

**Okemos Public
Schools
Community
Meetings**

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**Initial Mascot/Nickname
Recommendation**

**April 14 and 15th, 2021
7-8:30 pm**

Tonight's Agenda

- **Welcome and Introductions** - John Hood, (5 minutes)
- **History in Okemos and “Why now?”** - John Hood, (10 minutes)
- **Overview of Process** - Audrey Matusz, Adanya Gilmore(10 minutes)
 - *Committee process*
 - *Options considered*
 - *Criteria*
- **Initial Committee Recommendation** - Audrey Matusz, Adanya Gilmore (5 min)
- **Supporting Rationale**- Dr. Aaron Payment, (10 minutes)
- **Community Clarity and Feedback** - Panel, Community, (up to 55 minutes)
 - *Questions seeking clarity from community*
 - *Additional positives, negatives, neutrals for consideration?*
 - *Additional “I wonders” to add?*
- **Gratitude & Next Steps** - John Hood, (5 minutes)

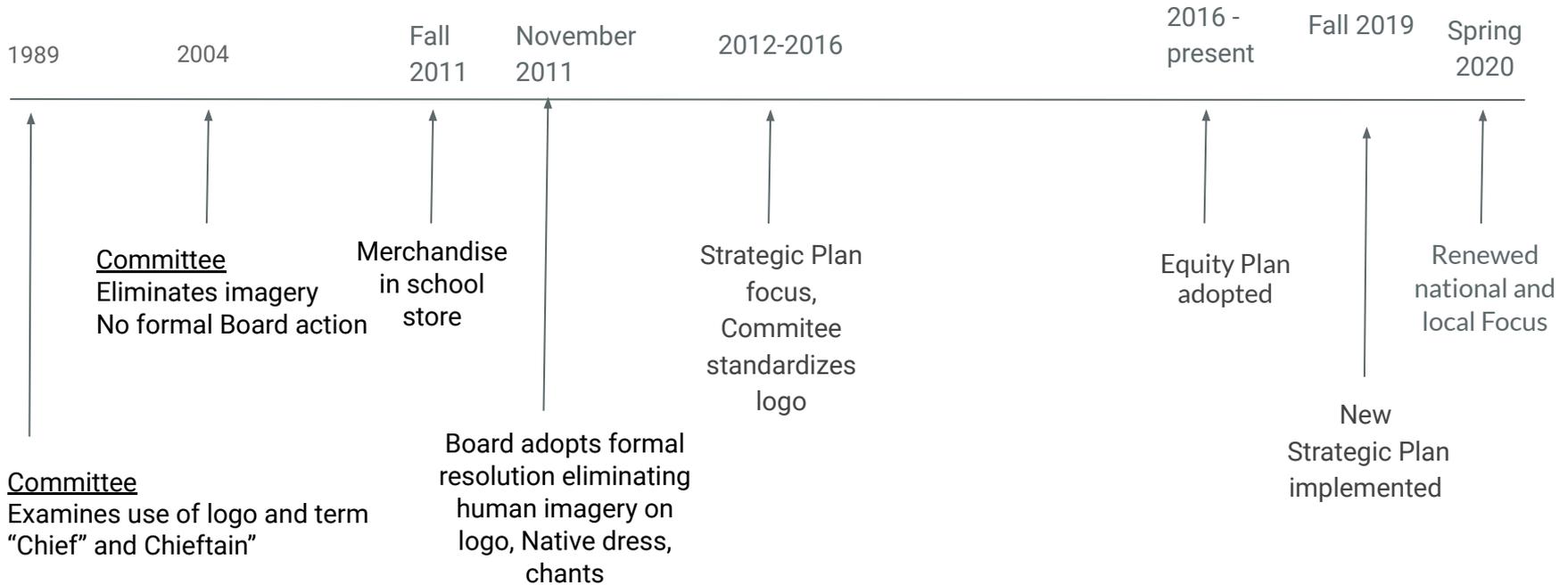
Our Panel:

- Dr. Aaron Payment
 - Tribal Chairperson, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians
- Audrey Matusz
 - Class of 2014, Okemos Public Schools
- Adanya Gilmore
 - Class of 2017, Okemos Public Schools
- John J. Hood
 - Superintendent, Okemos Public Schools

Moderators: Stacy Bailey and Matt Ottinger

Historical Journey in Okemos and “why now?”

