

**ANALYSIS OF THE CLEVELAND INDIANS
NAME AND MASCOT CONTROVERSY**

Presented to

Stephanie Childers
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Prepared by

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March 25, 2004

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March 25, 2004

Stephanie Childers
President
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Dear Ms. Childers:

SUBJECT: SUBMISSION OF REPORT ON MASCOT CONTROVERSY

Here is the report you requested February 5, 2004 about the Cleveland Indians name and mascot controversy. The report, “Analysis of the Cleveland Indians Name and Mascot Controversy,” uses a number of academic, business, and popular secondary sources to analyze the controversy.

Although the Cleveland Indians currently maintain that their Native team identity is a tribute to Native American baseball legend Louis Sockalexis, the evidence gathered indicates that the name “Indians” and Chief Wahoo mascot do not honour him or other Native Americans. Further, the team name and mascots perpetuate negative Native American stereotypes. In light of growing political opposition, legal threats, and ethical obligations regarding this issue, a new team identity as part of an antiracism campaign is recommended. Public resistance can be reduced by positioning the transformation as a positive social change and involving fans in the name change process. As well, the promotional value of a team name and mascot change, particularly in terms of new merchandising revenue, can compensate for increased costs.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at 1-604-487-2929 or jdk@hotmail.com . I would be happy, at your request, to help implement some of the recommendations in the report by developing an identity transition plan.

Sincerely,

Jane Nunnikhoven
Senior Partner

Enclosure

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Controversy has surrounded the use of Native American names, logos, and mascots by sports teams for the past 35 years. EuroCrown Communications recently purchased the Cleveland Indians, a professional baseball team with a Native American team name and mascot, and is concerned about the potential impact of the controversy on its public image in North America. As such, the purposes of this report are to (1) analyze the reasons for the Cleveland Indians mascot controversy, (2) identify the potential impacts of the controversy on EuroCrown Communications, and (3) determine if changing the team's name and mascot is in your best interest

This report relies on a variety of secondary sources, including current sports, business, and sociology periodicals; a collection of academic essays; and sports and Native American group Web sites. These sources were found through catalogue and database searches at the Simon Fraser University and Vancouver Public libraries

Although the Cleveland Indians currently maintain that their Native team identity is a tribute to Native American baseball legend Louis Sockalexis, the evidence gathered indicates that the name "Indians" and Chief Wahoo mascot do not honour him or other Native Americans. Further, the team name and mascots perpetuate negative Native American stereotypes and encourage people to borrow inappropriately from Native American culture.

In light of growing political opposition, legal threats, and ethical obligations regarding this issue, a new team identity as part of an antiracism campaign is recommended. Positioning the transformation as a positive social change and involving fans in the name change process will reduce public resistance and enhance your company's public image. As well, the promotional value of a team name and mascot change, particularly in terms of new merchandising revenue, can compensate for increased costs.

INTRODUCTION

For the past 35 years, controversy has surrounded the use of Native American names, logos, and mascots by sports teams. According to a 1995 survey conducted for a sports information class at Ithaca College, there are 1,500 high schools, 14 minor league baseball teams, 73 colleges and universities, 50 junior colleges, and 5 professional sport franchises that use Native American symbols, mascots, logos, or nicknames in the United States (Connolly, Corbellini, & Grant cited in Staurowsky, 1998). Native American activists and other special interest groups claim that these names and images are racist and exploitive, while many teams and fans adamantly defend their use.

The mascot controversy first began to receive widespread attention in the early 1990s, particularly during the 1991 World Series and 1992 Super Bowl. Native American protests took place at these two major sporting events, both of which were held in Minneapolis and involved sports teams with Native American names and mascots (baseball's Atlanta Braves and football's Washington Redskins, respectively) (Rosenstein, 2001). The mass protests garnered significant media attention, much of which was critical of Native American team names and mascots, and transformed the mascot controversy into a national issue (Davis, 1993; Rosenstein, 2001).

