



Florida State: Champions of Native American Racial Relations

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Florida State University: Champions of Native American Racial Relations

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A Thesis in the Field of History

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

American high school, collegiate, and professional sports teams use Native American mascots and insignia. Oftentimes, the usage of these mascots has sparked intense debates about whether or not images schools and teams use are racially insensitive. Universities and professional teams have argued that their team names and mascots are honoring the tribes that once inhabited their respective lands, and that by showing these images they are respecting the history of Native Americans and ensuring that future generations do not forget the origins of our country. Those arguing against the use of these images claim that the universities and professional teams miss the mark; rather than honoring a group of people, they are subjugating Native Americans by depicting them as sideshow oddities and subhuman stereotypes.

The purpose of this thesis is to look directly at the Florida State Seminoles and explore how the university created positive racial relations with the Seminole tribe. Whereas other universities and teams struggle to reach and gain support from Native American tribes, Florida State has seemingly reset the debate because of the outspoken vocal support from the Seminole Tribe. In fact, the tribe donates authentic garb, instruments, and weapons to ensure the credible representation of Chief Osceola. Florida State, from the late nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century struggled to have an identity. It began as a seminary school then it had an all-women's branch before it became fully coeducational. It wasn't until 1944 and the introduction of the G.I. Bill that the University began to shake the dysfunctional past to develop a new image. With the flood of former World War II soldiers coming into the University, the football program in particular began to take off. Florida State's football program was no longer floundering to stay

relevant, but rather flourished thanks in part to the creation of Chief Osceola and the Seminole nickname. From 1944, Florida State opened lines of communication to the Seminole Tribe of Florida, engaging them in all decisions on campus. The Seminole Tribe of Florida has final say on the images the University uses on campus as well as the statues placed around campus. The Seminole Tribe of Florida is invited to all campus events and helps create a curriculum for courses on Seminole history that undergraduates can attend. The relationship between the University and the Tribe was not born in vain or for the sole purpose of football. It's what the Tribe stands for, their unconquered history and their unwavering pride during impossible odds. The Florida State University Seminoles chose to honor the Seminole people, but also what they stand for and their place in American history.

What makes Florida State's relationship with the Seminoles different from other universities' connections to their regional tribes? Why has Florida State succeeded while other universities and teams faltered? In our contemporary society, engagement in racial issues and racial discussions are extremely important, and the Native American Mascot Controversy is a microcosm of the much bigger debates engulfing our country. By looking at the Seminole Tribe's influence on Florida's political and legal landscape, as well as its close relationship to Florida State, what can we, as a country, learn to better improve race relations with Native American communities?

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my Uncle Tommy, who passed away while I was writing this thesis to COVID-19 complications. I hope I am making you proud every day because I try to emulate your outstanding example. Thank you for showing me what hard work can do. *My son, my son.*

I am also thankful for my mom, my dad, my brother, my aunt Linda, Fran, and my girlfriend Jelene, who have been understanding and supportive to me throughout the whole process. They believed in me and pushed me to be better in many ways, no matter how crazy my ideas were, they were cheering me on. All those sleepless nights paid off.

I also would like to thank my mentor and my best friend, Ms. Denise Gokey, who has helped me to be a better teacher and really do what's best for our students. You're my best friend and my confidant, thank you for your guidance and mentorship.

Finally, I would also like to thank Dr. Gone and Dr. Ostrowski for their wisdom and assistance. Their patience with my constant emails wanting to perfect everything I do is appreciated. I am also thankful for their understanding of my extenuating circumstance in my thesis process.

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Introduction

Sport mascots in recent times have come under increasing scrutiny for depicting potentially offensive images. What was once a spark to energize the home crowd with halftime entertainment and lead stadium-wide cheers and chants, is now lightning rods for controversy. Whether due to inappropriate behavior and antics during games, or images that offend a particular group of people, recently mascots have been under the public's microscope. "‘Hooyas’... ‘Leathernecks’... ‘Dons’... ‘Hoosiers’ – the colorful and sometimes peculiar nicknames for college and professional athletic teams have long been a source of identity and affection for students, staff, faculty, alumni, and fans. Such nicknames are frequently accompanied by equally compelling logos"¹, such as the University of Notre Dame's unmistakable fighting leprechaun or the infamous New York Yankees logo, which appears to be globally recognizable. Athletic team logos and nicknames are cultural symbols that show a person's allegiance to a particular university or professional team, but are also used as a means to inform a particular city's or college's image. However, since the 1930s, some logos, nicknames, and symbols have come under scrutiny because they either demean or affront a particular group of people. Native Americans are at the forefront of the heated and sometimes controversial debate pertaining to athletic teams' usage of their images.

¹ Mark R. Connolly, "What's in a Name?: A Historical Look at Native American-Related Nicknames and Symbols at Three U.S. Universities," *Journal of Higher Education* 71, no. 5 (2000): 515-545.

Professional and collegiate teams have used Native American mascots and nicknames for around a century. Whether it is the origins of the Washington Redskins' name in the early 1930s, or Florida State's adoption of the Seminole nickname in 1978, dozens of professional and semi-professional teams have, or have previously used, Native American caricatures.

“According to the National Coalition on Racism in Sports and Media, more than eighty colleges and universities still use Native American mascots. Innumerable high schools continue to refer to themselves and their sports teams as ‘Indians,’ ‘Braves,’ ‘Chiefs,’ ‘Warriors,’ etc.”²

Such nicknames were given to the cities or universities represented by these teams due to the land being rooted in Native American history. In some cases, a team's nickname has been in use for so long that it loses its original meaning. For example, “the University of Illinois' Fighting Illini refers to an Indian nation, but now that its Chief Illiniwek mascot has been abandoned few people make the connection. Nor do they think twice about what the Atlanta Braves or Edmonton Eskimos or Florida State Seminoles represent other than sports franchises.”³

However, in recent times, such depictions of Native Americans are considered problematic because of their stereotypical and sometimes degrading portrayal of their people. “At the professional level, in April 1999, the federal Trademark Trial and Appeal Board voided the trademark of the Washington Redskins of the National Football League, finding that the name

² C. Richard King and Charles Fruehling Springwood, *Team Spirits: The Native American Mascots Controversy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

³ Jack Shakely, “Indian Mascots – You're Out.” *Los Angeles Times* 25 Aug. 2011.

and logo used by the team were disparaging and hence violated the law.”⁴ This particular case was first brought to the court system in 1992; however the National Congress of American Indians has been campaigning against negative stereotypes of Native Americans since the 1960s.

With all the hullabaloo surrounding Native Americans as mascots there is one university that has seemingly avoided repercussions from the National Athletic Collegiate Association (NCAA), court hearings, and calls for mascot removal and change. In an era of falling Indian sports mascots, what arrangements are most likely to inoculate such mascots from discontinuation? The Florida State Seminoles, when faced with court hearing threats, protests, and football games, and negative media attention, have consistently responded with the same rhetoric. The Seminole Tribe argues that the university is honoring a group of people and that their insignia, mascot, and image usage are out of respect. Florida State has since been removed from the NCAA’s list of 18 universities that have mascots that are considered abusive and offensive, and they have also not faced retribution from the tribe that their team name and mascot represent. In this thesis, I argue that Florida State University has created positive racial relations with the Seminole Tribe of Florida. An exploration of what the university has done, both at the media level and community level, can inform the improvement of shattered relationships between other universities and professional teams and the tribes they intend to honor. To facilitate this discussion, original archival documents and raw primary source documents are folded into this thesis to bring clarity to the idea that Florida State is a microcosm of the bigger racial issues of this country. By examining what Florida State has done, other teams

⁴ Shakely, “Indian Mascots.”

using Native American mascots and imagery, as well as other entities, can change and improve racial relations.

For the purpose of this thesis, the existing histories of Florida State University laid the foundation for the research and the original archival documentation presented to me by Florida State University, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and the State of Florida were critical in connecting events. These sources guided me to understand the tradition at Florida State University and the origins of the Seminole nickname. To that end, scholars with published histories of Florida State University informed this thesis a great deal. R.A. Kabat's "Before the Seminoles: Football at Florida State College, 1902-1904" gave critical information about Florida State University during their time of transition from a seminary school to a unified university. Once Florida was admitted as a state, the United States Congress named two towns where seminary schools will be located. West Florida Seminary, which would later be Florida State University, and East Florida Seminary, which would later be called the University of Florida. From 1897 to the mid 1900s Florida State evolved into a liberal arts coeducational institution enrolling 252 men and women.⁵ Between 1902 and 1904, Florida State University football team had mild success winning a state championship despite a 7-6 record.

The success was short-lived when much of the coaching staff left to join other universities with an established image, one of which was the University of Florida Gators. Kabat explored Florida State University before the G.I. Bill of 1944, where the Football program established itself as an elite national team. But the examination of Florida State during these transition years were critical. The success Florida State University tasted in 1902-1904 was a

⁵ R. A. Kabat, "Before the Seminoles: Football at Florida State College, 1902-1904," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (1991): 20-37.

result of the schism between the two seminary school locations. This competition between Florida State University and University of Florida to establish an image to get the best athletes possible resulted in the student vote for the “Seminole” name. After the 1904 season, Florida State University had an all-women's school which led to a decline in male enrollment and the loss of identity of the Florida State football program. Kabat’s look at this early time provided framing for my thinking and a clear trajectory of how the University started and why this desire for an image was so critical.

Andre Douglas Cummings’ “Progress Realized? The Continuing American Indian Quandary” examined several universities that had Native American mascots and symbols, particularly Florida State University, and looked at the history of the schools to see if progress has been made on respecting and honoring the tribes. Cummins asserts, “to some, American Indian mascots represent strength, power, reverence, and dignity. For others, Native American mascots are deeply offensive and mock tradition and sacred culture.”⁶ Cummings looks at the history of the usage of Native American mascots and why schools choose to use these images. In the last thirty years, Cummings states high schools and universities voluntarily switched their team mascot and moniker from an American Indian to a race-neutral one.⁷ Despite some universities doing so on their own, other universities and sports franchises refuse stating their image represents tradition and honor vital for the school and their sports team identity. That their nickname, colors, and insignias, are delicately interwoven in the fabric of their university. Cummings states: “some identifiers indicate that as a society, we have entered into a period

⁶ Andre Douglas Cummings, “Progress Realized? The Continuing American Indian Mascot Quandary,” *Marquette Sports Law Review* 18, no. 2 (2008): 309.

⁷ Cummings, “Progress Realized?” 309.

where more Americans are aware that American Indian mascots offend Native Americans and other non-native U.S. citizens alike.”⁸ He outlines several universities that fit this narrative such as the University of North Dakota and the University of Utah. However, Cummings analysis of the Florida State Seminoles was missing key sourcing that would separate Florida State from those other universities. Although his research of Florida State University and their program were true, he was missing the primary source documents from the University and from the Tribe to clarify Florida State is in a league of their own. Cummings does assert that law and popular opinion are continuing to evolve that may change the landscape of Native American imagery in sports. His writing was fruitful in understanding the other side of the debate, while also giving information about the University and the community’s evolution on the subject.

Also, Richard King and Charles Fruehling Springwood “Team Spirits: The Native American Mascot Controversy”⁹ was the genesis of my interest in this type of history. They researched universities that had Native American mascots and images, discussed the school's history with the mascot and outlined ties to any known tribes. Their research on Florida State University was the foundation of some of the chapters here. They have chapters about Florida State University and their role in the greater Native American mascot debate. The authors go over the history of the Seminole name at Florida State University and use that information to put issues at other universities in context to the greater Native American discussion. King and Springwood played an instrumental role in my research about Florida State University. *Beyond the Cheers: Race as Spectacle in College Sports*,¹⁰ “Fighting Spirits: the Racial Politics of Sports

⁸ Cummings, “Progress Realized?” 309.

⁹ King and Springwood, *Team Spirits*.

¹⁰ C. Richard King and Charles Fruehling Springwood, *Beyond the Cheers: Race as Spectacle in College Sport* (SUNY series on sport, culture, and social relations) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

Mascots,”¹¹ and “Uncomfortable Icons: Uneasiness, Expectations, and American Indians in Sports”¹² provided background information necessary for my research.

Carol Spindel’s “Dancing at Halftime Sports and the Controversy Over American Indian Mascots”¹³ provided valuable history of Florida State University and connects this to why tribes say Florida State and other athletic teams are not honoring them, but rather racially insensitive. The history of Florida State was the most useful, the research and the argument within the book lacked a legitimate dialogue between those against Native American mascots and proponents of them. For an in-depth Florida State University history and an honest discussion of the murmuring debate over the usage of the Seminole name three scholarly works stand out. Jack Guggenheim “Renaming the Redskins (and the Florida State Seminoles?)”¹⁴, Justin Grose “Time to Bury the Tomahawk Chop”¹⁵ and J. Gordon Hylton’s “Before the Redskins Were the Redskins: the Use of Native American Team Names in the Formative Era of American Sports,”¹⁶ compares Florida State with the Washington Redskins but offers a much more nuisance discussion and history.

¹¹ C. Richard King and Charles Fruehling Springwood, “Fighting Spirits: The Racial Politics of Sports Mascots,” *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 24, no. 3 (2000): 282-304.

¹² C. Richard King, “Uncomfortable Icons: Uneasiness, Expectations, and American Indians in Sport,” in *Native Games: Indigenous Peoples and Sports in the Post-Colonial World*, ed. Chris Hallinan and Barry Judd (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group, 2013), 247-266.

¹³ C. Spindel, *Dancing at Halftime: Sports and the Controversy over American Indian Mascots* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

¹⁴ Jack Achiezer, Guggenheim, “Renaming the Redskins (and the Florida State Seminoles?): The Trademark Registration Decision and Alternative Remedies,” *Florida State University Law Review* 27, no. 1 (1999): 323.

¹⁵ Justin P. Grose, “Time to Bury the Tomahawk Chop: An Attempt to Reconcile the Differing Viewpoints of Native Americans and Sports Fans,” *American Indian Law Review* 35 (2010): 695-767.

¹⁶ J. Gordon Hylton, “Before the Redskins Were the Redskins: The Use of Native American Team Names in the Formative Era of American Sports, 1857-1933,” *North Dakota Law Review* 86 (2010): 879-905.

Examining the history of Florida State University is important to understanding how the University created the Seminole name and how they built the relationship with the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Equally important is obtaining information about the Seminole Tribe generally and their impact on the State of Florida. Adam Wasserman's book "A People's History of Florida, 1513-1876: How Africans, Seminoles, Women, and Lower Class Whites Shaped the Sunshine State"¹⁷ looked at how various groups impacted Floridian history. Brent Wiseman's book "Like Beads on a String"¹⁸ and the Florida State Department of Agriculture's "the Seminole Indians of Florida"¹⁹ looked at the Seminole Tribe's history in the state through the Seminole Wars into the present day. These histories were critical in understanding the Seminole people and their impact on the region culturally.

My research in the topic was based on archival information and the history of Florida State University's usage of their Chief Osceola mascot and Native American imagery. I expected to find a plethora of information, particularly from media sources, to explain how the Florida State mascot and images are racially insensitive towards Native Americans. I was also expecting for these media outlets to call for widespread change at Florida State, lumping them with the other sports teams facing the Native American mascot controversy. However, upon looking at Florida State University's archives, I uncovered that, unlike other universities and teams, Florida State maintains a special relationship with the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Documents, texts, and

¹⁷ A. Wasserman, *A People's History of Florida, 1513-1876: How Africans, Seminoles, Women, and Lower Class Whites Shaped the Sunshine State*, 4th ed., (Sarasota, FL: A. Wasserman, 2010).

¹⁸ B. Weisman and Jay I. Kislak Reference Collection, *Like Beads on a String :A Culture History of the Seminole Indians in North Peninsular Florida* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989).

¹⁹ Writers' Program and Florida. Department of Agriculture. *The Seminole Indians in Florida*. Tallahassee, FL: Pub. by the Florida State department of agriculture, 1941.

images revealed that Florida State University and the Seminole Tribe of Florida have a long history of communication that exists in contrast to the portrayal from the national media.

Beyond identifying existing, relevant literature, I also contacted Florida State University to gain digital access to special collections on everything from Florida State's vote to use the Seminole nickname, to their first mascot, to the eventual use of Chief Osceola and Renegade. Sandra Varry, Florida State Heritage & University Archives Manager gave pictures of Sammy Seminole and Chick Cicio, along with a letter from T. K. Wetherell. This document was signed by Seminole Tribal leaders as well as officials from Florida State to officially recognize the relationship between the University and the Tribe amidst NCAA sanctions. The raw unfiltered documentation of the primary source documents between the University and the Tribe are not easy to acquire. According to Sandra Varry, Heritage and University Archivist at Florida State University, in an email to me states, "the difficulty is that some things never make it to the archives, they may have been retained by their office, or possibly disposed of after their retention period was over." The Seminole Tribe of Florida, as well as the Florida State Senate, were contacted and graciously provided me access to documents to aid me in my research, which further solidified my understanding of the relationship between Florida State University, the Tribe, and the State.

