

THE “UTES” NICKNAME—A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

OVERVIEW

Before colonization, Nunt’z (Ute) peoples lived in roughly eleven autonomous bands in most of the present day state of Utah. There are now three federally registered Ute nations, each with Reservation land: the Southern Ute Indian Tribe/Reservation in Southwest Colorado, the Northern Ute or the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uinta-Ourey Reservation in Northeast Utah, and the Ute Mountain Tribe/Reservation (including the White Mesa Ute Tribe) in the four corners region (specifically Utah, New Mexico, and Colorado). Since 1978, the University of Utah has used the “Utes” nickname with the permission of the Northern Ute tribe. The Northern Ute are a living, breathing, and changing people who, like most American Indians, live what may appear to be a standard everyday life in line with the dominant culture. Currently, the University of Utah officially uses the licensed nicknames Utes™, Utah Utes™, Runnin’ Utes™; has a Circle and Feather® logo (colloquially referred to as the drum and feather logo); and uses the mascot “Swoop,” a red-tailed hawk native to Utah. The University has permission from the Northern Ute tribe to use these symbols under a Memorandum of Understanding first signed in 2003 and renewed in 2014. In 2014 the University and Utes Nation also initiated the “Ute Proud Campaign” including a website with information about the relationship between the University and the Utes, and suggestions for appropriate fan behavior, a Ute Proud T-Shirt, and a scholarship for Ute students. Yet controversy persists about whether the University ought to keep the “Utes” nickname.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to *foster critical thinking, archival research, and communication about the University of Utah’s use of the “Utes” nickname.*

STUDENT READING

1. Rosier, Paul C. 2003. “Sports Mascots, Names, and Images.” In *Native American Issues*. Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1-29.

MATERIALS

For this lesson, students will need access to Internet-connected computers, video cameras, and time to conduct research. Students will also need access to the Utes Nickname Archives, which can be found online at: [LINK HERE](#). The instructor should provide lots of blank white paper and markers for student use.

PROCEDURE

Before class, announce to students that they will be engaging in an interactive, group activity in which they will research the history of the “Utes” nickname, conceptualize a

public service announcement drawing on their research, and film/screen their PSA in class. Encourage them to bring their computers and camera-enabled smartphones. If possible, designate two full class periods to this lesson. If you are able to spend two days on this lesson, use the first day for archival research. If not, have students get acquainted with the archives at home before class. At the beginning of the class session, have students gather into groups of three or four. Each group should have access to a computer and a video camera. Then announce a schedule for the class period (or periods, if you are able to use two sessions) that includes at least 30 minutes each for: research, script-writing and filming, and screening. Students should begin by perusing the “Ute” Nickname Archives. They should locate documents that will help them develop an argument about why the University of Utah ought to keep or get rid of the “Utes” nickname. Then, students should collaboratively write a 30-second to one-minute script for their public service announcement. Provide them with blank paper and markers on which they can compose cue cards for the filming process. Then, students should film their public service announcements and email them to the class professor (alternatively, you can create a Google Drive folder before class and invite students to upload their videos there). At the end of the class session, screen the PSAs and have students vote on the one they feel is most persuasive.

In a follow-up discussion or written assignment, have students discuss: (a) how and why the archives enabled them to make certain kinds of arguments and (b) some of the challenges of communicating about the “Utes” nickname.