The Lesson

A. Introduction: Rather than a unit, this is part of a semester-long series of inquiries as we unlearn and learn about the past and present history and culture of American Indian peoples in the Eastern Woodland region. The lessons on sports mascots described here include activities for five sessions.

http://www.bluecorncomics.com/und.htm
B. Guiding Questions

For the Unit: What do we “know” about American Indians? What are our assumptions about American Indians? Where did our assumptions come from? Are there points of view or information that diverges from our assumptions? Are there different ways to examine our assumptions? How do our assumptions influence our learning, our opinions, and our behavior?

For the Lesson: Is using representations of American Indian peoples as sports mascots a way to honor them? What are the arguments in favor and against changing this? What are those arguments based on? What is my position? Why?

“The more I learn, the less I know.”

-attributed to Socrates, Einstein, or Lao-Tzu

“It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so.”

-attributed to Mark Twain

“Until the lion has his or her own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story.”

-Ewe-mina (Benin, Ghana, and Togo) Proverb
C. Learning objectives (skills, content, and attitudes) for the lesson

Students will:

2. Continue participating in critical discussions about their knowledge of Native Americans in history and today.
3. Continue examining their assumptions about Native peoples.
4. Describe, compare and contrast American Indian sports logos, mascots, and paraphernalia used in the past and currently.
5. Listen to and analyze different positions on this issue.
6. Examine the evidence behind different assumptions, including primary and secondary sources.
7. Pose questions about background information needed to perform this examination.
8. Write a position statement.
D. **Background**

It’s common for teachers of young children to begin a new unit starting a KWL chart, with the intention establishing a framework in which students can “hang” new learning.

However, by the time they arrive in second grade, children have been exposed to pervasive stereotypical images of and ideas about American Indians and consequently internalized the assumptions that go with these stereotypes. These ideas are formed over time with the influence of their communities, popular culture, the media, and schools. Before students can truly learn a new perspective, they must examine what they think they know.

Much has been written about the development of the image of American Indians as existing only in the past, about the creation by the dominant culture of “pan-Indian” stereotypes, and about the appropriation of Indian cultural elements to help create the American identity.¹

These myths of either the “noble” or the “ruthless savage,” have been and are constantly reinforced in media and popular culture, from the Buffalo Bill shows of the past, to this year’s Lone Ranger. Their negative effects have been documented.

Understanding the details of the complex and complicated history native peoples is beyond the scope of children for whom 1975 years is a really long time ago. However they understand immediate realities and it is through this gateway that different historic perspectives can be presented.

“Native American sports team mascots represent a contemporary problem for modern Native American people,” (Taylor, 2013). My school is located in the area that is home to the Washington Redskins, so the conversation around the issue of using American Indians for sports mascots is a good springboard for bigger ideas such as appropriation, racism, and identity, as well as a good vehicle to teach the habit of listening, reading, and thinking critically.

Before undertaking this endeavor, however, a teacher should humbly embark in a journey of self-discovery. “Non-Native educators, influenced by biased portrayals of American Indians in their own schooling and in the media, often view Native Americans as exotic, quaint, and even mythological. It is important, therefore, that before teachers begin developing an anti-bias curriculum they examine their own underlying beliefs and ideologies about Native Americans. This usually involves an initial period of critically questioning and analyzing most of what they have learned about American Indians and Alaska Natives. Reading books and articles written by Native scholars will help.” (Almeida, 1996) The section on Resources for Teachers lists books, articles, and websites that could guide the beginning of your inquiry.

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¹ Stereotype origin
E. Preparation Instructions

The most important thing to do is to inform yourself as much as you can of the complex history of Native peoples. If your readings take you to certainty, you haven’t read enough!

Review for your own information the articles, books, and websites in the Resources For Teachers section that give perspective and different views on the issue of American Indian sports mascots.

Collect and prepare for sharing images, video clips, sites, and documents as described in the Activities section.

“You must unlearn what you have learned”

-Yoda
F. Lesson Activities

Lesson One

a) Displays
At the beginning of the unit, the teacher created a display with a collection of images showing people from the past and today, native and non-native, to which students have referred during previous lessons as they confront their assumptions of “Indianness” and to which they have added over time.