Cleveland Indians Name and Mascot

The Cleveland Indians, a professional baseball team that plays in the American League Central Division of Major League Baseball in the United States, have a Native American team name and mascot, Chief Wahoo. The team's Native American identity has resulted in intense media and public scrutiny. The American Indian Movement's Cleveland Chapter filed the first complaint against the team in 1970, and since then protests against the team's name and mascot have been ongoing (Banks, 1993). While some Native American aspects of the Cleveland franchise have been eliminated, including the tepee once located in centre field and the famous neon Chief Wahoo sign at the entrance of the stadium, the controversial team name and mascot have remained (Staurowsky, 1998).

Purposes of the Report

EuroCrown Communications, a German-owned multimedia group, recently purchased the Cleveland Indians. Already the owner of six European newspapers, five television stations, two Cable TV news networks, a fashion house, three European soccer teams, and a market-leading brewery, your company is now looking to expand into the North American market. You are, however, concerned about the impact that the contentious

Native mascot issue could have on your company's public image and reputation in North America. As such, you authorized this study to do the following:

1. Analyze the reasons for the controversy
2. Identify the potential impacts of the controversy on your company
3. Determine if changing the team's name and mascot is in your best interest

Scope of the Report

To achieve these purposes, this report analyzes the social, political, legal, and ethical issues involved in the Cleveland Indians team name and mascot controversy. It also considers the experience of a professional sports team that changed its name and logo. The analysis focuses on determining if the name and mascot should be changed, rather than on detailing how to implement such a change. For example, suggesting new potential names and mascots for the team is not within the scope of this report. Based on the conclusions of this analysis, several recommendations are made.

Sources and Methods

This report relies on a variety of secondary sources, including current sports, business, and sociology periodicals; a collection of academic essays; and sports and Native American group Web sites. These sources were found through catalogue and database searches at the Simon Fraser University and Vancouver Public libraries. The databases used include ABI/Inform, Academic Search FullText Elite, Academic Search Premier, Alternative Press Index, Business Source Premier, CBCA Fulltext Reference, Humanities and Social Sciences Index, Ingenta Select, and SocioFile.

The report draws heavily on three articles, two of which are by Dr. Ellen J. Staurowsky (1998, 2001), a professor with the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences at Ithaca College in New York. Staurowsky is well known for her work on the Native American mascot controversy and recently received Ithaca's Excellence in Scholarship Award (Ithaca College News, 2002). The third article is by Staurowsky and four other prominent Native issues authors: C. Richard King, an associate professor of comparative America cultures at Washington State University; Lawrence Baca, a past president of the National Native American Bar Association; Laurel R. Davis, associate professor of sociology at Springfield College; and Cornel Pewewardy, an associate professor in the Department of Teaching and Leadership, School of Education at the University of Kansas.

ORIGIN OF THE TEAM NAME

According to their *Media Guide 2003*, the Cleveland Indians were called the "Naps" in the early 1900s in honour of legendary second baseman Napoleon Lajoie. Following Lajoie's departure in 1914, the team needed a new name. Team owner Charles W. Somers invited the Cleveland baseball writers to help select a name, and the writers

solicited suggestions from their readers. Through this process the name “Cleveland Indians” was selected. Apparently, the old National league club of Cleveland was referred to as the “Indians” upon the arrival of Louis Francis Sockalexis, one of the first Native Americans to play major league baseball. The return of this old name was intended to honour and “revive the memory” of Sockalexis (p. 17).

Historical Accuracy of the Name Origin Story

In 1998, Dr. Ellen J. Staurowsky reviewed newspaper stories and baseball histories to test the Cleveland Indians’ historical account of how they got their name and found it to be “based on faulty information” (p. 299). Issues of the four major Cleveland newspapers from September 1914 through March 1915 present a different version of the story. Sockalexis was not mentioned in any of the stories recounting the selection of name, and one newspaper reported that the name was only “temporarily bestowed” (p. 306). Staurowsky identified several other inaccuracies in the team’s 1997 media guide (one being that there was a formal naming contest), but, interestingly, those details are no longer found in the team’s current promotional materials. Considering that the Cleveland Indians use Sockalexis to legitimate their team name, it is significant that the evidence indicates that the name was not selected to honour Sockalexis.