My research guided me to the very important question, "How has Florida State built such a strong support system between themselves and the Seminole Tribe of Florida?". I uncovered more supplemental materials, which answered the questions surrounding Florida State's winning racial relationship with Native American tribes, especially when other universities faltered. Where universities such as University of North Dakota and Arkansas State were ridiculed for their mascots by the NCAA and national media, Florida State seemingly avoided that attention. I

became interested in this idea about racial relations, particularly with regard to Native Americans, because of my interest in the general Native American mascot controversy debate, and Florida State's case study is particularly interesting. What Florida State did in evolving their way of thinking about the Seminole Tribe, and educating themselves and their community, could be a template for other institutions. Analyzing the University's history and looking at raw archival information has clarified just how different Florida State is compared to other universities.

My research was strictly historical and archival in nature, looking into the premise of why and how Florida State is different compared to other universities. This key idea aided in the formation of my hypotheses and guided my writing. This research amplifies the arguments and claims of authors debating the topic of Native American mascots. Only by understanding and diving into the original documentation between the University, the Tribe, and the State can one understand the relationship between these entities. My research was conducted through online databases and archival research from Florida State University, highlighting how the entities are a paragon of progress on the racial relations front. This research is important because it will provide a better understanding of how universities can inoculate themselves against mascot discontinuation, and more specifically, how Florida State University improved racial relations with the Seminole Tribe to buttress clamor for their mascot's removal. I hope to uncover how Florida State University improved relations with the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and how their interactions with the Tribe can be a model for other universities on how to properly interact with other racial groups. I also think it is important to know how Florida State University case study can be used for greater racial relations between other groups of people within the United States.

In developing this thesis I had multiple obstacles that had to be traversed. When the proposal was being developed our country was just starting to see signs of a pandemic. COVID-19 was beginning to ravage the country, and as a result of the pandemic and subsequent quarantining, all libraries, universities, and research facilities shuttered their doors. Interacting with people face-to-face was no longer possible and I had to conduct my research strictly online. I missed going to the location and diving deep into the research and handling the documents, something historians value, which creates a personal connection to the research. COVID-19 took a family member of mine's life. Having to battle the research aspect and also losing a close family member of mine at the same time made focusing on research difficult. The coronavirus altered, not only how I would conduct my research, but also how I challenged myself mentally.

Limitations for my research were wide ranging and played a major role in the direction my research was going to take. I do not live near the state of Florida nor do I have any connection to the Seminole Tribe of Florida. This geographic issue means I could not ask members of the community or the Tribe in person about their opinions on the topic. Not having that close connection with the Native-American reservation, or another outlet to get verbal communication played a role in my research. I had to rely on those that have conducted research similar to my own for information or contacts. I also needed to reach out to journalists and other students to get in touch with Native Americans who would be willing to speak on the subject. Location was a barrier, and the way to rectify the situation outlined above was to dive into archival research and historical analysis.

To add to the location issue, the teams that are discussed in my thesis are not geographically near my own location. For instance, teams such as the Florida State Seminoles, Atlanta Braves, and Arkansas State are all located in the southern region of the United States.

Teams such as the Cleveland Indians and Ohio University are located in the Midwest. Teams to be researched are throughout the country, so the lack of personal connection to the teams, the fans, and even the local culture will limit my research. This lack of cultural connection is critical to understanding why teams chose to use those insignias they do and may also play an intricate role in the fans beliefs. Are there historical ties? Are local Native American groups supportive of these images or are they advocating for their removal? Being on the ground in certain locations will be key to understanding this aspect.

Finally, location is a clear issue in research, both for asking Native Americans personally and also understanding the local culture of teams throughout the country. Another limit is how well-documented this topic is in sports circles. ESPN and *Sports Illustrated* have researched and provided countless articles and publications on this topic. They will be valuable to get information and opinions from all over the sports world; however getting the contacts of sports managers and administration will be a tireless effort. Having these contacts and getting some type of an interview or any correspondence will be vital to my research, however, I do not have the means major entities like ESPN and *Sports Illustrated* have. Limited contacts to heads of teams for comment at my disposal will prove difficult, however, it can be done through getting in touch with various journalists who can pass me on to another with the necessary contacts.

Chapter 1

What's in a Name? Origins of Osceola

Saturdays are an important day of the week for college football fans. For the entire day, fans sit in front of their televisions or computer screens to watch their alma maters play for a chance at winning the ultimate prize--the national championship. Fans bond over the common thread of their university's traditions and rituals; whether it is Mississippi State's clanking of cowbells sending a ringing cacophony throughout the stadium, much to the opponents' dismay, or University of Florida's "U"-shaped hand gesture showing unified support for the university, or University of Iowa's stadium-wide wave to the children in the hospital overlooking the stadium. These are some of the many traditions in which fans enjoy participating, and for the most part, these rituals are harmless entertainment and fun. These rituals bond alumni, current students, and the community together. One cannot step foot in Tuscaloosa, Alabama without hearing "Roll Tide" as a show of unwavering support for the University of Alabama. These bonds are creatively built, partially by university heads but also by the fans, and these traditions are rituals to power the home team to victory while also enjoying the day at the stadium.

If you are a Florida State University fan, the rituals and traditions may look different than at other schools. During halftime, instead of waving a neighborly hello to the Children's Hospital or engaging in stadium-wide songs that have been sung for decades, you are instead entertained by the electric Chief Osceola and his horse Renegade. Chief Osceola wears Native American garb, has war paint on his face, lets his long hair loose, and carries a spear. He rides out onto the field atop Renegade, speeds around the field and stadium getting fans to join him in his yelps and hollers. Finally, as a show of force and a last bit of energy boost, he punctures the

ground with his spear. This tradition might seem like a gimmick to an outsider, but Chief Osceola is not just a character or caricature. He is based on a real person steeped in the history of the region.

Osceola was born Billy Powell in 1804 in a Creek village of Talisi, which is in present day Tuskegee, Alabama, to a Creek woman, Polly Copinger, and an English trader William Powell²⁰. Billy was raised on Creek traditions, especially after the divorce of his parents. His mother would later move to Florida and join with the Seminole Tribe after the United States forces migrated south and pushed Creek Native Americans off their land. Billy would remain with the Seminole tribe until he was an adult, officially being called Osceola. At 14 he became leader of the Seminole warriors. He confronted the United States forces during the Second Seminole War as an adult and a warrior leader, with a band of other Seminoles.

In 1832, Seminole leaders signed an agreement with the United States government called the Treaty of Payne's Landing. This treaty was poorly received by many Seminoles, under which within three years the entire tribe would surrender all its Florida land holdings, and move to the so-called Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma), and join members of the Creek tribe²¹. Unrest and anger within the Seminole Tribe grew as their removal became imminent. Osceola expressed open contempt for the 1832 treaty and repeatedly refused to sign it²². Osceola felt this treaty embarrassed the Seminole Tribe and his hate for the United States' attempt to encroach upon the land was growing. "The white man shall not make me black. I will make the white man red with blood; and then blacken him in the sun and rain....and the buzzard [shall] live upon his

²⁰ Patricia R. Wickman, *Osceola's Legacy*, rev. ed. (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 2006).

²¹ "Famous Historical Indians Osceola (Creek)," *Central States Archaeological Journal* 17, no. 1 (1970): 36–37. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43138929. Accessed 12 June 2020.

²² "Famous Historical Indians Osceola (Creek)."

flesh”²³. Chief Osceola had a documented hatred for white people, and he openly refused the treaty to American generals, who, in turn, arrested him. The wily Osceola bartered for his release by pretending that he changed his mind and would sign the treaty²⁴. Upon his release, he formed a resistance group and initiated a guerilla warfare campaign against the American soldiers for seven years in the swamps of the Everglades. Osceola was eventually captured and died in prison on January 30, 1838.

Chief Osceola was praised, remembered fondly, and even honored by the same people that captured him. Osceola’s death impressed many people, and it is ironic that a person who fought so ardently against the United States forces became a national icon of American values due to his brave and tragic death²⁵. Chief Osceola was a martyr, because of his heroics in attempting to stave off American incursions, has enabled him to become regarded as a hero and true embodiment of what it means to be an American. The “never give up” mentality and willingness to abandon everything to preserve a way of life, even in the most dire of situations, are often considered attributes of true American heroism. According to Florida State Universities Communications Department, the Seminole people are described as:

“The Seminole Tribe of Florida are courageous, tenacious, and determined people who, against great odds, have struggled successfully to preserve their culture and to live their lives according to their traditions and beliefs. As history shows, they are a people who have resolutely refused to accept defeat, whether at the hands of the U.S. Military or when faced with the unforgiving wilderness of the Florida Everglades.”²⁶

²³ R. Soolater, “On Removing Seminoles,” *Military History* 29, no. 2 (2012): 62-70.

²⁴ Soolater, “On Removing Seminoles,” 62-70.

²⁵ R. A. Grounds, “Tallahassee, Osceola, and the Hermeneutics of American Place-Names,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69, no. 2 (2001): 287-322.

²⁶ University Communications, “Relationship with the Seminole Tribe of Florida,” *A Tradition of Tribute | The Florida State Seminoles | Messages | University Communications*, unicomm.fsu.edu/messages/relationship-seminole-tribe-florida/tribute/.

This sentiment of the Seminole Tribe, the reverence of the “never give up” mentality, is what ultimately influenced the team name choice for the future Florida State University athletic programs.

Florida State University has taken many forms before emerging as the University as we know it today. Originating as a seminary school, then called the West Florida Seminary, this iteration of the University was dissolved upon its relocation to Jacksonville. Some elements of the seminary remained in part and expanded to become Florida’s first liberal arts college in 1897²⁷. In 1905, Florida legislatures reorganized Florida universities, eliminating coeducational schools and creating separate entities for male and female students, as well as a school for African Americans. In 1947, after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the GI Bill, enabling wartime veterans to access university education for free, many collegiate football teams increased and improved recruiting tactics. Florida State yet again became a coeducational university. With the influx of war veterans enrolling at Florida State University, the football team was seeing some semblance of success on the gridiron, no longer beating only small school teams and toiling at the bottom of the standings.

Florida State was making a major foray into major college football. FSU had been playing football with a lot of smaller schools, but in those years we jumped to the big time – the University of Georgia, and Auburn. We were playing some big schools and we didn’t get killed. We won eight and lost two or three and went to the bowl that season and it was great on the team.²⁸

What happened during this time is something remarkable. Florida State University has taken many shapes and forms, and even their football team has been through the ebbs and flows of war

²⁷ “About Florida State – History”. Office of University Communications. September 23, 2009.

²⁸ M. Wills, and J. P. Morris, *Seminole History: A Pictorial History of Florida State University* (Jacksonville, FL: South Star Publishing, 1987).

and being incorporated into several other schools. Florida State did not have a unique identity, it held no traditions or rituals, but rather was crafted from the ashes and embers of past legislations and structures.

In October 1947, the university held a student-lead vote to decide upon a nickname. According to the report of *The Florida Flambeau*, “Seminole” won by 110 votes over “Statesman”²⁹. This was a huge step for the university, in part because the school now had an identity, something to latch onto to recruit athletes and energize the campus. The uniqueness of the name also stood out. No other college or professional team has, or has had, the name “Seminole”, partly because few places have a connection with the Seminole people. The identity for the university was in its infancy, and the evolution of the Florida State Seminoles was just beginning.

Sammy Seminole was the first mascot at Florida State University. He made his debut in 1958, and was originally represented as a cartoon image that characterized the general population’s perceptions of the Native American people . The character was a dark-skinned young man with a bare chest, holding a tomahawk in one hand and wearing a feather in his hair.³⁰

²⁹ D. Shin, “Okay, Seminoles, Take over from Here: Native American Mascot as Organization Builders at Florida State University” (2015).

³⁰ Shin, “Okay, Seminoles.”



Chic Cicio as Sammy Seminole at Homecoming 1958. 1958



McDowell, Gene. Gene McDowell, Sammy Seminole, and Company, 1962. 1962.

During basketball games, Florida State University employed a second mascot named Chief Fullabull which was described by Florida State University's Communication Department as "the buffoonish character specializes in skits such as ceremonially 'massacring' effigies of opposing teams; mascots." At the request of the Seminole Tribe of Florida Chief Fullabull was retired and the University administered changes to their mascots. Several tribes filed complaints with the University, and the Seminole Tribal Council of Florida submitted acceptable names for a replacement. Mascots such as Mikko and Yaholawere rejected by the University, which was instead considering the name Wampum-Stompum. The American Indian Fellowship objected to the racial insensitivity of the name, and in 1978 the University settled on the Chief Osceola mascot, which made his debut with his horse Renegade on September 16, 1978 against the Oklahoma State Cowboys. Since this time there have been fifteen Chief Osceolas, and five Renegades.

Any student that strives to embody Chief Osceola on behalf of the University must maintain a 3.0 GPA, study the history of the Seminole Tribe of Florida (regardless of the student's major), and must master years' worth of equestrian apprenticeships in order to handle

Renegade. It is not a job for the half-hearted sports fan. Unlike many other mascots, Chief Osceola is stoic at home games. While on the field, interacting with fans, or at university events, Chief Osceola never smiles or talks, and must maintain an almost somber mood while publicly in character. Even when fans ask for pictures, Chief Osceola never smiles. Drake Anderson portrayed Chief Osceola in 2011 and describes what it is like: “When I’m portraying Osceola, I don’t smile; I don’t talk. I’m portraying a fierce war leader, so it’s part of the program. When the paint starts going on, that’s when it really gets serious.”³¹ Andy Taylor, who portrayed Chief Osceola from 1995 to 1996, tells of his experience transforming from student to Chief Osceola, “When you get out on the field, you stop being a student. You stop being Andy Taylor or Josh or whoever, and you become Chief Osceola.”³² Over time, Florida State developed other traditions to complement Chief Osceola and Renegade, such as the “War Chant” and “Tomahawk Chop”, which can be seen at professional sporting events including Atlanta Braves and Cleveland Indians games.

³¹ T. Cowles, “Osceola in the Making: Mascot More Than Paint and Spear. *fsunews.com*. (2011, November 9). Retrieved from: <http://archive.tallahassee.com/article/20111110/FSVIEW/111109030/Osceola-making>.

³² B. Landman, “Mascot’s Tradition: A Dignified Portrayal,” *Tampa Bay Times*. 15 August 2005. Retrieved from http://www.sptimes.com/2005/08/15/State/Mascot_s_tradition__a.shtml.



Chief Osceola on Renegade.

Florida State has gone through many changes, especially in regards to the development of their Seminole image. This chapter serves to provide a brief history of the Seminole people and Chief Osceola, the origins of the university itself, and the establishment of a tradition and stadium-wide ritual. Future chapters will discuss where these images and rituals stem, the backlash they receive, and how the Seminole tribe has reacted and protected these images.

Chapter 2:

Adopting the “Seminole” Name

Florida State’s history, as well as that of Chief Osceola, is just a snippet of something much greater. Florida State needed an identity; a tradition to unify the campus after years of image uncertainty. The university held a student vote and the nickname “Seminole” won. To the athletics department’s glee, their teams began winning games because of the energy that Chief Osceola and Renegade brought to the stadium. Florida State University did a decent job winning over the campus to a new tradition. The bigger question was how Florida State would unify a community, especially incorporating the Tribe that bears the Seminole name. A deep dive into primary source documents will shed light on how Florida State won racial public relations with the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and gained their overwhelming support for the use of the Seminole name, Chief Osceola as a mascot, and the images that adorn their college campus. Whereas other colleges and universities are at odds with their Native American communities and facing critical, and sometimes severe media backlash, Florida State has seemingly avoided the controversy and conflict, and coexists in a manner in which most, if not all, universities have failed.

