

**“If I were an Indian,
I would be proud to
be a Berlin mascot,”**

*and other tragic
perceptions
of a community
in love with
'playing Indian'*

THE WISCONSIN INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION MASCOT AND LOGO TASK FORCE

www.indianmascots.com

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I. LOCAL FEELINGS VERSUS A NEEDED EDUCATIONAL VISION

There have been a hundred versions of the title quote that have appeared in the Berlin Journal, on Facebook pages and on blogs in the area in the summer of 2011. We see them. They are sincere when they speak of “Indian pride,” and of being “proud to be a Berlin Indian.” When one said “It’s no dishonor to anyone. I have some Indian in myself and I feel honored,” there was nothing in that person’s background to suggest a different perspective might be better for the community.

That’s where the tragedy lies. This is a wonderful community. The people of Berlin believe what they say, but their perspective on this issue has been severely restricted. It is a perspective born of tradition and carried through three generations of the school district having fun while “playing Indian.” It is also a perception that has anchored itself in a particular vision of the white man’s Indian, a vision that romanticizes an era when there was little understanding of the choices that were forced on Native nations. It is a vision that ignores the contemporary life and aspirations of the Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Oneida, Potawatomi, Mohican and Ojibwe people whose cultures are currently impacting the social, political and economic landscape of Wisconsin. Berlin is simply not listening to the elected leaders and educators of these and many more nations who have made it abundantly clear that Native nations don’t want their children exposed to the harms of race-based nicknames, logos and mascots. First Nations leaders want school districts to show leadership in the most important mandate related to each and every school in Wisconsin --- to serve students in a way that nurtures the full potential of each one. This doesn’t mean just a majority or only the students that subscribe to the most popular views. It means each and every student in Berlin and around the state of Wisconsin deserves the best possible educational environment regardless of who they are or how they come into our public schools.

The Berlin School District sincerely believes it provides that kind of environment, but has gotten caught up in the strong desire to maintain their nickname and logo policy in spite of a wealth of well researched, new information from diverse perspectives. The tragic irony here is that this includes the perspectives of the very people the Berlin School District says it is honoring. While admitting to looking at the resolutions from elected tribal officials, Berlin school officials are also quick to say they dismissed them in favor of their personal feelings, those of the majority of people within the Berlin community, and even some who say they “are part Native American,” who like Berlin’s race-based identity. This perspective is reflected in the hundreds of opinions expressed on Facebook, in the Berlin Journal and on the street corners and in the restaurants around town. It is popular. It just isn’t right. It represents behavior that is “under the influence” of stereotypes that the community has had fun with for three generations. It also represents a

one sided approach to the issue, since very few have considered the evidence that is stacked against the maintenance of a race-based school identity.

So what are we to do? Should people in the wider area, with more diverse perspectives and important understandings that will help nurture the full potential of all students keep quiet? Should we as a broader community stand by as the Berlin School District continues to do something that not only hinders the achievement of full potential for all students, but also harms the very foundations of human dignity for those affected by its race-based nickname and logo?

Of course not. It is our obligation as educators, parents, community leaders and citizens to serve the best interests of all who depend on receiving the best from our educational institutions by supporting that which will help create a better world for our young people.

So the Berlin School District and the school officials that lead it are in a very difficult situation right now. A 70 year tradition of using a race-based identity and stereotypical images to support that identity has come under attack by much new research and more diverse multicultural perspectives that need to be listened to for the school system to succeed in its mission to all young people.

There is no denying a majority in the community is angry about being confronted with the prospect that change is necessary. Berlin doesn't want to change because most people don't see the problem. They have a school system that has refused to bring the new information and diverse perspectives into the most critical forum for discussion --- its schools. Berlin has prominent community leaders, writers and local institutions that are trapped in a very restricted perspective and continue to only see popularity, local control and good intentions as the viewpoints that should be listened to.

As complainant Tom Sobieski recognized, it is time to step aside from these entrenched viewpoints that clearly hold back a great community with so many accomplishments to be proud of, and with such tremendous potential for the future. It's time to consider a new identity that will allow ALL to celebrate a nickname and logo without the controversy that will never go away as long people insist on using the race-based identity of 'Indian' in the Berlin School District. It is time to respectfully retire the race-based nickname and logo.

II. WHY AREN'T THE GOOD INTENTIONS ENOUGH?

Without good intentions we would rarely accomplish anything. They motivate us to help others; but, good intentions not guided by accurate and authentic information, can have bad results for everyone. Good intentions, without the understanding that culturally responsive education is a critical component in sound educational policy, guarantees that school mission statements promising the best education for ALL will fall short of the mark

Over the years well more than 100 Native tribal organizations, professional educational associations, religions, and human relations organizations have approached schools, including Berlin, to please consider changing to an identity that is not race-based. The reasons are many and can be summarized to include:

- 1) Racial stereotyping
- 2) Misrepresentation of cultural histories
- 3) Honor and tradition are poor covers for the romanticization, objectification and dehumanization of American Indians
- 4) The emergence of empirical research proves there are measurable harms to American Indian students
- 5) The accumulated harms extend to all students
- 6) There is a diminishment of the educational process



III. UNDERSTANDING RACIAL STEREOTYPING

A racial stereotype is a quality we assign to an entire race of people. Because each stereotype generalizes in ways that leads to discrimination and ignores the inherent diversity within racial groups, educators have long taught that stereotypes should be kept out of schools. “Strong, noble and brave” can be used to describe individuals, but as soon as you try and describe an entire race of people that way, you create inaccuracies and begin to limit the perception of people towards that racial group and the perceptions of the targeted group towards themselves.

This is at the root of a number of problems in Berlin. The perception is that somehow the educational premise of stereotyping being bad does not apply to them because they just do “good stereotyping.” Really, who wouldn’t want to be referred to as “strong, noble and brave?”

There are two issues here. First, there is the issue of the process of stereotyping itself. For students, if a “good stereotype” is true then “bad stereotypes” must also be true. Any school that tries to say they just promote the “good qualities” of a race of people has validated the process of stereotyping and set its students up to engage in stereotyping that will harm others. Secondly, any characteristic assigned to an entire race becomes very limiting to that group. It squeezes the individuality out of people and reduces the perception of what is possible for that person to achieve in life. This is a very important point. Even if substantial units on American Indian Studies were included in the curriculum, they couldn’t begin to counterbalance the conscious and subconscious limitations on possible selves for American Indian students. We will discuss the empirical research on this later, but for now let’s just look at how stereotypes impact us.

