

# Here's hoping for a monster's final demise

The University of North Dakota's Fighting Sioux nickname and Indian head logo is like a zombie in one of those campy B-horror films that can be found televised late on Saturday nights.

Just when you think it's dead, it keeps coming back.

I first thought the fatal stake had been driven through the zombie's, er, logo's heart in early 2009, when I wrote, "Accolades go to Summit League officials who have decided to steer clear of the University of North Dakota. People associated with the UND have for too long ignored the fact that the athletic team's mascot, logo, or whatever term you want to use – the Fighting Sioux – is offensive to a great number of people who have lived for several generations now in the Great Plains."

In May of 2009, it looked like the zombie logo's coffin was sealed when the North Dakota's Board of Higher Education agreed to drop the University of North Dakota's Fighting Sioux nickname and Indian head logo.

Just when we thought this issue was dead and buried, the zombie logo thrust its arms through the firmly packed dirt of its burial ground and began to roam the plains once more.

You can thank the North Dakota Legislature for bringing it back to life. The Legislature earlier this year approved a law that requires the board and UND to keep the nickname and logo.

You can also thank North Dakota Gov. Jack Dalrymple along with legislative leaders from that state for perhaps finally putting the zombie logo to rest for good.

The North Dakota governor and leading state lawmakers have said they will ask that the measure to keep the logo and nickname be repealed during a legislative special session in November.

North Dakota's Board of Higher Education decided on Aug. 15 to retire the Fighting Sioux nickname by year's end in a move that anticipates lawmakers will indeed repeal the law.

The board agreed unanimously to restart the process of dumping the nickname and a logo depicting an American Indian warrior, symbols that the NCAA contends are offensive.

We continue to be disappointed, however, with the entire context of what we can only describe as a pleasing development.

Ridding the Great Plains of this monstrous zombie logo didn't come about after an intense session of soul-searching on the part of North Dakota education officials. It has finally come about, for a second time, because once again the university's athletics program faces various NCAA sanctions and might be excluded from the Big Sky Conference, which it had planned to join.

It took a decades-long campus dispute about whether the name demeans Native Americans, and pressure from the NCAA and the Summit League, and, most recently, Big Sky, to finally convince board members that the nickname and logo are wrong.

In other words, if you think this change represents a generous act of human kindness on the part of North Dakota higher ed personnel, think again.

It's time to go back in time, to see how this monster was created, and also learn why it's so difficult to kill. There's money and a new campus building involved in this mess.

Former Fighting Sioux hockey player and wealthy alumnus Ralph Engelstad made it quite easy for UND officials to ignore all the statements, resolutions and pleas uttered by those who are offended by the mascot.

He donated \$100 million dollars for the construction of Ralph Engelstad Arena. This is one of the largest philanthropic donations ever made to a public institution of higher learning.

During construction of the arena, Engelstad threatened to abruptly cease work if the nickname was changed.

The day after receiving Engelstad's threatening e-mail, North Dakota State Board of Higher Education froze discussion on the issue by insisting that the team name remain the same. One of Engelstad's conditions for his donation was that the university keep the Fighting Sioux name indefinitely.

Engelstad placed thousands of Fighting Sioux logos in numerous places throughout the arena to make physical removal of the logo very costly if attempted. The arena opened in 2001.

The debate reignited in 2005, following a decision by the NCAA to sanction schools with tribal logos and/or nicknames, including UND, that the NCAA deemed to be "hostile and abusive." On Oct. 26, 2007, a settlement between UND and the NCAA was reached

preventing the case from going to trial. The settlement gave UND three years to gain support from the state's Sioux tribes to keep the monster alive – in other words, to continue

to use the Fighting Sioux nickname and logo. The Standing Rock Sioux tribe has officially disapproved of the use of the Sioux logo.

After a long wrangle, though, both sides sat down and negotiated a reasonable agreement: The school could continue to use its mascot if it could win the approval of the state's two Sioux tribes; otherwise it would have to eliminate the mascot by Aug. 15.

It gets complicated. Some of the Indians liked the name, considering it an honor. Other Native Americans in North Dakota considered the logo to be a stereotype that portrays Indians only in the context of physical aggression.

