RESOLUTION

SENECA VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

A RESOLUTION TO RETIRE THE USE OF A NATIVE AMERICAN MASCOT IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE SENECA VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT.

WHEREAS, in 1957, by agreement among local school board entities, several area school districts were merged into one school district named the Southwest Butler County School District comprised of nine municipalities: Cranberry, Forward, Jackson and Lancaster Townships, and Callery, Evans City, Harmony, Seven Fields and Zelienople Boroughs

WHEREAS, in 1961, students from Evans City and Zelienople, after researching the rich Native American history of the geographical area, selected Seneca Valley as the name of the newly merged high school and Raiders as the name of its athletic teams;

WHEREAS, the selection of these names was intended as a tribute to the people of the Seneca Nation and followed seeking and obtaining the support of their representatives;

WHEREAS, a mascot was subsequently developed in the manner of various imagery and caricatures of a Native American, as representing the Seneca Valley Raiders;

WHEREAS, in time, with deeper understanding and sensitivity and as explained in the attached Formal Statement of the Seneca Nation of Indians, the use of a Native American mascot is no longer perceived as representing the people of the Seneca Nation in a positive manner;

WHEREAS, consistent with its motto, “Proud of the Past and Committed to the Future,” the Seneca Valley School District recognizes and appreciates the tradition that the Seneca Valley Raider name and certain logos represent to students, staff, alumni and our communities and was never intended by them to offend members of the Seneca Nation or other indigenous peoples;

WHEREAS, the Seneca Valley School District also recognizes that the continued use of a mascot that is insensitive and offensive to the very persons intended to be honored is inconsistent with a diverse and inclusive educational environment and requires change to reflect our multicultural community and values; and

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors has received extensive and thoughtful comments from students, alumni and members of the community upon this subject and carefully considered those commentaries;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Seneca Valley mascot should serve the purposes of representing the history or attributes of the Seneca Valley School District region, instilling positive school spirit among students, parents, staff and residents, and providing a symbol of pride for all members of our community.

2. The Board of School Directors of the Seneca Valley School District has determined to retire and discontinue, effective immediately, the use of a Native American mascot insofar as that imagery no longer fulfills the intended positive purposes of a mascot or reflects favorably upon the Seneca Valley School District.

3. As in 1961, the Board of School Directors believes that the selection of a new mascot should reflect the input and voice of the student body. The Administration is directed to form and provide oversight to a student committee to review and provide recommendations upon and proposals for consideration of a new Seneca Valley mascot.

4. The Raider name will be retained to be used in conjunction with the new mascot, if adopted.

5. A target date for the provision of recommendations and proposals is August 1, 2021, with the objective of soliciting input from throughout the student body during the 2021-22 school year.

RESOLVED AND ADOPTED by the Board of School Directors of the Seneca Valley School District this 14th day of June 2021.

ATTEST: SENECA VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

_____ By: _____

Lisa Mislan, Secretary Eric O. DiTullio

President, Board of School Directors

Seneca Nation of Indians

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PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

FORMAL STATEMENT FROM PRESIDENT RICKEY L. ARMSTRONG, SR.

The Western New York region has a long and important connection to Native American culture and history. This area is and has always been home to the Seneca Nation, one of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. Our history predates that of the United States, and our people have played a central role in the history and life of the Western New York we know today.

Seneca and Native American culture are reflected in the names of countless streets, towns and locations throughout Western New York. Unfortunately, we also see the continued use of names and imagery, particularly in athletics programs, that degrade, mock, and offend Native traditions, Native culture, and Native people.

The time for change has long since arrived, and the call should be heeded.

The continued use of anti-Native nicknames and imagery is an affront to the very tenets of unity and inclusion upon which the United States is built. Like all Native people, the Seneca people have seen and suffered the indignity of having our language and culture stripped from us, and our spirit and heritage and race assaulted time and again. That is not something that should be celebrated in the

name of sportsmanship nor used to identify the character and spirit of a school community.

Cultural tolerance and sensitivities are an important part of the national and local dialogue. As educational institutions, local school districts can now teach an important and valuable lesson in their communities. Unity and tolerance begin with dialogue, respect and understanding. We are open to being partners in the important conversations that need to happen, so that our community can positively reflect all of its residents and the history that shaped Western New York.

The Seneca Nation is proud to lend our voice, and the voices of the nearly 8,000 Seneca people living throughout the world, to this growing chorus for change and respect.