The National Science Foundation tells us that we have, on average, 60,000 thoughts per day. We are only aware of about 5% of those thoughts but all of them impact our perceptions. Imagine being an American Indian student at a Berlin football game. Going through the stands you pass by 50 people wearing the logo. Each visual contact enters the student’s conscious and subconscious as a definition of who that fan thinks an ‘Indian’ is. Some fans yell, “Go Indians! Get ‘em!” A thought is planted about the aggressive competition and winning a game. An opposing fan yells, “Kill the Indians!” Dissonance accompanies that thought so it keeps being processed in the subconscious and transforms into some level of stress. Each representation is a reminder of a stereotype. Each one freezes ‘Indians’ in a past that was filled with trauma and constant sacrifices of their loved ones that go unrecognized by schools just wanting to expropriate certain characteristics for their sports teams. And each representation is a constant reinforcement of an imposed identity forced by the school.

It would be no different if Caucasian students were in an environment where very limited representations of what a “Caucasian” is were present at school activities --- no astronauts, presidents or business leaders

--- only one dimensional representations of past war leaders who were obsessed with aggression. Their lives with loving families would not be found anywhere in the stands. Their involvement in the Lions Club and at their churches would never surface. What futures would these Caucasian kids see for themselves?

Let's put this idea in a slightly different context. Like Berlin, Ripon has a very proud history. They are known as the Tigers, but let's say they took a similar approach to honoring the local history of a race of people that was important in Ripon's history. Ripon had many episodes of important abolitionist activity back in the 1800's, and even has evidence of Underground Railroad activity in town. Using the same sense of logic as Berlin, then, let's say they decide to honor African Americans by changing their nickname to the Ripon Blacks. Reminiscent of the experience of slavery and the "proud history of those who resisted," the school district then chooses a profile image of Black man with a traditional headdress from a West African culture to represent the school. Even though some cartoon images and insensitive mock ceremonies are used at times in Homecoming activities, every effort is made to be respectful and "honor the local historical heritage."

Would we be shocked if the NAACP, human relations organizations and African American organizations from across the country started to object, protest and file complaints? Of course we wouldn't. Almost all schools understand that you cannot honor an entire race based upon a specific local history. It is not sound educational policy to do that, as attested to by the fact that there is not a single high school team in America that uses a Black racial identity as a nickname. So, why is it deemed appropriate to use American Indian identity that way? Why is no other race of people treated this way by school districts and communities in Wisconsin and around the country?

Part of the answer lies in the attitude shown in Berlin that somehow things that have been learned and put into practice elsewhere just don't apply to Berlin. Somehow there is a uniqueness to the particular case of Berlin, somehow forgetting that every community in Wisconsin has an indigenous history, and somehow not understanding that the images they use are stereotypical and cause a number of harms that are completely avoidable.

Let's take a closer look at the images of the profile of a male Great Plains chief most used in Berlin. These are two of the most typical:



As WIEA Mascot and Logo Task Force chairperson Barb Munson (Oneida) explains:

These logos keep us marginalized and are a barrier to our contributing here and now. Depictions of mighty warriors of the past emphasize a tragic part of our history; focusing on wartime survival, they ignore the strength and beauty of our cultures during times of peace. Many Indian cultures view life as a spiritual journey filled with lessons to be learned from every experience and from every living being. Many cultures put a high value on peace, right action, and sharing. The images that the Berlin School District uses does nothing to convey these things.

The depictions of Indian “braves,” “warriors,” and “chiefs” common in Berlin also ignore the roles of women and children. Although there are patrilineal Native cultures, many Indian nations are both matrilineal and child centered.

In addition, we need to consider that each feather in a headdress, such as those in the images that Berlin uses, represents an earned honor. Each also carries great responsibility. To use these images in relation to high school sports competition profoundly demeans their cultural significance.

This is a very important point, especially in relation to the metaphor of high school sports as competitions that are often compared to battlefields. Historically, in those cases where American Indian warriors had to make the ultimate sacrifice of giving their lives for their nation in warfare, there is a qualitative difference between giving one’s life and catching a football or making a free throw. Using the stereotype is wrong to begin with. Using it with this additional understanding that high school sports trivializes the sacrifices of real warriors, makes the harms all the worse.

As we can see, there are many problematic aspects of the use of these stereotypical images. The problems get much worse, though, when we consider what Berlin has done in misrepresenting the cultural history of American Indians whose homelands were once in the area around Berlin.

IV. HOW THE MISREPRESENTATION OF AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURES IN BERLIN AMPLIFIES THE HARMS

A good place to start is to take a look at some of the historical articles entered into evidence by the Berlin School District at the hearing on August 3, 2011. The perception was that the school district was showing how they valued the 'Indian' history of the Berlin area by keeping it alive. What the District actually showed was a propensity to stereotype and denigrate the very people Berlin says it is honoring. Here are six examples:

A. The use of cultural terms - The personal testimony of Barbara Blackdeer-Mackenzie (Ho-Chunk), who represented the Ho-Chunk Nation at the hearing, demonstrated that the evidence submitted by the Berlin School District had factual flaws and is harmful when used as presented, especially since there are very limited representations of American Indians in evidence from Berlin. This is a form of harassment identified in DPI documents submitted by the complainant's representative. Ms. Blackdeer-Mackenzie also testified that the Enrollment Office is the official Ho-Chunk repository of information and authority about individuals of Ho-Chunk heritage. In the hearing, the historical articles presented as evidence by the School District of Berlin presented two individuals as "chiefs" --- Hanagah Dick and Oscar Pigeon. Neither were or are recognized as chiefs in the Ho-Chunk Nation according to the official records of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

The articles also represented villages as clans. This use of the term "clans" by the Berlin historian and the District's "evidence" articles is the usage as seen from a white European background and misrepresents what clans are in the cultures of Wisconsin's Native nations. Ms. Blackdeer-Mackenzie noted the dangers of the type of articles submitted by Berlin, not only because of historical and cultural misrepresentations but also because they are not put in the context of curriculum that can help students understand the errors.

B. "Honoring" the Mascoutin people - A major point of the Berlin testimony was that they were specifically "honoring" the Mascoutin people. Yet the only detailed description of the Mascoutin (appearing in Exhibit P, the Jenkins article entitled *The Mascoutin Village* on Page 4) described them as "perfidious, warlike, and very fond of

dancing.” First of all, the description is both stereotypical and denigrating, especially since it is part of the limited representation of American Indians by the Berlin School District and judged only from a white perspective. Secondly, by what stretch of anyone’s imagination would any people consider it an honor to be described as treacherous, warlike and very fond of dancing? After all, this is a Wisconsin public school where guidelines should be in place for making sure that all students can receive an education that is responsive to the cultures that are part of the Wisconsin experience.

