

June 15, 2023 Native American names, mascots, symbols & imagery update including Board Resolution

Hello Red Jacket Families and Team:

I am writing to provide you with an update regarding the use of Native American names, mascots, symbols and imagery. As was anticipated, the District's current mascot/team name "Indians" and current logos do not comply with the forthcoming regulation 8 NYCRR 123.4 (a). As shared with you previously, this decision was predictable and, as a result, in recent years we have maintained our school's Red Jacket name, but ceased to purchase uniforms and equipment with the team name "Indians". It wasn't clear whether or not we would be required to change the name of our schools. Chief Sagoyewatha took the name Red Jacket after the red coats he wore during the American Revolution. Since our schools are named after Chief Red Jacket, I reached out to the New York State Mascot Advisory Group for clarification on this issue.

Chief of Staff, Mr. David Frank from the Office of Education Policy said in his response to my inquiry, "While continued use of the vestiges of the 'Indian' team name and/or images, either explicitly or implicitly linked to Indigenous peoples, contribute the continued stereotyping, characterization, and denigration of Indigenous peoples, we see no connection per se to the 'Red Jacket' and applaud the district working to retire the mascot and consider changes to the name if any link to Indigenous peoples exists now or has in the past."

I am pleased to share that we will not be required to change our school name. The Indigenous Mascot Advisory Group has determined that our school's Red Jacket name is not an indigenous symbol as it refers to the British red coat during the American Revolution. The District made a commitment and ceased to use "Indian" for our school's team name and we have been working to remove Native American imagery, symbols and logos throughout our schools.

At the June 14, 2023 Regular meeting of the Board of Education, the Board adopted a resolution committing to phasing out the use of Native American names, logos, mascots and imagery, including the team name "Indians". The phasing out of such use needs to occur by June 30, 2025. 8 NYCRR 123.3(a). The regulations also currently obligate the District to prohibit any staff or board members from displaying the "Indian" team name, logo, and mascot on campus or at school events. 8 NYCRR 123.5.

I am set to retire on June 30, 2023. I have encouraged the new Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education to engage all stakeholders (community members, parents, students and staff) in a process to consider a new mascot during in the 2023-2024 school year. I encouraged them to establish criteria for this process that excludes the use of Native American names, symbols, or images that are "explicitly or implicitly linked to Indigenous peoples." While these changes may be emotional for many, there is an exciting opportunity to honor other significant aspects of the Manchester-Shortsville communities.

Below you will find the full response, with links, from Chief of Staff Mr. Frank from the Office of Education Policy. You will also find the Board of Education Resolution that was adopted on June 14, 2023. You may also visit our website at www.redjacket.org or search: *Proposed Addition of Part 123 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education Relating to Prohibiting the Use of Indigenous Names, Mascots, and Logos by Public Schools* for more information.

With Red Jacket PRIDE & Gratitude,
Charlene Dehn
Superintendent of Schools

Superintendent Dehn,

*My apologies for the delay in response. We appreciate your inquiry and work to ensure all students across New York State have a warm, welcoming learning environment to learn, grow, and thrive. The Department has discussed this matter internally and have consulted with the Indigenous Mascot Advisory Group, a group the Department convened to provide NYSED with guidance on school mascot issues from an Indigenous perspective. Subsequent to the Department's 2001 memo from then Commissioner Mills, reinforced by the **November 2022 Memo** from Senior Deputy Commissioner Jim Baldwin, at the December 2022 Board of Regents meeting, NYSED **proposed regulations regarding a prohibition on the use of Indigenous team names, mascots, and logos by public schools**. Subsequently, **a notice of Proposed Rulemaking** (see page 33) was published in the State Register on*

December 28, 2022, for a 60-day public comment period. Following the 60-day comment period, which has ended, and if adopted at the April 2023 Board of Regents meeting, the Department will develop guidance on the regulations with a broad range of stakeholders that will be shared with the field. Based on the comments received, we do not expect any significant revisions to the proposed regulations that will require another round of publication and comment period.

After extensive consultation and discussion, while it is clear that team names such as the “Indians” is contrary to the requirements of the proposed regulations and New York State’s Dignity for All Students Act, the term “Red Jacket” seemingly has always referred to the British red coat during the American Revolution which is not an Indigenous symbol. While continued use of the vestiges of the “Indian” team name and/or images, either explicitly or implicitly linked to Indigenous peoples, contribute the continued stereotyping, characterization, and denigration of Indigenous peoples, we see no connection per se to the “Red Jacket” and applaud the district working to retire the mascot and consider changes to the name if any link to Indigenous peoples exists now or has in the past.

Echoing the words of Commissioner Mills in his memo to the field almost 22 years ago, “...the use of Native American symbols or depictions as mascots can become a barrier to building a safe and nurturing school community and improving academic achievement for all students...[and] there is a state interest in providing a safe and supportive learning environment for every child.” He went on to ask boards of education “to end the use of Native American mascots as soon as practical.”

Sincerely,

David Frank

David M. Frank
(he/him/his)
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**Board of Education June 14, 2023 Meeting
RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, 8 NYCRR 123.2 prohibits the use or display of Indigenous names, mascots, and logos by New York State public schools; and

WHEREAS, 8 NYCRR 123.3 requires Boards of Education to commit to eliminating all uses or displays of Indigenous names, logos, and mascots by adopting a resolution no later than June 30, 2023.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Education of the Manchester-Shortsville Central School District as follows:

1. The Board of Education hereby commits to eliminating the use or display of the District’s “Indian” team name, mascot, logo and related imagery by June 30, 2025.

2. The Board of Education plans to identify all displays and uses of the “Indian” team name, mascot, logo, and related imagery at the Manchester-Shortsville Central School District, and to remove, eliminate, or archive the same in the most efficient and economical manner possible.

3. The plan to eliminate all displays and uses of the “Indian” team name, mascot, logo, and related imagery does not include uses or displays for the purpose of classroom instruction pursuant to 8 NYCRR 123.2.

4. The Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent and her designee(s) to take any steps necessary to effectuate the plan outlined herein.

5. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.