead to or condone unjust practices.**

##### **Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity**

**Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination. Psychologists are aware that special safeguards may be necessary to protect the rights and welfare of persons or communities whose vulnerabilities impair autonomous decision making. Psychologists are aware of and respect cultural, individual and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language and socioeconomic status and consider these factors when working with members of such groups. Psychologists try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone activities of others based upon such prejudices.**

**In addition, several of the *Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic, Linguistic and Culturally Diverse Populations* (1992) also address our concerns on this issue.**

**# 5. Psychologists respect client's religious and/or spiritual beliefs and values, including attributions and taboos, since they affect world view, psychosocial functioning, and expressions of distress.**

**a. Part of working in minority communities is to become familiar with indigenous beliefs and practices and respect them.**

**# 7. Psychologists consider the impact of adverse social, environmental and political factors in assessing problems and designing interventions.**

**b. Psychologists work within the cultural setting to improve the welfare of all persons concerned, if there is a conflict between cultural values and human rights.**

**#8. Psychologists attend to as well as work to eliminate biases, prejudices, and discriminatory practices.**

**a. Psychologists acknowledge relevant discriminatory practices at the social and community level that may be affecting the psychological welfare of the population being served."**

**We applaud the current efforts across the nation to have this crucial issue raised and addressed in a responsible and productive way. It is our hope this letter contributes to that effort.**

### **Research Update (2015)**

**More recent research has confirmed the destructive nature of American Indian and Alaska Native sports mascots. Mascot exposure can be detrimental to self-esteem, community worth, and imagining achievement among Native students (Fryberg, Markus, Oyserman, & Stone, 2008). Exposure to sports mascots also can negatively impact the mood of Native students when compared to White students at the same institution. The differences in responses persisted even when the mascot images were judged to be "neutral" rather than "controversial" (LaRocque, McDonald, Weatherly, & Ferraro, 2011). Although it has been argued by proponents of these mascots that the images honor Natives by presenting a positive image of the people and culture in mainstream society, the research has found that mascot images actually were associated with increased**

negative stereotyping of Natives by Whites (Freng & Willis-Esqueda, 2011). In addition, mascot exposure for White Americans may make it more likely they will stereotype other non-Native minority groups (Kim-Prieto, Goldstein, Okazaki, & Kirschner, 2010). It is clear that exposure to mascots represents a risk to health and mental health for American Indians and Alaska Natives as well as to other non-Whites group members.

### References

American Psychological Association (1992). *Guidelines for providers of psychological services to ethnic, linguistic and culturally diverse populations*. Retrieved April 6, 2015, from <http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/policy/provider-guidelines.aspx>

American Psychological Association (2010). *Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct*. Retrieved April 6, 2015, from <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/>

Freng, S., & Willis-Esqueda, C. (2011). A question of honor: Chief wahoo and American Indian stereotype activation among a university based sample. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 151*(5), 577-591. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2010.507265>

Fryberg, S. A., Markus, H. R., Oyserman, D., & Stone, J. M. (2008). Of warrior chiefs and Indian princesses: The psychological consequences of American Indian mascots. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 30*(3), 208-218. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01973530802375003>

Kim-Prieto, C., Goldstein, L. A., Okazaki, S., & Kirschner, B. (2010). Effect of exposure to an American Indian mascot on the tendency to stereotype a different minority group. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 40*(3), 534-553. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2010.00586.x>

LaRocque, A. R., McDonald, J. D., Weatherly, J. N., & Ferraro, F. R. (2011). Indian sports nicknames/logos: Affective difference between American Indian and non-Indian college students. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research, 18*(2), 1-16. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.5820/aian.1802.2011.1>

### Other Resources

**American Psychological Association (2002). *Guidelines on multicultural education, training, research, practice, and organizational change for psychologists.***

**<http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/policy/multicultural-guidelines.aspx>**

**The American Psychological Association Statement Resolution Recommending the Immediate Retirement of American Indian Mascots, Symbols, Images, and Personalities by Schools, Colleges, Universities, Athletic Teams, and Organizations:**

**<http://www.apa.org/about/policy/mascots.pdf>**

**The American Anthropological Association statement to denounce inappropriate American Indian mascots:**

**<http://www.aaanet.org/issues/press/upload/Sports-Mascot-Resolution-Release-Final.pdf>**

**The Asian American Psychological Association Statement on American Indian Mascots in Sports**

**<http://aapaonline.org/2015/01/30/aapa-statement-on-american-indian-mascots-in-sports/>**

**The Association of Black Psychologists statement:**

**<http://www.abpsi.org/pdf/DCfootballpressrelease2014.pdf>**