

Native American Bar Association of Washington, D.C.

Resolution #2015-1

TITLE: Support for the Elimination of Race-Based Native Logos, Mascots, and Names in Publicly-Funded Educational Institutions

WHEREAS, the Native American Bar Association of Washington, D.C. (“NABA-DC”) was established to promote the educational and professional advancement of Native American attorneys and Indian country; and

WHEREAS, NABA-DC is committed to promoting the sovereignty of Native American tribes and their communities; protecting the legal rights of individual Native Americans, their communities, and their tribes; providing community outreach and education about legal issues that affect Native Americans; and promoting the cultural heritage of Native Americans, their communities, and their tribes; and

WHEREAS, Washington, D.C. is the seat of numerous federal institutions having direct constitutional and statutory authority associated with fulfilling the trust responsibility to federally recognized tribes throughout the Nation; and

WHEREAS, these institutions include the United States Congress; Executive Agencies, such as the Department of the Interior, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Defense; and numerous subsidiary offices, such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Service, the Office of Tribal Justice, and the Office of Trust Services, among others; and

WHEREAS, many of these institutions and other organizations are staffed and led by Native American tribal members and leaders who, with their families, relocate to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area from around the United States to advocate on behalf of Native American tribes or to pursue public service careers on behalf of all Americans; and

WHEREAS, despite their commitment to the public good, these public servants and their families must endure racial disparagement from the use of Native mascots, such as that of the Washington National Football League (“NFL”) team, whose derogatory mascot and name invokes a history of violence and racism toward Native Americans; and

WHEREAS, a number of publicly-funded educational institutions in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area promote and allow the use of race-based Native mascots and logos by staff and students on their premises; and

WHEREAS, such public disparagement is most acutely felt by Native American children, many of whom enroll in area public schools because of their parents’ commitment to national public service; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the constitutional right of the Washington NFL team to celebrate and promote disparaging symbols, NABA-DC questions the desire or need of schools in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to support or encourage such use where doing so fosters hurtful stereotypes and diminishes a child’s self-respect based on her or his color or creed; and

WHEREAS, Native Americans have endured centuries of attempts at cultural destruction and assimilation, and continued fostering of stereotypes in educational institutions detracts from the proud histories, cultures, and traditions of Native peoples; and

WHEREAS, the use of race-based Native American mascots, symbols, images, and personalities in educational settings fosters a hostile learning environment for students through the affirmation of harmful stereotypes; and

WHEREAS, studies have empirically demonstrated that the psychological impacts of race-based Native American mascots on both Native and non-Native students have negative effects, such as lessened self-esteem and an increased likelihood of insidious racial stereotyping; and

WHEREAS, the National Native American Bar Association, representing the interests of all populations indigenous to the lands which are now collectively the United States, supports the elimination of race-based Native mascots, and specifically the Washington, D.C. franchise of the NFL; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians, the oldest and largest national representative organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments, has passed Resolutions TUL-13-050, ANC-14-018, and TUL-05-087 supporting the efforts of schools and school districts in addressing harmful race-based mascots; and

WHEREAS, the National Indian Education Association, the largest national Native organization of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian educators, administrators, parents, and students, has passed Resolution 2013-07 supporting the elimination of race-based Native logos, mascots, and names; and

WHEREAS, federal courts have upheld the invalidation of the trademark of the Washington D.C. franchise of the NFL as being inherently offensive and disparaging to Native peoples; and

WHEREAS, publicly-funded educational institutions should not be vehicles for institutionalized racism; and

WHEREAS, every child deserves an educational environment that is safe, supportive, and respectful of all cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NABA-DC stands with other national organizations in calling on all publicly-funded educational institutions to eliminate race-based Native logos, mascots, and names on their premises in order to ensure an educational environment that is supportive of all students; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NABA-DC encourages those school districts in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to engage in active efforts to protect Native students and families from discrimination and disrespect caused by race-based Native logos, mascots, and names and to provide education to all staff, students, and parents' associations about the harms of racial stereotyping; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this shall be the policy of NABA-DC until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Native American Bar Association of Washington, D.C. on November 17, 2015 with a quorum present.

10 In Favor, 0 Against, 4 Abstain, 2 Absent



Christina Snider, NABA-DC Secretary