C. Historical Inaccuracies - Complainant’s witness Rebecca Alegria (Menominee) reacted strongly to the Elaine Reetz article, *A Lasting Impression*, (Exhibit E) which was rife with the promotion of stereotypes. The two background pictures showed (1) two ‘Indians’ with a group of Pilgrims, and (2) a frontal picture of a Great Plains chief in full headdress, even though (A) there were no Pilgrims that were part of Berlin history, and (B) “Chief Highknocker” wore a distinctive hat that was well known to local residents. Even more egregious was the description of “Chief Highknocker” in the article as someone who “could read and write; quite an accomplishment, for an Indian.” Remember, there was no curricular context provided for these articles. They were left to stand as they read. How would any American Indian person feel seeing a statement that literacy is “quite an accomplishment for an Indian?”

D. Inciting cultural trauma - Exhibit I, an unsigned, untitled and undated article submitted and accepted as evidence described the boyhood experiences of a Berlin resident. Even though it was meant to show an interest in “the life of the Indians,” it demonstrates a total disregard for the perspective of Wisconsin’s First Nations. Complainant witness reactions only begin to express the horror of the passage that reads, “Every Saturday during the summer we dug into mounds but seldom found relics but we had at least two bushels of bones that we kept in the Dodson barn.” Even the passage following that carries a huge impact for Native people, “Years later the woods were cleared and the mounds were leveled off and it is now ploughed land. I have no doubts but what a foot or more under the surface of the ground are buried many fine relics that will likely never be found.” The “two bushels of bones,” the “mounds” and “many fine relics” are what should have been respected as a heritage that belonged to Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Fox and Sac nations. The content of this article should have been put in the context of a social studies lesson on the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, or it should not be used at all. As it stands, any traditionally raised American Indian student exposed to this article would experience significant trauma.

E. Misunderstanding scholarship - When asked about the white perspective of all of the District's historical articles, Berlin's historian replied "a scholar is a scholar." Really? There is very little scholarship evident in the litany of white recollections of the American Indian experience around Berlin that makes up the bulk of the Berlin evidence. The single perspective evident has more in common with mythology than scholarship, because of the insistence on interpreting American Indian cultures through a white European lens. This has led advocates of the educational uses of these articles within the Berlin School District toward creating significant inaccuracies and misunderstandings that only serve to amplify the promotion of stereotyping, harassment and discrimination.

If we were talking about citizens of Berlin writing about the Euro-American aspects of the settlement of Berlin, then the articles would have some educational potential. But we're not. We are talking about white people observing Indian cultures through the biases and understandings of Euro-American cultures. The point is not so much to make an issue of the ignorance of local settler descriptions or how white people have made errors when writing about American Indian cultures. The point is that the evidence submitted by the Berlin School District is filled with stereotypes and inauthentic cultural assertions from the American Indian perspective. This adds to a hostile learning environment for American Indian students who come into contact with Berlin's "evidence."

Really, the only scholarship evident at the hearing was submitted on behalf of the complainant. American Indian scholars and non-Indian social scientists have been writing about this issue for a generation and many articles and affidavits were submitted as evidence on behalf of the complainant. Where are those perspectives represented in the Berlin "evidence?" The fact is, there has been no attempt to bring American Indian or non-Indian scholarship into the Berlin School District's consideration of how it is "honoring" American Indians. Instead, we are left with example after example of errors and misrepresentations of the very people Berlin says they are "honoring."

F. The destructive nature of the exclusive use of a Euro-American lens - Finally, in the District's evidence is the matter of the Berlin historian's "Letter to the Editor" that was admitted into evidence as Exhibit C. It acts as a microcosm of the problems that surface in the rest of the District evidence. When Mrs. Erdmann made the statement,

“We have ... honored our Native American ancestors by naming our sports teams ‘the Indians,’” she begins a journey that travels far away from respect and honor and ends up promoting stereotyping. Specific American Indian nations inhabited the area around Berlin. Each had a distinct culture. Each has experienced significant changes throughout the years. Each new generation adds to what was there. The actions of the Berlin School District show they only want to remember the way things were as seen through the eyes of white settlers and writers.

Consider that ‘Indian’ is the federally recognized term for an entire race of people consisting of 565 federally recognized nations and almost 200 more unrecognized by the federal government. To think that you can fairly represent all these cultures and changes in a racial name for a sports team is to assume something that no scholar would ever endeavor to do. Every accurate statement you make for one aspect of one culture becomes inaccurate for another.

The letter also demonstrates another important aspect of this same problem when it states, “I believe every student that attended Berlin High School has been proud of their Indian connection and are more respectful of the Indian culture because of it.” Notice the reference to a single culture. Are students really to believe that all American Indians are a singular culture? Native people raised in a traditional way know that there are fundamental differences. Does the culture practice matrilineal descent or patrilineal descent? What is the clan structure like? What are the origins of each clan? What is the language, how does it relate to others and what important cultural lessons come from it? The questions go on and on, all important to traditionally raised American Indian youth; but not to the Berlin School District. Does the District really think that all these cultural traits can be grouped together in a single identity? When the District picks out only the characteristics they want their sports teams to show in athletic competition, do they really think they are “honoring Indians?”

Another point in the historian’s letter wants us to think, “The Mascoutin Nation has disappeared from the world. Not a soul remains – not a tradition is left to indicate where the last survivor of them sleeps.” Other places in their evidence assert that the Mascoutin blended into other tribes, including the Kickapoo, Fox, Sac, and others. What that means is that, even though the federal government doesn’t recognize the Mascoutin, descendants would still exist. The statement, “Not a soul remains” is simply inaccurate. But, even at that, we can’t know many specifics for sure, because the very name is translated from the Fox language and others as the description of a

geographic area (people of the little prairie, people of the treeless plain) where there may have been blended tribes from the earliest “recollections” by white explorers and settlers. We simply don’t know many details (other than the stereotypes “pernicious, warlike and very fond of dancing”).

To say, then, that you are “honoring” a people you know so little about is either hypocritical or a psychological cover for the real original usage of the nickname ‘Indian’ to represent warlike characteristics for the school’s athletic teams. Remember, when asked about when Berlin High School began calling themselves the ‘Indians,’ Berlin’s historian said she didn’t know exactly, but thought it was around 1939. We should note that the ‘Indian’ identity wasn’t treated as important for more than 20 years in Berlin, from 1916 until 1939. People primarily used “The Red and Green” and just the town name of “Berlin.”