Our Historical Journey - A Timeline



Historical Journey

1989

- Committee charged with examining use of Indian profile logo and the words “Chief” and “Chieftain”
- Final report includes majority and minority recommendations
- Majority report recommends nicknames of “chief” and “Chieftains” be gradually phased out. Minority report recommended retaining logo and nicknames.
- Superintendent recommends that Board of Education defer judgment and further study the issue

2004

- Committee with diverse perspectives reviews use of Native American silhouette as logo, as well as nickname
- Board commits to phasing out logo and predominantly utilize the nickname “Chief”; expectation, but no formal action
- OHS incorporates Native American literature into curriculum

2004 - Fall 2011

- Good faith effort to phase out human imagery
- Thought it was “widely understood and communicated”
- School store purchases merchandise with Native American silhouette

Historical journey continued. . .

November 2011

- Board adopts a formal resolution to reaffirm and document district's commitment
 - Eliminate all instances of Native American silhouette as logo
 - Eliminate use of all Native American symbols; dress; chants etc. . .
 - Promote curricula that is fair, appropriate and accurate in depicting the cultures and histories of ALL people
 - Predominantly utilize the nickname "Chiefs"

2012-2016, Strategic Plan

- District establishes committee to look at educational components/curriculum related to Okemos' Native American heritage; looked for "gaps" and initiated curriculum revisions and focus; consistency
- District establishes committee to standardize logo

Historical journey continued...

Winter 2013

- Lawsuit at Federal level targeting Michigan school districts
- Okemos was not named; recognized for efforts
- Lawsuit dismissed in Summer, 2013

Spring 2013

- Board adopts a standardized logo (current logo)
- “O” logo with the word “Chiefs” written through it

2016-present, Equity Plan

- “As a district enhanced by diversity, Okemos Public Schools is dedicated to an ongoing process of creating and sustaining an inclusive and safe culture for students, families and staff. “
- Areas of Focus: Authentic Selves and Relationships, Cultural Competence, Instruction/Curriculum/Assessments, Policies/Practices/Procedures

Historical Journey continued . . .

Fall 2020, Strategic Plan

- Strategic Plan identifies equity as critical issue
- District core values of equity, relationships, culture and integrity defined
- Mission statement update to reflect each learner
 - “Together... educating with excellence, inspiring *each* learner for life.”
- Vision statement of “Leading in Educational Equity”

Spring 2020

- Renewed and intense focus on systemic racism at the national and local levels (George Floyd)
- Community feedback - re-evaluate/eliminate/retire the use of the mascot/nickname “Chief”

Winter 2020

- Superintendent establishes study committee

Overview of the Process

Study Committee Membership

Representation/Perspectives

High School Administrator:
Athletic Director:
CMS Administrator/Athletic Director:
Students:
OHS Staff:
Coaches:
Alumni:
Parent/Guardians:
MSU Faculty:
Native Americans:

Lamanzer Williams
Brian Fuller
Andre' Ridley
*Mario Migaldi and *Vibha Mahesha
Diane Dockus and Hedlun Walton
Chrissy Schoonover and *Brian Guggemos
Audrey Matusz and Adanya Gilmore
Jose Quintero and Leslie Gonzales
Mark Largent
Mary Calcaterra and Matthew Wesaw

Facilitator: John J. Hood

**served on committee for majority of process, feedback until exit included*

Process: January to Now

- Reviewed district's historical journey
- Identified/considered two (2) options:
 - *Maintain chief nickname/mascot*
 - *Eliminate/change chief nickname/mascot*
- Developed criteria to analyze options, analyzed the options:
 - *Identified impact of "chief" terminology (positive, negative, neutral)*
 - *Applied criteria to identify additional positive, negative or neutral impacts*
 - *Identified "I wonders" (additional related topics for discussion)*
- Formulated initial recommendation to superintendent
- Seeking community feedback (initial recommendation) tonight

Criteria for Consideration of Options

Values/respects/builds relations with Indigenous people

1. Does this option value and respect Indigenous people?
2. Does this option build positive relations with Indigenous people?