According to Staurowsky (1998), several other factors make it unlikely that Sockalexis’ ethnic background would have been viewed as an honourable quality. For one, when Sockalexis stepped to the plate, fans of the opposing teams would yell racial slurs at him. When his alcoholism and inability to play due to injury became known, the press portrayed him as “one of the most dominant and enduring Native American stereotypes, that of the drunken, lazy, and suspect Indian” (p. 309). As well, the United States government was implementing policy that stripped Native Americans of their culture and freedom when the name “Indians” was revived (Staurowsky, 1998). All of these factors cast doubt on the claim that the team name was selected in order to honour Sockalexis. Staurowsky concludes that the name “Indians” was chosen for exploitive purposes, rather than as a tribute to Sockalexis. According to her, the team’s Native identity was a useful marketing and reporting angle that helped sell tickets and newspapers (1998).

Current Acknowledgement of Sockalexis

In addition to these historical inaccuracies, the Cleveland Indians’ current failure to adequately acknowledge Sockalexis further weakens their claim of honouring the Native American baseball legend. In her article *Sockalexis and the Making of the Myth at the Core of Cleveland’s “Indian” Image* (2002), Staurowsky describes several examples of the team’s failure to recognize Sockalexis. First, the team did not acknowledge the one hundredth anniversary of Sockalexis playing in the majors in 1997, even though that same year Major League Baseball was celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of signing the first African American, Jackie Robinson, to the league. And while the team has immortalized other individuals with fitting tributes (there is a statue of revered pitcher Bob Feller and the stadium is named after former team owner Richard Jacobs),

Sockalexis' picture (as seen in Figure 1 below) and name appear infrequently and often in remote locations at the ball park and in team publications (2002).

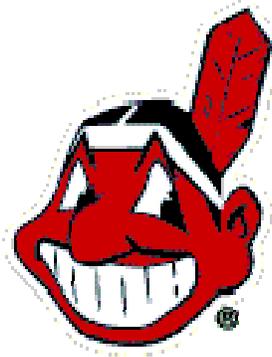
The team's most common Native American representation is Chief Wahoo, a caricature with a red face, wide grin, and black hair parted down the middle. He wears a headband from which a feather protrudes at the back, as shown below in Figure 2. This mascot, which appears on garbage cans and licence plates all over the city, is a rather unflattering representation that many Native American groups find offensive (Staurowsky, 2000). Given that Sockalexis is the only reason for the team's Native identity, it is difficult to understand why the Cleveland Indians have chosen to honour him in such a disrespectful way.

Figure 1
LOUIS SOCKALEXIS



Source: The Baseball Reliquary. (n.d.)
The story of Louis Sockalexis.
Retrieved March 3, 2004, from
[http://www.baseballreliquary.org/
/story_of_sockalexis.htm](http://www.baseballreliquary.org/story_of_sockalexis.htm)

Figure 2
CHIEF WAHOO



Source: Orwell Police Department.
(n.d.). *Cool links*. Retrieved
March 18, 2004, from
[http://www.orwellpolice.com/
Kids.htm](http://www.orwellpolice.com/Kids.htm)

REASONS FOR THE CONTROVERSY

The questionable nature of the Cleveland Indians' proclaimed intent to honour Sockalexis is a major reason for the controversy surrounding the team's name and Chief Wahoo mascot. In general, however, the controversy involves a more elaborate set of claims and responses.

Claims of Mascot Opponents

King, Staurowsky, Baca, Davis, and Pewewardy (2002) have summarized the main arguments of anti-mascot activists. First, they assert that team names and mascots, like "Indians" and Chief Wahoo, stereotype Native Americans. One common stereotype is

that of the noble savage, which views Native Americans as childlike and primitive (King et al, 2002). As seen in Figure 2 (page 4), the Chief Wahoo caricature, with its huge grin and exaggerated features, seems to fit the noble savage stereotype. Another common stereotype is that of the drunken Indian. According to long-time Cleveland baseball writer Terry Pluto, Chief Wahoo “looks as if he sold his soul for a six-pack, reinforcing all the old stereotypes” (as cited in Staurowsky, 2001, p. 100).

Such stereotypes can have a damaging effect on Native Americans’ images of themselves. In 1992, the American Indian Mental Health Association of Minnesota issued a position statement on the controversy, stating: “As a group of mental health providers, we are in agreement that using images of American Indians as mascots, symbols, caricatures, and namesakes for non-Indian sports teams, business, and other organizations is damaging to the self-identity, self-concept, and self-esteem of our people” (as cited in Pewewardy, 2001, p. 267). Stereotypes portrayed in popular culture can be confusing for Native American children in the process of defining their identity, values, and attitudes. A 1998 study commissioned by Children Now, a non-profit child advocacy organization, revealed that Native American children feel that the media has a powerful influence on perceptions of people of colour and that they see themselves characterized as poor, drunk, and living on reservations (1999).