What makes Florida State stand out from other universities is the uniqueness of their symbol, as it represents a specific tribe. Other teams use the names Braves, Savages, or Redskins with a generic, almost cartoonish caricature that is more dramatization rather than historical. When the first mascot rode onto the field in 1957, many questions were raised about the stereotypical representation of the Tribe, as the images the University used were more of an

homage to the Plains Native Americans, rather than the Seminole Tribe. Students noticed that the images the University was selecting may be offensive to the unconquered Tribe of the Seminoles. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Florida State University's campus became a place of learning for both the University and the community of Tallahassee in regard to the Florida Seminole Indians³³. This document highlights several individuals with regards to the shift in thinking about the images the University uses and portrayal of the mascot. Joy Chaudhuri, an American Indian expert and professor of anthropology, and his wife Jean Chaudhuri established an American Indian Fellowship at Florida State during this time. This influential group led the campus and community toward a better understanding of Native American Indians and the Florida Seminoles, in particular.³⁴ This was an enlightening time for those on campus, and it bridged the gap between the University and the Seminole Tribe. By building this connection, and educating the people about the Tribe and the land, they will better understand what the name Seminole represents, with respect to the history and strength of the Seminole Tribe. Education, not top-down dictation, was the driving force for the bond between University and Tribe that still lasts to this day.

While the University was educating the community and the campus about Native American tribes, the Seminoles in particular, the athletic department was already making strides with the Tribe to create a tradition unlike any other in the country. These iterations of Chief Osceola and Renegade were not born out of a misconception about Native Americans, but rather is right in line with the educational dialogue from the Chaudhuri's. Although the mascots preceding Chief Osceola did not take the interests of the Tribe into account, and were more

³³ "Section 5: Debating the Use of Seminole as a Team Name." Florida State University, Tallahassee.

³⁴ "Section 5: Debating the Use of Seminole as a Team Name."

impromptu in regards to clothing and design, the image of Chief Osceola was not only born at the University, but would come to fruition with the support of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Bill Durham, who was a Florida State University student in 1962, first conceived of a Seminole mascot riding into the stadium atop a horse. Once head football coach Bobby Bowden was hired, he accelerated the need and desire to have a tradition and have Chief Osceola and Renegade mascots on the football field, similar to the one that was conceived by Durham. Durham worked with Howard Tammie, Chief of the Seminole Tribe of Florida at this time, to ensure that the clothing and make-up of Chief Osceola was authentic to the Seminole Tribe's history. In an interview with Bill Durham from 1972 he stated “he [Seminole Chief Howard Tammie] was very enthusiastic. The ladies on the Seminole reservation made our first costume and we still try to keep everything very authentic.”³⁵ He continues to say “and everything we do, we try to do with dignity. That’s what I promised Tammie.”³⁶ Durham wanted to make Chief Osceola, not just a mascot, but a symbol. He wanted to make the attire, the pain, everything associated with Chief Osceola as authentic as possible as a means of paying respect and honoring the Tribe for which the University is named.

During the 1990s, many vehemently opposed the use of Native American imagery for athletic teams and university logos. Heated debates, speeches, and hate-filled soliloquies blared from radio broadcasts, written about in newspaper articles, and posted on message boards. However, throughout this time the Florida Seminole Chief has remained supportive of Florida State University and its mascot. Later on, Chief Haney of the Oklahoma Seminoles added his

³⁵ Dave Joseph, *Sun Sentinel*, 1991.

³⁶ Dave Joseph, *Sun Sentinel*, 1991

support as well.³⁷ Throughout these debates, Florida State has never fallen to outside pressure. They have remained loyal and tenaciously adamant about their relationship with the Tribe. Throughout the 1990s the University continued to march Chief Osceola and Renegade onto the field, and leading stadium wide roars and yells. Football games are the rare opportunities where fans and the community can see how Florida State honors the Seminole Tribe, alumni, and current students. According to James Melton, former President of Florida State's Alumni Association, in an interview in 1991 he states: "By bringing back and emphasizing those grads, you tie your past and future together."³⁸ By linking the Seminole Tribe to the alumni and current student body, the past has blended in with the present at the University. It is as if the past is never forgotten, but rather continuously brought to the forefront, not just on Saturday's during football games, but throughout the school year.

To add to the continued support from, and collaboration with, the Seminole Tribe, in 1999 the Tribe did not oppose a bill that was presented to the Florida State Senate to compel the University to continue the use of the Seminole name and Chief Osceola as a mascot. Jim King, a Republican in the Florida State Senate and a Florida State University alumnus, proposed an amendment to the House Bill 1735. A copy of this bill was granted to me through the State of Florida, and in it are mentions of schools that would have full control over the naming of various state buildings, and if passed would enact a law that would allow Florida State University sports teams to continue to be called "Seminoles".³⁹ According to King, "for those of us who are of

³⁷ "Section 5: Debating The Use of Seminole as A Team Name."

³⁸ James H. Melton, Special Projects Florida State University Alumni Affairs, telephone discussions with the author, October 17, 2006.

³⁹ United States, Congress, Cong. Senate, Building Designation/State Univ., et al. 0AD. Florida State Senate Congress, bill 1735.

garnet and gold persuasion, it is time, in fact it is long past time, for us to defend the heritage that is of Florida State University.”⁴⁰ If this bill were to pass, any mascot or university logo change would need Florida Legislature approval. The bill was eventually killed due to time constraints, but with 38-0 vote on the floor, and another Florida State University alumnus, John Thrasher, controlling the House, it was all but certain to pass. Despite this, the Seminole Tribe Council did not oppose the bill. In fact, when the NCAA decreed that eighteen institutions promoted hostile and abusive mascots, Florida State was removed from the list due to the Seminoles Tribe’s testimony and presence before the court proceedings.

In a roaring response to outside pressures, and the murmurings of racial insensitivity being thrown at the University from all corners of the country, former Seminole Tribe of Florida Chairman, James Billie, in an open letter, later printed in the Seminole Tribune as an editorial piece, stated his dissatisfaction with people telling Florida State University and the Seminole Tribe how to deal with their mascot and imagery. He states:

“In the old Indian days, you don’t travel to another Indian’s territory and start trying to tell him what to do. It’s the same today. People have come into my territory, which is the state of Florida, and tried to tell us what to do. I told them to go back to their own territory. In my own territory of Florida, we support the FSU mascot. I am not going to cross the line and start telling other people how to do their business. We Seminoles don’t go to their territory and start dictating to them.”⁴¹

This is a very powerful statement from a former Chairman, and something that needed to be said, especially with rising tensions regarding the controversy of using Native Americans inappropriately as mascots. In reading this statement in its original language the close relationship between the Tribe and the University is solidified.

⁴⁰ Charles H. Lippy, *Faith in America. Changes, Challenges, New Directions: Personal Spirituality Today* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2006).

⁴¹ J. Billie, “Like the Old Florida Flag: Let Us Alone!” *Seminole Tribune*, 2013: 2A.

According to a 2003 letter from T. K. Wetherell, president of Florida State University, a continued close relationship with the Seminole Tribe of Florida was maintained. Wetherell addressed the letter to Chairman Mitchell Cypress of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and invited the Tribe and members of the Tribal Council to a statue unveiling. The statue is called the “Unconquered Statue”. The President stated that it “celebrates the unconquered spirit of the Seminole Tribe and Florida State University’s cherished relationship with the Tribe.”⁴² This statue not only pays homage to the tribe and their unrelenting bravery, but also serves as a new part of the tradition at football games. President Wetherell describes the statue as “stand[ing] more than two stories tall and depicts a Seminole on a roaring horse holding a flaming spear. An important aspect of this event will include starting a new tradition of lighting the spear at sundown on Friday before every home game and extinguishing it at dawn on Sunday.”⁴³ Not only does this show the University’s willingness to work with the Tribe by asking them to attend the unveiling, but it also shows that the line of communication between the school and the Tribe is solid. The University is seeking the Tribe’s approval every step of the way, and in doing so they are building a University institution that both honors the Seminole spirit, while harnessing an identity all their own.

To cement the relationship with the University, the Tribal Council of the Seminole Tribe of Florida signed a resolution that approved the University’s continued use of the Seminole name, images, and logos. In an overwhelming vote of 5-0, the Tribe agreed to continued relations with the University. In a document from Florida State University, with the official seal

⁴² T. K. Wetherell, “Received by Chairman Mitchell Cypress,” Florida State University, 15 Sept. 2003, Tallahassee, Florida.

⁴³ Wetherell, “Received by Chairman Mitchell Cypress.”

of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and signatures of the Tribal Secretary and Tribal Chairman, it asserts:

“The Seminole tribe of Florida has an established relationship with Florida State University which includes its permission to use the name ‘Seminole,’ as well as various Seminole symbols, and images such as Chief Osceola for educational purposes....”⁴⁴

The Seminole Tribal Council in this section of the agreement states it has an established relationship with the University, and grants permission for the use of the logos and images. This statement in the official letter shines a light on the Tribe’s support for the use of Chief Osceola during halftime at games and all statues and traditions the University has established.

The agreement continues:

“The Tribal Council of the Seminole Tribe of Florida wishes to go on record that it is not opposed and, in fact, supports the continued use of the name ‘Seminole’ and any associated head logo as currently endorsed by Florida State University....”⁴⁵

This statement is a direct answer and rebuttal to the continued debate over the use of Native American mascots by Florida State University.

Many media outlets and individuals have gone on record to vocalize their dissatisfaction with Native American mascots, stating that they are racially insensitive and borderline racist. While this may be the case for other Universities and schools, Chairman Mitchell Cypress makes it clear the Seminole Tribe supports the use of the name and the Seminole mascot. Unlike other schools and professional sports teams, this open dialogue and support between University and Tribe makes this particular situation unique. Chairman Mitchell Cypress continues saying:

⁴⁴ Chairman Mitchell Cypress, “Florida State University Seminole Mascots and Symbols.” Received by Florida State University, Hendry County, 17 June 2005, Hollywood, Florida.

⁴⁵ Cypress, “Florida State University Seminole Mascots.”

“[T]he Tribal Council further extends an invitation to the Florida State University and its officials to continue their relationship and collaborate on the development of logos and nicknames that all members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida and officials and students of Florida State University can be proud of...”⁴⁶

As a final and definitive statement, the Tribal Council welcomes a continued relationship with the University. This directly ties in with the work being done in the 1960s and 1970s with Jean and Joy Chaudhuri, and this continued education between the Tribe, University, students, and community will not only increase awareness about the Tribe, but it will further produce an image of which all parties can be proud.

To further push the envelope against the NCAA and other outlets attempting to tarnish the relationship between the University and the Tribe, former President of Florida State University T.K. Wetherell sent a letter to the former head of the NCAA, Dr. Myles Brand. In this letter he outlined not only the strong connection between the University and the Tribe, but also uses the ties to shoot down NCAA’s allegations that the University uses racially insensitive mascots and imagery. The letter was also signed by Tribal Committee members in a show of support. In this letter Wetherell links the University to the Seminole Tribe in a few ways. As outlined earlier in this thesis, in 1947 when Florida State became a coeducational university, the student body voted on the name “Seminole” to honor the unconquered spirit of the Seminole Tribe. A tribe that never surrendered to the United States military and have never formally signed a peace agreement with the government, but have lived in peace. Wetherell states, “The Seminole Tribe of Florida comprises the vast majority of those survivors in Florida, and it has

⁴⁶ Cypress, “Florida State University Seminole Mascots.”

supported Florida State University's use of the name informally for decades.”⁴⁷ The president asserts that the University has had an informal agreement with the Tribe, and that fact has been supported by the Tribe providing the authentic war paint for Chief Osceola, as well as the legitimate garb he wears, as well as the approval or dismissal of any image as the Tribe sees fit. These were not official proceedings but rather a working relationship between the Tribe and University as a show of respect between the two sides.

The first official signed copy of the agreement occurred in 2005, at which time the Seminole Tribe of Florida formerly provided Florida State University the permission to use Chief Osceola as their mascot and any approved image of the Seminole Tribe.

“The significance of putting this resolution in writing is enhanced by the fact that traditionally the Seminole Tribe of Florida has not seen the need to commit these kinds of relationships or agreements to writing. Their word is their bond. During the presentation of that resolution to me at the Tribe's Big Cypress Reservation, Tribal Council member Max Osceola said, ‘we have to respect each other's views, and in the Seminole Tribe of Florida's view, you honor us by using the name Seminole’⁴⁸”

It is historically true that Native American tribes never used to write or make physical documentation of agreements. Their word was the agreement and the ceremony was the tribe's way of showing overwhelming support for such a commitment. It is also true in Florida State University's case that few formal documents exist between the University and the Seminole Tribe of Florida as actions and respect spoke louder than signatures on a piece of paper. In this instance the Tribe overwhelmingly voted to approve the resolution, and the signees gave the document to the University as a show of solidarity against, not just the NCAA, but also outsiders

⁴⁷ T. K. Wetherell, “Received by Dr. Myles Brand,” Florida State University, 12 Aug. 2005, Tallahassee, Florida.

⁴⁸ Wetherell, “Received by Dr. Myles Brand.”

who do not understand the nuanced relationship. It is the keystone holding up and legitimizing the relationship. It was a statement that did not necessarily have to be made, but was agreed upon to show the coexistence between the two entities.

Florida State University has “developed mutually beneficial relationships with their ‘namesake tribes’ that have led to better understanding of Native American heritage and even increased opportunities for the higher education of young tribe member.”⁴⁹ The former president even mentions that the Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma supports the University in their usage of the imagery and name “Seminoles”. This is further validated in an early entry due to the works of Joy and Jean Chaudhuri and their desire to continue the education of the student body with the Seminole Tribe. That educational experience built the foundation of respect that has continued to this very day. Without that educational platform, President Wetherell’s comments to the NCAA and to the public about the use of the image would be moot.

In a 2006 effort to further bring the University and the Tribe closer Florida State University began offering a Seminole History class as an elective course for undergraduate students. Neil Jumonville, who was the Chairman of Florida State’s Department of History planned this course while at a meeting with members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

“One of my top priorities is to make sure that our students and supporters have a greater understanding of who the Seminole people are, what they have had to endure throughout their history, and what they have accomplished despite such hardships...If we know their history, we’ll have a greater appreciation for the Seminole name that we so proudly identify ourselves with.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Wetherell, “Received by Dr. Myles Brand.”

⁵⁰ Barry Ray, “At FSU, Students Learn the History of University’s Namesake Tribe,” *Florida State University*, www.fsu.edu/news/2006/09/19/tribe.history/.

This goes hand-in-hand with the ideals of Joy and Jean Chaudhuri, and it is no surprise that every year the forty-five seat course fills up with eager undergraduate students. Tina Osceola, Tribal Secretary and executive director of its museum, spoke to the class and commented, “the students had a very good working knowledge of the material, which means that it’s working...Their questions are informed questions.”⁵¹ This course does not exist in vain. The university did not create this course to give credence to a fictitious linkage between the University and an unwilling tribe. Florida State University has worked alongside the Seminole Tribe of Florida on the best way to educate the students on who the Seminoles were as a people. By understanding the history and traditions of the Seminole Tribe, the University’s educational efforts continue to solidify its relationship with the Tribe.

As stated by previous Florida State University President, the Seminole Tribe of Florida did not have a need to make any of the past connections official via documentation because “their word is their bond.” However, what was uncovered here clearly shows a linear path to mutual respect. The University’s admiration for the Tribe, and their search for approval from the Tribe in every new logo, tradition, and costume, speaks volumes to the legitimacy of the relationship. The University has done their due diligence in requesting the Tribe’s permission to use certain images and logos, as well as hearing the Tribe’s opinions. These steps are critical in ensuring an open dialogue between the institutions to ensure the mascot and images at Florida State University are out of respect and honor.

⁵¹ Associated Press, “Florida State University Launches Seminole History Class in Effort to Keep Mascot,” *Diverse*, 29 Nov. 2006, diverseeducation.com/article/6698/.

Chapter 3

Media Backlash

The documents received from the University, the state of Florida, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida reveal that Florida State University is working in close collaboration with the Tribe. The members of the Tribal Committee have expressed that Chief Osceola and the other images around campus are honoring and respecting their Tribe. All documents analyzed, researched, and read through in the archives reveal mutual respect and, at times, admiration on behalf of all parties involved. There is a harsh critic in the midst of all this information: the media. Newspapers, news outlets, and radio shows have depicted, not just Florida State, but other universities using Native American mascots in a negative light. Many media outlets urge the discontinuation of Native American imagery because they are racially insensitive and potentially outwardly racist. The Washington Redskins and University of North Dakota, formerly the Fighting Sioux, received the brunt of the negative publicity, but Florida State has gotten their fair share of negative feedback. An analysis of the local *Florida Flambeau*, a newspaper covering on-campus events and happenings, shows the evolution of campus opinions regarding the Seminole mascot from the 1950s to the early 2000s. By understanding the change of thinking locally can one fully understand national media coverage of the Florida State Seminoles.

Sammy Savage was, in 1958, the first iteration of what would become Chief Osceola. The mascot was a cartoonish, almost carnivalesque halftime sideshow. The person who performed as Sammy was Chick Cicio, a member of the gymnastics team. During sporting events Sammy would be seen performing acrobatic stunts while wearing a feathered headdress.