Social/emotional impact on students/learning/environment

3. Will this option have a positive social/emotional impact on Indigenous students?
4. Will this option have a positive social/emotional impact on all students?
5. Will this option have a positive impact on the learning environment of Indigenous students?
6. Will this option have a positive impact on the learning environment of all students?

District's equity focus (promotes pride for all/eliminates or reduces controversy/curricular responsibility)

7. Will this option promote pride for all?
8. Will this option eliminate or reduce controversy?
9. Can/will this option address curricular aspects of history and marginalized groups?

Financial impact/commitment (ties to academic impact)

10. Will this option have a financial impact (beyond the current budget)?

Share Initial
Committee
Recommendation

Initial Committee Recommendation

The initial recommendation of the mascot committee is to eliminate/change/retire the “chiefs” nickname/mascot.

Our Hope: District’s reputation and culture impacted positively as result of the work!

Recommendation: Considerations Identified by Committee

Positives:

- Meets our responsibility and obligation as an educational institution to our current/future students:
 - Eliminates source that perpetuates stereotypes of Indigenous people, unintended student and organizational outcomes
 - Centers and honors voices of those in our history who have been and continue to be marginalized
 - Improves educational environment for Indigenous students and all students
 - Places well being of all students at forefront of district approach; fair and respectful treatment of all student's cultures
- Values and respects Indigenous people; offers opportunity to improve relationships with community that nickname negatively impacts, recognizable action/acknowledgement
- Supports district's stated values of equity, relationships, culture and integrity
- Addresses critical/goal areas in strategic and equity plans, with clear action and outcome
- Opportunity for a new mascot/nickname that may bring community together over time; closure on recurring topic of division

Recommendation: Considerations Identified by Committee

Negatives:

- For those that feel strong affiliation to the term “Chief” and leaving it will be painful; a loss
- For some, term is not problematic; no reason to change besides political correctness
- Some believe it honors Native Americans, our local history
- Financial impacts may be significant
 - Costs to families/students for district related gear, uniforms, etc.
 - Costs to district to rebrand; overall impact on school funding (may require grants, fundraising)
- Additional change for our students/staff and community during a year of change
- May result in additional division, tensions within community
 - Potential for current Indigenous students/community and others to be “blamed” for change

Recommendation: Considerations Identified by Committee

I wonders (Other related topics of discussion)

- Can we collect data, analyze findings?
- What will this actually cost? If a grant does cover much of the cost, what is left, who pays that?
- If the committee had a larger sample size, would the discourse be different?
- Do our Native American members of this committee speak for all Indigenous people? Have we talked to others? Do other Native Americans have a different perspective?
- Based on our equity plan, can you defend either option?

Outside Scope of Committee's Charge

- If we drop Chief, would we need to consider changing the names of schools? The district? (and move away from the name of Okemos?)

Supporting Rationale



*Honor Native Students by
Being on the Right Side of
History*

**Dr. Aaron A. Payment, Chairperson
Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians**

- ***Ahneen, Boozho* ~ ST Chairperson**
- **HS Drop Out at 15 (racism); Took the GED at 16**
- **Entered College at 17 ~ BS, MPA, MEd, EdS, EdD**
- **Former School Board President**
- **National Advisory Council on Indian Education**
- **Former Executive Director of Nokomis Learning Center**
- **Offer of Assistance to Coordinate Native Count Title VI \$**
- **Volunteer to Assist in Writing Grants to Change the Name**

red•skin ('red, skɪn) n.

Definition: Usually Offensive. American Indian

Webster's Dictionary Online
http://www.webster-online.com/dictionary/redskin



State Ticket.
For Governor.....ERLWIN MILLER, of Geneva.
For Lieut. Governor.....CHAS. D. HANCOCK, of Florence.
Secretary of State.....VID BEARLIE, of Ocala.
Auditor of State.....ASA BELLARIE, of Seelye.
State Treasurer.....CHAS. SCARLETT, of Westville.
Attorney General.....JACOB E. COLE, of Rice.
Clerk Supreme Court.....T. PUTTAN, of Houston.