King et al. (2002) also argue that such stereotypes influence the perception and treatment of Native Americans. They explain that while there are more than 550 recognized tribal groups in the United States, stereotypes often portray Native Americans as a homogenous group with a single culture and prevent people from understanding current Native American realities (2002). According to the United States Department of Justice, Native Americans are victims of violent crimes at about twice the rate of other racial and ethnic groups (King et al., 2002). The authors contend that the prevalence of negative Native American stereotypes contributes to these crime rates (2002).

Third, the authors state that no cultural group should be mimicked, particularly in regards to sacred items and practices. For example, the Chief Wahoo logo has a feather protruding from his headband. Dennis J. Banks (1993), a long-time leader in the American Indian Movement, explains that the eagle feather is actually the highest honour that Native Americans bestow on other individuals, as well as their highest ceremonial item. Given this, it seems inappropriate for a logo that depicts a sacred item to appear on garbage cans and licence plates around the city, as Chief Wahoo does (Staurowsky, 2000). Banks states that “it is especially painful to see a mockery made of this most precious spiritual ritual” (p. 8), such as when fans adorn themselves with feathers (as seen above in Figure 3). The

Figure 3
CHIEF WAHOO FANS



Source: Little Black Sambo and Chief Wahoo. (2000, May 17) Retrieved March 22, 2004, from <http://www.bluecorncomics.com/wahoo.htm>

Cleveland Indians' Native American identity has also lead fans to perform sacred Native American rituals like religious chanting and dancing at games, making these practices seem "comical or quaint rather than deserving of reverence" (Staurowsky, 1998, p. 304).

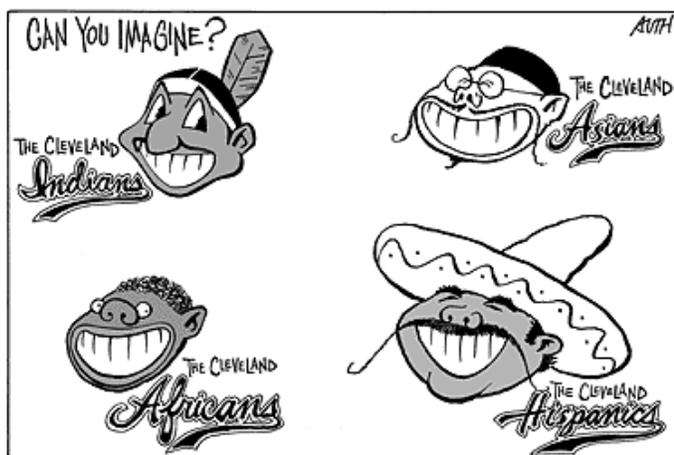
Reponses from Mascot Supporters

In response to these claims, mascot supporters often defend the use of Native American team names and mascots with several different responses. The most common is the assertion that such names and mascots honour Native Americans (Davis, 1993; King et al., 2002). This assertion is problematic for the Cleveland Indians because not one Native American organization considers the image of Chief Wahoo to be honourable (Staurowsky, 2000). Several events at Cleveland Indians games also seem to contradict the notion that the team's name and mascot honour Native Americans. Staurowsky describes a scene at the team's 1998 opening day in Cleveland, during which pro-mascot spectators dressed up in "Indian" regalia shouted expletives and derogatory comments at Native Americans (2001). As well, a number of Native American protestors have been arrested at the team's field (Staurowsky, 2001). Such actions and events do not honour Native Americans. Although the team claims to honour Native Americans, it continues to ignore their protests (Davis & Rau, 2001).

Another common response from mascot supporters is that the controversy is simply a case of excessive political correctness (Staurowsky, 2000). This belief overlooks the danger of stereotypes and ignores the numerous concerns that anti-mascot activists have raised. Others point to the fact that some Native Americans support the mascots (Davis, 1993). This, however, does not override the finding that a majority of Native Americans oppose the mascots. A recent survey by *Indian Country Today* (2001) found that 81% of Native American opinion leaders felt that the use of Native names, symbols and mascots are largely offensive and disparaging to Native Americans.