The day the teacher will introduce the conversation about sports mascots, the display should have an additional collection of images showing sports mascots, logos, imagery, and paraphernalia, to which students will refer and add throughout the unit (see Resources, Images of Sports Mascots).

b) Precise Language
Use class dictionaries or http://www.wordcentral.com/ student dictionary from Merriam-Webster to look up definitions for key words that will be used in the lessons. Some of these words will have already been used in previous lessons, but it is important to continue to use precise language. Make sure you discuss with your students their understanding of these definitions and have them explain the terms in their own words. These are some words to be included: mascot, racism, assumption, refute, argument, evidence, stereotype, prejudice, honor, offensive, poll

c) Video Clips
Show video clips of people expressing opposing points of view regarding American Indians used as sports mascots, for example Hugh Foley’s documentary Savage Country. The clip between 2:36 to 4:01 in part 1 shows a Native child saying it doesn’t bother him and an elder saying it is offensive. Discuss (see Resources for questions).

Lesson Two: Images

a) Display a variety of images of sports mascots, from high school to professional teams, and from the caricatures to the more “realistic” depictions. Have students describe, compare, and contrast these images.

b) In small groups, have a discussion using the questions in the Resources section. Emphasize precise language and that students support their opinions.

c) Discuss as a whole class.

Lesson Three: Websites

a) Give background information on the NCAA resolution to eliminate Indian mascots in collegiate sports and specifically on the case of University of Illinois.
b) Assign one half of the class to explore the site for Honor the Chief and the other half the site for Retire the Chief. Alternatively give each half of the class copies of excerpts from the websites found in Resources.

c) Have students work in small groups and answer questions (see Resources) as they explore the websites.

d) Pair students who explored a different website and have them compare and discuss their answers.

e) Discuss as a whole class and make a chart comparing the websites (see Resources).

Lesson Four: Polls

a) Use the information in the Resources for Teachers section to build your knowledge of the five polls discussed here, not only in terms of the results but how the data was collected and interpreted.

b) Discuss students’ background knowledge of polls and their uses.

c) Give each student one of the excerpts from the different polls (see Resources) and give them a few minutes to grasp the main idea on their own. The complete text is available in the Resources for Teachers section.

d) Students with different polls should meet in groups of five and, after reading each statement, discuss the similarities and differences, as well as the reasons for those (see Resources).

e) Discuss as a whole class, including an overview of factors that could account for differences in polls. Also discuss why the Indian Country Today poll is not as publicized as the others.

Lesson Five: Public Comments

a) Distribute a sampling of comments made in public venues such as social media sites and letters to the editor making sure that the spectrum of opinions is represented. You will have to select those comments very carefully and even “sanitize” many in order to make them appropriate for your grade level (see Resources).

b) Have students talk to at least three different partners and argue the position expressed in the comment they got, as well as remark on the comment their partner shares.

c) Repeat the activity but this time have students argue the opposite point of view.

d) Discuss as a whole class (see Resources).
G. Assessment

a) Assessment should be ongoing by looking at the students’ increasing ability to pose questions about background information needed to evaluate sources, examine opinions, and refute arguments and to articulate their own thinking.

b) After lesson five students should be asked to write a paragraph with their position statement.

Designed by Barbara E. Munson (Oneida) for the Wisconsin Indian Education Association

http://www.indianmascots.com/
H. Extending the Lesson

a) Organize and list by themes or strands the information that students have identified as lacking and make a plan of action for research. This could be individual, in groups, or as a whole class. Emphasize the need to locate many different sources and the importance of critical reading as well as the habit of questioning both the sources and the content.

b) Discuss the students’ understanding of how change can come about and brainstorm ideas for getting involved in the issue of sports mascots. These could range from inviting guest speakers to learn more, to taking a personal stand, to letter-writing campaigns.
The Basics

1. Time Required
   At least five 50-min periods

2. Subject Areas
   • Social Studies
   • Language arts

3. Skills
   • Analysis
   • Compare and contrast
   • Critical thinking
   • Data analysis
   • Gathering, classifying and interpreting written, oral, and visual information
   • Synthesis
Resources

