



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on July 27, 2011

## Univ. of N. Dakota's "Fighting Sioux" May Soon Be No More

North Dakotans who love the fierce Indian mascot of their state university are circling the wagons to battle an attack from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The governing body of American collegiate sport, which critics say was seized by political correctness many moons ago, no longer allows its members to use offensive Indian names. So the Fighting Sioux of the University of North Dakota might have to ride off to the Happy Hunting Ground. (Fighting Sioux logo at left.)



The name is supposed to be phased out by Aug. 15. If it isn't, that could mean heap big trouble for UND. The Associated Press reports that the university could be blacklisted by other teams if it keeps the proud name and logo of the warrior Sioux. Retaining the name would also invite scorn, it noted.

### NCAA on the Warpath

The real trouble for UND began in 2005. Offended Indians and leftists began pounding the war drums, claiming Indian names and images were offensive, and so the NCAA declared such names officially offensive and began ordering its teams to drop the Indian names. The policy took effect in 2006, and banned everything to do with Indian imagery. A total of 20 teams dumped their proud spirit and traditions.

An appeals procedure permitted schools such as the Florida State Seminoles, Central Michigan Chippewas and Utah Utes to keep their names after those schools received permission from the tribes. The alumni and boosters who support the schools didn't have much influence.

In 2006, UND sued the NCAA for breach of faith and restraint of trade on the issue, but the suit was settled. The settlement permitted UND three years to garner enough support for the name to justify an exemption.

The school didn't drum up enough support during its grace period. Alumni, students, and the Spirit Lake Sioux strongly support the logo. But, because the Standing Rock Sioux do not, the NCAA would not reconsider.

In 2009, the State Board of Higher Education and the university agreed the logo would go on Aug. 15.

### State Legislature Says No

But North Dakota's council of Great White Fathers, the state legislature, rode to the rescue, or at least



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think they did. The Governor signed a bill that prohibits the university from changing the name. Now, the NCAA must decide whether to sanction the school. UND recently joined the Big Sky Conference, and according to the AP, not changing the name could severely damage the schools athletic program.

Potentially more damaging, the Big Sky Conference has said the issue will complicate the school's conference membership and some schools may refuse to schedule games with North Dakota. Some believe that would lead to a broad decline in athletics.

As well, the AP reported, the NCAA hasn't budged despite North Dakota's new law. A meeting on the subject was cancelled when the Senate majority leader was killed in an automobile crash. Aug. 12 is the new date for that pow-wow.

Although many seem to support the logo, history is not on UND's side, the AP flatly stated. Two former university officials involved in the name war said boosters who supported Indian names eventually raised the white flag. But they didn't surrender because of disgruntled Indians, but because the leftists who control universities cancel games with teams that bear Indian names.

Robert Potts, recently retired chancellor of Arkansas State University, told the AP that the issue is whether the team will be outcast:

If the university expects to build a first-rate program in all its sports, it can't do it very well if it's treated as a pariah by a lot of other Division I programs and it can't host NCAA events. The NCAA is just too big an animal to thumb your nose at and expect to be a participant in its programs and so forth.

As well, Potts told the AP:

[S]ome boosters who held out for Arkansas State to keep the Indians nickname reversed course after the University of Wisconsin pulled out of a football contract that could have been worth about \$300,000, citing a Wisconsin school policy barring them from playing teams with nicknames considered offensive.

"It was just a hassle we didn't need," Potts said.

### **Wampum Keeps Rolling In**

Most importantly, AP reported, donations from boosters actually increased after the name change because even the most rabid fans came around, Potts told AP.

Income tax documents obtained by The Associated Press show that the Indian Club Inc. at Arkansas State took in donations of about \$1.5 million in 2004, the year before the NCAA edict. Revenue was \$1.9 million in 2005, \$1.5 million in 2006, \$1.6 million in both 2007 and 2008 and \$2.4 million in 2009. ...

The University of Louisiana-Monroe Athletic Scholarship Foundation saw a similar pattern when the college was in the midst of changing its name from Indians to Warhawks. Contributions were at \$743,031 in 2004 and increased each of the next four years to reach \$1.4 million in 2008, tax records show.

Money and athletics, it appears, not pride or principle, will decide the issue for UND. The *New York Times* quoted Grant Shaft, the president of the State Board of Education that decided to give up the name beginning Aug. 15. Shaft went to law school there and said five generations of his family attended the university. But Mr. Shaft says it is time for the university to move past the matter and comply with



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N.C.A.A. guidelines. He added,

My roots with the Fighting Sioux nickname go as deep as anybody. The reality of the situation is that the Aug. 15 date is looming, and were starting to realize the consequences are really untenable for the athletics department.

Interestingly, there have been no reports about complaints being registered by either the NCAA or Irish Americans concerning Notre Dame's team nickname, the "Fighting Irish."



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