

The Redskin Resolution

The University adopts a second athletic nickname.

Miami University teaches people how to think, not what to think. That's why the University's board of trustees, acting on a recommendation from President Paul Risser, has decided to let the use of the athletic nickname be a personal choice.

"Those who wish to continue to use the term Redskin can do so, but for those who feel uncomfortable with that nickname, they now have the option of using the term Miami Tribe," Risser said during the December trustee meeting. "Some people thought this should have been a simple decision, yes or no," Risser continued. "But it is not and should not be the role of any educational institution to tell people what is right and wrong."

After several members of the board publicly shared their reactions to the president's recommendation, the trustees voted 4-3 with one abstention to allow athletic organizations and athletic publica-

tions currently using the Redskin nickname to continue its use. All other publications and organizations sponsored by the University are to adopt the nickname Miami Tribe.

"The discussion of the use of the athletic nickname Redskins by the University is over, but what isn't over, what I want to see continue, is the discussion of how we think about each other, how we recognize different cultures, how we interpret the things we say, and how those might affect others," Risser said.

Currently, the Redskin name appears in limited form. No team uniforms carry the term, although it is on hockey team helmets and band uniforms.

The board's decision in no way affects the University's name or logo, which incorporates the image of a Miami Indian with the letter M, or Chief Miami, who appears at athletic events.

Any newly created athletic team will use the nickname Miami Tribe, and an established sports team can change to Tribe if desired. Any team that makes the switch will not be allowed to revert back. University sports publications currently using the term Redskin may continue its use, adopt Miami Tribe, or use both interchangeably.

"By providing an alternative, the University does not divide the community," Risser said. "No one is right and no one is wrong. As for my feelings, I will in the future use Miami Tribe when referring to Miami's athletic programs."

Risser's recommendation followed several months of discussions that began last spring. At that time, the president stressed that the step-by-step process leading to a decision should be given as much attention as the decision itself.

"This process will serve as a model for helping students to de-



1809

Miami University is chartered by the Ohio Legislature and named in honor of the Miami Tribe, which gave up rights to most of its Ohio homeland in the 1795 Treaty of Greenville.



1928

Miami Publicity Director R. J. McGinnis is credited with coining Redskins for athletic teams; the Varsity M Club becomes Tribe Miami. Prior to this, Miami

teams are referred to as The Miami Boys, The Big Reds, The Reds, or The Red and Whites.



During their fall meeting on the Miami Hamilton campus, University trustees listen to one of numerous presentations on both sides of the Redskin debate.

velop their own intellectual process and learn to think critically," he said.

The first step was to gather information: a history of Miami's use of the nickname and the University's relationship with the Miami Tribe; the outcome of debates on the use of Native American names, images, and symbols at other colleges and universities; and opinions from alumni, faculty, staff, students, and the community at large.

During the months following Risser's call for discussion, 500 of the University's 110,000 alumni wrote letters expressing their views. The president read and responded to every letter sent to his office.

The trustees heard presentations about the history and use of the nickname and statements on both sides of the debate at their September meeting.

On Nov. 19, everyone who had a n opinion to express and could make it to campus was given the chance to speak at a public forum in Millett Hall. Comments for and against change were almost evenly divided among the students, faculty, alumni, community members, and Native Americans who spoke directly to the president before a crowd of approximately 200 spectators.

The process culminated in Risser's Dec. 10 recommendation to

the board, which appears in its entirety on Pages 7-9 of this *Miamian*. Board Chairman Joseph Marcum MBA '65 voted in favor of the resolution as did Sister Jean Patrice Harrington, Eleanor Irwin '73, and Donald Kasle '66. Harold Paul '50, William Gunlock '51, and Robert Tenhover '56 voted against the resolution. Wayne Embry '58 abstained. Richard Farmer '56 was absent, but his recommendation in favor of the resolution was read to the board.

After the vote, Marcum summed up his feeling and those expressed by others.

"I think that this decision took into account the feelings on both sides of the issue and that eventually the term Redskin will phase out, but instead of a jolt, it will be an evolution," he said. "I believe this is the right decision for this University and everyone concerned."

While the Miami Tribe did not participate directly in Risser's recommendation, tribal leaders voiced their support in a Dec. 3, 1993, letter.

"With respect to the use of the term 'Redskin' as the name of the University's athletic teams, the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma supports the process by which the issue is being considered.

