

Native Americans

## MEMORANDUM

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW

DATE: November 2, 1977

TO: Melvin Mounts, Vice President, Student Affairs

SUBJECT: Use of the American Indian as a Symbol of Syracuse University.

From: (ONKWEHONWENEHA Native American Student Association of Syracuse University)

The following statement and reasons represent the general consensus of Onkwehonenaha.

I. We oppose the use of the American Indian as a symbol of Syracuse University:

The basic attitudes and values that Native Americans hold in high esteem as they pertain to their traditional culture and tribal heritages are not adaptable to non-Indian symbolism. Too often the well-intentioned but inadequately informed may add an "Indian" flavor which may be beneficial to the conscience of the dominant society but actually results in illusory and insensitive depictions. While symbols may draw attention to a school establishment, in the abstract it does not foster respect for Native American traditions and is not tangible proof that there is no prejudice against Indians. We believe the most effective broad role of the school in the area of Indian culture & traditions is not to symbolize our heritage but to teach tolerance and appreciation by example and simply accept and respect diverse Native American Cultures for what they are today.

II. We strongly oppose the manner in which the American Indian as a symbol of Syracuse University is presently used.

This opposition rests on our belief that the portrayal of the American Indian as a "mascot" or "caricature" of Syracuse University athletic teams and other programs and activities is degrading to Indian people and culture and represents a blatant form of racism based on a cruel and distorted stereotype. We are the representatives of the Native American community and are aware of our rights and responsibilities. We are here to take advantage of educational opportunity. We ask you to alleviate your own ignorance by discontinuing immediately the inaccurate and stereotypic treatment of American Indians by use of the Saltine Warrior caricature which is damaging to us individually and as a group.

III. We therefore request a hearing before the proper administrative authority empowered to terminate the use of the American Indian as a symbol of Syracuse University and the present practice of portraying the American Indian as the "Mascot" or "caricature" of various S. U. programs and activities.