Sammy was criticized heavily on campus for not properly honoring the Seminole spirit. Mark Austin, student and writer for the *Florida Flambeau*, in 1958 chided, “Have you ever noticed our Marching Chiefs represent the Seminoles spirit by playing music associated with the Western Plains Indians? Of that during some football halves, the majorettes get out on the field and perform a Plains Indian Rain Dance?”⁵²

While Florida State was searching for an identity, Sammy Savage, sometimes referred to as Sammy Seminole, was criticized by those on campus for not even portraying a Seminole. Some students claimed he resembled more of a Plains Indian rather than a Seminole. There were calls from some on campus to abandon the team name altogether because it did not respect the Tribe, as it was purported to do. The name Seminole practically demands that you wear it with great pride as it stands for bravery and perseverance. However, with Sammy Savage, it was doing more harm than good. Ray Owens, in a 1959 issue of the *Florida Flambeau*, criticized the University’s portrayal of the Seminoles and how Sammy Savage missed the mark of the true intention of the University name:

“We add this myth here. We use the name ‘Seminole,’ but the local interpretation is a painted-up, subsidized Yankee running about the stadium half nude, brandishing a stick full of buzzard feathers and wearing a couple of old Davey Crockett hats wrapped about his shoulders....Have you ever seen a Seminole?”⁵³

Unsurprisingly, Sammy was retired as a mascot in 1972. Students and community members disagreed with the portrayal of the mascot, and admittedly much of the costume he would wear was improvised and not locally authentic. In spite of this, Sammy originated what would become a staple of Chief Osceola’s halftime show: the use of a horse, Renegade.

⁵² Mark Austin, “Plains Indian Or Seminoles?” *Florida Flambeau*, 14 Oct. 1958: 4–4.

⁵³ Ray Owens, “A New Team Name,” *Florida Flambeau*, 13 Oct. 1959: 4–4.

While Sammy focused primarily on football games, Chief Fullabull was introduced in 1969 for basketball games. He received his fair share of criticism from campus officials, students, and even the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Chief Fullabull would run around the stadium, specializing in halftime skits featuring ceremonial massacres of props representing the opposing team. Roger Messer, in 1970, reported that the Seminole Tribe of Florida communicated their opposition to the University. "Complaints were lodged with the University by several Indian groups. After two years, the university finally saw their point and decided to change the name."⁵⁴ The Seminole Tribe of Florida did submit numerous name replacements for Chief Fullabull, one of which was "Yahola" which is derived from the name "Osceola". The University dismissed the recommended names, and instead settled on the name "Wampum-Stompum".

In 1970, the American Indian Fellowship and members of the American Indian Group of Tallahassee objected, as recorded in a 1970 issue of the *Florida Flambeau*;

“‘[W]ampum’ is not an authentic Seminole word. This is not the major objection, however. The main objection is that the name and the character it represents, present the Seminole and American Indians in general, as stupid, bumbling objects of tom-foolery. They feel, and rightfully so, that this is degrading.”⁵⁵

The new name was not much better than the previous one. Many Native American fellowships and members voiced their displeasure in the lack of proper representation of the area Natives. Students voted for the nickname "Seminole" for a reason, and the previous mascots failed to live up to this reason.

“Let’s make the Seminoles of Florida proud instead of ashamed that a state university has taken their tribal name as a symbol of school spirit. The spirit chief can have dignity and raise school spirit at the same time. Object to this form of

⁵⁴ Roger Messer, "Name Degrades Indians," *Florida Flambeau*, 8 Oct. 1970: 12–12.

⁵⁵ Messer, "Name Degrades Indians." 12–12.

racism or stubbornness or whatever you want to call it by the University. Let's correct this problem...."⁵⁶

It is no wonder that this news article in the *Florida Flambeau* correlates with the rise of education and community-building led by the Chaudhuris. Within the same year Chief Fullabull was officially retired at the request of the leaders of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Two years later, in 1972, Sammy Savage was formally retired.

Over the course of the next decade, Florida State would begin to develop the image of Chief Osceola. Despite the continued positive dialogue with the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the University was still a lightning rod for controversy. Between the retirement of Sammy Savage, Chief Fullabull, and Wampum-Stompum, there was a lull in complaints on campus related to the mascot. And as stated, this time was concurrent with a rise in campus and community education. As Florida State changed their mascot and imagery to the more recognizable Chief Osceola, and included more of the Tribe in their decision making, the community was still critical up to the 1990s and beyond. In the early-to mid-1990s, Florida State was under the proverbial microscope to an even greater degree, but not because of anything their institution had changed. The increased scrutiny was because of the Atlanta Braves.

The early 1990s was a renaissance for the Atlanta Braves of Major League Baseball. The team established a dynasty where winning was expected, and anything short of a championship was an abject failure. In 1991, the Atlanta Braves reached the pinnacle of the Major League Baseball season, the World Series against the Minnesota Twins. In their first World Series appearance since 1958, Atlanta brought the same energy and stadium antics customary to their fanbase. The major difference between this World Series matchup and the regular season, as well

⁵⁶ Messer, "Name Degrades Indians," 12–12.

as their previous World Series appearances, was the scope of the national television broadcast. During these games, the Braves fans engaged in stadium-wide chants and, most notably, the Tomahawk Chop. Protestors and activists decried the Braves for their use of the Tomahawk Chop and their continued use of cartoonish Native American caricatures, even after the retirement of mascot “Chief Noc-a-Homa” in 1986.

The Tomahawk Chop is not exclusive to the Atlanta Braves, The Florida State University Seminoles were the originators of the Tomahawk Chop in their stadiums. Ann Turkle in a 1992 article in the *Florida Flambeau*, indicated that education and attentiveness to potential insensitivity is key: “Native American or African-American or thinking twice about the chop may not make the world a better place – but such language and concerns may indicate a first glimmer of attention being paid.”⁵⁷ This statement was made around the same time former Seminole Tribal leader Chief Billie indicated his support for the use of the Seminole mascot and imagery. To some the Seminole image, and other Native American imagery and team names, romanticize natives as subhuman or savages. After years of mistreatment by the American government, through forced relocations to reservations and the introduction of boarding schools with specifically anti-Native policies that forbade the study of their native customs, it is no wonder why such romanticized rituals and mascots are insensitive.

“Years of living with such attitudes can make people testy - hypersensitive, even righteously indignant about the implied association of their culture to animals (Gators, Bears, Lions) and cartoon ‘Injuns’. It seems reasonable that an aspect of taking control of one’s history and traditions might include, 500 years after Columbus, reclaiming the name Indian.”⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ann Turkle, “Images Slight Native Indians,” *Florida Flambeau*, 15 Oct. 1992.

⁵⁸ Turkle, “Images Slight Native Indians.”

Although it was the Atlanta Braves being vehemently protested, with continued ridicule for their use of the Tomahawk Chop, the effects reverberated to Florida State where students participate in a stadium-wide tradition with a mascot and imagery that show how teams can avoid trivializing Native Americans.

The student body called to better educate themselves on the Seminole Tribe, going beyond what is written in textbooks and on university pamphlets: “My motive is for making these suggestions is simply my belief that one needs to be fluent in the experience of another group in order to speak, not the jargon of political correctness, but the language of understanding.”⁵⁹ It is no wonder why protests continued at Florida State, not just in regards to their use of the Tomahawk Chop, but to their overarching image. Lance Lane, an American Indian activist, led a variety of protests around campus, in particular one protest became heated at a football game in November 1992. Students and fans threw ice at the protestors and resorted to shouting matches. Lance Lane made analogies to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. “It was like being at home in Selma, Alabama in 1964 because of all the hate ... it was like an old John Wayne movie with everyone screaming around us, it was almost reminiscent of Wounded Knee.”⁶⁰ This tense situation was exacerbated by the University's miasma of ignorance and misunderstanding towards the Seminole Tribe and Native Americans as a whole. “Officials with the Seminole Tribe of Florida have said the Tribe has no problem with FSU’s portrayal of the Seminoles. Lane, however, said the Florida Seminoles do not represent the opinions of all American Indians. ‘They can do what they want, but they don’t speak for all Native Americans

⁵⁹ Turkle, “Images Slight Native Indians.”

⁶⁰ Kat Tracy, “Protestors Decry Use of Seminole Mascot,” *Florida Flambeau*, 30 Nov. 1992.

or native peoples.”⁶¹ This sentiment harkens back to Chief Billie’s comments about not instructing other tribes how to handle their business, just as they stay out of other tribes’ affairs. Only the Seminole Tribe can decide whether or not the use of their image as a mascot deserves their support, and other tribes should respect their decision.

In the midst of minor protests from Lance Lane at football games, another activist by the name of Mike Haney, an American Indian activist and an official of the Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma, took particular offense to the Seminole mascot and ordered the University to get rid of it entirely in 1993. The Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma has been conflicted about the usage of the Seminole mascot. They have voiced their dismay numerous times for the use of their image, and how it is reminiscent of a time where they were removed from their land, and that the mascot further subjugates their people. Mike Haney threatened the University with a civil rights complaint if progress is not made: “Florida State must drop its name and find another mascot. In four months, if I’m satisfied that they’re moving in that direction and are sincere about working with us, then I won’t file.”⁶² The university responded and accepted refinements to the symbol but rejected its removal in its entirety. Haney asserts that the mascot is not only racist but demeaning to all Native Americans.

Although the Florida Seminoles have voiced their approval of the mascot with positive relations with the University, the Oklahoma Seminoles and many other tribes around the country have deemed the Florida State Seminoles and Chief Osceola to be racist. Haney attests, “Florida State is known for its racism. They are considered to be the most offensive school to us.”⁶³

⁶¹ Tracy, “Protestors Decry Use.”

⁶² Amy Ellerson, “Seminole Activist Wants FSU to Drop Its Mascot,” *Florida Flambeau*, 7 Jan. 1993.

⁶³ Ellerson, “Seminole Activist.”

Haney's argument was met with some agreement from some students, claiming that the basketball games are equivalent to a KKK meeting⁶⁴ and even questioning former Seminole of Florida Chief James Billie on whose team he's really on calling him an Uncle Tom: "[Billie] doesn't want to do anything to offend white people, but I don't care about that, I want to defend my culture."⁶⁵ Haney pointed to the fact that Florida State University is a popular and highly televised sports team, and he mentions the psychological impact that Chief Osceola's antics on the field have on children. "When people see Florida State on TV dressed up and doing the chop it sends a confused message to the youth that we still do that."⁶⁶ This psychological impact is something to which many Native Americans point when they oppose Native American imagery in high schools and universities.

The University seemingly shrugged off Haney and mentioned they will listen to the Seminoles of Florida above all. A week later Haney lead a protest on campus and gave a speech criticizing the use of the Tomahawk Chop at their games as it "simulates scalping, a violent act that the French and other Europeans practiced for the bounties on the scalps of my people."⁶⁷ The schism between Mike Haney and Florida State in the year 1993 was mended after Chief Jerry Haney endorsed Florida State's program and their contribution to the Seminole Nation's higher education program. 1993 was the first time the University faced direct repercussions and criticism from those outside of Florida. The University responded by providing educational funds to the Seminole Tribe, and embraced closer ties to the Tribe in Florida. However, this did

⁶⁴ "How about the Florida State....Sunbeams?" *Florida Flambeau*, 8 Jan. 1993.

⁶⁵ "How about the Florida State....Sunbeams?"

⁶⁶ "How about the Florida State....Sunbeams?"

⁶⁷ Robert Marquez, "Indian Activists Haney to Speak Tonight on Use of Seminole Mascot." *Florida Flambeau*, 8 Feb. 1993.

not deafen the cacophony of criticism pounding on the University, something which weighed heavily on the students and community. The naysayers have not been satiated and as the University progresses into the next generation, activists and those urging the university to move on continue to ask for change.

Florida State is not shy to controversy. They still deal with their fair share of criticism throughout the country, but remarkably, as the new millennium arrived, the University has been greeted with relaxed tensions at the local level. Through the early 2000s, the *Florida Flambeau* has published articles reiterating the Seminole Tribe of Florida's support to the mascot and the University. In 2005, the University and the Seminole Tribe of Florida signed an official resolution document formalizing the Tribe's support for the University. Around this time the local media shifted, and the *Flambeau* advertised Seminole speakers and educational events for the community. While this sounds like a turn in the right direction there was a lag in national media coverage.

Discrimination and racial prejudice issues have aroused national media attention, not just here in the United States, but abroad where indigenous peoples have to deal with the constant discrimination and belittling.

“Federal governments in Canada and Australia have acknowledged historical abuse of native populations and have offered official apologies and regrets. Though belated, these governmental acknowledgments of racism, discrimination, hostility and abuse serve as a reminder that indigenous populations, particularly American Indians, suffered incredibly at the hands of white oppressors. Badges, indicia and reminders of this abuse by the United States government and its white citizens remain today.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Andre Douglas Pond Cummings and Seth E. Harper, “Wide Right: Why the NCAA’s Policy on the American Indian Mascot Issue Misses the Mark,” *University of Maryland Law Journal of Race, Religion, Gender and Class* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 135-180.

The NCAA has attempted to rectify these wrongs and listen to those who are offended. In 2006, the NCAA announced it would ban eighteen schools from participating in post-season tournaments if they did not change their Native American related nicknames. In an interview with National Public Radio (NPR), Wally Renfo, a senior advisor to NCAA President Miles Brand, was quoted, “This isn’t a decision that was reached in the vacuum. It is a decision that involved the input from Native American tribes across the country as well as input from the member institutions themselves.”⁶⁹ The NCAA has been at odds with Florida State University, as they have been caught between the complaints of activists advocating for change to racial imagery in athletics, and the open support from the Florida Seminole Tribe. The NCAA not only threatened to ban Florida State, and other Native American named teams from postseason tournaments, they put Florida State on a concentrated list of eighteen universities that have aggressive and offensive mascots. Max Osceola snidely said, “I know they didn’t come to our Tribal Council and ask our opinion.”⁷⁰

While other universities, such as the University of North Dakota, Central Michigan, and Arkansas State, have been under the NCAA microscope and under increased pressure, Florida State has accrued a layer of insulation due to the blessings from the Seminole Tribe of Florida. The NCAA eventually wavered and removed Florida State from their list of offending schools. As a rebuttal to the NCAA’s accusations, former president T.K. Wetherell threatened legal action against the NCAA and expressed that steps have been made by the University to maintain a close relationship with the Seminole Tribe, something the NCAA would not have known. The Florida State Senate reacted to the NCAA’s claims and wish for the University to remove their image:

⁶⁹ *Analysis: Florida State Protests NCAA Ban on Seminoles*. (2005). National Public Radio.

⁷⁰ *Analysis: Florida State Protests NCAA Ban on Seminoles*. (2005). National Public Radio.

“Florida Governor Jeb Bush condemned the NCAA’s stance as ‘politically correct’ and also chided the NCAA ruling as a misunderstanding of local culture.”⁷¹ Shortly thereafter, Senator Jim King added the Amendment that would enact as law that Florida State could retain their Seminole nickname. Those steps were a direct response to NCAA threats, and as such the NCAA relented.

Despite the never-ending rush of negativity from activists, the NCAA, and media outlets, there are some voices that should not be drowned out. The argument from activists and many media pundits is that Florida State’s mascot and imagery are racist in origin, and that the Seminoles of Florida do not speak for Native Americans as a whole. The University and the Seminole Tribe remain vocal proponents to the continued use of the Seminole nickname and the Chief Osceola mascot. According to Browning Brooks, Assistant Vice President for University Communications for Florida State, “For almost 70 years, Florida State has worked closely side by side, with the Seminole Tribe of Florida in a relationship that is mutually supportive and built on respect.”⁷² The NCAA recognized this in 2006 after W. K. Wetherell, the Florida State Senate, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida roared back. “It cited unique circumstances. Those included the partnership that stretches from Tallahassee to the six reservations near the base of the state, including Hollywood, Brighton, and Big Cypress”⁷³ and it even mentioned the ties the team created with the Tribe under Bill Durham and former football coach Bowden. Those links aided in squashing NCAA arguments and helped them respect the lengths to which the

⁷¹ Rebecca T. Alpert, “Case 13. The Florida State University Seminoles’ Osceola and Renegade: Mascots or Symbols?” Columbia University Press, New York Chichester, West Sussex, 2015, pp. 159–170.

⁷² Autumn A. Arnett, “Is There Any Place for Native American Imagery in Sports?” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 21 Nov. 2015.

⁷³ Chuck Culpepper, “Florida State’s Unusual Bond with Seminole Tribe Puts Mascot Debate in a Different Light.” *Washington Post*, WP Company, 29 Dec. 2014.

