



SPIRIT LAKE TRIBE

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Spirit Lake Nation Files Lawsuit Against NCAA

Below is the transcript of the official statement issued by Reed Soderstrom, esq., regarding the filing of a lawsuit in federal court by the Spirit Lake Tribal Nation against the National Collegiate Athletic Association. The Spirit Lake Nation is suing the NCAA over their policy on the use of Native American names and imagery by collegiate athletic teams, including the University of North Dakota Fighting Sioux.

Statement by: Reed Soderstrom, an attorney for the Committee of Understanding & Respect, and Archie Fool Bear, individually and on behalf of the 1004+ Petitioners.

Today, the Spirit Lake Tribe of Indians, by and through its Committee of Understanding and Respect, and Archie Fool Bear, individually, and as Representative of more than 1004 Petitioners of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, filed a lawsuit against the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in direct response to their attempt to take away and prevent the North Dakota Sioux Indians from giving their name forever to the University of North Dakota.

In 2009 the Spirit Lake tribe voted overwhelmingly to allow the University of North Dakota to continue using the name "Fighting Sioux." In 1969, in a sacred & religious spiritual ceremony, the tribal leaders of the Standing Rock tribe granted perpetual use of the name "Fighting Sioux" to the University of North Dakota.

However, the NCAA has unilaterally decided that the name "Fighting Sioux" is derogatory to the very people who feel honored by the name – the North Dakota Sioux tribes. The NCAA has declared, without input from the Dakota Sioux, that UND will be prevented from hosting any post-season sporting events; and is encouraging other universities to boycott UND if the University does not remove the name "Fighting Sioux" and the accompanying logo honoring the traditions and customs of the proud Dakota Sioux people. These actions are a violation of the religious and first amendment rights of the Dakota Sioux tribes, and show the NCAA believes it knows the interests of the North Dakota Sioux community better than Sioux people themselves.

Though the NCAA has decided "Fighting Sioux" is derogatory, the NCAA supports the University of Illinois' use of the name "Fighting Illini," and the use by Florida State University of the name "Seminoles" along with the Seminole mascot – someone dressed in Native American attire who rides into the FSU

stadium on a horse and throws a flaming spear before every home football game. The NCAA claims these are not derogatory depictions because the Illini people and the Seminole people approve of the use of the name and mascot. Inexplicably, the NCAA fails to accept the tribal vote and the sacred religious ceremony as endorsements of the name "Fighting Sioux" by the North Dakota Sioux Nation. The NCAA's actions violate Native American civil rights, equal protection rights, and religious rights.

The suit has been brought by the Spirit Lake Tribe's Committee of Understanding and Respect on behalf of the Spirit Lake Tribe, and by former Standing Rock Tribal Council member Archie Fool Bear on behalf of the more than 1000 members of the Standing Rock Tribe who signed a petition to reaffirm their support for the use of the name "Fighting Sioux".

Neither party has taken this step lightly. Indeed, it could possibly have been avoided had the NCAA only listened to the Dakota Sioux people, and recognized that the use of the Fighting Sioux name and likeness by UND for the past 80 years has been honorable and in keeping with Dakota Sioux culture and traditions. It is the NCAA who has dragged this matter out. They have had several opportunities since 2005 to realize their policy was in error, and either rescind it or grant UND an exception. The NCAA chose not to, and left the Dakota Sioux people no choice but to bring this legal action against them.

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(More information can be found at www.savethefightingsioux.com)