The zombie has been kept alive all this time, in part, because of court action that kept the logo decision undecided in recent years. Some members of the Spirit Lake tribe sued to keep the mascot, but their case was thrown out of court. A group of Native American students at the university sued to get rid of the name and accompanying logo of a young Sioux man. Written into the new state law is a provision that calls for suing the NCAA if it imposes any penalties.

In all sports, there's one thing we all can count on. There are rules that must be followed. In football, for example, one can't simply change a rule they don't like. In fact, one can be penalized for not acting properly on the field.

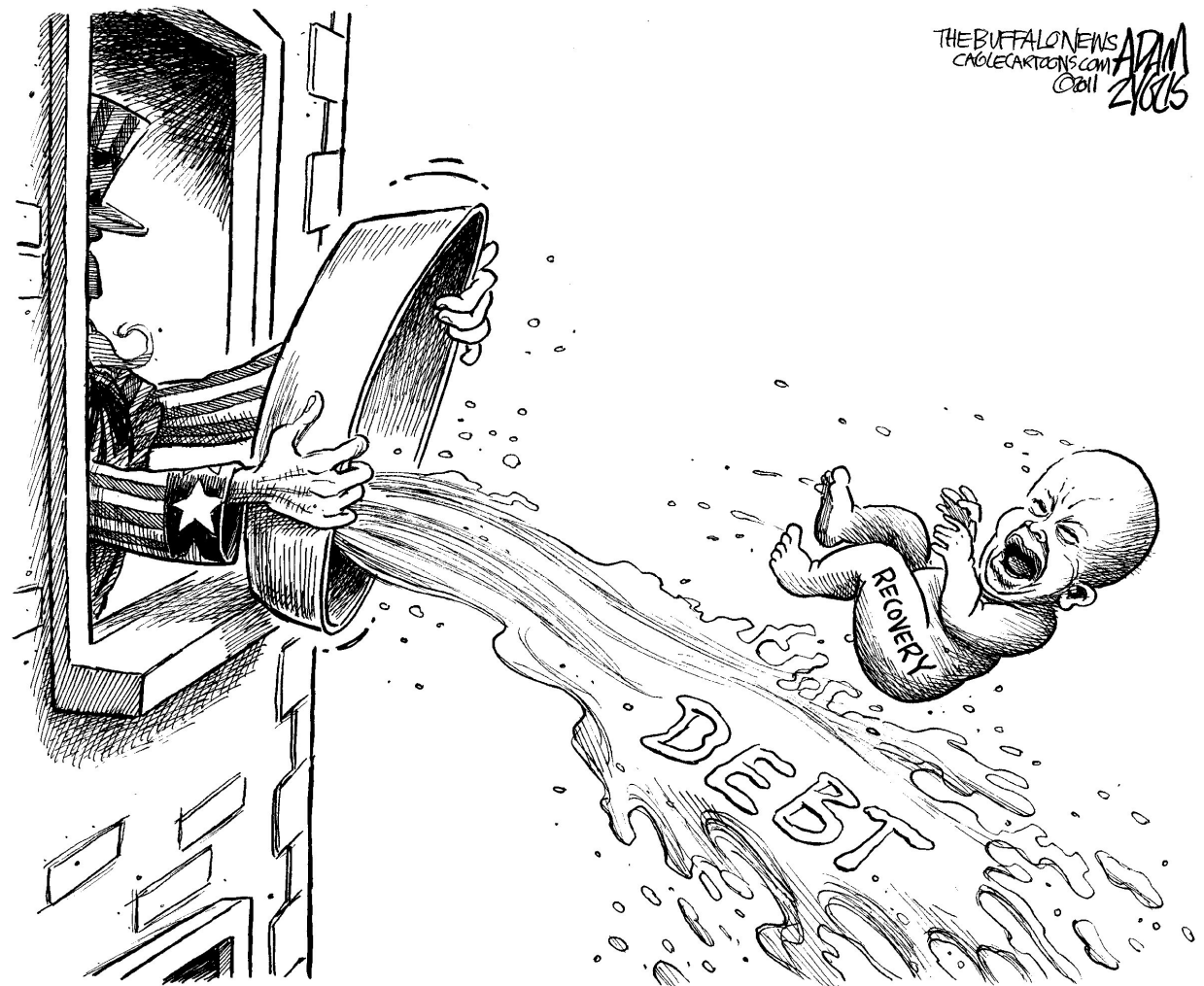
One would think that North Dakota students and alumni who insist that the logo of their institution's athletics remain "the Fighting Sioux" would also be able to understand that just because you don't like a rule you should be able to break it.