Finally, the Berlin historian asserted in the letter, “We in Berlin choose to remember --- the High School annual is called ‘The Mascoutin,’ the bus service that takes our children to school is called Mascoutin Transportation ...” Maybe one of Berlin’s school officials can explain how naming a bus service and a yearbook after a tribe honors the tribe because, truthfully, this kind of “honor” really only has the effect of an expression of good intention. The names teach nothing about American Indian cultures or about the specific culture referred to as “Mascoutin.” They become brand names, in effect, and carry the same level of being “honored” that Quakers must feel when they pass by “Quaker Oats” on the store shelf when they are shopping for groceries.

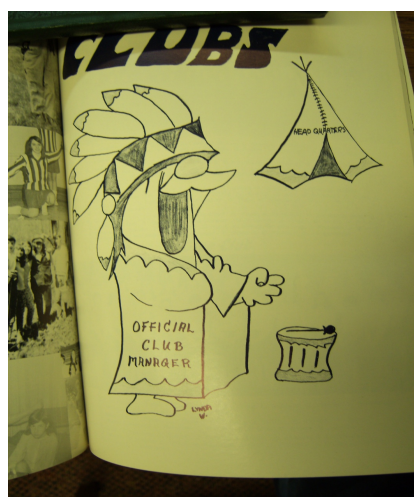
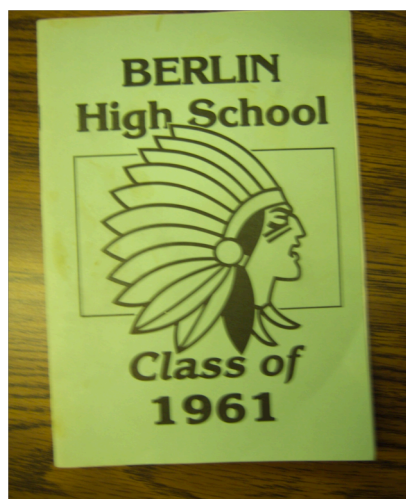
V. HONOR AND TRADITION MAKE POOR COVERS FOR THE ROMANTICIZATION, OBJECTIFICATION AND DEHUMANIZATION OF AMERICAN INDIANS

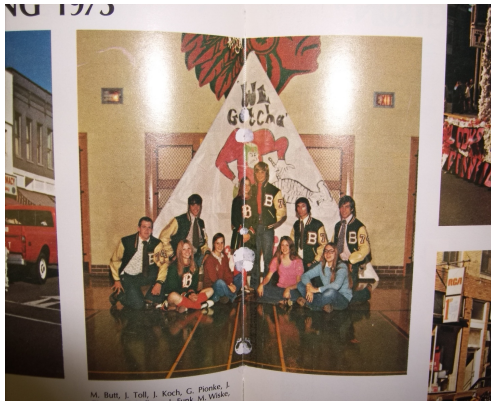
The truth really lies somewhere outside of the intention to honor a people with brand names and sports activities. In the complainant’s evidence is the research of Dr. Ezra Zeitler. It shows that the introduction of cartoon and warlike ‘Indian’ images in Berlin in the late 1930’s coincides with the emerging popularity of Hollywood cowboy and Indian shoot ‘em up westerns. Schools realized that there were characteristics about that genre that they wanted for their sports teams.

Dr. Ezra Zeitler corroborates much of what was said at the hearing about the creation of hostile environments that promote harassment. As a cultural geographer, Dr. Zeitler describes Berlin High School as a “hegemonic space.” The term hegemony is broadly defined as the political, economic, ideological and/or cultural power exerted by a dominant group over other groups, regardless of the explicit consent of the latter.

Clearly, this was an issue at the July 20, 2011, Berlin School Board meeting where the board was deciding what to do about the complaint filed by Tom Sobieski. One board member declared, “We can’t let the state push us around” while others echoed this and other sentiments that had nothing to do with respecting the wishes of the people they said they were honoring. The board president led the discussion while wearing his “Berlin Indians” T-shirt. To many in the community these behaviors just show the pride and determination to carry on a long-standing tradition. To those who understand hegemonic space these behaviors represent the desire to maintain control over an identity that isn’t really theirs to control. On a nine member board only one person expressed any sympathy for the perspective of American Indians.

As Dr. Zeitler explains that the portrayal of Native Americans in institutionally sponsored public spaces, specifically secondary schools in predominantly white communities like Berlin, symbolizes control over Native Americans. This is done through the use of mnemonic devices --- iconography such as can be seen in the following Berlin yearbook pages and reunion documents over a period of several decades:





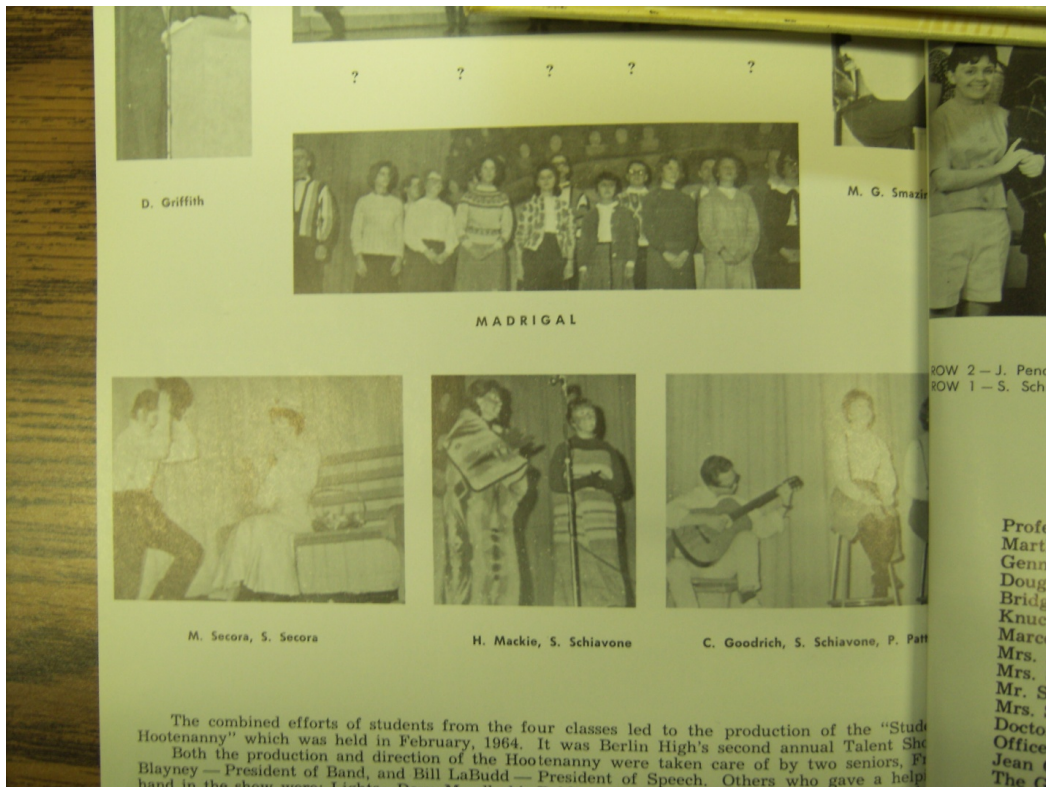
The first image on the previous page is actually the cover of the 25th reunion booklet of the Berlin High School Class of 1961, published in 1986. What is striking about the image is that it represents what they proudly remember --- a stereotypical profile of an 'Indian' chief, complete with war paint.

