

December 14, 2022 Board of Education information shared by Superintendent Dehn

Native American Mascots, Logos, and Imagery: Enclosed in your Board packet, you will find the New York State Education Department (NYSED) memo regarding the court's decision and requirements for schools. I would like to provide some background information, a recommendation, and open up for Board discussion on the topic.

I will start with excerpts from November 17, 2022 NYSED Memo: *The court's decision establishes that public school districts are prohibited from utilizing Native American mascots. Arguments that community members support the use of such imagery or that it is "respectful" to Native Americans are no longer tenable.*

Those school districts that continue to utilize Native American team names, logos, and/or imagery without current approval from a recognized tribe must immediately come into compliance. Should they require guidance, districts may reach out to those districts that successfully retired their mascots or their local Board of Cooperative Education Services. The Department is developing regulations that will clarify school districts' obligations in this respect.

Should a district fail to affirmatively commit to replacing its Native American team name, logo, and/or imagery by the end of the 2022-23 school year, it may be in willful violation of the Dignity Act. The penalties for such a violation include the removal of school officers and the withholding of State Aid.

On Friday, November 18, 2022, I informed the Board of Education of the recent legal decision regarding the use of Native American mascots, logos and imagery.

On Friday, November 18, 2022, students, staff and families were informed of the legal decision via ParentSquare message. Along with the NYSED memo, they received this message from me: *This decision was predictable and, as a result, in recent years we have maintained our nickname Red Jacket, but curbed the purchasing of uniforms and equipment with the use of "Indians." As we did in the past (2013), my hope is to engage the community to assist us with decision-making regarding our school's logo/mascot. Once I have had an opportunity to discuss this further with the Board, we will communicate additional information out to our school and community.*

On November 30, 2023, I reached out to the office of the President of the Seneca Nation of Indians (SNI) and spoke to Jacquie Crouse to determine if there is an approval process and/or requirement to allow our District to continue using the "Red Jacket Indians" name, mascot and logos. Understandably, Ms. Crouse said they are receiving a lot of requests and she asked that I send her an email to track the requests they are receiving. It seems that SNI is engaged in discussion about this topic. The follow-up email, requested by Ms. Crouse, was sent to her on November 30th and another was sent on December 8, 2022. Her response was for us to please stand by.

In the meantime, we have stopped using the mascot and logos, where possible, we have begun taking inventory as to where the Red Jacket name, Indians mascot, logos and imagery exists

within the District and have been preparing for the budgetary impact a change would necessitate.

I am open to the Board's thoughts, ideas, and direction. During this meeting, there seemed to be general agreement to wait for a response from SNI and/or additional guidance from NYSED.