"We would be pleased with the use of the term 'Miami Tribe' as the University's symbol for its athletic teams. As we have stated many



1931

Redskin first appears in *Recensio* yearbook in reference to athletic teams; cheerleader sweaters sport an Indian silhouette.

Late 1940s

Student snack bar becomes the Redskin Reservation, also known as The Res.



1950s

Students dressed as Indians begin to appear with the marching band, which occasionally decorates its bass drum with a caricature of an Indian.

times, we are very proud of our close relationship with Miami University. We, the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, appreciate the efforts of all concerned and applaud the University for addressing a complicated issue in an open way. May we move forward together."

The new year sees the relationship between the tribe and the University growing stronger. At Risser's recommendation, a team led by Myrtis Powell, vice president for student affairs and University liaison to the tribe, is working with tribal leaders to define specific goals and plans of action.

"We will put together short-term and long-term goals and exactly what it will take in terms of human and monetary resources," Powell said. "We want to expand the programs we have, which include cultural exchanges, student visits, and scholarships. We hope to have short-term goals to present to the president by the end of spring semester and begin implementing some of those by the beginning of fall semester.

"We will move forward together."

This article was written by University news bureau staff member Deborah Lucas with assistance from Cory Foster, senior associate director in Miami's Office of Alumni and Parent Programs, and Richard Little, director of university communications.

A Miami Primer

Editor's note: Throughout the discussions this past year, it became apparent that some misconceptions have been formed over time. Here are a few clarifications.

Common belief: Miami University always has referred to its athletic teams as the Miami Redskins.

Miami's intercollegiate athletic teams were called The Miami Boys, The Big Reds, The Reds, or The Red and Whites until 1928, when a University PR man coined Redskins for athletic teams and Tribe Miami for the letter-winners' society.

Common belief: The University has a treaty with the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma.

The action by the Miami Tribe expressing pride in its relationship with the University, passed in 1972 and reaffirmed in 1988 and 1991, is more accurately described as a resolution. A treaty is a formal agreement signed by all parties and normally would include elements of a contract. The University has formally stated what actions it would take to assure that any use of Indian symbols and other activities is "authentic, dignified, and in good taste," but there is no treaty signed by both parties.

Common belief: The Miamis live on a reservation.

Members of the federally recognized Miami Tribe of Oklahoma have not lived on a reservation since being forced to migrate from their ancestral homeland to Kansas in the 1840s. In 1867, the tribe was moved to northeastern Oklahoma, where they received family land allotments of 160 acres. While there are restrictions on transactions involving "trust land," many descendants manage this land as private property. For a closer look at the Miami Tribe, see the feature starting on Page 10.

Common belief: The University colors are another reference to Indian heritage.

The University's colors of red and white have nothing to do with Indian heritage. The campus literary societies founded in 1825 adopted these hues, with the Erodelphian Society choosing red and the Union Society picking white.



1960s

The marching band's Indian mascot gives way to Hiawabop, a student usually dressed as a Plains Indian in a war bonnet and painted face.



Late 1960s

A visit to campus by Miami Chief Forest Olds results in a formal relationship between the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma and the University.

1972

Miami President Phillip Shriver appoints a task force to examine the use of Indian symbols; Miami Tribe passes a resolution of support for a relationship with the University.

President's Decision

*Editor's note: Miami University President Paul G. Risser presented the following decision regarding the use of **Redskin** at the University's December 1993 board of trustees meeting. Miamian has added the boldface emphasis. This was not in Dr. Risser's original text.*

Introduction

Since 1931, Miami University has used the name "Redskin" for its athletic teams and occasionally for other entities. Although this term may have been viewed as completely acceptable in the past, today there is a legitimate question of whether its use should be continued. Some people of all races and cultures believe the term "Redskin" to be derogatory, racist, or at least insensitive.

During 1993, the broad community of Miami University has thoroughly discussed "Redskin" as a nickname and in other uses. This continuous discussion has been in the true spirit of inquiry—of each person's learning different points of view and each one's coming to an individual conclusion based on a broader and deeper understanding of all the dimensions of the issue. As a result of these deliberations, several points emerge as particularly significant.

