Braves to Bulldogs: A History of Belmont Team Names

In the spring of 2000, as part of a unit on negative stereotyping in society, students in Paul Waterlander’s First Nations Studies 12 class examined the ways in which Canada’s aboriginal people were portrayed in inaccurate or detrimental fashion. They looked at a number of images from various aspects of society, including athletic mascots. One student raised the issue Belmont’s “Braves” and “Tomahawks” Belmont team names and questioned the large Braves banner that was prominently displayed on the wall of the South gymnasium. After the class travelled down to the gym to examine the logo, which featured a cartoon-like aboriginal figure accompanied by the slogan “Scalp ‘em Braves,” the students decided to propose a change.

The students approached Belmont’s principal Dr. Daniel Horovatin to express their concerns and also made a formal presentation to School District 62 trustees at a board meeting. The student group was clear that they were not trying to dishonor Belmont’s athletic heritage, but felt that the use of an aboriginal warrior and a war weapon were no longer culturally appropriate as 21st century mascots. The issue raised some controversy, as some coaches, alumni and students hoped to preserve the traditional names. However, as the process continued, the majority of people agreed that change was warranted. The school administrators and staff didn’t want to rush into a decision on a new name so decided to wait until the next year in order to finalize their decision.

For much of that transitional 2000-01 school year, Belmont was without an official mascot. The girls’ basketball team dropped their Tomahawks label and referred to themselves as the Hawks for a single season, but the majority of the teams didn’t use any identifying name. The task of researching possible replacement team names was placed in the hands of a small group of Athletic Leadership students, under the guidance of athletic director Muzz Bryant. The four girls, Beth Dawes, Tahryn Green, Kristen Patterson and Lindsay Scruton, gathered suggestions from students, as well as the broader community. The girls hoped to get input from all interested parties, including former Belmont students and retired teachers, before narrowing the choices for a final vote. There were some interesting suggestions, including the Renegades, Blue Hounds, Terriers, Boa Constrictors, Killer Bees, Xtreme, Blue Bells, and Rogues. Goldstream Gazette editor Keith Norbury offered his own tongue-in-cheek possibilities with a distinct Western Communities flavor, including the Big Boxers, Belmont Collision, Belmont Armadillos (because of their thick skin) and the Belmont Bingos. In the end, the Bulldogs emerged as the most popular entrant and was adopted by all the school teams in September, 2002. As the senior boys’ and girls’ basketball were the only teams that actually displayed the Braves or Tomahawks moniker on their uniforms, the new mascot didn’t result in an immediate need to buy new uniforms for every school team and the Bulldogs logo could gradually be phased in.

# Bibliography

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