Finally, Davis (1993) points out the common defence that there are mascots modeled after other ethnic groups, such as the Vikings and the Irish. Davis explains that, unlike Native mascots, these were selected by people from that ethnic group or represent a group of people that are not alive today. As the political cartoon on the right (Figure 4) illustrates, it is hard to imagine any other racial or ethnic group being represented as a mascot like the "Indians."

Figure 4
"CAN YOU IMAGINE?" CARTOON



Source: Little Black Sambo and Chief Wahoo. (2000, May 17) Retrieved March 22, 2004, from <http://www.bluecorncomics.com/wahoo.htm>

POLITICAL OPPOSITION

As these arguments have been increasingly publicized, political opposition to Native American sports team names and logos has grown. Well over 100 political, religious, and professional organizations have taken a stand against Native American mascots, including the National Education Association, the United Church of Christ, the National Congress of American Indians, the Modern Language Association, the United Methodist Church, the American Anthropological Association, and the American Indian Movement (King, 2004). The United States Commission on Civil Rights has even denounced Native American images and team names, calling them disrespectful, offensive, and “particularly inappropriate and insensitive in light of the long history of forced assimilation that American Indian people have endured in this country” (2001, para. 1).

Over 100 colleges and universities have replaced Native teams names and mascots (“Public Accommodations,” 1999), and several school districts and state boards of education have banned their use (King, 2004). As well, a number of major media outlets, including the *Star Tribune* in Minneapolis, the *Salt Lake Tribune* in Salt Lake City, the *Oregonian* in Portland, and *WOL-Radio* in Washington DC, have announced that they will no longer use team names that are offensive to racial, religious or ethnic groups, including references to Indians (Harjo, 2002). When asked if the Chief Wahoo image is racist, Cleveland sportswriter Larry Durstin said, “Of course it is. Any self-respecting native American would find it offensive. That’s as plain as the nose on my face” (as cited in Springwood, 2001, p. 325).

There has also been opposition demonstrated specifically against the Cleveland Indians name and logo. In 1994, then United States President Bill Clinton refused to wear a cap with the Chief Wahoo logo while tossing the first pitch on Opening Day of Cleveland’s 1994 season (“Public Accommodations,” 1999). In 1996, Hachivi Edgar Heap of Birds created a billboard for the Cleveland Institute of Art that juxtaposed a likeness of Chief Wahoo with the phrase “Smile for Racism” (Staurowsky, 1998). In 2000, former Cleveland mayor Michael R. White denounced Chief Wahoo as a racist caricature and proposed stripping the logo from all city-owned property (Vosburgh & Quinn, 2000). That same year the tribe to which Sockalexis belonged, the Penobscots, called upon the team to drop its Chief Wahoo mascot (Holyoke, 2000). As owners of the Cleveland Indians, this political opposition could damage your public image.

LEGAL CHALLENGES

A number of legal challenges have also been brought against teams with Native American names and mascots, including the Cleveland Indians. In 1993, a state legislator in Ohio introduced a bill to prohibit the use of public money for a new stadium for the baseball team, unless it dropped its mascot Chief Wahoo (Sigelman, 1998). Although this particular legal challenge was unsuccessful, another potential legal threat is on the horizon.

About a decade ago a group of seven Native American activists filed a lawsuit with the United States Patent and Trademark Office against the National Football League's Washington Redskins, claiming that the term "Redskins" is offensive. In 1999, a three-judge panel unanimously decided to withdraw trademark protection of the name "Redskins" on the grounds that it "may disparage Native Americans and may bring them into contempt or disrepute" (Harjo, 2001, p. 189). The Native American activists hoped that the trademark cancellations would force a name change, since the team would lose its exclusive rights to market the Redskins name and potentially lose \$5 million in merchandising revenue each year (Fisher, 2003). The Washington Redskins, however, have successfully appealed the federal ruling, and now the Native American activists are considering an appeal (Fisher, 2003).

