

The Michigan Association of School Psychologists (MASP) represents school psychologists across the state of Michigan for whom social justice advocacy is a foundational part of our practice.

As we benefit from the use of facilities on land previously owned by the Native Americans, for the activities of our organization, we would be negligent if we did not acknowledge that one community within our state often overlooked in discussions of diversity is the very same Indigenous, or Neshnabé (Native American) community.

According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, there are twelve federally recognized Indian tribes in the our state. Those tribes are:

- Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
- Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
- Hannahville Indian Community
- Bay Mills Indian Community
- Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians
- Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians
- Grand Traverse Bay Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
- Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
- Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Potawatomi Indians (Gun Lake Tribe)
- Saginaw Chippewa Indian Band
- Pokegan Band of Potawatomi Indians
- Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi Indians

Additionally, “there are countless tribal descendants who are unrecognized at present,” according to Monica Washington Padula (2023), Cultural Consultant and Advocate (Indigenous and Black Diasporas). “Each Tribe has its own unique history, set of values, creation story and world view which guide their lives” (NASP, 2020) which we all should recognize, as we work within these communities.

Despite their differences, one area in which many within the Neshnabé community agree is the topic of Native American logos and mascots. The National Congress of Native Americans is recognized as the nation’s oldest, largest, and most

representative American Indian and Alaska Native advocacy organization in the U.S. (according to Julie Dye, 2023, an Elder Citizen of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians). Given that, MASP agrees and supports the 2014 National Congress of American Indians Resolution #ANC-14-018, which called for the elimination of race-based native logos, mascots, and names by state athletic associations receiving federal funds. Similarly, the United Tribes of Michigan wrote Resolution #512070511 which states, in part, that “ United Tribes of Michigan condemns the use of the “Redskins” by any Michigan educational institution or sports team.” In addition, the American Psychological Association (APA) in 2005 called for similar action regarding American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams and organizations.

The American Psychological Association suggests that a large and growing body of research illuminates the harmful effects of racial stereotyping, and false racial portrayals (including Native American sports mascots) on the development of identity and self-esteem of Native American and indigenous young people.

"The use of American Indian mascots as symbols in schools and university athletic programs is particularly troubling because schools are places of learning. These mascots are teaching stereotypical, misleading and too often, insulting images of American Indians. These negative lessons are not just affecting American Indian students; they are sending the wrong message to all students." (APA;2005)
- Former APA President Ronald F. Levant, EdD

MASP acknowledges that Native cultures have endured for centuries, despite attempts to destroy and assimilate them, and that continued use of stereotypes by major educational institutions and national sports franchises not only negatively impacts the proud history, cultures, and traditions of Native Americans, it also harms Neshnabé children (penothé) psychologically. In addition, it also negatively impacts non-Native children.

MASP acknowledges that when local institutions (like schools) engage meaningfully in conversation and collaboration around terminology - and the meaning of different symbols or depictions, and include education about local indigenous communities in their educational program- the use of such terminology and symbols can be a positive and powerful connection between different communities. Unfortunately, many local

institutions in Michigan with Native mascots or nicknames do not engage in this level of positive and collaborative conversation with local tribes or groups representing the interests of the Neshnabé .

Individuals such as President Barack Obama, numerous congressional members, entities such as the American Psychological Association and National Education Association, human rights and tribal organizations including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Congress of American Indians, and sports regulatory commissions such as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), all call for the discontinued use and commodification of Native American Logos and mascots.

We note and acknowledge that the use of negative stereotypes is a testament to the continued practice of commodifying Native peoples and their unique cultural identities. Native American tribes, intertribal organizations, and non-tribal partners have combined their focus on this issue; which has resulted in the elimination of Native logos, mascots, and names in hundreds of educational settings across the nation by providing workshops, presentation of professional papers, providing legal briefs, and holding forums on organizing networks of Native educators (géknomagét) as advocates. Unfortunately, educational institutions and national sports franchises continue the practice of using Native logos, mascots, and names despite great success and efforts by the aforementioned entities. Additionally, the dearth of Native American representation in the media and popular culture negatively impacts what children learn about Native people and subsequent identity formation by reinforcing stereotypes about Native cultures from the past and present. According to the APA (2005) , such practice result in:

- undermining the educational experiences of members of all communities-especially those who have had little or no contact with indigenous peoples.
- establishes an unwelcome and often times hostile learning environment for American Indian students that affirms negative images/stereotypes that are promoted in mainstream society; which impacts the way indigenous youth see themselves
- undermines the ability of American Indian Nations to portray accurate and respectful images of their culture, spirituality and traditions.

- presents stereotypical images of American Indians.
- is a form of discrimination against American Indian Nations that can lead to negative relations between groups.

According to Lisa Thomas (2005) "We know from the literature that oppression, covert and overt racism, and perceived racism can have serious negative consequences for the mental health of American Indian and Alaska native people. The discontinued use of American Indian mascots is a gesture to show that this kind of racism toward and the disrespect of, all people in our country and in the larger global context, will not be tolerated," said Lisa Thomas, PhD, APA Committee on Ethnic and Minority Affairs.

MASP agrees and supports the call by the APA, and others, to eradicate the hurtful presence of stereotypical imaging of the First Nations. The APA encourages continued research on the psychological effects that these mascots, symbols, images and personalities have on Native communities and others. Educational institutions are encouraged to develop relationships with tribes to learn about the history and culture of indigenous persons.

MASP, with this statement, calls on all school psychologists to speak out against racism, and take proactive steps to prevent the occurrence of intolerant or racist acts and recommends the immediate retirement of American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams and organizations.

Sources:

1. American Psychological Association:
2. Federally-recognized tribes in Michigan:
<https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/adult-child-serv/native/overview/federally-recognized-tribes-in-michigan>
3. National Congress of American Indians : Resolution #: ANC-14-018 Title: Support for the Elimination of Race-Based Native Logos, Mascots, and Names (2014)
4. United Tribes of Michigan: Resolution #05120170511

5. Wiawkébthëgen.com : Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Government