The North Dakota Legislature should have known better, too, when it passed that silly law earlier this year.

We can understand there is a wide range of emotions involved here. Over the years, many people, it appears, have grown fond of the zombie in their midst.

It's time, however, for reason to trump sentiment. It's time for the law that keeps the zombie logo alive to be repealed.

It's the 21st century. Surely it's time for UND to find a more fitting, less controversial athletic symbol.



## Celebrate joy of living with 'liferal'

The other day, I finally sat down and outlined my funeral service, something I had wanted to do ever since the age of 16.

I know this may sound morbid and a bit odd, but I've dreaded the thought of my family scrambling at the last minute to select songs, readings, prayers and whatnot for my funeral.

Soon after I had done this, I read about the late Reverend Robert Condon who planned his own living eulogy.

By the time Father Bob passed away on July 24 at the age 85, he had already attended his own wake. Yes, even prior to the visitation, Vigil Service, Funeral Mass and burial service, the former Briar Cliff psychology professor had the opportunity to listen to his own eulogy. How cool and creative is that?

While still under Hospice Care, three days before he died at the New Cassel Retirement Center in Omaha, Father Bob, a native of Fort Dodge, was celebrating his life with his family and friends.

The downside of wakes and funerals, besides the loss of loved ones, is that it's too late to tell the deceased all the things you wanted to say when they were alive. With a living wake, the person is right there, hearing every word, soaking in the love and experiencing the gratitude.

Before I read about Father Condon's unique approach to dying, I had never heard of living wakes. So when I looked it up, I found an entire industry with slogans,

like "Give your loved one a wake while they are still awake!" Really.

Reading further, I discovered the word "liferal" (pronounced life-for-all), coined by writer Paul Hassing. Liferal, Hassing defines as "an organized event to celebrate love, friendship and the joy of living." A liferal takes a living wake in a whole new direction. Intended not for those on the brink of death, but for those who need to hear how much they are loved and cherished.

"We drop everything to attend the funeral of someone we love," Hassing writes.

"Whatever our commitments, we work around them, because there's only one official opportunity to mourn.... Getting time off work, postponing holidays, rescheduling meetings can be difficult and inconvenient, but we do it. We go to great pains to 'celebrate' death; why not do the same to celebrate life? A liferal is the antithesis of a funeral. It's a gathering to celebrate friendships before they are dissolved by death."

It appears that Hassing's own liferal ceremony changed his life and maybe saved it. "As you may gather, a liferal can be a

heady experience indeed," he notes. "Mine turned me round and made me focus on all I had, not what I didn't have."

The more I thought about the idea of a liferal, the more I realized I haven't told my own family how important they are to me. I haven't celebrated who they are and how much they mean to me, apart from birthdays and holidays.

So, you could say I've decided to turn over a new leaf – a liferal leaf.

Fair warning to my family members – if I show up on your doorsteps with balloons, banners and bands, it's because you mean the world to me and I want you to know it before either you or I go.

If I begin sending poems and posies, it's because I love you so very much.

And, if I hold parties to celebrate you, it's because you are irreplaceable.

Source: <http://www.liferal.com/4.html>

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A resident of Southeast South Dakota, Paula Bosco Damon is a national award-winning columnist. Her writing has won first-place in competitions of the National Federation of Press Women, South Dakota Press Women and Iowa Press Women. In the 2009 and 2010 South Dakota Press Women Communications Contest, her columns took five first-place awards. To contact Paula, email [boscodamonpaula@gmail.com](mailto:boscodamonpaula@gmail.com), follow her blog at [my-story-your-story.blogspot.com](http://my-story-your-story.blogspot.com) and find her on FaceBook.

