

# Nicknames Through the Decades Grand Forks Central

By Nicholas Holmes and Jack Flaagan

When Grand Forks Central was first opened in 1881, it had initially opened under the nickname the Maroons. Because this was also slang for escaped slaves, eventually this nickname became controversial. Because the football team was unofficially nicknamed the Redskins since 1929, the choice for the new nickname was an easy one when they dropped the Maroons nickname in 1949.

Unfortunately, the new Redskins nickname stirred up an equal amount of controversy as time progressed, as Redskins is a slang nickname for Native Americans. This was brought to the attention of the city by the Grand Forks Herald and the UND students who were protesting the name.. Mark Jacobs wrote that “As long as the name Redskins is used, there will be people who do not feel comfortable here --- because the name represents more than an academic tradition.” Consequently, once the nickname was removed due to the controversy in 1991, The Grand Forks Herald received a great deal of backlash from the community and Central High School, much like can be seen from the changing of the UND nickname. The Grand Forks Herald’s editor even had to go on to write an article defending their exploitation of the nickname.

A big part of the backlash for the proposal for the nickname change came from the student body and the central alumni. The Redskins name was apart of their tradition and they did not want to see it go away. Many students were able to voice their opinions to the changing of the nickname. “I don’t think so, we take pride when we say the



Redskin name, we don't cut it down." (Kathy Gust) Kathy was one of many that agreed in the fact that the name was a honor and that the community took pride in the name instead of being ashamed of it. Betsy Kuchera was another student that believed in keeping the Redskin name even though she was able to understand why some were opposed to the nickname. "I think the Indians have a point, and I can reason with their feelings. I think if we thought about it long enough we'd all see how they feel. After all, they really have been through a lot, why don't we give a little... But let's keep the name anyway!!" (Betsy Kuchera)

From there, the decision for the new nickname was left in the hands of the students. Initially, the students didn't want to have a nickname, but that was not allowed by the school, so they were forced to have a vote. The two final candidates of the vote were the knights and the bulldogs, but because both of them could potentially be perceived as sexist, for their gender connotations, Grand Forks Central temporarily assumed the nickname of the Maroon and Grays.

This nickname was later replaced by the Knights anyway in 1994. Grand Forks Central has stuck with this nickname ever since, and it is well accepted and proudly represented by many alumni and students today.



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