Lesson Resources

Activities for the Lessons

Primary Sources


   *This is the press release from the APPC. Includes the survey methodology but not the actual poll.*


   *This is an article about the poll but does not show actual data or describe the methodology.*


   *This is a much cited article which includes a reference to Sports Illustrated’s own poll but does not show actual data or describe the methodology.*


   *This shows the actual data and methodology.*


Secondary Sources


   *This article analyzes the data collected.*


**Resources for Teachers**

**Websites**

**ONLINE MAGAZINES AND BLOGS – CURRENT EVENTS**

http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/ The essential online magazine for current events and opinions.


http://nativeappropriations.com/ “A forum for discussing representations of Native peoples, including stereotypes, cultural appropriation, news, activism, and more.”

http://honorindians.com/ Honors Indians working for their community and “honors” people working against. Has a section on mascots.

http://www.nativepeoples.com/ Native peoples magazine “as they live their culture today.”

http://www.turtletrack.org/ Online magazine celebrating Native American culture; low key.

http://www.nativenewstoday.com/2012/12/13/american-indian-inaugural-pow-wowgala/ An aggregation site. “We gather breaking news from around the web from dozens of sources.”

**STEREOTYPING, RACISM, AND APPROPRIATION**

http://www.racismagainstinians.org/ Home of STAR, Students and Teachers Against Racism. Their mission is “Through education and public service we seek to support the well-being of Native American children and to raise public awareness of the stereotyping, discrimination, racism and other unique situations facing all Native Americans.” Website includes among others Teacher Information, Lesson Plans and Curricula, Educational No-Nos, Native American
perspectives (or the other side of the coin), and Articles. Several pertinent articles can be found in the Food For Thought section of Resources For Teachers.

http://www.hanksville.org/sand/  Many articles on cultural property (Who owns culture?), stereotypes, education, and a rich web of neatly organized links.

http://www.aigenom.com/index.html  American Indian Genocide Museum “has a vision to defeat prejudice and discrimination through education.” It has a small exhibit in Houston and small but powerful website.

This article discusses the development of stereotypes:
http://publications.newberry.org/indiansofthemidwest/indian-imagery/how-we-know/

MASCOT

http://aistm.org/  American Indian Sports Team Mascots is the site for this issue, with a wealth of links, to articles, resolutions, documents, chronology, annotated links, FAQ, archives, etc.

http://aistm.org/fr/faqs.htm  Rebuttals to common objections to retiring AISM

http://www.aistm.org/1indexpage.htm  Documents resolutions calling for retirement of mascots

http://aistm.org/more.educators.resources.htm  Many useful links, especially about resolutions

http://indianmascots.com/  Indian Mascot and Logo Task Force from the Wisconsin Indian Education Association. Excellent site with not only many links but in-site content, including logo by Oneida artist, Barbara E. Munson, who has given permission to use it with credit. Logo reads, “Indians are People Not Mascots. No Stereotypes in Our Schools.”

http://www.bluecorncomics.com/stharm.htm  This is comprehensive article detailing the harmful

http://www.educationnews.org/k-12-schools/oregon-moving-forward-on-native-american-mascot-ban/  Specific to the hearings of the Oregon Board of Education but interesting as a case study.

http://publications.newberry.org/indiansofthemidwest/indian-imagery/challenging-stereotypes/sports-imagery/  From the Newberry independent research library in Chicago, established in 1887. This article presents useful images and clear summaries of the issues.
Part of the American Indian Cultural Support site, this section offers background information, primary sources, articles and links.

Also a part of the American Indian Cultural Support site, this section is the home of the National Coalition on Racism in Sports and the Media.

LITERATURE

This is a “comprehensive offering of Native authors.” Publications range from novels and books of poetry to children's literature, historical analysis, journals and newspapers, sacred traditions and music. “Every attempt is made to choose material that is actively supported by the Native communities it represents.” This is a Native owned and managed non-profit organization and a percentage of proceeds are used to support Native American cultural and literary foundations, including, but not limited to the Returning the Gift Project and the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers.