University has gone to ensure authenticity and open lines of communication with the Tribe. Other collegiate teams Have not been so lucky. In 2015, the University of North Dakota changed their name from the Fighting Sioux to the Fighting Hawks and Arkansas State University changed their names from Indians to the Red Wolves, just to name a few examples.

Florida State has faced remarkable, and sometimes harsh, criticism from those within the community, and from national media. With strides being made, the University has maintained their open communication with the Seminole Tribe of Florida, which continues to provide its unwavering support regarding the use of the name and Chief Osceola. That is not to say Florida State has not faced opposition from those within the Seminole Nation, specifically from the Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma. David Narcomey, a Native American activist who considered Native symbols and imagery demeaning and is pushing for their removal, is also a member of the Oklahoma Seminole Tribe. He refers to the Seminole mascot as a “minstrel show”⁷⁴ and claims that high-ranking officials at the University are unaware of the harmful effects of their mascot. Narcomey adamantly believes that the continuing usage of the mascot and its image can have “psychological effects that promote low self-esteem, low self-image. It promotes racism, cultural discrimination, religious discrimination.”⁷⁵ These harmful side-effects are particularly disparaging to Native American families and children.

The Seminole Tribe in Oklahoma has voiced their displeasure over the use of Florida State’s mascot. Some Florida State trustees have taken offense saying, “I could care less what the Seminole Tribe in Oklahoma think. They’re in Oklahoma. They got run out of here by – who

⁷⁴ Berry Tramel, “Florida State’s Chief Osceola Disgusts Members of Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma,” *The Oklahoman* 15 Sept. 2011.

⁷⁵ Tramel, “Florida State’s Chief Osceola.”

was it, Andrew Jackson or somebody like that? The Trail of Tears? The real Seminoles stayed here.”⁷⁶ People like Narcomey claim that the psychological impact on children, and the stereotypical antics of the chief leading in stadium-wide tomahawk chops and chants are equal to that of other American racist remarks. “The Seminole mascots halftime dances, and nicknames like ‘Redskins’ or ‘Redmen’ are blatantly offensive.... Just as offensive as the word ‘nigger’ to most African Americans.”⁷⁷ If you were to ask members of the Oklahoma Seminole Tribe, Florida State has overstepped their boundaries, even with regards to the written document between the two sides. “The University has ‘a formal agreement with the Seminole Nation’ and that makes everything alright. Fans treat this much touted-agreement like they have a ‘racism amnesty card’ in their back pocket. The approval of the Seminole Nation, they will tell you makes it all okay.”⁷⁸ Florida State University has an agreement with the Seminole Tribe of Florida, not the Seminole Nation as a whole. In fact, the Seminole Tribe’s largest concentration of members are located in Oklahoma, the descendants of Andrew Jackson’s Trail of Tears. A written resolution from the Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma from 2013 reads, in part, “The Seminole Nation condemns the use of all American Indian sports team mascots in the public school system, by college and university level and by professional teams.”⁷⁹

Since then, Florida State has made great strides in connecting with, and reaching out to, the Oklahoma Seminole Tribe in the attempts of mending any severed ties. In a letter from

⁷⁶Steve Bousquet, “FSU Contests NCAA’s Mascot Ban.” *St. Petersburg Times* 13 Aug. 2005.

⁷⁷ Tramel, “Florida State’s Chief Osceola.”

⁷⁸ Dave Zirin, “The Florida State Seminoles: The Champions of Racist Mascots,” *The Nation*, 29 June 2015.

⁷⁹ Leonard Harjo, “Tribal Resolution of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma Condemning the Use of All American Indian Sports Team Mascots.” Received by Seminole Nation, Mekusukey Mission, South of Seminole, 26 Oct. 2013, Mekusukey Mission, South of Seminole.

former President T.K. Wetherell he states, “We embrace all Seminoles. In fact, one of our ‘Seminoles’ is a member of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma. Under the University’s Seminole Scholarship Program, all Seminole Scholars receive our highest-level scholarship.”⁸⁰ This extension of an olive branch, whether genuine or out of attempted appeasement, shows that Florida State is committed to improving relations with the Seminole Nation as a whole. Ken Chambers, Chief of the Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma, was quoted saying, “We feel it gives the type of recognition that allows people to identify with the name ‘Seminole’.”⁸¹ This ruffled the feathers of Narcomey, claiming, “Chambers doesn’t know what he’s talking about.”⁸² While this is not the view of the Seminole Nation as a whole, members of the Seminole Nation attend Florida State, and Chambers asserts that the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma is proud with the way in which they are represented by the University. If Chambers’ rebuttal to both Narcomey and the NCAA was not enough, in 2004, The Seminole Nation went on record to not oppose the University’s use of the Seminole name and Chief Osceola as a mascot: “This past July the Seminole Nation General Council, the legislative body for the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, resoundingly defeated a motion to denounce the use of Native American nicknames and images in sports and other events. The vote was 18-2.”⁸³ The fissure that existed between the Florida and Oklahoma Seminole Tribes appears to be closing, at least for the time being, as all members of the Seminole Nation are in agreement.

⁸⁰ Wetherell, “Received by Dr. Myles Brand.”

⁸¹ Darryl Fears, “Indian Mascots: Matter Of Pride or Prejudice?” *Washington Post*, 14 Aug. 2005.

⁸² Fears, “Indian Mascots.”

⁸³ Fears, “Indian Mascots.”

A former student at Florida State University wrote an article for the campus newspaper entitled, “My Complicated Relationship With Our School Mascot.” This article echoes the overall sentiments of media across the country. The Seminole mascot is complicated, it is unique to the university and the community, and it is drastically different from those at other universities. Locally, and within the community there is such a strong bond between the school and the Tribe, with communication that is fluid, and the University does not make a decision regarding Tribal image without getting approval from the Tribe first. There is still a disconnect with what is being seen at the local level and what is being seen on a national level. In the early stages of Chief Osceola, there were protests and calls for change, calls that have reverberated through the early 1990s. Florida State has remained committed to open connection with the Seminole Tribe who, in turn, respond with their support. Often the media, and those unaffiliated with Florida State, deem the use of the Seminole nickname and Chief Osceola as racially charged, and as gimmicks that compartmentalize all Native Americans into sideshows or caricatures during halftime shows. The University has responded with a series of legal and official documentation to alter the direction of the discussions. Florida State has not only won racial public relations with the Seminole Tribe of Florida, but they have extended an olive branch to the Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma, in the hopes of using this relationship to better dictate to the media how to report on Florida State University and their unique situation with the Seminole Tribe.

Chapter 4

Where Did Other Universities Go Wrong and FSU Go Right?

In 2005, the NCAA released a list of eighteen universities with potentially offensive racial imagery or mascots. Florida State's name was removed from this list after receiving a signed document from the Seminole Tribe of Florida and a vote of confidence from the Seminole Nation in Oklahoma. This, coupled with strong state opposition forced the NCAA to remove the Seminoles from the list. Other universities throughout the United States were not so lucky. Eight universities abruptly changed their name, including Arkansas State University and Midwestern State University, from the Indians to the Red Wolves and the Indians to the Mustangs, respectively. Five other universities were granted waivers that provided the NCAA with sufficient evidence that local tribes supported the universities' use of their imagery, and are working collaboratively to help educate the students and the communities at large. Florida State was among those on the waiver list, along with other universities such as the Central Michigan University Chippewas, Mississippi College Choctaws and the University of Utah Utes. The remaining universities are still embroiled in legal battles trying to defend their universities in their use of these mascots and images.

One of those universities is the University of North Dakota Fighting Sioux, who recently changed their name to the Fighting Hawks, however the community and University want to return to the Fighting Sioux image. Of course, 2005 is not the origin story for these discussions as to what constitutes insensitive or potentially racist images. Universities, at a community level, have been having these discussions since the early 1930s. It is important to see where

universities such as University of North Dakota, Syracuse University, University of Illinois, and Arkansas State went wrong with their use of imagery and mascots that has inevitably led to their discontinued use. By understanding where these universities went wrong in their relationships with Native American tribes, and comparing those missteps with Florida State's successes, one can best understand how Florida State has maintained their positive racial public relationship with Native American tribes.

North Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin have a rich history of Native American tribes claiming those lands as their own. The Dakota, Yanktonai and Lakota share a close history and share a similar language called Siouan. Coming from different areas, these tribes have different dialects and different means of conveying similar words, but speakers are mutually intelligible. Prior to the eighteenth century, the groups primarily occupied the woodland regions of Minnesota and were divided into seven bands known as Oceti Sakowin or "Council of Fire". The bands recognized their affiliation by referring to each other as "kota" or "koda" meaning friend or ally.⁸⁴ Due to growing conflicts between the groups and other neighboring tribes, such as the Chippewas, the Oceti Sakowin moved further west. The Chippewa tribe referred to the Oceti Sakowin as "natowessiwa", which has been translated as "snake," "enemies," or "people of an alien tribe."⁸⁵ The French when they occupied this territory, converted this word to "nadouessiou", which was further diluted when English and American settlers moved to the area. This caused the word to be abbreviated further to "Sioux". It is worth noting that the Dakota, Yanktonai, and Lakota never referred to the other as "Sioux". In regards

⁸⁴Amy Phillips and Dan Rice, "The 'Fighting Sioux' Conflict: Lessons On Social Justice for Higher Education," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 43, no. 4 (2010): 511–526.

⁸⁵ Phillips and Rice, "The 'Fighting Sioux' Conflict," 511–526.

to using “Sioux” as a nickname for an athletic team, this is a major red flag for the University of North Dakota. The name Sioux is not a natural word in their language, and it has it’s been distorted and twisted over generations of settlements and colonization. When reverse engineering the name it leads to an aggressive term towards another tribe.

Starting in 1883 the University of North Dakota used the nickname “Flickertails”, so named after a breed of squirrel native to the area. In 1930, a student newspaper called the *Dakota Student* advocated for a change of the name ahead of their first football game:

“Drawing on a discourse that consisted of White cultural views of Native Americans, the paper argued that (1) ‘Sioux are a good exterminating agent for the [North Dakota State] Bison,’ (2) ‘They (Sioux) are warlike, of fine physique and bearing,’ and (3) ‘the word Sioux is easily rhymed for yells and songs’. It is important to note that no Native American students attended UND in 1930 when the nickname was changed.”⁸⁶

During a 10 day period in 1930, the University of North Dakota went from the “Flickertails” to the “Sioux”, a change stemming from a grassroots movement of students and editorials in the campus newspaper. In an October 3rd issue of the *Dakota Student*, the headline read “Sioux Replaces Flickertail” The athletic board sanctioned the name change,⁸⁷ which was rapid and unprecedented in how it started with students, and came to fruition in under two weeks.

“It appears, then, that the push to change the name came primarily from the student newspaper, with the initial impetus orchestrated by a small number of students who were interested in a more virile team name for the upcoming football season in 1930 and who wrote letters about this, some anonymously, to the student paper.”⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Dana Williams, “Where's the Honor? Attitudes toward the Fighting Sioux Nickname and Logo,” *Sociology of Sports Journal* 24, no. 4 (2007): 437–456.

⁸⁷ “Nodaks Play New Role as Warriors of the Prairie,” *Dakota Student*, 3 October 1930: 1, 4.

⁸⁸ Phillips and Rice, “The ‘Fighting Sioux’ Conflict,” 511–526.

When this situation is compared to the one at Florida State, it becomes clear that the two are comparable. Sports were a driving force for a name change, specifically in regards to the football team. Institutions felt the need for an image that would invoke strength, and put fear into the hearts of the opponent. Florida State went through a voting process among students and was approved to use the name Seminoles by the governing body of the University in conjunction with the Tribe. University of North Dakota changed their name after a few issues of the *Dakota Student*, which led to the change being haphazard and abrupt. There was no discussion with the local tribes or the President of the University, and it was done by the athletic board and the students. According to Fred Traynor, who was President of the University of North Dakota Alumni Association at this time stated that he was against the name change, but not for the reasons one would think. He felt that people on the East Coast still held stereotypical views of those living in North Dakota as backward and uncivilized. Taking a name such as Sioux, Traynor argued would only exacerbate the image of North Dakotans as uncultured and coarse⁸⁹.

The addition of “Fighting” to the Sioux name was first reported in the 1938 yearbook, the *Dacotah*, but had never been used previously. The University then sought to create a logo to match the Fighting Sioux name, and thus created a stereotypical Native American with a feather in his hair. The Sioux logo does not appear to have been motivated by a desire to honor Native Americans, but instead was a reaction to the adoption of the bison as a mascot by rival North Dakota State University.⁹⁰ There are no documents in which University of North Dakota officials, alumni, or students in the late 1920s or 1930s suggested honoring Native Americans or

⁸⁹ Raul Tovaes, “Mascot Matters: Race, History, and the University of North Dakota’s ‘Fighting Sioux’ Logo,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 26, no. 1 (Jan. 2002): 76–94.

⁹⁰ Tovaes, “Mascot Matters,” 76–94.

members of the Sioux Nation by calling their teams the Fighting Sioux.⁹¹ In the absence of hard evidence, speculation arises and questions begin to circulate. The hint that the Sioux were the exterminators of the North Dakota Bison adds to the allusion that the tribe was warlike or uncivilized. With a lack of evidence in support of the University's decision to use the Fighting Sioux name and the rather mysterious way it evolved on campus, it is clear why entities such as the NCAA may deem these names and iconography as racially insensitive or abusive.

The University of North Dakota has faced racism targeted at Native American students at the local level, as well as belittlement of Native Americans in general. The very hazy beginning to the Sioux name precipitated this white stereotype of Native Americans, and the negative connotations as a result. Since there is no evidence of a link to, or support from, the local tribe, it is a Petri dish of racial misconceptions and miseducation. According to the University of North Dakota's student body profile, 1.43% of the student body are Native American in heritage,⁹² which is the largest percentage of Native Americans that attend a single university in the country. This, along with the Fighting Sioux name and mascot, has caused a perfect storm of turmoil. In 1972, Native American students demanded that an ice sculpture in front of a University of North Dakota fraternity house be taken down. The sculpture was of a topless Native American woman with the words "Lick 'em Sioux" across her breasts. The fraternity refused to do so. A Native student destroyed the sculpture, resulting in a fight and that student's arrest.⁹³

⁹¹ Tovaes, "Mascot Matters," 76–94.

⁹² "Student Body Profile," *University of North Dakota*, und.edu/analytics-and-planning/data-and-reports/2019.html.

⁹³ Dana Williams, "Where's the Honor? Attitudes toward the Fighting Sioux Nickname and Logo," *Sociology of Sports Journal* 24, no. 4 (2007): 437–456.

University of North Dakota fraternities have a history of using Native American imagery in a negative way, and the 1970 case is just one of many. In 2007, photos of a Native American themed party surfaced where party-goers were wearing buckskin outfits, face paint and feathers in their hair. University of North Dakota American Indian students filed a discrimination complaint. During a 1992 homecoming event Native children were heckled on a float, and told by white students to go back to the reservation.⁹⁴ In 1999, a Native American activist who was advocating for a name change at the University was emailed a death threat for his opposition to the existing nickname.⁹⁵ University of North Dakota has had racially-charged incidents on campus despite the reasonably large number of Native students, as documented by the University. 1968 saw the creation of the first Native American Student Organization, and their first action was to get rid of the Fighting Sioux name. The University disregarded their petition and instead created and expanded the use of the Sammy Sioux logo and mascot.

Florida State University, when examined at the student body level, state level, and then national level, shows that its progress was a process. When the need for a mascot and image arose at Florida State, a student vote took place, unlike the process that took place at University of North Dakota. When the students decided on the Seminole name it still took several years for the University to, not only, start the lines of communication with the Seminole tribe of Florida, but to revise the Chief Osceola mascot. It further took until the 1970s before widespread education of the student body took place. After examining the *Florida Flambeau*, it was clear that an evolution had taken place. At first there was disdain towards the Sammy Sioux and Chief

⁹⁴ H. Annis, "Thirty Years of Telling Us to Be Honored," *High Plains Reader*, 4 March 1999.

⁹⁵ A. Brownstein, "A Battle over a Name in the Land of the Sioux," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 February 2001: A46.

Fullabull monikers, but once the lines of communication were open, and the University involved the Tribe in the customization of the Chief Osceola mascot, the student newspaper amended their position.