The second image cartoonizes a "Berlin Indian," with stereotypical "tom tom" and stereotypical "teepee" to serve as the beginning of the yearbook section that shows all the "clubs." We need to ask all those who thought this was appropriate what it really says about how Berlin has been defining being an 'Indian.'

The image on the left above further demonstrates that accuracy never got in the way of the Berlin School District having fun "playing Indian." Teepees freeze the 'Indian' identity in the past and primarily on the Great Plains as their main use in the area was to please tourist requests for stereotypes. This is also why full headdresses gained a greater level of usage in more recent times, because most of Wisconsin's Native nations typically used headgear that was better suited to the woodlands than plains. Tourists wanted to see what they saw in those cowboy and 'Indian' movies, and were willing to pay for it.

The photo on the right above is a bit blurred but clearly shows the stereotyping and dictation of how to define an 'Indian,' this time extending into the use of language. The yearbook photo declares, "But bare fact is: they lose 'um shirt."

The most disturbing yearbook image of this group, however, is the one on the next page that shows in the center of the bottom two "Berlin Indian princesses" doing a skit in the 1964 school talent show called the "Student Hootenanny." Their "costumes" were complete with red face makeup and feathers stuck in headbands.



By presenting these white-controlled spaces as the fictional realm of "Berlin Indians," the students had "fun" while the District controlled the identity of 'Indians,' teaching stereotype after stereotype.

As Dr. Zeitler points out, Berlin High School could also purposely portray their home fields as foreign places in the eye of the competitor, intending to make them uncomfortable and intimidated in an unfamiliar environment.

The net result of the "historical" documents used as evidence by the Berlin School District and the historical usage of the nickname, logo and mascot within Berlin High School is the romanticization, objectification and dehumanization of American Indians, all of which harm the entire educational process and all students, not just American Indian students.

When the Berlin "Indians" take on the Ripon "Tigers" and Winneconne "Wolves" one would think that educators would realize that there is a basic equation at work that dehumanizes American Indians to the point of being the same as the predatory animals represented in the logos of opposing schools. When sacred ceremonies are reduced to passing the tomahawk between class presidents and crowning Homecoming "royalty" with full headdresses (see the 1962 yearbook photo on the next page), then the intensely important cultural meaning is lost and replaced with objectification. There is no doubt that the white students have had "fun" in doing these things BUT there is no "local 'Indian' heritage" celebrated from the perspective of Wisconsin's Native nations.



It's a sad commentary on education that a school district would even attempt to transform these practices from their school's history into a contemporary story of "honoring Native Americans," especially in light of the empirical research that has emerged in the last decade.

VI. THE EMERGENCE OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH PROVES THERE ARE HARMS TO AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS

The accuracy of the research and its importance can be summarized from the documents submitted by the complainant's representative at the hearing as follows:

Dr. Stephanie Fryberg (Tulalip) completed her doctoral dissertation on the 'Indian' mascot and logo issue at Stanford University about a decade ago. It was a series of five separate studies that tested the impact of 'Indian' nicknames, logos and mascots. She used the kind of research methodology that schools across the country have come to depend upon for making policy decisions. Her research was checked and rechecked by three of the most preeminent psychologists in the world. Their enthusiastic endorsement was only the beginning. Dr. Fryberg completed a sixth study and took her research before two national associations who also

examined it thoroughly and gave it their wholehearted endorsements. Her findings were published in peer reviewed psychological journals.

Dr. Fryberg's research clearly shows how American Indian students are harmed by Berlin and other schools that "play Indian." This is because:

- A) American Indian students self-esteem is lowered.
- B) It negatively affects American Indian students' beliefs that their community has the power and resources to resolve problems (community efficacy).
- C) It reduces the number of achievement-related future goals American Indian students see for themselves (self-efficacy).
- D) Non-Indian students whose schools use 'Indian' nicknames, logos and mascots receive a boost to their self-esteem.

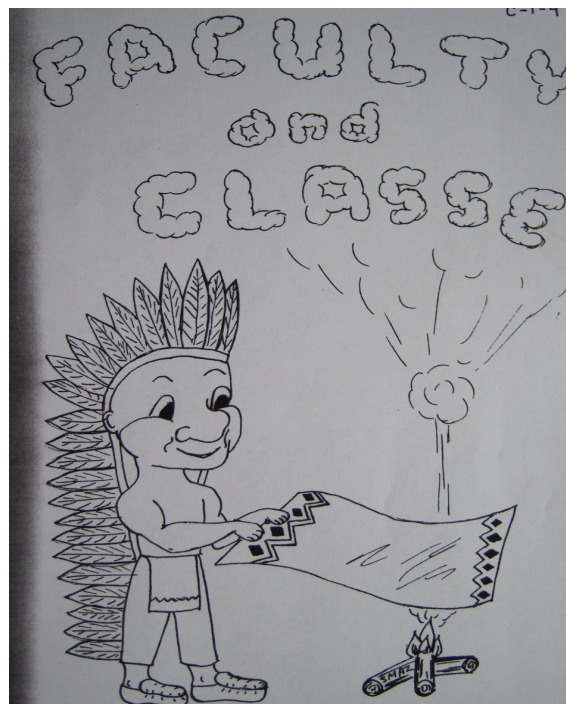
These findings of differential impact between racial groups are powerful, having impacts that go far beyond "offensiveness." They quite literally prove that discrimination exists in all predominantly white schools where 'Indian' nicknames, logos and mascots exist. What this means for the purposes of Berlin's situation is that, even without Wisconsin Act 250, the Fryberg research proves Berlin discriminates against American Indian students. And there are no extenuating circumstances that will help Berlin out on this point.

