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AAA Calls on Sports Organizations to Denounce Inappropriate American Indian Mascots

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The American Anthropological Association today called on professional and college sports organizations to denounce and abandon the use of American Indian nicknames, logos, and mascots, unless appropriate consultation has taken place with individual tribes and other indigenous stakeholders. The AAA resolution also calls for sports organizations to respect the right of individual tribes to decide how to protect and celebrate their cultural heritage.

“While these organizations may feel they are honoring Native Americans, many in that community view it to be a degrading and painful symbol of racism,” said Monica Heller, AAA president. “Research has established that the continued use of American Indian sports mascots harms American Indian people in psychological, educational, and social ways. Frankly, I don’t see where the honor is in that.”

The resolution calls on the organizations to acknowledge that the use of such mascots causes continuing harm to American Indians. “It is the harm that is done that must be the basis for determining what is a racist representation or depiction, not the intentions of the users,” Heller added.

The continued use of American Indian mascots in sport also has been denounced by American Indian advocacy organizations, as well as academic, educational and civil rights organizations, including but not limited to: Association of American Indian Affairs, National Congress of American Indians, and National Indian Education Association, American Psychological Association, North American Society for the Sociology of Sport, Modern Language Association, Linguistic Society of America, United States Commission on Civil Rights, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and Southern Poverty Law Center.

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The American Anthropological Association, dedicated to advancing human understanding and addressing the world's most pressing problems since its founding in 1902, is the world's largest professional anthropology organization.