The *Dakota Student* examination shows a string of racially charged incidents and misunderstandings of Native Americans. This can be attributed to the awkward turn from their original “Flickertail” mascot to the Fighting Sioux. Boosters urged for an identity that would ooze ferocity for athletes encouraged by the name, but with little historical connections or education. Florida State, while taking some time to gain the respect and blessings of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, at least had a connection and communication with the community. In 2015, the University of North Dakota officially changed their name to the Fighting Hawks following NCAA pressures, and the general lack of evidence of collaboration between the University and the local tribes. Even after this decision many students, alumni, and community members refused to acknowledge the name change. When the team is announced as the Fighting Hawks, the arena often engages in a concerto of boos⁹⁶ and at football games when the team gets a first down the stadium yells “Sioux suck shit”⁹⁷ as a protest, not only to the team name, but as a show of disappointment that the Tribe has not defended the University’s use of the name. The University has faced challenges from alumni over the name change and continue to battle racially charged attacks.

Syracuse University was one of the first institutions to employ the masculine, warrior image of a Native American as their school’s mascot, even before Florida State chose the

⁹⁶ Greg Wyshynski, “North Dakota Avoiding 'Fighting Hawks' References in Arena,” *Yahoo! Sports*, Yahoo!, 2016.

⁹⁷ Wade Rupard, “Petition Calls for Change to UND Logo,” *Grand Forks Herald*, Grand Forks Herald, 27 June 2016.

Seminole as their own mascot. Founded in 1870, the University has established a mythical relationship with the Onondaga people of the Iroquois Confederacy. Due to rising competitiveness in recruiting highly touted athletes, during the nineteenth century the University adopted an identity rooted in local Native American antiquity.

“Undergraduates perceived they had symbolically inherited the lands and noble qualities of Natives. Drawing a Social Darwinian parallel between modern students and Indians from the past, one student explained why the class of 1885 developed ‘from the lower forms of life’ to be among the intellectual and athletic champions in the ‘survival of the fittest’.”⁹⁸

A student from the class of 1903 wrote a poem which was published in the University’s student publication, *The Onendagan*, which illustrated how the spirits of dead Indians “allowed for a racial transferal of wisdom from Indians to Syracuse students, with undergraduate ‘books of magic’ replacing the Indians ‘warrior’s bow.’”⁹⁹ As the university constructed its image via ill-defined historical linkage between the school and the Onondaga people, students created a song, “The Saltine Warrior” resulting in the creation of an Indian mascot, Chief Bill Orange. Despite the minimal historical link to any Native American tribe, the mascot was very popular, especially in the 1960s where his personality drastically changed. No longer was the mascot a symbol for brevity or stoicism, but instead the students celebrated the wild qualities of the warrior.

⁹⁸ Donald M. Fisher, “Chief Bill Orange and the Saltine Warrior: A Cultural History of Indian Symbols and Imagery at Syracuse University,” in *Team Spirits: The Native American Mascots Controversy*, ed. C. Richard King and Charles Fruehling Springwood, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 25-42.

⁹⁹ Fisher, “Chief Bill Orange,” 25-42.

According to Melvin Egger, University Chancellor from 1971-1991, “in the spirit of libertarians doing their thing as they saw fit, the person of the Saltine Warrior took on more extreme forms of behavior that could be interpreted as making fun of the real thing, whether it would be noises or antics of one sort or another. . . . He would take off into the stands and run around making the ‘whooping’ sounds attributed to Indians and their war dances.”¹⁰⁰ In March 1976, the student newspaper discovered that the link to Native American tribes that the University prided itself on was completely fabricated. Outspoken groups of Native American students and some white students and faculty argued that race-based stereotypes like the Saltine Warrior and Chief Bill Orange were poor symbols for the University, and offensive to Native American students. They claimed the mascot was disgraceful and a “racist reminder of archaic interpretations of the nation’s past.”¹⁰¹

By 1978, after pressure from Native American students and tribes in the surrounding area the school discontinued the use of the Indian mascot. The orange-skinned figure with a feathered headdress logo was finally removed and replaced with a fruit. The controversy in Syracuse has had a deep cultural and social impact. As of 2000, there are still proponents who want to retreat back to the schools traditional mascot claiming that “although the Indian signified some abstract link with the past, he functioned as a binding force among students, alumni, and faculty.”¹⁰² Native American students and residents in upstate New York still assert that the University’s

¹⁰⁰ Fisher, “Chief Bill Orange,” 25-42.

¹⁰¹ Fisher, “Chief Bill Orange,” 25-42.

¹⁰² Fisher, “Chief Bill Orange,” 25-42.

early image of the mascot was offensive, stereotypical, and degrading. A 1970 Syracuse University graduate, Andy Burns, says “‘I treated the Saltine Warrior as an honor. It’s not racism at all’ he also indicated his disgust with current accusations of racism by saying, ‘I’m beginning to not like Indians.’”¹⁰³

Syracuse University, like many other universities, needed an image to get more athletes to commit to the University. Historically upstate New York has a strong link to the Iroquois people, the Tribe that once inhabited the northern part of the state, still has a very strong presence, and if Syracuse University played their cards right, they could have fallen into the same category as Florida State. However, they did not follow the path that Florida State did. The created a fictitious, almost fantastical, relationship with the Tribe based on spirituality rather than actuality. This was a misstep for the school and their first incarnation of the Saltine Warrior was an attempt to create this image. The Saltine Warrior was dressed like a stereotypical Native American in deerskin, face paint, and a headdress, while leading in commercialized whooping arena chants. Syracuse did not go through the proper channels to pay respect to the Iroquois Tribe, rather creating a mythical or spiritual connection to the Native American people. Instead, they should have built a bridge to the Tribe to invest in some sort of authenticity. Florida State did not create a fictitious link. Instead, they were open to the changes and the dialogue with the local tribe, Syracuse University was focused on an image and boosters to help bring athletes to the school. This mythical and spiritual connection is why the University eventually discontinued the Saltine Warrior in favor of a fruit. When analyzing the Syracuse University case study, it is simple to pinpoint where Syracuse University went wrong in their relationship with their local

¹⁰³ Fisher, “Chief Bill Orange,” 25-42.

Native American tribe. The comparison to Florida State makes it clear how different the intent was. Where Syracuse University was one of mythical connections, Florida State was one of real and genuine respect.

Arkansas State began competing in intercollegiate sports in 1911, changing their nickname many times along the way. They were once called the “Farmers”, which then changed to the “Aggies”, before seeking out a more attractive nickname for its athletic teams, and in 1932 adopting the “Indians” nickname. The Osages were even mentioned in the Arkansas State University historical records with an Indian wielding a tomahawk and feathered headdress as the mascot. Many historical inaccuracies are tied to the University’s false image that it portrays to current and prospective students. “The school’s mascots do not reflect the Indian heritage of the state because they have been fashioned to resemble the ‘Indians’ portrayed in western movies.”¹⁰⁴ Arkansas State University consciously connected the University to the false idea that the State of Arkansas was protecting Native American nations. In the midst of this nostalgia, the image they created was not based on historical evidence, but rather based on popular stereotypes and misconceptions. Arkansas State University relied on stereotypes about Indians, mainly of the Osages, to create their mascot. “Because of the misconception that they were ‘savage warriors’ and in the hope that their legendary aggressive traits could be magically transferred to their athletic teams.”¹⁰⁵ The problem is that the Osages the University purported to honor were not native to Arkansas, nor savages.

¹⁰⁴ Mary Landreth, “Becoming the Indians: Fashioning Arkansas State University’s Indians,” in *Team Spirits: The Native American Mascots Controversy*, ed. C. Richard King and Charles Fruehling Springwood (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 46-63.

¹⁰⁵ Landreth, “Becoming the Indians,” 46-63.

The University adopted a Native American family to be their mascots: Chief Big Track, the Princess, and the Brave. The chief and his male companion do not resemble the historical Osage image. Instead of a shaved head and traditional buckskin clothing, they instead wear a feathered headdress and long black wigs, the same thing one might see in Hollywood depictions of Indians. Halftime shows consist of the “War Drum Ritual”, wherein new freshman football players take shifts for one hour beating on an Indian war drum, against the teepee backdrop in the endzone of the football field where Chief Big Track and his family will ultimately arrive mounted on horses running laps around the stadium. “The demeaning stereotypes endure, causing Native American children in the community to ask their parents, ‘why do they make Indians look like clowns? And ‘why are they making fun of us?’”¹⁰⁶ The University was faced with upheaval from the Native American community, which ultimately pressured the President of the University to alter or outright change the mascot. The Native American tribes were granted their wish in 2008 when the University officially changed their name from the “Indians” to the “Red Wolves”. The University also created a stronger Tia Pia Society voice on campus, which is a group of preservationists of Native American culture.

In a 2008 court agreement with local Native American tribes, the University to waive out-of-state tuition for Native American students who are descendants of Native societies that once lived in the state, thereby considering all Native American students of Arkansas state origin as in-state tuition students.. An annual “powwow” is held on campus to educate the students about Native American culture with all proceeds supporting a scholarship fund for Native American students attending the University. According to John Fantana, an Arkansas resident and Native American, schools like Arkansas State University who either refuse to change their

¹⁰⁶ Landreth, “Becoming the Indians,” 46-63.

mascot or have an unflattering Native American depiction “Are adamant about keeping our myths intact. The mascots, like the myths, make us feel good about ourselves (for having successfully conquered the impossible foe, the Indians) so we justify the use of Native American culture through stereotypes and mascots by claiming to be ‘honoring’ the peoples these actions degrade.”¹⁰⁷

Arkansas State University was looking at creating an exaggerated image and a dramatized entertainment for fans at stadiums by creating a fictionalized Native American family. This caused severe psychological effects on Native Americans, who were left asking why they are being portrayed as clowns or sideshow attractions. While this drastic take on creating an image is superficially similar to what Florida State went through, there are clear diversions. Arkansas State did attempt to educate the community and work with the Native American peoples, but it was too little too late as the damage was already done, and the mascots, logos, and images had already done their psychological damage on Native peoples. It seems like Arkansas State’s effort to include Native American tribes were failures as they were attempts to distract naysayers from the many years of negativity. The education of the community came too late, and the continuous use of the mascot and imagery up until 2015 shows that it was a distraction.

When Florida State began educating their community, the effort was led by educated professors and the Tribe itself, while the Tribe was already involved in the creation of the logos, mascots, and imagery used on campus. Florida State educated their community starting in the 1970s, Arkansas State was late to the game as the foundation of the mascot was built on fictitious links and stereotyping. Florida State educated the community, and took their efforts than Arkansas State has Florida State has also had much more dialogue with the local Native peoples,

¹⁰⁷ Landreth, “Becoming the Indians,” 46-63.

whereas Arkansas State was blinded by boosters and the desire to bring in more money through their athletic department by using Native American mascots and intertwining this with merchandise and ticket sales. Florida State wanted an image to recruit athletes, but did not go as far as succumbing to financial benefits and booster pressures. Just as in the cases of University of North Dakota and Syracuse University, Arkansas State made many missteps in creating a fictitious link to local tribes and trying to play it off to the community as authentic. This is a stark contrast to Florida State, and by coming to terms with what these universities did wrong can one fully understand how to best emulate what Florida State did right in correctly building a relationship with local tribes and communities. Florida State has set the best example of a university improving public relations with their local Native American tribes.

Chapter 5

Opposing Arguments

The Florida State University Seminoles and their improvement in race relations with the Seminole Tribe have been studied and reviewed in this thesis. There is one thing in common that continually crops up when examining Florida State's case: there are still critics of the usage of the Seminole nickname and imagery. From people in the Oklahoma Seminole Tribe to advocacy groups, there continue to be those arguing for the elimination of Native American mascots and nicknames entirely because of the psychological effects such iconography could carry. That stigma of dehumanization of Native Americans weigh heavily on children as their people have been rendered as caricatures and sideshow entertainment rather than living and breathing human beings. In some cases advocates of eliminating Native American mascots, such as the National Congress of American Indians, have vague arguments because it is difficult to determine what can and should be classified as racially insensitive or borderline racist imagery from athletic teams. Is it a specific racial slur donning team names that make it offensive? Or the usage of stereotypical smiling natives that make it racist? Advocates urging for the elimination of Native American mascots have a blurry grey area in their argument. If tackling potentially racist nicknames and mascots is the primary goal, why were the San Diego State Aztecs not part of the NCAA sanctions against racially aggressive team names? In looking at the professional sports world, how come the National Football League's Kansas City Chiefs have not been cited for their usage of Native American imagery more frequently? These advocate groups blur what constitutes racially insensitive and racist.

Although Florida State University has Native American imagery and mascots, they tailored them to respect and honor the people whom they purport to represent. For example, in the summer of 2020, it was announced that the NFL team, the Washington Redskins, and the MLB team, the Cleveland Indians, were going to change their team nicknames. The Washington Redskins, for over seventy years have been pushed to change their name because the term “Redskin” is a vicious racial slur towards natives. For the Cleveland Indians, it has been their smiling Native American caricature on their uniforms and memorabilia, Chief Wahoo, that was the spark plugs for the conversation surrounding racial insensitivity. Florida State University does not have the same blatant offenses as these teams. Florida State has a unique relationship with the Seminole Tribe, taking their opinions and words into consideration before placing statues on campus, and in regards to the movement and clothing of Chief Osceola. Florida State University’s willingness to connect with the Seminole Tribe, opening the lines of communication that other universities, like the University of North Dakota, did not do, has enabled Florida State avoid much of the ambiguity as to what constitutes racially insensitive mascots and imagery. Should Florida State suffer the same consequences as a team with a racial slur as their team name? Or be under a proverbial microscope when teams with no connection to Native American tribes still use the Tomahawk Chop and “sing Indian” at arenas? Florida State, in this miasma of ambiguity, remained consistent and dedicated to the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and should not be lumped in with teams that have failed to build any connection with local tribes.

Native American tribes from around the country have scoffed at the usage of Native American mascots. One particular argument for why they wish to eliminate Native American mascots in their entirety stems from the psychological impact it may have on Native American children and the biases it may create in non-Native children. According to Patricia Merzlak, a

member of the Native American Intertribal Association: “What other living race of people would allow themselves to be used as mascots? Would we allow mascots like the Washington Blackskins, The San Francisco Chinks, or the Los Angeles Wetbacks? It’s shameful, embarrassing, to even write those words. Yet American Indians are dishonored by derogatory words and images, in the name of athletics.”¹⁰⁸ Merzlak, and others within these groups, believe that Native American mascots are racist and shameful, and would have severe psychological impacts. By having such names, mascots, and imagery, children will grow up feeling dehumanized, that their people are nothing more than a halftime show at which to laugh and clap.

This may be true in some instances at the collegiate level, where educating the community on the Native American tribes and interacting with them is not practiced. It was seen at the University of North Dakota that without educating the campus community about Native Americans, people were more likely to engage in racial antics demeaning Native American students. By not educating people on, and collaborating with, the Native American community, and by not making this connection visible, ignorance and biases will continue to reign supreme. The school administration and key figures have to be models for the community, and lead towards openness in dialogue with other racial groups. When examining other universities, the critical step of education and immersion in widespread knowledge of the people was missing. When comparing these institutions lacking in such infrastructure, Florida State has clearly fostered this educational understanding of Native American tribes, and the Seminoles in particular, as well as, tolerance and willingness to have discussions with people in a constructive and successful way. Psychologically, for adults and children the collaboration with the Tribe and

¹⁰⁸ Patricia Merzlak, “It’s Time to Change Erwin’s Mascot,” *Mountain Express* 2 Sept. 1999.

community, as well as the integration of Seminole culture, has proven a benefit rather than a hindrance. Whereas Native American groups and organizations are arguing the psychological side of the mascot controversy, the Oklahoma Seminole Tribe, on the other hand, has a different grievance.

Florida State University is caught between two sensitive poles while having the “Seminole” name attached to the University; the issue of cultural and racial identity. When analyzing the psychological effects it had on Native American children to be seen as “less than” only scratches the surface of challenges Florida State University has to traverse. Psychological impacts on Native American children and descendants can be remedied by showing good faith efforts, like being involved in schools on reservations and opening up scholarship programs, which Florida State has done. Juxtaposing racial and cultural identity of Native American people are difficult to balance. Jody Potts, a Native American voiced her displeasure over Native American mascots: “Are we subhuman? Are we inferior to whites? That kind of puts us in a class with all these other mascots. You know, eagles, donkeys and pigs. That’s really disrespectful.”¹⁰⁹ The idea that Native Americans, as a race and a culture are being viewed in the same category as animals is degrading to Native Americans. This goes beyond the psychological harm of seeing a Native American in a headdress and stereotypical deerskin garb, this pulls at the strings of racial and cultural inequity.