Another very important point in Dr. Fryberg's research was that it didn't matter what kind of images were used. They could be very much like the officially recognized images of the Berlin School District shown on Page 7 that are widely perceived by Euro Americans to be "noble" and "honorable," or they could be like the caricatures on the next page that have shown up in Berlin yearbooks ...

in 1946:



... or in 1964:



... or on this Homecoming float in 2010:



Each and every one of the images that Berlin has used causes the harmful effects shown in the empirical research of Dr. Fryberg.

And the damage doesn't end there. Dr. Fryberg's research also showed that more damage was done to American Indian students who don't oppose 'Indian' nicknames and logos than was done to those who actively oppose them. This finding shows that the assertions of school district witnesses about not seeing anything "that is detrimental to Native Americans" in Berlin are virtually meaningless, not only because they were from a very restricted perspective, but also because of these unrealized harms identified in the Fryberg research. And when the District witnesses testified that they "knew American Indians who support the Berlin nickname and logo," these individuals also don't recognize the harms and, in the long run, are likely to become the greatest victims. For instance, if an American Indian feels the "warrior on the warpath" stereotype is cool they may well choose a career that reflects that. They may not be physically suited for that or may be better suited to being a concert violinist. What the Fryberg research shows is that the limited representations and the stereotypes push them towards the stereotypes where they may never reach their full potential. For Berlin to limit the "possible selves" of any students in

any way with their race-based policy is a failure of great proportions in relation to the very reason public schools exist.

In addition, we need to further consider that Dr. Fryberg's research shows that the negative impact is less related to the perceived negativity of the image than it is to the fact that there are not enough alternative representations either in the school environment or in the community. Even if substantial units on American Indian Studies were included in the curriculum they couldn't begin to counterbalance the conscious and subconscious limitations on possible selves for American Indian students. This is especially true in Berlin where the limitations of the District's evidence are so severe. Their historical articles and lack of American Indian studies curriculum freeze "Indian identity" both in the past and in white only interpretations of American Indian experiences in and around Berlin.

There is simply no bigger failure in schools than to limit the possibilities that students see for themselves, especially when studies show self-esteem is damaged in multiple ways by any school environment that promotes a race-based identity with its nickname and logo.

The fact that there are no studies that show any positive effect to using race-based nicknames and logos should also cause alarm in every 'Indian' logo school.

This alarm should get even louder when we further examine the empirical research through the testimony of Dr. Harvey Gunderson and Chris Munson at the hearing. Both reinforced the findings of the Fryberg research and talked about additional new research. Each added new insight that has a great amount of relevance for Berlin.

In particular, Dr. Gunderson testified that the Fryberg research, as summarized above, indicates exposure to American Indian stereotypical images lowers the self esteem of American Indian students, reduces American Indian students' belief their community has the power and resources to resolve problems, and reduces the number of achievement-related future goals American Indian students see for themselves. It does not matter what a District does to mitigate these effects. The very nature of using an entire race of people and the stereotypical images used by Berlin brings about these harms.

Dr. Gunderson also reinforced that the Fryberg research shows that exposure to stereotypical American Indian images has the same negative effect on American Indian children regardless of whether the images involved are viewed as positive or negative. Through the years, the Berlin School District has dropped much of its use of cartoon-like and child-warrior images as shown in the above examples and made internal assessments

and changed from the images it had been using. This alone represents an admission that school officials sensed something was wrong. The point made by Dr. Gunderson, however, is the perception of negativity doesn't matter according to the empirical research. The harms happen either way. The changes Berlin has made have not stopped the harms from happening.

In addition, Dr. Gunderson explained that exposure to American Indian stereotypical images increases the tendency of children of any race to endorse stereotypes of other racial minority groups. He explained the two studies completed by Dr. Chu Kim-Prieto and three other researchers, all at different universities. The studies were published in *The Journal of Applied Social Psychology* in 2010. They were titled, "Effect of Exposure to an American Indian Mascot on the Tendency to Stereotype a Different Minority Group," and showed that students have an increased tendency to stereotype other races as well as American Indians when exposed to American Indian nicknames, logos and mascots.

Dr. Gunderson also confirmed that the research submitted by the representative of the complainant explains why the white school officials in the nearly all-white community of Berlin can't see the problems they create for their own students as well as students in communities they face in athletic competition. The Fryberg research shows that white students at Berlin, using their 'Indian' nickname and logo, receive an artificial boost in their self-esteem by "playing Indian" while the self-esteem of American Indian students is lowered. This, again, apart from all other considerations, shows that the Berlin School District promotes discrimination in spite of all the good intentions and the efforts to control the amount of exposure to the stereotypes.

Dr. Gunderson added one more indication that Berlin has a particular problem. He noted that the DPI demographic statistics for last year show that Berlin had zero students attending Berlin High School that were identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native. If American Indians felt honored by the nickname and logo, one would think that there would be an identifiable population of American Indian students as in the rest of their conference schools that report those statistics. Moreover, he emphasized that there were American Indian students attending all the other schools in the Eastern Valley Conference who were harmed. He pointed out that about 14% of Berlin students were minority students last year. The Prieto research, then, shows that all these minority students are additionally harmed through increased receptivity of the stereotypical images and nickname that Berlin uses. Similarly all racial minority students at competing schools are negatively impacted.

Finally, Dr. Gunderson pointed out that the research was acknowledged by the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC) in its resolution 2006-01.03 passed by unanimous vote of its 11 members and sent to all race-based nickname and logo schools in December of 2005. In part, it states:

***Whereas,** some Wisconsin public schools still have school nickname/logo policies based on race which target Native Americans; and*

***Whereas,** the American Psychological Association has confirmed the growing body of knowledge indicating that these race-based school policies can harm all students, but particularly Native American students; and*

***Whereas,** a diverse and growing body of professional opinion has shown that these policies reduce the self-esteem of Native American students and reduce the number of future roles Native American students visualize for themselves in society; and*

***Whereas,** a diverse and growing body of professional opinion has shown these policies constitute discrimination based on race because they raise the self-esteem of non-Native Americans while lowering the self-esteem of Native Americans; and*

***Whereas,** the Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction has recently re-affirmed support for the elimination of Native American nicknames, logos and mascots in public schools, and has written to public school districts across the State of Wisconsin, encouraging them to consider alternatives to Native American imagery; and*

***Whereas,** the “boost” in self-esteem experienced by non-Native Americans helps explain why some non-Native Americans support these race-based policies and have difficulty understanding why Native Americans could have a different view based upon a different experience; ...*

Two things are important to remember about Dr. Gunderson’s references to this resolution. First, it points out that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction sent a letter to ALL school districts in the state in December of 2005. It acknowledged the research and recommended other alternatives to race-based nicknames, logos and

mascots. It is worth noting that four consecutive elected State Superintendents of Public Instruction have all written to schools recommending that they change from using race-based 'Indian' nicknames, logos and mascots.