After thoughtful and informed consideration, there are those who sincerely believe that the name should be changed and those who think it should be retained. Some who believe it should be changed argue one or more of the following points: that the name is derogatory, racist, and insensitive; that it conveys the wrong image of Native Americans; that nicknames of athletic teams can be changed without harming the long-term identity of the institution; and that a university, as a place where all people and ideas should be respected, should have no nicknames which denote otherwise. Some who believe in maintaining the status quo argue that the name was initially selected to honor the American Indians; that it is not meant to be negative and that it connotes positive characteristics; that it has developed a strong and respectful tradition; and that the move to change it comes largely from a few people who are concerned about what is currently termed a "politically correct" point of view.

Neither belief—that the name should be changed or retained—is limited to any one constituency.

Miami Tribe of Oklahoma

Unlike many other institutions and organizations that are considering this general issue, Miami University has a special linkage with the federally recognized Miami Tribe of Oklahoma from which it received its name and with whom it maintains a close relationship. As such, the voice of the Tribe in this discussion is particularly important. Both the University and the Tribe treasure and respect the strong relationship between them. The University and the Tribe will continue this special relationship indefinitely and, moreover, will mutually seek to enhance this partnership.

With respect to the use of "Redskin" as the nickname of the University's athletic teams, the Tribe has not participated directly in the discussion. As one would expect among any group of people, there are members of the Tribe who believe the name should be changed, members who believe it should be retained, and members who have no particular opinion or who believe the issue is not of importance. The Tribe does, however, support the process by which the issue is being considered and supports the decision.

Early in the discussion, the Tribe indicated that if a change in the nickname were made, the Tribe would ask that the symbolism between the University and the Tribe persist and that any other nickname continue to convey the strong relationship between the University and the Tribe. If no change were made in the name, the Tribe would ask that "Redskin" continue to be used with the utmost care and respect.

Consideration of the Issue

Several other universities and colleges also have considered changes in nicknames or symbols that denote Native Americans. In virtually every one of these cases, regardless of the ultimate decision, the issue has remained divisive on these campuses, in some cases for decades. This is not surprising, especially when decisions have been made without inclusive and comprehensive consideration. Continuing



Mid-1970s

Hiawabop is retired in favor of Chief Miami, whose regalia is provided by the tribe; students who appear in the role learn authentic Indian dances. During this

time, a liaison between the tribe and the University is established.



1984

Tom-O-Hawk, a student dressed as a comical red bird, starts entertaining at athletic events.

discussion occurs because there is no answer that satisfies all parties, nor is there an objective method for deciding what all persons should think or believe. The nickname is not the fundamental issue—it is a manifestation of personal beliefs and of institutional values. On such issues, the University should clearly state institutional values, but it should not dictate personal beliefs.

Miami University has an opportunity to make a significant contribution to the resolution of issues such as these. Our process has involved an environment that encourages open sharing of ideas and a respect for different views. There has been marked attention to an informed discussion—one in which the participants have taken the time and made the effort to study the issue. In so doing, participants in this inquiry process have not simply leapt to an initial position and defended that position at all costs. Indeed, many individuals have changed or modified their views throughout the process.

There is a serious question about the degree to which an institution should attempt to dictate the beliefs and statements of its members and constituents. An academic institution by its nature is committed to free inquiry and to promoting a search for knowledge. While recognizing the dignity of individual members of the community, an academic institution is not and should not be engaged in promoting a particular ideology or denying individuals the right to hold unpopular positions. Fundamental to the process of learning is the ability of an individual to question the conventional wisdom, to refine the teachings being offered, and to derive his or her own values.

At Miami University, it is our fundamental position that individuals should become as informed as possible on issues in question, should recognize their individual responsibility to society as a whole as well as to themselves, and should develop a set of values on which to make judgments and base decisions. The role of the University is to provide an environment which supports this personal intellectual development and fosters thoughtful and respectful decision-making processes.

DECISION

Individual Values and Responsibilities

Miami University retains as one of its hallmarks an intellectual environment that encourages respectful and informed debate. **Indeed, a major purpose of this University is to assist students as they clarify their values and reach responsible decisions.** Each of us, be we students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni, or community members, is expected to **form views and beliefs based on thoughtful analysis and sound moral judgments.** Thus, each person will be called upon to decide whether he or she wishes to use the term "Redskin." This individual decision should be based on careful and informed thought, the values of the person, and his or her responsibilities to others and to society.

