

## CREATIVE PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### THE PEKIN CHINKS

#### A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF A CITY'S TRADITION

STUDENT: Joseph Dennis Lanane

DEGREE: Master of Arts (Journalism)

COLLEGE: College of Communication, Information, and Media

DATE: December 2011

Tradition is not something easily changed and is rarely forgotten. For decades, the small Midwestern city of Pekin, Ill., embraced a tradition considered by many to be an act of prejudice and ignorance. It was not until 1980 that Pekin Community High School students no longer called themselves “Chinks,” and the school united under a different mascot, the Dragons. However, the derogatory stereotypes continued as evidenced by city memorabilia that states, “Old Chinks don’t die – they just ‘Drag-on.’”

This creative project sought to identify how this city’s controversy compared to related debates about the use of derogatory team names and mascots across the country and, most importantly, what impact the nickname Chinks still has on the community. Varied research methods, including interviews, ethnography, and secondary research, were utilized to produce a historical case study of the community.