Secondly, the GLITC resolution was sent in February of 2006 to all schools still retaining 'Indian' nicknames and logos along with a letter from Michael Allen, the Executive Director of GLITC. These things are important in so far as the Berlin School District has been asserting that no complaints have come before the current complaint. The form of the complaint may be different but there is a strong history of resolutions, letters and emails that have been sent to the Berlin School District.

Witness Chris Munson (Oneida) testified about additional studies that have recently been completed, especially as they relate to the weblog comments that Berlin witness Erdman used to emphasize the popularity of Berlin's nickname and logo. First of all, Ms. Munson showed where this particular "Save the Berlin High School Mascot Facebook Page" kicked off people who opposed the logo so it loses claim to measure much of anything. It also shows that there has been a strong tendency toward one-sided discussions on this issue in Berlin. This is a systemic failure of local educational institutions.

More importantly, Chris Munson showed that a new study by Dr. D. Anthony Clark, et. al., reported in the *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, that weblogs create a new problem for school districts since they make it easier to wage stereotype attacks and other microaggressions. What this means is that the more Berlin residents engage in their "save the mascot" Facebook commenting, the more harms accumulate for their targeted population. In this case it also includes anyone who supports change. So if the supporter of change happens to be American Indian, then Berlin creates a compounded victimization of the very people they keep claiming they are "honoring." One needs to also observe that microaggressions in this kind of social media create a heightened vilification of the complainant and increases the general level of hostility within the community.

Also important in the testimony of Chris Munson was her representation of the resolutions from the Oneida Nation. In particular, this resolution represents a continuous commitment, since 1992, in asking Wisconsin schools to stop using race-based nicknames, logos and mascots. Resolution 07-28-10-A summarizes SIX resolutions and several other actions passed by the elected leaders of the Oneida Nation. The RESOLVED clause is very notable since, by unanimous vote, it states that the elected Oneida council "does reaffirm its stance in opposition to all uses of race-based mascots, names and images as being derogatory and derisive and harmful to Native Americans, Tribes and tribal governments."

Many of the research impacts can be summed up in the transcript of the testimony of clinical psychologist Dr. Jesse Steinfeldt (Oneida) when he testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on May 15, 2011, in Washington D.C., admitted as evidence at the hearing. He stated:

My research and clinical experiences can provide support for all of these (impacts), but I am in a unique position to testify about how this practice negatively impacts the psychological functioning of American Indians. I am a psychologist and an assistant professor of Counseling Psychology at Indiana University. Furthermore, I am a man of Oneida heritage and I have conducted clinical work with American Indian populations at the Oneida Behavioral Health Center on the Oneida Reservation in Wisconsin. As such, I have heard first-hand the negative impact that these stereotypic images can have on the psychological functioning of American Indian patients. American Indian communities are disproportionately impacted by serious mental health issues (e.g., depression, anxiety, substance abuse, suicide), and a societal environment wherein American Indians are readily stereotyped and discriminated against contributes to the onset and entrenchment of these mental health issues. In addition to the misinformation and stereotypes produced by Native-themed mascots, nicknames and logos, "an increase in accurate information about Native Americans is viewed as necessary for the achievement of other goals such as poverty reduction, educational advancements, and securing treaty rights" (King et.al., 2002, p.392).

Other experts in the study of human behavior agree. In 2005, the American Psychological Association (APA) recommended the retirement of American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities by schools. The justification for the APA resolution is based upon the study of the empirical research that demonstrates the harmful effects of the mascots, symbols, and images. Similarly, the American Sociological Association also examined the research and passed a resolution detailing the research that proves the harms of 'Indian' nicknames, logos and mascots.

At the hearing the research was brought to life with the testimony of Omro resident Louis Clark (Oneida). Mr. Clark recalled a 25 year history of interacting with Berlin School District's race-based identity and how it impacted his whole family. He recalled his attitude as his children played sports:

What sticks out at that time is I did not want them to face stereotyping as Indian kids. As I sat on the visitor side of the gym at games in Berlin I tried to ignore the stereotyping but it became more difficult as time went on. By 1999 Berlin kids started showing up in headdresses and (carrying) spears and doing little dances. They didn't mean to hurt anyone (but) it was offensive. These are stereotype things I had to face my whole life.

These observations were also supported in Mr. Clark's written testimony:

I am not honored by your Indian. I have been surrounded by Indians all of my life and I've never seen one like yours on the rez. ...

Being an Indian is about making sacrifices for your family. It's about keeping your mouth shut. It isn't pretty and your characterization and what people learn from it just adds to the pain. Human beings are not mascots!

Mr. Clark clearly recognized what Dr. Fryberg and the other researchers found in relation to the intense impact that the nicknames, logos and mascots have on American Indians when you know your culture, its history and how society had so often exhibited prejudicial behavior towards American Indians. But remember, at the hearing 100% of the District's witnesses testified they never saw anything like Mr. Clark repeatedly experienced. Why?

Well, it's like the title quote of this booklet indicates. The residents of Berlin project that "if they were Indian" they would like being mascots. However, they are not 'Indians.' Few in Berlin know or understand the very cultures they say they want to honor. They just like "playing Indian."

VII. THE ACCUMULATED HARMS EXTEND TO ALL STUDENTS

Looking back, we see harms from the use of race-based nicknames and logos that extend throughout the entire student populations of Berlin and any district that comes into contact with Berlin. In fact, those who argue for local control on this issue might want to look at the fact that Wisconsin's 'Indian' nickname and logo schools comprise less than 2% of Wisconsin high school students, yet they impose their stereotypes on the other 98%. It is an issue of fundamental democratic fairness that 2% never be allowed to dictate to 98%.