“a Native organization working to see that our lives and histories are portrayed with honesty and integrity, and that all people know that our stories belong to us.” Find reviews and recommendations of books and curricula.

The site for information about teaching Native Americans using children’s literature, from book recommendations and critiques, to articles and guides.

The Pequot Museum in Massachussetts, including The Research Collection, “the best books for cultural information about Native people because of their perspective, written by Native people or endorsed by Tribal Nations”; The Historical Collection, “composed of fiction and nonfiction books by, and about, Native people of North America, including Canada and Hawaii. Some of the books in this collection may contain inaccurate, insensitive, or stereotypical text or illustrations. The purpose of this collection is to create a historical record of the changing attitudes about American Indians in children's literature;” and The Education Collection, which “contains materials for educators that address both teaching about American Indians and selecting appropriate books.” Provides contact information for the children’s librarian.

Eaglecrest Books are a “set of leveled books that represent First Nations children. Stories reflect experiences of First Nations children involved in cultural activities and in everyday life at home and school.” These are not books to teach “about being Indian” but portrayals of Indian children in their everyday life, which may or may not include cultural aspects. From At the Beach and My Big Brother to The Hawk Drum and The Dream Catcher.
http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com/index.html  A Native author, her website “offers articles, interviews, reading recommendations, publishing news, and annotated links.”

GENERAL

http://publications.newberry.org/indiansofthemidwest/  From the Newberry independent research library in Chicago, a site about the Indians of the Midwest highlighting recent scholarship and “drawing on the expertise of a large network of Native and non-Native scholars affiliated with the D’Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian and Indigenous studies.” From the people and the land, to identity, treaties, commercial activity, etc. each section includes articles, educational resources, images, videos, history, primary sources, Indian perspectives and a feature entitled “How We Know,” which details the research behind the information.

http://virginiaindians.pwnet.org/  A comprehensive resource from the Virginia Department of Education with lots of information and resources. Be sure to download The Virginia Heritage Trail, “a landmark publication, created by members of the Virginia tribes and reflecting Virginia Indian perspectives on their own history and how that history is interpreted.” http://virginiaindians.pwnet.org/lesson_plans/Heritage%20Trail_2ed.pdf

http://smithsoniansource.org/  This is a collection of primary sources, including documents, artifacts, and photographs (although no photographs related to American Indians).

http://www.narf.org/nill/index.htm  Native American Rights Fund – National Indian Law Library “a public law library devoted to federal Indian and tribal law.” “access to tribal codes, constitutions, intergovernmental agreements” covering a variety of topics ranging from tribal recognition to sacred sites and religion and law materials by tribe.

http://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/index.html  Highlighted records (50 topics as varied as American Indian Movement, Art, Children and Babies, Indian Schools, Ratified Indian Treaties, etc.), highlighted tribes (75 tribes, plus you can search by name), and notable individuals (12 important people, from Crazy Horse to Jim Thorpe)

http://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/published-resources.html  Published primary sources which “contain information on federal policy toward Native Americans, overviews of Indian wars, and reports of Indian agents.”

http://www.aics.org/  “The American Indian Cultural Support organization is dedicated to preserving our various Nations sovereignty, legal rights, lands, and cultures.”
Books

The authors describe the complex relationship between Indian tribes and the U. S. government from a sovereignty perspective. Reid is Navajo and Winton is Pascua Yaqui Aztec/Crow.

The authors presents case studies of institutions that use American Indians as mascots drawing on his research on how these representations have developed. Taylor is Seneca.

The author discusses how to embrace culturally responsive teaching as he continues to facilitate and deepen the discussion of race and social justice in education.

American History books frequently present the Wounded Knee Massacre as the end of Indians. This book focuses on what has happened since as Native peoples history, rather than in relation to the U. S. government.

This book presents an analysis of the ways in which Native Americans are represented in children's books, insightful essays by well-known authors, and critical reviews of popular children's books that distort and/or misrepresent Native culture.

This book describes Indian peoples histories as one of political activism and as a central part of the narrative of American History.