### BETWEEN THE LINES



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## S.D. EDITORIAL ROUNDUP

The Associated Press  
The Daily Republic, Mitchell: Aug. 5  
**City needs to get back to basics**

Sometimes, organizations get so caught up in their day-to-day problems that they forget about their basic, bedrock responsibilities.

That seems to have happened at Mitchell City Hall.

In case you missed it, The Daily Republic reported recently that the city's alcohol laws are in shambles. A restaurant liquor ordinance that was never adopted by the City Council was somehow inserted into the official city code, and a cap on the number of beer licenses was somehow removed from the code even though it was not repealed.

Particularly insulting to citizens is the accidental omission of the beer-license cap. This city's voters decided in 2007 to keep the cap, despite an attempted repeal by the City Council. To find out four years later that city staffers still took the cap off the books is infuriating.

Some city officials interviewed for the story, including the mayor, downplayed the significance of the error. It's just a clerical error, the mayor said, and it can be fixed as easily as it was screwed up.

Still, the fact remains that for two and a half years, the official city code included a law that was never adopted,

and for four years, the city code omitted a law that was never repealed.

City officials should be embarrassed. Laws are the foundation of every civilized society and democratic government. If citizens cannot trust a government to keep track of its own laws, why should they trust the government to do anything else?

To make matters worse, this wasn't the first time The Daily Republic has caught a significant error in the city code. It also happened in 2005 when the City Council inadvertently repealed the law that requires newly constructed buildings to have sidewalks along curbed streets.

City officials should have learned from the 2005 incident and instituted protocols to ensure that the handling of the city code would never again be flubbed so badly. Obviously, they didn't do that.

Now that they have a second chance, we hope they will finally learn their lesson. The city code is the most important set of documents kept by the city. It should be treated as if it is made of gold, and it should be entrusted only to trustworthy employees.

Furthermore, the City Council should undertake or appoint a committee to undertake an exhaustive review of the entire city code. After several embarrassing errors, it's time to get serious about finding any undetected

errors and getting them fixed.

Argus Leader: Aug. 7  
**Accessible city data sets example**

Making information public does no good if it's difficult to find it.

The city of Sioux Falls has made finding the salaries of city employees easier on its website. The list is alphabetical by last name and grouped by department. That makes it simple to scan and find the information you're looking for.

We applaud Mayor Mike Huether and the city for making the information more accessible. It will be updated annually every January.

Huether campaigned saying he wanted to be transparent in his leadership. This change to the city salary website shows he is following through on that promise. It's good to see Huether has kept his word and worked toward more open government.

And it's a good example for the rest of the state. Current state salary websites require exact name spellings to find information. That can be challenging. If the city can make this change, the state can, too.

We hope Sioux Falls is setting an example for open government, transparency, ease of use and attention to detail with the city salary website.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### MS Society extends thanks

On behalf of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, we would like to thank our participants, volunteers and sponsors who attended Bike MS: Pedal the Plains 2011, Aug. 6 and 7. Thanks to the support from our sponsors and participants, we are on our way to matching 2010's funds of \$200,000. These funds will be used to support MS research to find a cure and fund local programs and services for people living with MS and their families.

The National MS Society would like to thank the event sponsors: Sanford Health, Avera McKennan Fitness Center, Results Radio, Sioux Steel, Howalt McDowell, John Morrell's, Borrowed Bucks Roadhouse, Dakota Splash, Tri-State Water, Christiansen Water, Comfort Keepers, 2nd Street Dinner of Madison, Sunshine of Madison, Dairy Queen of Madison, University Center, Dakota State University, Prostrollo's Auto Mall of Madison, Sioux Empire HAM Club, Dizco, Scheels, DAKOTACARE, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Sammons Financial Group, Texas Roadhouse, Midcontinent Communications and Hot Springs Spa of Sioux Falls.

Special thanks to our planning committee for their time and dedication: Brett Ketcham, Lori Waldner, Miranda Ochocki.

To learn more about the MS Society or how you can be involved, visit [www.myMSSociety.org](http://www.myMSSociety.org).

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