Next, as pointed out in Section III, any school that uses a whole race of people for its nickname and the stereotypical clip art image of the Great Plains “chief” used by Berlin as its logo, is giving an institutional endorsement to the process of stereotyping. Instead of equipping their students with the 21st Century skills needed for our increasingly multicultural world, Berlin is hanging on to teaching the harmful practice of stereotyping.

Also, we know from the Fryberg research that, while American Indian students experience a decrease in self-esteem, self-efficacy and community efficacy from exposure ‘Indian’ nicknames and logos, non-Indian students experience a boost and feel very positive about their experience. But, while non-Indian students are having this “fun” while “playing Indian,” the school district is (consciously or not) making students unwitting accomplices to discrimination. It is nothing less than a tragedy that Berlin students are not learning how to recognize and deal with discriminatory behavior.

Finally, with the Prieto research, we now also know that Berlin students are more prone to stereotyping other racial groups because of their exposure to ‘Indian’ nicknames and logos. In a world already burdened with too many prejudices students don’t need any more reasons to practice racial insensitivity.

Through this entire discussion we have to remind ourselves that no student is harmed when a school district names its sports teams the Comets, Cardinals, Thunder, Wildcats or Patriots. The harms detailed in the research are unique to race-based nicknames, logos and mascots. Why would any school district be so afraid to risk change when there are so many alternatives that students can have fun with and have no risk of harm to anyone?

Decades ago almost all schools incorporated asbestos into their buildings. The perception was that it would provide a safer environment for students as the asbestos was non-flammable. In the 1970’s empirical research showed there was a long-term risk of tiny asbestos fibers becoming airborne, being ingested and causing cancer. Even though the Environmental Protection Agency rated some of the school uses of asbestos fibers as low risk, schools readily accepted the mandate to inspect, remove and/or encase it. Even a small risk to students was considered a higher priority than the costs of clean-up and doubts about the research.

The empirical research on the issue of harm to kids from race-based ‘Indian’ nicknames, logos and mascots is more conclusive than the research on asbestos, so we must ask the

question of school officials about why there is so much resistance to change and, in the end, what it has done to the educational process in Berlin.

VIII. RETAINING THE 'INDIAN' NICKNAME AND LOGO DIMINISHES THE ENTIRE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN BERLIN

The decision to spend thousands of dollars of taxpayer money to fight for the retention of a race-based nickname and logo is not a decision based upon sound educational policy. The truth is that the Berlin School District did not do its “homework” and has not recognized some very important facts that would have allowed them to understand the nature of expropriating racial identities more clearly.

To begin with, popularity doesn't make something a good policy decision for a school district. Popularity is simply a measure of how many people like something. If you ask those in Berlin who say they want to keep the race-based identity of 'Indian' whether or not they have read the research or the resolutions from the elected leaders of Wisconsin's Native nations, there is a deafening silence. Their conclusions are simply based on their feelings filtered through a singular perception. The Fryberg research even predicts this. They have fun “playing Indian.” Their fathers and grandmothers also had fun “playing Indian,” so it has felt right, but it isn't a sound policy framework. The experience of those who want to retain *their* 'Indian' nickname and logo in Berlin has been just too narrowly focused on personal school experiences and a viewpoint of Berlin's local history that is trapped in the Euro-American perspective.

The result is nothing less than a diminishment of the educational process because, in the end:

1) You cannot represent anything accurately for an entire race of people, especially when you have been given so much information from educational leaders (including the last four State Superintendents of Public Instruction), professional educational and psychological associations and the democratically elected representatives and educators of the people you say you are honoring (that have consistently told you they do not feel honored by what you are doing). What does it say to the young people who count on the Berlin School District for the best possible preparation for life when the District embraces racial stereotyping and ignores the research and input from so many who have the expertise that schools normally respect?

2) The very nature of trying to use a racial identity to cheer on sports teams means that there is always an opposition that will be cheering against 'Indians.' The human dignity of every student is grounded in each and every thing they observe around them, both consciously and subconsciously. Just as with the potential dangers of a physical threat like asbestos, educational environments should always error on the side of that which creates the best and safest possible environment for all students.

3) For every good intention there is an unintended negative consequence when the lens you are looking through ignores the multiple perspectives needed in today's diverse world. To ignore the perspectives represented in the many resolutions passed unanimously by elected tribal leaders misses the very purpose in honoring others. To ignore the perspectives of professional educational and psychological associations is an equally bad message to pass on to young people.

4) For every angry outburst about local control when it comes to race-based nicknames and logos, there has been a reasoned, measured response about how local control can fail when it comes to racial issues and discrimination. The discussion in Berlin has been far too one-sided because, until the complainant Tom Sobieski came along, no one showed the leadership necessary to get all the important information into the community. People in Berlin have had almost three generations of experiences that only reinforced the notion that their race-based, expropriated identity was good. So, listening to new information is not easy in that context; but it is necessary, and schools need to take a leadership role.

5) For every inclination to blame "political correctness" for the call to change, there are voices that need to be listened to about the moral correctness of giving **all** students the opportunity to achieve their full potential. The first line of the Berlin School District mission statement reads, "The Berlin Area School District will provide a quality education for all students." It doesn't say "for most students" or "for students of Euro-American heritage." It says for "all."

It's time to make peace with the idea of change and live up to that mission. It's time to respectfully retire the race-based nickname and logo.

A WORD ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

The authenticity of the yearbook pictures in this booklet can be checked at the Berlin Public Library. The library has copies of the yearbook dating back to 1916. The pictures in this booklet are but a small sampling of the total number that demonstrate the anti-educational and disrespectful way that American Indian heritage has been portrayed in Berlin over many years.

The documents quoted and referred to in the booklet are available through the Wisconsin Indian Education Association Mascot and Logo Task Force website www.indianmascots.com or through www.aistm.org, or can be obtained by contacting the primary author, Clif Morton, at morton@hughes.net.

This booklet is just a brief overview of many of the complex issues involving Berlin's use of its race-based nickname and logo. Readers are encouraged to research the related topic of white privilege as well as the full range of indigenous perspectives that are largely absent from the written statements of Berlin residents in the local paper, on Facebook and in school district materials. Each of Wisconsin's Native nations has a terrific website with many historical and cultural resources. The Department of Public Instruction has hundreds of pages of accurate and authentic materials available from the American Indian Studies consultant.

This booklet is intended to stimulate thought about important reasons to change Berlin's race-based nickname and logo. In that spirit, Clif welcomes any particular questions about the content of the booklet. Don't hesitate to contact him at the email address listed above for further information.