County Ticket.
For State Senator.....THOMAS STUBBS.
For Representative.....HARLE S. YOCUM.
THOMAS P. DICKIN.
For Sheriff.....LEIGH J. KING.
For Treasurer.....MAYNOR J. NORTON.
For Surveyor.....N. PAUL HOPKINS.
For Chooser.....EDWARD GAY.

The State reward for dead Indians has been increased to \$200 for every red-skin sent to Purgatory. This sum is more than the dead bodies of all the Indians east of the Red River are worth.



Are we too Assimilated to Care?!



Culturally Appropriate School Climate:

School Leaders at the K-12 level used to follow the ISLLC ~ Inter-State School Leader Licensure Consortium for ensuring,

“A Culturally Appropriate Environment for all students to learn”.

Education Professional Standard for School Climate:

Now, the National Policy Board for Education Administration provides professional standards for Education leaders (2015)

Under Standard 1 the National Policy Board describes that Effective Educational Leaders:

Develop an educational mission for the school to promote the academic success and well-being of each student. [S1,a]

....promote a vision for the school on the successful learning and development of each child and on instructional and organizational practices that promote such success. [S1, b]

...advocate and cultivate core values that define the school's culture including...child-centered education, equity, inclusiveness, social justice, openness, caring, and trust. [S1, c]

Education Professional Standard for School Climate:

Further, **Standard 2** “Ethics and Professional Norms” calls for:

...placing children at the center of education and accept responsibility for each student’s academic success and well-being; [S2, c]

Safeguard and promote the values of...equity, social justice...and diversity.
[S2, d] &

Lead with...an understanding of all students’ ...backgrounds and cultures.
[S2, e]

Education Professional Standard for School Climate:

Standard 3, “Equity and Cultural Responsiveness” identifies that effective educational leaders:

Ensure each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student’s culture and context. [S3, a]

Recognize, respect, and employ each student’s strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning. [S3, b].

Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization...and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language... [S3, e].

Promote the preparation of students to live productively in and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts. [S3, f]



So, an Important Question is....

How do we know that the use of mascot for the American Indian Race ~ *and Only Our Race* ~ is inconsistent with the Professional and Ethical Standards Educational and School Leaders are bound by?

Educational Professional Response

In 2005 the American Psychological Association (APA) called for the immediate retirement of all American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams and organizations.

The APA's position is based on a growing body of social science literature that shows the harmful effects of racial stereotyping and inaccurate racial portrayals, including the particularly harmful effects of American Indian sports mascots on the social identity development and self-esteem of Native young people.

Educational Professional Response

Continued use of these mascots, symbols, images, and personalities has a negative effect on not only American Indians students but on all students by:

- Undermining the educational experiences of members of all communities-especially those who have had little or no contact with Indigenous peoples.
- Establishes an unwelcome and often times hostile learning environment for Native students that affirms negative images/stereotypes that are promoted in mainstream society

Academic Research Says

According to Dr. Stephanie Fryberg, University of Arizona:

"American Indian mascots are harmful not only because they are often negative, but because they remind American Indians of the limited ways in which others see them. This in turn restricts the number of ways American Indians can see themselves."

Further, Indian Mascots:

- Undermine the ability of American Indian Nations to portray accurate and respectful images of their culture, spirituality, and traditions.
- Presents stereotypical images of American Indians. Such mascots are a contemporary example of prejudice by the dominant culture against racial and ethnic minority groups
- Is a form of discrimination against American Indian Nations.

APA Resolution Describes:

"The use of American Indian mascots as symbols in schools and university athletic programs is particularly troubling because schools are places of learning. These mascots are teaching stereotypical, misleading and too often, insulting images of American Indians. These negative lessons are not just affecting American Indian students; they are sending the wrong message to all students."

- Former APA President Ronald F. Levant, EdD

Another Question is....

If the use of these mascots is to “honor” American Indians, why don’t school districts honor other races by using an...

African American mascot for a Basketball Team?