Dennis Tibbets, Director of Native American Studies at Northern Michigan University and a descendant of the Anishanabee Tribe voiced her displeasure of being viewed as subhuman: “it’s the idea that they have a sign in front of the school with a warrior. Then they tell you, ‘we’re honoring you by making you our mascot.’ Like we’re some good luck charm. To me it’s a

¹⁰⁹ Greg Garber, “What’s in a Name?” *ESPN Magazine* 3 June 2010.

symbol of ignorance.”¹¹⁰ The stereotypes and lack of understanding of the Native American culture and race, not only will have lasting psychological effects, but Native Americans will feel inferior to other races and by having these mascots foster a hostile learning environment. Florida State University, in this regard are in a very precarious position of trying to balance the racial and cultural identity of Native Americans at their University and doing so with respect. Navigating these tumultuous waters ripe with contention from members of opposing tribes is not new to Florida State University, but in an emerging age of racial awareness the issue gets amplified.

According to Richard King and Charles Fruehling Springwood, “while the cartoonist might be admonished for his insensitivity, it can be argued that Florida State University itself is guilty of propagating precisely the kind of environment in which Native Americans are likely to be victimized by such forms of symbolic violence.”¹¹¹ That this idea of “redness” and “whiteness” are converging in the creation of Florida State’s nicknames, symbols, and mascots where leadership at the University is out of touch with the cultural and racial identity of Native Americans. King and Springwood go even further saying: “Thus Osceola, as portrayed at FSU, offers a stereotypical representation of Native American cultures and histories informed by racist notions and romantic sentiments. In fact, we would argue, the FSU icon represents a generic Indianness as much as it signifies the Seminole people as such.”¹¹² This is a harsh criticism of the University that has worked tirelessly for decades to ensure their images are not only tasteful but

¹¹⁰ Garber, “What’s in a Name?”

¹¹¹ C. Richard King, “The Best Offense...Dissociation, Desire, and the Defense of Florida State University Seminoles,” in *Team Spirits: The Native American Mascots Controversy*, ed. C. Richard King and Charles Fruehling Springwood (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 129–156.

¹¹² King, “The Best Offense,” 129–156.

honorary to the Seminole people. When analyzing the collegiate and professional landscape, Florida State University has done more in terms of involving the Seminole Tribe of Florida in decision-making than other universities. University of North Dakota, Syracuse University, and Arkansas State have been mentioned in this thesis at length for their blatant racial undertones to their athletic atmosphere without even mentioning the University Illinois' Chief Illiniwek and St. John's University previous nickname, the "Redmen". The Seminole Tribe of Florida grants permission on symbols to be used around campus and discards the ones they deem as unrelated to the Tribe. Correspondence between the President of Florida State to the members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida are fluid and open, and the Tribes opinion on even the statues places around campus and the tribal members that speak at Commencement adds to how different Florida State is.

To assert that Florida State University and the Chief Osceola image is generic or racist is not fully comprehending the Universities involvement with the Seminole Tribe of Florida. The student that portrays Chief Osceola, the student must maintain excellent grades and be of good character. The clothing he wears depicting Osceola is sewn by the women of the Seminole Tribe.¹¹³ The University created a course for Florida State University students, with close collaboration with the Seminole Tribe that focuses on Seminole history and culture, and the administration has made it clear the University will not engage in any activity that does not have the approval of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.¹¹⁴ King and Springwood are misguided to assume that Florida State University has injected white racial stereotypes to Chief Osceola when the

¹¹³ Communications, University, "Relationship with the Seminole Tribe of Florida." *Relationship with the Seminole Tribe of Florida | Messages | University Communications*.

¹¹⁴ Communications, University, "Relationship with the Seminole Tribe of Florida."

Tribe themselves have a hand in making the clothing and educating the student who becomes Chief Osceola. King and Springwood mention, “perhaps the Florida State Seminole relationship with FSU’s Chief Osceola and his Renegade is indicative of having become ensnared in older, stereotypical narratives of Seminoleness.”¹¹⁵ This idea of racial hierarchy and that Florida State contaminated the Chief Osceola image based on “whiteness” is failing to look deeply at how involved the Seminole Tribe of Florida is on campus and at events. The early incarnation of Sammy Seminole would fit the criticism put forth by King and Springwood, however, the image and the relationship between the two entities evolved, so did Chief Osceola.

To further dispute King and Springwood’s idea that Florida State University and Chief Osceola is racist, in “Deconstructing the Mascot, Part 2”, Andrew Billings and Edward Black state that, “the FSU logo utilizing the war-painted face scored among the most splintering of public sentiments, with a high standard deviation and a generally lower mean than most other images.”¹¹⁶ A survey of over 1,000 respondents rated mascots and images from athletic teams that have Native American mascots. In terms of both acceptability and inoffensiveness, this survey utilized an eleven point scale (0-10), with a higher number representing less problematic logos on acceptability/inoffensiveness measures and lower scores indicating more problematic logos.¹¹⁷ Ideally the higher the number the less problematic the image is perceived. According to these acceptability and offensive ratings set forth by Billings and Black, Florida State University

¹¹⁵ C. Richard King and Charles Fruehling Springwood, “Sammy Seminole, Jim Crow, and Osceola: Playing Indian and Racial Hierarchy at Florida State University,” in *Beyond the Cheers*, 75–98.

¹¹⁶ Andrew C. Billings and Jason Edward Black, *Mascot Nation: The Controversy over Native American Representations in Sports* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018). *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctv6zdc19. Accessed 10 Aug. 2020.

¹¹⁷ Billings and Black, *Mascot Nation*.

“scored lower than either of the other two logos in our survey,”¹¹⁸ meaning that Florida State images were judged more favorably when compared to other Native American images. The Seminole image earned a 5.42 acceptability score and a 5.29 in offensive score compared to the Cleveland Indians scores of 4.28 and 4.06, respectively. Since Florida State had a higher number, their image was designated as being less problematic and offensive when compared to the Cleveland Indians’ Chief Wahoo image. The scores from Billings and Black look at whether the images from the University are offensive but do not take into consideration the relationship between the University and the Tribe; if this was taken into consideration the numbers may be much lower. Regardless, the numbers given from Black and Billings refute King and Springwood’s assertion that Florida State University images are racist.

Arkansas State was criticized for their “Indians” mascot due to the severe psychological effects it would have on children and others within the Native American community. Their mascot would have donned stereotypical headdress and engage in loud whooping noises to get the fans interested and energized for the action on the field. Arkansas State, along with University of North Dakota and Syracuse University, just to name a few offending parties, engaged in the use of these stereotypical images and mascots in the name of sports, and for the purpose of having a strong and stoic nickname. These universities intentionally created a false narrative: “The school’s mascots do not reflect the Indian heritage of the state because they have been fashioned to resemble ‘Indians’ portrayed in western movies.”¹¹⁹

Florida State University mitigated this false narrative in several ways. When looking at the issue at Arkansas State, where that particular university did not reflect the Native American

¹¹⁸ Billings, and Black. *Mascot Nation*.

¹¹⁹ Landreth, “Becoming the Indians,” 46-63.

heritage of the state, Florida State was able to avoid this pitfall by actively engaging with the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Florida State University instituted a Native American history course to educate students on campus, and by getting Seminole Tribe members to participate in the dressing and training Chief Osceola, they are better in tune with the local Seminole culture. A common thread between University of North Dakota, Syracuse University, and Arkansas State is that they all created false narratives and connections with fictional Native American links to campus life. Rather than stereotyping Native Americans in general and making their images look like a “western movie”, Florida State’s continuous communication with the Seminole Tribe on images and statues around campus highlights that the University is not intending to create an environment that belittles or dehumanizes a peoples, but rather making it one of education, dialogue, and respect.

To go a step further, when looking at other universities that have Native American mascots and struggle with the psychological stigma that accompanies children were the most impacted; “The demeaning stereotypes endure, causing Native American children in the community to ask their parents, ‘why do they make Indians look like clowns? And ‘why are they making fun of us?’”¹²⁰ This assumption is true at other universities, however Florida State mitigates this psychological impact on children by awarding members of the Seminole Tribe a scholarship to Florida State University, as well as Seminole Tribe inclusion in campus programs. Florida State helps schools on the Tribe’s reservation, which has a population of more than 3,000.¹²¹ The Seminole Tribe also sponsors the Bobby Bowden Award, presented to a football

¹²⁰ Landreth, “Becoming the Indians,” 46-63.

¹²¹ Eddie Pells, “Supported by Tribe, Florida State Has No Issues with Using ‘Seminole’ as Nickname,” *St. Augustine Record*, 5 Jan. 2014.

player who demonstrates excellence on the field and in the classroom and community.¹²² As Florida State University is actively involved in the education and success of the Seminole people, the University is changing the narrative that Native American mascots make the people look like clowns. Instead, the University is investing in the success and future of the people whom they intend to positively represent. It is also important to note that when Tribe members travel to the campus to crown the king and queen for homecoming, they are dressed in traditional Seminole regalia, and the Seminole Tribe members march with graduating seniors at commencement, as well as participating in building “chickee” dwellings on campus and their involvement in campus pow-wows. Florida State has done a lot to mitigate the feelings of psychological dehumanization with the Tribe’s inclusion on campus, something that was severely lacking in other campus cases.

Critics often cite Florida State’s commitment to working very closely with the Seminole Tribe of Florida, has gained them wide support over the use of their Seminole name. However, the majority of the Seminole Nation does not reside in Florida. The larger Seminole Nation is located in Oklahoma and critics point to the fact that Florida State does not have approval from the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma. Florida State University has worked closely locally with the Seminole Tribe of Florida to ensure respect to the Seminole culture. However, for decades a loud critic of the usage of Chief Osceola as a mascot, and of the Seminole nickname, have stemmed from their own kin. David Narcomey, member of the Oklahoma Seminole Nation and fierce advocate for the removal of Native American mascots, as well as many key figures in the Oklahoma Seminole Council, have urged the NCAA to take action against Florida State. Florida State University was, in 2005, placed on the NCAA list of universities with racially aggressive

¹²² Pells, “Supported by Tribe.”

and insensitive mascots, and was followed by post-season tournament sanctions, because of the opposition from the Oklahoma Seminole Nation. In response to this, Florida State University's President, T.K. Wetherell, wrote a three-page appeal to the NCAA explaining that Florida State does not employ a mascot, but rather a symbol of the people they wish to emulate.

It is true that Seminole Nation of Oklahoma has been a loud critic, especially member David Narcomey. Members of the Seminole Nation have shown up to protests and rallies at Florida State urging for the removal of the Chief Osceola mascot, and a changing of the nickname. The *Florida Flambeau* has documented these interactions. On July 16, 2005, the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma's governing body, the General Council, voted 18-2 against a resolution condemning the use of American Indian names and mascots. Oklahoma Seminole Nation Attorney General, Jennifer McBee, states: "The Nation took the position it was not going to condemn the use of Native American mascots nor condemn the Florida State Seminoles."¹²³ Not only do members of the Oklahoma Nation attend Florida State, but the University has created scholarship and education programs for members of both the Seminole Tribe of Florida and of Oklahoma. McBee asserts that people like David Narcomey do not speak for the 14,000 members of the Seminole Nation, nor did the NCAA ask the Oklahoma Seminole Nation their stance on the issue. Shortly after this, Florida State was removed from the NCAA sanctioned list of universities with aggressive and insensitive mascots. The loudest critics for decades have been the Oklahoma Seminole Nation, however since 2005 a bridge has been mended between the kin. Sometimes the most outspoken critics do not speak for the whole nation, and the steps Florida State has taken in creating scholarships and programs for members of both Seminole Tribes is an

¹²³ "Seminole Nation OK with Use of Mascot," NBC Sports. Archived from the original on February 7, 2012. Retrieved February 6, 2013.

olive branch for future collaboration. Collaboration might be more fruitful for all parties involved than meets the eye.

To add a bit of nuance to the argument, it is important to note the dynamic between the modern Seminole Tribe and Florida State, and modern Floridian politics. The Seminole Tribe of Florida has a long history in the state, their tactics during the Seminole Wars, and avoidance of the fate that befell many other Native American tribes are legendary. Although the Seminole Tribe of Florida is smaller in numbers compared to the greater Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, why should the state or University want or care to include the Tribe in these dealings? Why are other states and Tribes are not being consulted to the extent the Seminole Tribe is? Why does the Tribe go out of its way to defend and vocalize their support for Florida State University? One would argue the Tribe is benefitting in some financial way, in accordance with the usage of their name. To understand the dynamic, it is important to research and analyze the role the Seminole Tribe of Florida plays within the state as being critical.

It is no secret that the Seminole Tribe of Florida owns six casinos in the state of Florida. They are not required to share the financial information of the casinos, nor does the Tribe volunteer this information. The checks the Tribe signs to the state are very telling; “According to the media outlet’s calculations, the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Tampa is its biggest cash cow, with revenue totaling \$967 million during the fiscal year...”¹²⁴ From all their gaming locations, the Tribe brought in over \$2.3 billion, compared to the state-owned casinos and racetracks only bringing in \$578 million. Not to mention, the Tribe gives between 12 to 15 percent of their profits to the state. When the NCAA handed down their 2005 sanctions against

¹²⁴ Samantha Beckett, “Florida Seminole Casinos Generating Massive Revenues for Tribe., *Casino.org*, 10 Aug. 2017.

Florida State University, they placed them on a list of universities with abusive and offensive mascots and nicknames. The State rushed to support the University, with many of those in the Florida State Legislature being Florida State alums, eager to defend their alma mater.

The additional layer in the conversation is how intertwined the Tribe is with the state. Not only were state officials acting out of pride for their university, but they were also cognizant of the revenue the Tribe pumps into the state economy. It is with the national attention on Florida State University's team on the field, and their continued success on the gridiron, do they bring attention to the Seminole Tribe and a willingness to support their casinos. It exists cyclically; the Tribe does not directly benefit financially from the University using the Seminole name, but their casinos are a huge benefit to the Tribe and the State. It is being seen whether this revenue from the casinos has a trickle-down effect: if the Seminole Tribe of Florida brings in a lot of money, the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma may too reap some benefits. With the revenue produced by the casinos, the Seminole Tribe of Florida has a seat at the table of state decision-making, and has gained a very loud voice in how things ought to function. Even when the State and the Tribe squabble over the card games patrons at their venues can play, the Tribe forces the State's hand.

According to Professor Bob Jarvis, an expert in Indian Gambling history in the state of Florida, "They always refer to themselves as the unconquered tribe. They take that very, very seriously and there is this feeling that what we do on our land is not the government's concern. There's certainly a lot of very ugly history between the state of Florida and these Indian tribes. While that is true in every state, it's more so when you throw this much money into the mix."¹²⁵ The Seminole People have been one of Florida's poorest demographics, while in the course of

¹²⁵ Richard Luscombe, "Florida Seminole Tribe Goes to 'War' Again with State over Gambling Income," *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 13 June 2019.

two generations the Tribe became the richest in the State. The Seminole Tribe of Florida is intertwined with Floridian politics and state profits. It is critical that they support and assist Florida State University in maintaining a respectful atmosphere to learn about the Tribe because national attention of their name is critical in the continued success, and profit, for the Tribe and the State.

Although the Seminole Tribe benefits from their casino operations in the State of Florida, the Tribe is not selling out their high principles for money. According to federal law, tribes are sovereign nations and states cannot enforce civil codes on reservations within their borders. This includes that tribes will have more autonomy economically given how their reservation does business within their borders. In the tribes having the freedom to do business as they see fit, Native American tribes created a style of casino gambling on their reservations that conflicted with state and local laws. In 1988, the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act not only allowed tribes to continue operating their casinos, but clarified how tribes and states interact in regards to the casinos. What is occurring in Florida between the State and the Seminole Tribe is not unique. Native American Tribes are exempt from federal taxes, and do not have to pay taxes to the state or federal government. Tribes have worked with state and local governments to continue operating their casinos while giving the state a cut of the profits in exchange for the allowance for the playing of certain games, and for law enforcement, fire departments, and other essential works to be done on the reservation where these activities take places.

In Connecticut, the Mashantucket Pequot owns Foxwoods Resorts and Casinos, one of the world's largest casinos. The resort is 4.7 million square feet, has over 380 gaming tables, and 6,200 slot machines. The tribe negotiated with the State, who originally argued against the use of slot machines, that the state would get 15% of revenue from the machines in order for them to

continue operating them. A similar arrangement was agreed upon by the Mohegan Tribe in Connecticut. Although states and the federal government cannot tamper or impose taxes on Native American reservations, further clarity between the two entities is needed. Outsiders see two conflicting entities with different laws regulating them, but they are not witnessing the positives that are stemming from these gaming entities. Young adults are moving back to reservations, fueling an 11.5 percent population increase; adult employment is increasing by 26 percent; and there is a 14 percent decline in the number of working poor.¹²⁶

One could see the Seminole Tribe working with the State as corruption, or else as them selling their principles to the highest bidder, but to the contrary, they are not unlike other casinos on reservations. Like other tribes, the Seminole Tribe of Florida is collaborating with the state and communicating with them so they can continue their business ventures. The Seminole Tribe of Florida does have the added benefit of having a successful athletic program donning their Tribe name, but their business ventures are not unlike other tribes across the nation. The Seminole Tribe of Florida and Florida State University still are a paragon of good modern race relations, and this adds to that nuance at the larger state and federal government levels. By the tribe continuing to discuss and negotiate with the State to maintain their businesses, it sheds light on the need for constant communication that can begin to heal past historical tragedies. Florida State's on-the-field success translates to the casino's success. This does not negate the fact that the state and federal governments, and the Tribe need to negotiate and communicate to ensure the future success of the Tribe.

