

Logo by logo, ND school changes its brand

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP)—Duke without the Blue Devil? Notre Dame without the Fighting Irish? Most students and alumni at those proud universities wouldn't dream of dropping those enduring symbols of school pride.

But that's exactly what's happening at the University of North Dakota, where the state's flagship school is undergoing a mandatory facelift after the NCAA concluded the 80-year-old Fighting Sioux nickname was hostile and abusive.

North Dakota was the nation's last college to challenge an NCAA edict against American Indian mascots and images. But eventually, an NCAA lawsuit forced the school to reconsider, and the state Board of Higher Education said it would retire the nickname if the school didn't obtain permission from the Spirit Lake and Standing Rock Sioux tribes. Spirit Lake endorsed the nickname; Standing Rock did not.

So by next August, most vestiges of the nickname—logos on letterheads, Indian heads on walls and windows, even food items on menus—must be erased, removed, power-washed or painted over. School officials say they will take their time in finding a new nickname and logo.

"I would say a majority of students just assumed this day wasn't going to come," said Casey Hayden, a UND senior from Cottage Grove, Minn. "There are a lot of hurt feelings over it, but it's pointless to blame anyone and important to move forward."

The agreement with the NCAA says the school can keep historical

items related to the nickname and items embedded in the architecture. While college and community representatives continue to sort out what fits that definition, it's clear that a number of scholarships, clubs and events will need new identities.

It won't be simple. There's the Sioux Award, Spirit of Sioux Award, Fighting Sioux Club, Sioux Boosters, Sioux-Per-Swing, Sioux-Per-Burger, Fighting Sioux ROTC Battalion, Sioux Laundry, Sioux Fan Fest, Sioux Crew, Sioux Amateur Radio, Sioux Kids Club, Sioux Strong and Soaring Sioux.

Just to name a few.

"I didn't know we had the Soaring Sioux," said UND Indian studies professor Birgit Hans, a member of a committee helping with the transition. She was told it was a hot air balloon club.

School officials believe it should be relatively cheap and painless to remove most references to the logo on campus, which is not prominently displayed in most buildings. In some cases, a few coats of paint will do, such as a Fighting Sioux logo on the wall of the office of Lt. Col. Josh Sauls, head of the Fighting Sioux Army ROTC.

"We will make whatever adjustments need to be made," Sauls said. "The Army is taking no sides in this issue and are behind the university 100 percent."

But there are some exceptions, mostly in sports arenas.

The \$100 million Ralph Engelstad Arena, a privately owned building where UND plays hockey, has thousands of Indian-head logos, including a 10-foot sketch of an Indian head embedded in the granite

floor and brass medallions on the outside chairs of most rows.

Asked how many of the logos could be easily removed, arena manager Jody Hodgson said, “None.”

Although the agreement with the NCAA shows pictures of logos, trophies and banners that should remain intact, Hodgson said he’s still not clear on the final orders.

“At the time this settlement agreement was created, I don’t think anyone foresaw what was happening today, and that is transitioning away from the logo,” he said. “There’s still issues to be resolved there.”

The transition committee also is wrestling with its approach to private businesses that use the logo, including bars and restaurants that display banners and jerseys and those that use the name. One of the most popular eateries in town is the Big Sioux cafe, marked by an Indian statue near the entrance.

Bruce Smith and Kris Compton, who head the so-called Honoring History and Traditions Task Group, said they’re hoping those establishments will follow the college’s lead. The group plans to meet twice a month, with the next session scheduled for Nov. 30.

The school has said on a website dedicated solely to the nickname issue that fans will be allowed to wear the popular Sioux gear—sales on the hockey jersey have increased for five straight years—on campus.

“However, eventually, as a new nickname and logo are adopted, we expect to see less and less of the Fighting Sioux branding,” the website

says.

The university has set a June 30, 2011 deadline for retailers to sell off the last of their Sioux logo merchandise. Officials from a licensing company plan to canvass those merchants in July to make sure products are off the shelves—and officially become collector's items.

“By the time that deadline rolls around, I think you will see people buying as much of that merchandise as possible,” Hayden said.

Some fans have opted for more permanent souvenirs.

Magoo Boyer, owner of Magoo's Tattoos outside of Grand Forks, said he and his son, Kevin, have applied hundreds of Fighting Sioux tattoos over the last three decades. Interest dropped off during the nickname controversy—but none of their customers have shown buyer's remorse.

“I've never had anyone come back to get a Sioux logo covered up,” Magoo said.