

Michigan Civil Rights Commission

RESOLUTION ON AMERICAN INDIAN MASCOTS

WHEREAS, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission is empowered pursuant to its authority under the Michigan Constitution and the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to "secure the full enjoyment of civil rights guaranteed by the law and the constitution through the elimination of unlawful discrimination"; and

WHEREAS, the Commission understands that the use of American Indian mascots is a chronic and growing issue for public school systems across the nation. Accordingly, public schools are at the forefront in assessing the impact caused by mascots, where the objective is to provide a safe, supportive, and nondiscriminatory learning environment for all students; and

WHEREAS, the use of the culture of a people as mascots, logos, symbols or nicknames perpetuates stereotyping and cultural insensitivity. The activities associated with the use of these nicknames often irreverently depict sacred customs, rituals, and people, perpetuating the lack of respect for other cultures. It prevents children from forming a positive identity and developing appropriate and healthy levels of self-esteem; and

WHEREAS, regardless of the prideful identification or other good intentions, the use of racial nicknames is overwhelmingly resented by the group of people it is intended to honor; and

WHEREAS, in Michigan, there are approximately 75 schools currently using American Indian mascot names, and

WHEREAS, school administrators, staff, parents and community members play a critical role in modeling behavior that celebrates and honors cultural traditions and beliefs.

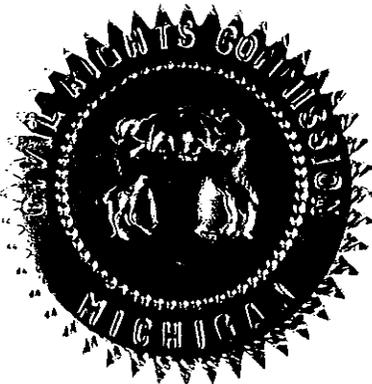
THEREFORE, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission acknowledges the importance of Michigan students learning about diversity so that they will understand, respect and celebrate people's differences and draw strength from them and become good citizens and productive adults.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, in its continuing effort to eliminate discrimination, opposes the use of a people's culture or race as mascots, logos, symbols or nicknames, and recommends the methods used by the Marshall Public Schools Board of Education and its Nickname Task Force as a model for other school districts to emulate in their own assessments. The model stresses the importance of actively including the community, faculty and students in the decision making process.

FURTHER RESOLVED, the Commission encourages all school districts to ensure that instructional materials, course work, policies and procedures are respectful of cultural differences and enhance cultural competency, and are void of stereotypic language and representations.

NOW, THEREFORE, IS IT RESOLVED, that the Commission directs the Michigan Department of Civil Rights to engage in discussion and collaborative initiatives with the Michigan State Board of Education and Michigan Department of Education to address educational issues affecting cultural populations represented in Michigan communities.

Given under and ratified on this 20th day of May, 2002, by the



MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

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