

WILLIAM WILCOXEN: Hundreds of Indian leaders from across North America are gathered in Minneapolis this weekend for a three-day cultural festival. Vernon Bellecourt of the American Indian Movement says that since the festival coincides with the appearance of the Washington Redskins, many Indians will take the opportunity to show their abhorrence of the use of Indian logos and mascots by sports teams.

VERNON BELLECOURT: We hope to have several of our dancers with us so we can take this message right to the Washington Football Organization and their leadership, that our culture has nothing to do with the demeaning and degrading depiction that we see carried on by professional football and America's favorite pastime, baseball in particular.

WILLIAM WILCOXEN: Bellecourt and others say team names such as Redskins and cartoonish mascots such as Chief Wahoo of baseball's Cleveland Indians are not only offensive to Indian people but also perpetuate stereotypes. The National Coalition on Racism in Sports and the Media is planning a rally at the Metrodome before the football game. Bea Swanson is an Ojibwe who was surprised at how hostile football fans were toward her and other demonstrators at last year's Super Bowl.

BEA SWANSON: I see the racism at the dome. It was hard for me to believe at first some of the remarks that people made, how angry they are with us. So I know how important it is to protest against what's happening.

WILLIAM WILCOXEN: The movement to purge Indian symbols and caricatures from the sports world has gained momentum in recent years. World Series appearances by the Atlanta Braves have focused attention on the tomahawk chop, popular among the team's fans. Terry [? Gibbs ?] of the American Jewish Committee says that kind of spectacle has more non-Indians concerned about racism in sports.

[? TERRY GIBBS: ?] Anytime stereotypical behavior of an ethnic group is portrayed, as it was in the World Series and as it will be again, unfortunately, it weakens the fiber of American society.

WILLIAM WILCOXEN: Many high schools and colleges have changed team names that were offensive to Indian people, but no professional team has changed its nickname. Indian groups are challenging some team names in court. And Vernon Bellecourt says another tactic is being used to put pressure on Washington Redskins owner, Jack Kent Cooke.

VERNON BELLECOURT: Jack Kent Cooke has been looking for a new stadium in Virginia. We have been assured that Governor Wilder of Virginia supports our issue. And we feel that he would be open to our recommendations to block any move by this football team to Virginia until such time as they changed their name.

WILLIAM WILCOXEN: This weekend's rally begins at the American Indian Center in Minneapolis. Demonstrators will then march to the Metrodome. The coalition is also planning a National Summit on Racism in Sports to be held this spring in Atlanta. I'm William Wilcoxon, *Minnesota Public Radio*.