

Trimble: Dispatch from the Un-American Indian Activities Committee

The "Fighting Sioux" issue rages on, and the University of North Dakota is hanging on like Hillary, never admitting they are whopped. One Sicangu writer, in a fine column several weeks back, suggested that UND be made to use the translation of the Chippewa or Ottawa word from which the name Sioux was derived; in which case, they'd now be "the fighting little snakes."

The word nadouweesiou is the epithet those pesky Chippewa up north hurled at our Lakota, Dakota and Nakota ancestors as they departed mosquito land for the Great Plains. The French, with whom the Chips allied against us, shortened the name, put an "x" on the end (as they do with almost everything), and stuck us with the name Sioux.

But UND is not alone in its recalcitrance. The Fighting Illini and the Florida State Seminoles are not letting go either, nor are scads of other schools across the country.

In my investigative work for the new Un-American Indian Activities Committee, which I'm starting, I downloaded a list of nicknames of all colleges in the U.S. to see which institutions are not complying with the NCAA's dictum to jettison nicknames and mascots that might offend us Indians. It is scandalous the number of schools that are sticking with their offending monikers.

I will list the offending nicknames that I found, but I won't give the names of the colleges just yet. I'll spare them one more chance to repent and be saved before our UAIAC investigators are let loose upon them, followed by our close-order shrill team. Here are the offending nicknames I found: Aztecs, Braves (three teams), Chippewas, Choctaws, Indians (six, including Haskell), Moccasins, Nanooks, Red Men, Redmen, Renegades, Runnin' Utes, Savage Storm, Seminoles, Fighting Sioux, Tribe (College of William and Mary, of all the uppity hypocrites), Utes, Wahoos, Warriors (30, including Bacone College) and the Zias.

And to the "Moundbuilders" down at Southwestern College in Kansas: That name better mean ants or prairie dogs, boys, or we will be down to visit you.

NCAA, where is your power? Have you no guts? Your sole sanction against schools that disregard your orders - nay, your wimpy "suggestion" - is banishment from postseason competition, depriving them of bragging rights for a year. That leaves a whole bunch of cellar-dwellers with vacant postseasons to fill. Anyway, these are the institutions, Mr. NCAA, that are flipping you the bird and tormenting us Natives.

Actually, the list has several really great names which should give UND folks and others of their ilk some ideas about changing their offending nicknames to something more friendly, more creative, more fun. Take, for example, the following: "Anteaters" of U. Cal-Irvine; "Battling Bishops" of North Carolina Wesleyan College; "Black Flies" of the College of the Atlantic in Maine; "Blue Hose" of Presbyterian College in South Carolina; "Cotton Blossoms" of University of Arkansas-Monticello; "Ephs" of Williams College in Massachusetts; "Lemmings" at Bryant & Stratton College in Cleveland; and "the Poets" of Whittier College in California.

Poets. How civilized. Their cheers are probably in iambic pentameter.

Then there are the "Nads" of the Rhode Island School of Design. Fans of the school's hockey team cheer - what else? - "Go Nads!"

There are a few nicknames in sports, the prime one being the "Redskins," that are patently racist and offensive and should be discarded with due apology to Indian country. Other than those, I really can't get all revved up about college athletic nicknames that mightily offend some of our more sensitive tribal kinfolk.

I don't know if any Indian alumni of UND have suffered great humiliation while they were on campus there, or post-

traumatic syndrome thereafter. It seems the Indian students there in the recent past were OK with the nickname until more sophisticated students from the East came to campus to teach them how to be appropriately outraged. At least that seems to be the finding of a delegation from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council that went up to the university to assess the situation and make recommendations for appropriate council action.

So much effort seems to be put into bringing Indian people into the enlightenment of victimhood.

In the national black community, there's an interesting movement taking place - headed up by actor-comedian Bill Cosby, no less, and others, like journalist Juan Williams - to shake off the chains of victimhood and get on with building, or rebuilding, a habitable black world in the U.S. Their advice is: To hell with what the whites or others think of us; what's important is what we think of ourselves. Let's quit spending so much time trying to get them to like us, pity us, or even respect us. Let's spend our time and effort building a better black community in which to raise our children and rebuild our society.

Their books, Williams' "Enough," subtitled "The phony leaders, dead-end movements, and culture of failure that are undermining Black America - and what we can do about it," and Cosby's "Come On People," subtitled "On the path from Victims to Victors," are worth a read for a new direction in Indian country.

It's time to get off the mostly futile crusade of forcing high school, college and professional athletic teams to quit offending some of our people. Or psyching whites to the point that they don't even know what to call us: Native Americans, American Indians, or People of Color.

Watching our students on campus spend time making slogan signs and picketing athletic events, or booing faculty and white students, causes one to wonder what is happening to their grades and their psyches in the process.

Generations of successful Native alumni of the institutions using allegedly offensive nicknames attest to our strength as Indian people to ignore such inane silliness, and move on to much more important things.

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