¹²⁶ Linda Gorman, *The Social and Economic Impact of Native American Casinos*. The National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://www.nber.org/digest/feb03/w9198.html>.

Florida State University and their usage of the Seminole nickname and imagery have proponents and opposers, but the University has been adamant in their commitment to honor and respect the Seminole people. The Seminole Tribe of Florida is intertwined in Floridian history, and the University has made it clear that education, and ensuring Florida State University's positive educational environment will enable the community to be respectful of the people. The State needs the University to pay homage to the Tribe, and have the community respect and honor them. The Tribe's payment to the state is essential. Aside from the financials, many look at the psychological side effects of having Native American mascots and the biases that stem from them. The University has responded well to these arguments, even the Oklahoma Seminole Nation in their resolution will not condemn Florida State University in their usage of the Seminole name. The Florida State Seminoles have been under the proverbial microscope for their mascot, and this may never change, given the current climate surrounding the racial relations crisis in this country. The University, the State, and the Seminole Nation have put up their support for the nickname as long as the University continues to honor, respect, and foster the culture of the unconquered people.

Conclusion

Florida State prides itself on educating the community and the student body about, not just the Seminole tribe, but Native American culture as a whole. When the NCAA listed Florida State University as one of its schools having an abusive and racially charged mascot, the Tribe and the University stood together. This unity stemmed from over fifty years of collaboration between the two institutions, conversing on ways the University can best represent the tribe to honor their legacy, while seeking Seminole input at every step. 2005 was not the end of Florida State University and the Seminole Tribe of Florida's relationship. If anything, the legal battles and media backlash brought the University and the Tribe closer together. The education and the deep-rooted mutual respect has been amplified after this point, and 2005 can be considered a turning point in the relationship. The first fifty years of the University's relationship was spent building inroads with the Tribe, enabling the education of the University leadership and students in order to honor and respect the Seminole name. From 2005 on the relationship has been strengthened with the ties previously forged with statues, seminars, and extracurricular activities that highlight how Florida State differs in comparison to other universities.

It is easy for universities to create a false link to a Native American tribe; to simply have a stereotypical Native American team name, a mascot with accompanying images, and name buildings after prominent members of the local tribe. However, if there is no honest connect or the connection is made in vain, the community will notice and Native American tribes will unite for change. Florida State University created a clear honorary link to the Seminole Tribe while also educating members of the community on the importance of this relationship. In 2006,

Florida State began offering “The History of the Seminoles and Southeastern Tribes” as a course, which covers the pre-contact era to the present with an emphasis on tribal perspectives.¹²⁷ Neil Jumonville, History Department Chairman, created the course in close collaboration with the Seminole Tribe. Florida State University History Department faculty consulted with three tribal representatives about the organization of the course, and the Seminole leaders suggested that the class include discussions of other Southeast tribes that predated their own¹²⁸. The class is offered every semester to all students at Florida State University, and immerses the students, not only in research of Native American history, but with direct access to members of the Seminole Tribe when they visit the class.

At the north end of Langford Green outside the south entrance to Doak S. Campbell Stadium is the massive statue called “Unconquered”. Standing approximately 31 feet tall, made out of bronze with a graphite base, it has become the new staple on campus. Since 2004 it has become a tradition at the University to light the tip of the spear at sunset the night before each home game, and having it stay illuminated until sunrise the morning after the game. Upon unveiling the statue, the University invited members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida to take part in the festivities, while also allowing them to give their seal of approval for the depiction. Stephen Reilly who spearheaded the project gives a broader meaning to the statue:

“Bill Durham’s creation of Renegade and Osceola, which adds such an impact to our home football games, was obviously the inspiration behind this statue. However, the ‘Unconquered’ statue more broadly celebrates the human spirit that will not be defeated. This statue does not depict any particular person or event. Rather, it symbolically portrays the unconquered spirit of the Seminole people of

¹²⁷ Florida State University. “2583: The Seminoles and the Southeastern Indians.” Tallahassee, Tallahassee.

¹²⁸ B. Kaczor, “FSU Launches Seminole History Class.” *Washington Post*. 28 November 2006.

the nineteenth century and the timeless legacy of that spirit that continues to burn bright into the future.”¹²⁹

The statue unveiling was done with members of the Seminole Tribe in attendance, and they had a presence on the committee to build the statue.

On October 21, 2006 the University unveiled another bronze statue to honor the Seminole Tribe called the “Seminole Family” during their Seminole Tribute Weekend. This weekend also included their football team wearing honorary specialty jerseys. Former Florida State University President commented, “We are so proud to have this beautiful statue on our campus. It clearly conveys the tradition and the great spirit of the Seminole Tribe of Florida – a spirit that stands as a model of courage for every member of the Florida State community.”¹³⁰ The University also unveiled the Seminole Tribe honorary jerseys to be worn by the football team during this tribute weekend. Their jerseys have the Seminole Tribe of Florida flag colors: red, yellow, white and black. It features the word “unconquered” on one pant leg and “Seminoles” on the other. Nike designed the jerseys as a tribute to the Tribe’s courage and perseverance. According to Dave Hart, Director of Athletics at Florida State University said:

“This weekend represents a special opportunity for us to honor the Seminole tribe as well as express our unwavering appreciation for the privilege they have granted us to call ourselves Seminoles...Our hope is that this tribute will assist us in our efforts to further spread the knowledge of the unconquered spirit of the Seminole Tribe.”¹³¹

Adding the colors of the Seminole Tribe of Florida’s flag was a special touch that helps to bring the University and the Tribe closer. The jerseys were created to honor and show respect to the

¹²⁹ Jason Henderson, “Unconquered,” *Florida State University*, www.facilities.fsu.edu/sights/?p=34.

¹³⁰ “Florida State to Kickoff Seminole Tribute Weekend with Special Uniform/ Statue Unveiling,” *Florida State Seminoles*, <https://Seminoles.com/>, 3 Oct. 2006.

¹³¹ “Florida State to Kickoff.”

Tribe, while the “Seminole Family” statue was intended to share the courageous story of the Seminoles in the 1830s.



Lax, Bill. "The Seminole Family." *FSU's Monuments and Memorials: Seminole Family*, 2006.



"College Football Uniforms News." *Nike News*, 11 Apr. 2014.

In April 2012, Florida State revived the Cimarron character to appear at certain Florida State athletic events. Cimarron is a more kid friendly character dressed like a horse, and is used in a variety of ways. The reason for this new character is because the University limits Chief Osceola and Renegade to football games, so Cimarron is used in lieu of them at other events. Assistant Athletic Director of Marketing and Promotions Jason Dennard said, “Cimarron has been revived to give a promotional presence at other distinguished events. It also allows us to participate in some opportunities that were not appropriate for the distinguished symbol of Osceola and Renegade.”¹³² The University realizes the sanctity of the Osceola and Renegade mascot traditions, thus Cimarron is a welcomed reminder to the community and the Tribe that

¹³² Erik Hall, “What Is the FSU Basketball Mascot? Here’s the Answer Florida State Fans.” *Tallahassee Democrat*, 5 Jan. 2019.

Osceola and Renegade are sacred traditions that are solely intended for honoring the Seminole Tribe.

Another tradition at Florida State University that pays homage to the Seminole Tribe of Florida involves the University's homecoming weekend festivities. On October 26th, 2019, Miss Florida Seminole Durante Blais-Billie, and Junior Miss Florida Seminole Aubree Billie arrived on campus to show their support for the Seminoles football team, and to also be a part of the festivities. Both ladies are a part of the Tribe's Princess Programs. They took part in the homecoming parade, met Florida State University President John Thrasher and his wife Jean, and took the field at the Florida State football game to crown the homecoming king and queen. Durante tells the Seminole Tribune, "It was really amazing. You could really feel their love for their school and also or the relationship they have with our people."¹³³ Also taking place at the homecoming was a pow-wow, which is a Native American way of coming together to sing, dance, and make new friends in the name of preserving and enriching their heritage.

Florida State University is a microcosm for greater racial relations issues in the United States. By actively analyzing Florida State's history of refining their mascot and going through the motions of building a relationship can the United States mend some very deep rooted racial issues. At the university level they are working with a smaller group of individuals, specifically on-campus and in the areas around the university. Florida State University has global reach, the Seminole Nation spans two states, Florida and Oklahoma, and the issue of Native American mascots has infiltrated national media. The leadership at Florida State, along with the ways they have interwoven Native American culture into the college experience, has made the community and the Tribe itself comfortable with their portrayal. When we look at the state of the United

¹³³ Kevin Johnson, "Tribe's Princesses Shine at FSU Homecoming," *Seminole Tribune*, 4 Nov. 2019.

States, other racial groups can learn something from Florida State and the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Even leadership roles within our country can learn from the Presidents and administrators at Florida State University in regards to better handling these situations.

In 2020, in the aftermath of the George Floyd death at the hands of Minneapolis police officers, major United States cities exploded in protests and marches demanding change. Not just change in reforming the police departments, but also sweeping changes in federal and state laws. Unfortunately, this issue of racial inequality and inequity is not new, and it has seemingly reared its ugly head annually when the media reports on the death of another African American at the hands of a police officer. In a 2019 Pew Research Center report it is highlighted that “About seven-in-ten say race relations are bad, and half say it is unlikely that black people will eventually have equal rights with whites.”¹³⁴ A deeper dive into the data from Pew shines a light on the fact that our country has a long way to go to improve racial relations with African Americans. A plurality of Americans (45%) say the country has not gone far enough in giving black people equal rights with whites¹³⁵ and when looking at the African American population polled, 78% say the United States has not gone far enough. 58% of all adults polled say that race relations are bad, 71% of African Americans and 60% of Hispanic adults note that relations are not only bad but getting worse.

As noted by Kenneth Nunn, a law professor and race relations expert at the University of Florida, under President Donald Trump racial issues may be exacerbated, “In very

¹³⁴ Anna Brown, “Key Findings on Americans’ Views of Race in 2019,” *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 9 Apr. 2019.

¹³⁵ Brown, “Key Findings.”

straightforward terms; he hasn't really tried to hide it at all.¹³⁶ Racial incidents have risen because of this laissez-faire mentality from the commander-in-chief. To add to our state of racial relations after the election of Donald Trump, "About two-thirds of the respondents said it's more common for those with racist or racially insensitive views to express them than before Trump was elected, and 45% said it has become more acceptable to do so."¹³⁷ This is supported by the Unite the Right Rally held in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, a year after Donald Trump was elected, where many White Supremacists and Neo-Nazi groups gathered. According to the Brookings Institute, "FBI Data show that since Trump's election there has been an anomalous spike in hate crimes concentrated in counties where Trump won by larger margins. It was the second-largest uptick in hate crimes."¹³⁸ The Pew Data illuminates something in our country, and President Trump has not done much to improve racial relations, with his tweets urging for "Law & Order" and stricter police activity following the protests.

About six-in-ten [poll respondents] say the legacy of slavery affects the position of black people in American society today either a great deal (31%) or a fair amount (32%)¹³⁹ which should not come as a surprise to anyone. The Civil War ended 150 years ago and with the reabsorption of the Confederacy back into the Union, the Civil Rights Movement lasted well into the 1960s, which was only sixty years ago. In historical terms, these events are not that far removed, these events are part of recent history, and the children of the Civil Rights Movement

¹³⁶ Jorge L. Ortiz, "Poll: Americans Say Trump Has Made Race Relations Worse," *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 10 Apr. 2019.

¹³⁷ Ortiz, "Poll: Americans Say."

¹³⁸ Vanessa Williamson and Isabella Gelfand, "Trump and Racism: What Do the Data Say?" *Brookings*, Brookings, 13 Aug. 2019.

¹³⁹ Brown, "Key Findings."

and the segregated South are grandparents today, to put it perspective. Despite progress made since the 1960s , many African American dreams are deferred:

“from the early 1960’s, when blacks enjoyed the ‘perverse equality’ of almost uniform poverty in which even the best-off blacks could seldom pass on their status to their children....black middle class would be highly gratified by its recent and dramatic rise in status and that persistently poor blacks would be frustrated and embittered by their unchanging or worsening fate.”¹⁴⁰

2020 has amplified these feelings among Americans with a series of police killings of African Americans. It is difficult for one individual to change the mindset of millions of Americans, and it will certainly take continuous education and leadership across industries to change their thinking, but it starts at the local level before one can think nationally.

To initiate this change, at the heart of the issue is police reform. In Camden, NJ, the police department was disbanded in 2013, crime in the city went down by half with officers holding outdoor parties for residents and introducing themselves to members of the community. “It starts from an officer’s first day: When a new recruit joins the force, they’re required to knock on the doors of homes in the neighborhood they’re assigned to patrol. They introduce themselves and ask neighbors what needs improving.”¹⁴¹ Camden can be seen as a model for police departments across the country for how they relate to, connect with, and learn from the community they serve. This is analogous to Florida State University when they looked internally to their campus first when using a particular mascot and image before turning to the community to buy-in. Florida State University achieved an incredible victory in racial relations with Native Americans, in particular the Seminole Tribe, around the same time as African Americans since

¹⁴⁰ Jennifer L. Hochschild, “American Racial and Ethnic Politics in the 21st Century: A Cautious Look Ahead,” *Brookings*, Brookings, 28 July 2016.

¹⁴¹ Scottie Andrew, “This City Disbanded Its Police Department 7 Years Ago. Here’s What Happened Next,” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 10 June 2020.

the Civil Rights Movement. Change has to happen at the local level before change can be realized at the highest national levels. Florida State realized this in communicating and learning from the Seminole Tribe of Florida, asking for their opinions and interactions at events. That same educational process and open dialogue is what is needed in our country now more than ever. Florida State University started by educating the local community and the campus about the Seminole Tribe, and through this the University built inroads with the Tribe. For our country to be successful, educating, listening, and willing to adapt and coexist is critical.

In this thesis, I argued that Florida State University has created positive racial relations with the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Upon the student body's vote to name the athletics program after the Seminole Tribe, head football coach Bobby Bowden began the dialogue between the Tribe and the University. He contacted the Tribe to ensure the early incarnation of Chief Osceola had authentic clothing, paint, and engaged the audience as a warrior would. When Chief Osceola would meet fans or be on the field he had a stoic demeanor, never smiled or laughed, always remained somber in facial expression. From there, in the 1960s and 1970s, the University began educating the students and the community about Native American culture, particularly from the Seminole Tribe. This grassroots approach taught the students and community about the Seminole Tribe, what makes them special, and how their history is interwoven in Floridian history. The University from here would include the Tribe in decisions from creating statues or using certain words and symbols around campus. Members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida do talks and hold “pow-wows” on campus to strengthen the bond between the school community and the Tribe. The University also created a scholarship program so children of the Seminole Tribe can get into Florida State University.

By understanding the history of Florida State and the ebbs and flows of their program can one understand the importance of the link between University and Tribe. On the surface, it may seem like Florida State University invented a false image in the name of college athletics, that the usage of the Seminole name was to attract athletes and emulate the “unconquered spirit”. However this is barely scratching the surface. Florida State University could have gone down the same path as University of North Dakota, Syracuse University or Arkansas State University, in inventing stereotypical Native American caricatures and false tribal links to local history and campus life. However Florida State University went in a different direction entirely. The deep rooted history of the Seminole Tribe in Florida, in the areas where the University now encompasses. That history of a Tribe that never surrendered and never gave up despite impossible odds is what the University wishes to honor, respect, and pay homage too.

American History is far from perfect, from the treatment of Native Americans during the Trail of Tears to African Americans under Jim Crow, the United States has many scars it wishes to shake in hindsight. What Florida State University achieved in their racial relations with the Seminole Tribe of Florida is the silver lining in racial relations in the United States. The gradual steps the University had to clear before gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the law and to the NCAA are important to note for greater racial implications. Change is possible; education, communication, and respecting a history and a people is critical to building a healthy relationship. It is important to see where other universities went wrong in how they dealt with their local tribes, and conversely it is important to document how Florida State managed to gain support from all swaths of life in their usage of the Seminole image.

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