

Letter from University of North Dakota President Robert O. Kelley Concerning Today's Decision
by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education

Dear Campus Community:

Today, Thursday, May 14, the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education passed the following unanimous motion:

"Consistent with the terms and conditions of the October 26, 2007 Settlement Agreement entered into with the NCAA, the Board directs UND officials to retire the 'Sioux' nickname and logo, effective October 1, 2009. Full retirement of the nickname and logo shall be completed no later than October 1, 2010. In the event a new nickname and logo is adopted by UND, they shall not violate the NCAA policy regarding Native American nicknames, mascots and imagery.

UND is further directed to undertake actions consistent with the Settlement Agreement to protect its intellectual property rights in the 'Fighting Sioux' nickname and mark. UND is further directed to address the imagery at Ralph Engelstad Arena and other venues pursuant to the terms, conditions and timelines set forth in the Settlement Agreement.

This directive shall be suspended, if, prior to October 1, 2009 the following should happen:

1. The Standing Rock Sioux tribe and the Spirit Lake Sioux tribe give namesake approval consistent with the terms of the Settlement Agreement; and 2. The namesake approval be binding upon the tribes for a period not less than thirty (30) years."

We are mindful that there is a nearly 80-year tradition with our nickname and related logos. We honor that tradition, which has brought us national honor and distinction, as well as national championships and an outstanding record of student athletes as scholars. I want to be clear that I believe our athletes and our athletic teams -- athletic directors, coaches and related staff -- have used the nickname and logo with great honor and respect, and with a tremendous sense of pride.

Many alumni and fans have been staunch supporters of our athletic programs, and many have been proud of the nickname and logo. Among those was Ralph Engelstad, a former UND hockey goalie, who, with his wife, Betty, made many gifts to UND and built a magnificent arena that bears his name. We appreciate their legacy of generous support, which continues through The Engelstad Family Foundation and the management team of the Ralph Engelstad Arena.

Now is the time for all of us-- no matter what our previous or current position -- to come together for the benefit of the University, for our students, and for our student athletes.

If an agreement is not reached with the Standing Rock Sioux and the Spirit Lake Sioux Tribes prior to Oct. 1, I will call on ALL members of the University community -- both on and off campus - - to work with me, administrators, faculty, staff and students, to create new traditions based on our continued and shared vision of academic and athletic excellence and success.

Sincerely,

Robert O. Kelley
President

Very respectfully,

David L. Dodds
Writer/Editor

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