Institutional Values and Responsibilities

Miami University also has values and responsibilities. One of its responsibilities is to value its people and to ensure that these persons can grow intellectually in a thoughtful, fair, and respectful environment. Appellations help create this environment. To many, the nickname "Redskin" implies a disrespectful environment. Conversely, to others, the nickname does not imply any disrespect. Therefore, as an institution that encourages independent thought, the institutional use of the term "Redskin" as a nickname for the University's athletic teams will be addressed in the following way:

- A. **Only those University athletic organizations and athletic publications currently using the nickname "Redskin" may continue to use the nickname.** Whenever the term "Redskin" is used, the name and any symbol of peoples and cultures must continue to be represented authentically, with dignity and respect. The use of the nickname "Redskins" shall not be expanded beyond representations where it currently appears.
- B. **All other organizations sponsored by the University and official publications of the University not cov-**

1988

The Business Committee of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma releases a resolution reaffirming the 1972 resolution.



Spring 1993

Newly appointed President Paul Risser announces a process to study the use of the term Redskins; University Senate passes a resolution that recommends discontinuing nickname.



Nov. 19, 1993

President Risser listens to nearly 70 individuals at the Redskin Forum in Millett Hall. About 200 attend.

ered above will use the term "Miami Tribe" as the nickname of the athletic teams. The word "tribe" is defined by Webster as "...a group of persons, families, or clans believed to be descended from a common ancestor and forming a close community. . . ." This clearly describes the unique relationship between Miami University and the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, and it responds to the Tribe's request that the name retain the symbolism between the Tribe and the University. The nickname "Miami Tribe" provides an alternative for those who believe that the term "Redskin" does not convey the sensitive environment that must exist at Miami University. The University's linkage with a proud Native American people, even in the very name of the institution, can be preserved with dignity indefinitely through the use of the words "Miami Tribe."

Discussion

During this long and thoughtful deliberative process, I have reviewed my own feelings about this issue in arriving at the decision that I announce today. It would have been relatively easy to have made a simple decision either to discard or retain the "Redskin" name, but neither of these outcomes, although they would have engendered approval from some quarters, would have been the right decision. Had that happened, one part of the community would have "won" and another part would have "lost." There would be continued discussion because the University would have attempted to dictate beliefs to individuals, to state what is right or wrong when in fact the answer must come from individual values and judgments. Far more significantly, each of us would suddenly have been absolved of thinking about the implications of this issue any further. By providing an alternative, the University does not divide the community. More importantly, as a result of this recommendation, each of us as a person, as members of campus athletic organizations, or through involvement with athletic publications must continue to examine our values and responsi-

bilities, decide how we use words, and reflect on how our thoughts and ideas affect and are affected by other people and cultures.

The process of considering this issue has been extremely important as a model for discussing complex topics, and the University has involved its broad community in resolving it. Acceptance of the nickname "Redskin" has been reasserted when individuals, athletic organizations, and those involved with athletic publications have carefully considered the implications as brought forth during the deliberative process. Alternatively, the term "Tribe" may be used by those who prefer it; its use is also supported by the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma. As for my own feelings, I will in the future use "Miami Tribe" when referring to Miami's athletic programs by their nickname. While I sincerely believe that those who continue to choose to use the nickname "Redskin" use it with no intent to be disrespectful, for me the "Miami Tribe" more appropriately reflects my beliefs and values.

Continuing Relationship

Miami University will continue to strengthen its relationship with the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma. During the next six months, a broad-based team, led by Dr. Myrtis Powell, Vice President for Student Affairs and the University's liaison with the Tribe, will be appointed to consider and make recommendations about specific steps that can be taken to enhance this relationship. These steps should be developed in the context of the University's efforts to strengthen and support a campus community that is culturally diverse and respectful of all people.

Conclusion

Miami University has addressed a complicated issue in a way that has fostered the open exchange of ideas. The University will now move on to other issues as it continues to strive for increased excellence in all areas—both in and outside the classroom.

Dec. 3, 1993

Miami Tribe of Oklahoma releases a letter stating in part: "The Miami Tribe supports the recommendations as set forth by President Paul Risser. . . . We would be pleased with the use of the term 'Miami Tribe.' "

Dec. 10-11, 1993

Trustees approve President Risser's decision to allow athletic teams and publications currently using Redskin to continue. All other University-sponsored publications and organizations are to adopt the nickname Miami Tribe.

1994

A team led by Myrtis Powell, vice president for student affairs, will investigate and recommend ways to strengthen the University's ties with the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma.