Regardless of the outcome of such legal challenges, the process of defending lawsuits and launching appeals is costly and generates negative publicity. As owners of the Cleveland Indians, you could face a similar trademark lawsuit regarding the team's name and logo.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF A NAME/LOGO CHANGE

After considering the ethical, political, and legal implications of Chief Wahoo and the "Indians," there are clearly a number of reasons to change the Cleveland team name and logo. Such a change, however, is likely to have an impact on public opinion, costs, and revenues.

Public Opinion

Staurowsky (1998) asserts that there is a great deal of public ambivalence and confusion about the racial implications of the Native name and imagery associated with the Cleveland Indians. This claim is supported by King et al.'s review of public opinion surveys, which found substantial variation in opinions about Native team names and mascots (2002). Although these surveys do not provide conclusive evidence regarding public opinion about the controversy, they do indicate that a certain portion of the public would oppose a name/logo change.

There are two main reasons, according to college professors Davis and Rau (2001), why many people in the United States support Native names and mascots. First, the public has been exposed to stereotypical images of Native Americans since birth. As a result, such images have become a normal part of the cultural landscape. Second, many Native American images and stereotypes seem to be positive (Davis & Rau, 2001). A good example is the claim that the Cleveland Indians' name and logo honour Native American baseball legend Sockalexis. In addition, sports fans often attach a strong sense of identity and tradition to team names and mascots (Davis, 1993). For these reasons, the general public is often uncritical and even supportive of Native names and mascots.

Although public opinion is an important consideration, it should not be the sole determinant of your decision regarding this matter. King et al. (2002) point out that even

if the majority supports the use of Native American team names and images, this does not make it acceptable. This sentiment was summed up by North Carolina activists that said, “one does not vote on racism and sexual harassment” (as cited in Davis & Rau, 2001, p. 236). This point is particularly relevant given that Native Americans are a numerical minority that lacks the power to educate the non-Native majority in the United States (Davis & Rau, 2001).

Costs

Changing the team name and logo would also result in some additional costs. Public resistance to the change could potentially cost the team in terms of revenue; however, Banks (1993) reports that a number of universities (Stanford, Dartmouth, Illinois, and Massachusetts) have changed their Native team names and mascots with no great loss of revenue or drop in attendance. The name/logo change process itself would involve costs for research, logo design, and promotions. The team would also have to purchase new uniforms, merchandise, equipment, signs, and other marketing collateral.

Revenues

Although there would be a number of associated costs, a team name and mascot change could potentially increase revenues. Seth M. Siegel (2003), the co-founder of a global trademark licensing agency, states that league and team owners “could turn a re-branding exercise into a complete marketing, promotional and merchandising triumph” (para. 9). As seen in Table 1 below, the Cleveland Indians’ team value and game attendance have decreased over the past few years. The new team identity would likely generate a lot of publicity, which could increase ticket sales. As well, offering new merchandise to fans could increase merchandising revenue.

Table 1
CLEVELAND INDIANS TEAM VALUES
AND AVERAGE GAME ATTENDANCE
FOR 1998-2003

Year	Team Value (\$ million)	Average Game Attendance
1998	\$322	42,806
1999	\$359	42,820
2000	\$364	42,670
2001	\$372	39,694
2002	\$360	32,308
2003	\$331	21,358

Source: adapted from Forbes.com. (2003, April 28). Cleveland Indians. Retrieved March 15, 2004, from http://www.forbes.com/free_forbes/2003/0428/mlb_10.html

Source: adapted from Baseball-Reference.com. (n.d.). Cleveland Indians attendance, stadiums and park factors. Retrieved March 15, 2004, from <http://www.baseball-reference.com/teams/CLE/attend.shtml>

CASE STUDY OF A TEAM NAME/LOGO CHANGE

In this analysis of potential gains and losses, it is informative to consider a case study of a professional sports team that changed its name and logo on moral grounds. On February 22, 1997, Washington Bullets owner Abe Pollin announced that the National Basketball Association's team name would become the Washington Wizards as part of an antiviolence campaign (Schaffer, 1996). Pollen explained that he realized some time ago that the team should consider a name change.

I picked up a newspaper and saw the word bullets in a headline and thought for an instant that the article was about my basketball team. Unfortunately, far too often these days, bullets in the news does not have anything to do with basketball. It is our intention that this name change will go hand in hand with our team's antiviolence campaign. I think this is bigger than just changing a name. It is about being committed to you community and the people in it (as cited in Schaffer, 1996, para. 4).

