

American Indian group

As part of heritage
month, Kansas
City helps address
Native issues

By THOM HANRAHAN
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In a series of pregame activities, the Kansas City Chiefs and the American Indian Community Working Group celebrated American Indian Heritage Month on Sunday at Arrowhead Stadium.

The Chiefs and the group first made contact three years ago to begin a dialogue about the potential for culturally disrespectful behavior by fans at NFL games. The relationship began as pressure began to mount for the Washington Redskins to change their mascot.

"As we embark on this year's celebration of American Indian Heritage Month, we appreciate (the Chiefs') continued and sincere effort to better understand issues from a Native perspective," the group said in a statement.

Prior to the game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Creg Hart, a member of the Kitfox Society of Men, a Cheyenne spiritual leader and teacher from Thomas, Oklahoma performed the Blessing of the Four Directions.

Cheyenne Ceremonial Leader Curtis Levi joined the Cheyenne-Arapaho Singers in a blessing ceremony and honor song in honor of the family of Chiefs long snapper James Winchester. Winchester is of Native American descent and lost his father in an Oklahoma City shooting last week.

The Buddy Bond Color Guard of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes presented the colors and the Chickasaw Nation Youth Choir sang the national anthem.

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Pregame ceremonies honor Native American culture

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The Chiefs' nickname was chosen by fans when the team — previously the Dallas Texans — relocated to Kansas City.

While the team's name is closely associated with Native American iconography, it was also chosen as a tribute to then-mayor H. Roe Bartle, whose nickname was "The Chief."

The American Indian Community Working Group said working with the Chiefs affords the opportunity to educate the community on issues of cultural sensitivity.

"The consultation in which we are engaging has just begun," the group's statement read. "We are optimistic that it will be a part of an ongoing process that can serve as a model to be implemented by other teams in other communities."

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