

Controversy emerges over Indian mascots

Groups say culture is trivialized, exploited

Martina Hines advanced Tuesday blossomed. KELLER (AP) — School officials took her ranting at dozens of high school stadiums and gymnasiums across Texas.

At Port Neches-Groves High School, just east of Beaumont, the mascot is called the Indian. "I don't have spirit and does a war dance as she does," while carrying a feather-covered shield and spear. The football coach said "Welcome to our Reservation."

At Keller High School, north of Fort Worth, cheerleaders wear beaded headbands and students do the "tomahawk chop" when rooting for their teams.

"I don't think we're putting Indians down," said Keller cheerleader Susie Belew. "They teach us to have pride in ourselves and to honor nature. We're proud to be the Indians."

But some American Indian groups say even schools with good intentions are trivializing and exploiting their culture.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recommended that all non-Indian schools and colleges abandon Indian team mascots, saying they may be disrespectful and offensive.

Representatives of the Cherokee Nation say

Hispanics, blacks and Asians would be outraged if a character representing their race, clad in a culturally inaccurate and stereotypical costume, ran around a football field.

"No human being should be portrayed as a mascot," said Richard Allen, a policy analyst with the Cherokee Nation, based

"I don't think we are putting Indians down. They teach us to have pride in ourselves and to honor nature."

— Susie Belew
Keller High cheerleader

in Tahlequah, Okla. "Some people say, 'We have the Cowboys, too,' but that's an occupation."

About 40 high schools in Texas are the Indians. A dozen other schools have Indian-related mascots: Apaches, Braves, Cherokees, Chieftains, Chiefs, Comanches, Indian Arrows and Redskins.

Officials from some schools

said they have never received complaints but would consider changing the mascot if someone requested it. Others oppose the idea, saying their mascot's costume and antics are authentic and do not mock Indian culture.

"Some mascots are funny or cuddly, but the Indian Spirit is serious," said Matt Burnett, football coach and athletic director at Port Neches-Groves. "It's a symbol of spirit for the whole community. It's a tradition."

Indian groups say part of the problem is a lack of understanding.

For example, the term "red-skin" refers not to skin color but to the bloody scalp of an Indian killed by whites who collected a bounty from the colonial government, Allen said.

Indian mascots are especially inappropriate in Texas, where early settlers and militia groups ran out most tribes, Allen said.

Chief Bowl, the principal chief of the Cherokees in Texas, was gunned down in the battle of the Neches in 1839. The Indians were resisting an order to leave Texas, following the invalidation of a treaty granting the tribe land in the eastern part of the state.

purpose of the Sunday afternoon workout is to work out some of the soreness, but this Sunday we had to do much more than that because of the limited preparation time. Wyoming has the advantage

of not having to travel. They can go ahead and get a little more done than we can preparation-wise."

Kickoff is set for 9 p.m. and will be nationally televised on ESPN2.

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.
— Luke 9:23

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