A report on the name change (Schaffer, 1996) describes the contest held to involved fans in the name change process. First, fans were asked to suggest names on forms found at local restaurants. There were over 500,000 entries, which resulted in approximately 3,000 name suggestions. A panel then narrowed the suggestions down to five (Dragons, Express, Sea Dogs, Stallions, and Wizards) and asked fans to call a 900-number to vote for their favourite. Each call cost one dollar, with proceeds going to the antiviolence campaign set up to provide conflict resolution, education and scholarship programs to local students. At the end of the contest, which ran for almost four months, the name Wizards was ahead by more than 1,000 votes (Schaffer, 1996).

According to Siegel (2003), the symbolic name change "elevated the team's moral stature" and has had no noticeable effect on the team's on-court performance. The team's value has also been on the rise, as seen in Table 2 below, although values from 1996 and 1997 were unavailable. As shown in Table 3 (page 11), average game attendance during the team's first season with the new name (1997-98) actually increased about 14% from 17,089 to 19,542. Following a slight decrease, average attendance has increased to over 20,000 during the past two seasons.

Table 2
WASHINGTON WIZARDS TEAM
VALUES FOR 1998-2001

Year	Team Value (\$ million)
1998	\$207
1999	\$209
2000	\$210
2001	\$214

Source: adapted from Forbes.com. (2003, February 17). Washington Wizards. Retrieved March 15, 2004, from http://www.forbes.com/home/free_forbes/2003/0217/nba_6.html

Table 3
WASHINGTON WIZARDS ATTENDANCE FOR 1996-2003

Season	Games	Total Season Attendance	Average Game Attendance
1996-97	41	700,646	17,089
1997-98	41	801,240	19,542
1998-99	25	402,481	16,099
1999-00	41	616,593	15,039
2000-01	41	638,653	15,577
2001-02	41	839,567	20,477
2002-03	41	827,093	20,173

Source: adapted from Tomasch, K. (n.d.) Washington Wizards attendance_ Retrieved March 17, 2004, from http://www.kenn.com/sports/basketball/nba/nba_was_attendance.html

The Washington Wizards case is evidence that professional sports teams can successfully change their name and logo. The Wizards overcame public resistance by involving fans in the name change process and by positioning the transformation as a positive social change. Including the name change in an antiviolence campaign shifted public focus away from the loss of the old team name to the gain of increased antiviolence awareness and community programs for students. The change seemed to improve the public image of the team, and did not greatly impact the team financially.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis presented in this report, the following conclusions are drawn:

- The Cleveland Indians team name and Chief Wahoo mascot do not honour baseball legend Louis Sockalexis or Native Americans in general.
- The Cleveland Indians team name and mascot perpetuates stereotypes that influence the perception and treatment of Native Americans.
- The Cleveland Indians team name and mascot encourage people to borrow sacred rituals and practices from Native American culture inappropriately.
- Teams with Native American names and mascots face growing political opposition and legal threats.
- The decision to change the team name and mascot is an ethical issue that should not be determined by public opinion.
- The promotional value of a team name and mascot change can compensate for increased costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings and conclusions of this report support the following recommendations.

- Launch a local antiracism campaign on behalf of the Cleveland Indians that involves educational programs about stereotypes, cultural sensitivity training, and scholarships for Native American students.
- End the team's perpetuation of Native American stereotypes by announcing that you are changing the Cleveland Indians name and mascot as part of the antiracism campaign.
- Ensure that Cleveland fans can identify with the new name and logo by involving them in the name change process (soliciting their suggestions and asking them to vote for their favourite new name).
- Enhance your public image by publicizing the name change as a positive social change that demonstrates your commitment to the community.
- Increase revenues by promoting the team's new merchandise.

As the Washington Wizards example demonstrates, the Cleveland Indians can reduce public resistance by implementing the name change as part of an antiracism campaign. With the new team identity positioned as a positive social change that is part of a campaign that will benefit the community, it will be more difficult for fans to voice opposition. Resistance can further be reduced by involving fans in the name change process. Also, focusing on the promotional value of the name change, particularly new merchandising revenue, will help compensate for any additional costs that result from the transformation.

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