

Resolution Proposing an Alternative Mascot for SDSU

Whereas, the SDSU Senate, on November 7, 2017, passed the “Resolution to Eliminate the Mascot and Form a Task Force to Investigate the Aztec Identity” that explicitly state, “LET IT BE RESOLVED, that San Diego State University retire the current human representation of an Aztec as the school mascot as well as retire usage of spears or weapons that connote barbaric representations of the Aztec culture;”

Whereas, the University has not followed through with this resolution given that a student dressed as an “Aztec” warrior led cheers at the SDSU football and basketball games as recently as the 2019- 2020 season;

Whereas, the university has claimed that the Aztec Warrior is no longer a “mascot” but merely a “spirit leader” or “moniker”;

Whereas, the spirit of the “Resolution to Eliminate the Mascot and Form a Task Force to Investigate the Aztec Identity” was to end offensive human representation of Indigenous peoples, and moving from calling the Aztec Warrior a “mascot” to a “spirit leader” or “moniker” contradicts this spirit of the 2017 resolution;

Whereas, “Resolution to Eliminate the Mascot and Form a Task Force to Investigate the Aztec Identity” states, “LET IT BE RESOLVED, that San Diego State University form a task force to investigate and make recommendations regarding the appropriateness of

the continued usage of the Aztec moniker including symbols, signage, logos, branding, buildings, statues (e.g., Monty), awards (e.g., Zuma) and other references to the possible misappropriation of Aztec identity. This task force shall also make recommendations regarding an education component in relation to the Aztec identity;”

Whereas, the Aztec Identity Committee has been primarily focused with on restoring the “honor” of the Aztec moniker and educating the University community about Aztec culture, in hopes that better education will make the use of an Indigenous mascot educational, not offensive;

Whereas, as a state-funded public institution of higher education, SDSU should make decisions on fact-based evidence and research, and yet the report of the Aztec Identity Committee suggests that it did not fulfill a University-based mission of collecting evidence and research to make its decisions;

Whereas, there is no evidence in its report that the Aztec Identity Committee sought the counsel or advice of actual SDSU “Aztec” scholars/content experts such as Dr. Paula De Voss (History) or faculty in the Department of Chicano/a/x Studies (CCS) whose mission includes understanding the U.S. and transborder expressions of Mexcoehuani (Mexican-descended) peoples’ history and culture, nor considered the CCS department’s 2017 resolution calling for the complete retirement of the use of the “Aztec” moniker and mascot;

Whereas, there is no evidence in its report that the Aztec Identity Committee seriously considered the deleterious effect of Indigenous mascots on Indigenous students/faculty/staff and local Kumeyaay and other Indigenous communities by seeking counsel from the Department of Psychology or Student Psychological Services;

Whereas, there is no evidence that the Aztec Identity Committee sought counsel from faculty in the Department of American Indian Studies, which contains experts on contemporary Kumeyaay and California Indian culture and history.

Whereas, maintaining a human representation of an Aztec has demonstrable deleterious effects on the members of the Kumeyaay community, who are genuinely indigenous to the land SDSU resides on;

Whereas, the continued use of a human representation of an Aztec obscures and offends the true history and contemporary communities of Indigenous nations in the San Diego region and beyond;

Whereas, there is no evidence that the Aztec Identity Committee seriously considered evidence on the economic advantages of retiring racist and Indigenous based mascots, nor is there any evidence that they consulted faculty with relevant expertise in the Economics Department, or Fowler School of Business, or the SDSU's Sports MBA Program;

Whereas, two of the three Indigenous students/faculty appointed to the Aztec Identity Committee officially resigned in protest (sending letters of resignation to the committee chair and the SDSU President) of the Aztec Identity Committee's unwillingness to consider the needs of Indigenous students/faculty/staff, the Committee's unwillingness to genuinely engage in the deleterious effects of the mascots on Indigenous people, and the Committee's unwillingness to genuinely consider the possibility of removing the "Aztec" altogether;

Whereas, SDSU students, faculty, and staff (Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike) are still suffering the deleterious effects of a racist mascot, the existence of which makes it challenging for the University to recruit American Indian students, faculty, staff (a specific objective of the University's strategic plan), donations, and guest lecturers and residencies, all of which would greatly enhance the reputation of, the educational mission of, and diversity at SDSU;

Whereas, although SDSU has significantly improved its relationship with the local Kumeyaay communities through an invitation of bird singers at significant events like Convocation and Commencement, the creation of an official Land Acknowledgement, hiring a Tribal Liaison, creating a Native Resource Center on campus, and the creation of an SDSU Ethnic Studies Requirement, all of these progressive efforts are undermined by the continual use of an Indigenous caricature and nomenclature as an official part of the university that offends Native Americans and still overwrites the true indigenous history of the land that SDSU sits on;

Whereas, a land acknowledgement is a continuous living responsibility the University upholds through actions in community, solidarity, and support of the Kumeyaay;

Whereas, Indigenous mascots—because they are offensive, not honor creating—are daily removed by sports institutions, schools and universities throughout the United State of America and around the world;

Whereas, a solution to the problem of an offensive mascot is to stop using humans as mascots;

Whereas, SDSU could rectify its offensive past in regards Indigenous mascots by creating a new non-human mascot and one that would actually honor the Kumeyaay;

Whereas, using a Kumeyaay word for a local animal (such as Amu the big horn sheep) would be a genuine honor and recognition of respect for the Indigenous knowledge and epistemology of the Kumeyaay as opposed to a human representation of warrior which inescapably distills cultural identity to barbarous warrior stereotypes; and

Whereas, SDSU no longer has an official mascot;

Therefore, LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the SDSU University Senate urge the SDSU President and the SDSU Administration to empanel a commission, to be Chaired by the

SDSU Tribal Liaison Dr. Jacob Alvarado Waipuk (Kumeyaay from the San Pasqual Band), to work with Kumeyaay tribal leaders and community members to select at least two Kumeyaay-named animals as appropriate choices for a new official mascot of SDSU; and

LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the SDSU University Senate urge that, by no later than December 7, 2021, the aforementioned commission will recommend to the SDSU President, the SDSU University Senate, and the SDSU Associated Students, no less than 2 options for a Kumeyaay-named animal that shall serve as a new SDSU mascot; and

LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT, by no later than April 5, 2022, the SDSU University Senate urge the SDSU President and the SDSU Administration to work with the SDSU Associated Students and the SDSU University Senate to choose one of the Kumeyaay-named animals presented by the aforementioned commission, and to formally establish the chosen Kumeyaay-named animal as the new SDSU mascot.