What would that look like? What would be acceptable?

What about a Latina Sports Team?

What caricature would a district use then?

How about an Asian Pacific American Mascot?

What perceived aspect of their culture would be exploited?



Common sense shows how absurd this would be. So, why is it tolerated for American Indians and not other races?

The answer is in the objectification of American Indians as relics of the past or uncivilized humans in need of salvation.

After all, American Indians were the last to be granted citizenship with the right to vote in 1924 but not protected until 1965.

Another Question is....

What curriculum do districts administer to counter this? I'm guessing a unit in 3rd grade and one in Middle School Social Science to align with State Standards. Having worked as Nokomis' Executive, I can attest that Okemos was one of the early districts to implement this curriculum.

What contemporary lessons?

Anything about the origin of American Democracy?

An affirmative approach would be to fully infuse culturally appropriate curriculum ~ across curriculum.



Finally, as a School District, School Board or Community charged with Professional Ethics as an Educator...

...What is your duty to provide a safe and culturally appropriate environment for all students to learn?

NCAI “Ending ‘Indian’ Mascots” Initiative

NATIONAL SCHOOL MASCOT TRACKING DATABASE: THE CURRENT NUMBERS

Online link: <http://bit.ly/schoolmascotdatabase>

SCHOOLS WITH NATIVE “THEMED” MASCOTS: THE CURRENT NUMBERS (*Last updated: April 13, 2021*)

Current overall numbers and numbers of five most common mascots featured below:

OVERALL	
Total Schools	1,905
Total School Districts	1,018

“R*DSK*NS”	
Total Schools	94
Total School Districts	43

“INDIANS”	
Total Schools	790
Total School Districts	346

“BRAVES”	
Total Schools	206
Total School Districts	124

“CHIEFS”	
Total Schools	181
Total School Districts	94

“WARRIORS”	
Total Schools	417
Total School Districts	247

RECENT SCHOOL MASCOT CHANGES – NOVEMBER 2020-MARCH 2021 (Last updated: April 13, 2021)

Total school mascot changes in calendar year 2020: 70 / 16 most recent school mascot changes listed below:

SCHOOL NAME (STATE)	MASCOT	DECISION	DATE
Gar-Field HS (VA)	"INDIANS"	School announced change in letter (link)	03/15/21
Cheyenne Mountain HS (CO)	"INDIANS"	School board voted to retire mascot (link)	03/15/21
Camanche HS (IA)	"INDIANS"	School board voted to retire mascot (link)	03/15/21
Wichita North HS (KS)	"R*DSK*NS"	School board voted to retire mascot (link)	02/08/21
Shawnee Mission North HS (KS)	"INDIANS"	School board voted to retire mascot (link)	01/25/21
Watertown HS (CT)	"INDIANS"	School board voted to retire mascot (link)	01/25/21
North Brookfield HS (MA)	"INDIANS"	School committee voted to retire mascot (link)	12/21/20
John Burroughs HS (CA)	"INDIANS"	Student body voted to retire mascot (link)	12/11/20
Caledonia-Mumford HS (NY)	"RED RAIDERS"	School board voted to retire mascot (link)	12/09/20
Farmington HS (CT)	"INDIANS"	School board voted to retire mascot (link)	12/09/20
Fresno HS (CA)	"WARRIORS"	School board voted to retire mascot imagery (link)	12/09/20
Snell MS (NM)	"R*DSK*NS"	School board voted to retire mascot (link)	12/04/20
Bountiful HS (UT)	"BRAVES"	Principal announced change in video (link)	11/30/20
Watchung Hills Regional HS (NJ)	"WARRIORS"	School board voted to retire mascot (link)	11/10/20
Union HS (OK)	"R*DSK*NS"	School board voted to retire mascot (link)	11/09/20
Kahuku HS (HI)	"RED RAIDERS"	State Civil Rights Compliance Branch recommended change (link)	11/06/20

**Note: The database features a comprehensive accounting of all public K-12 schools, and also tracks private schools that NCAI has managed to identify through continuous online research and its ongoing education and advocacy on the issue. Only the most recent changes are listed in the table above (Suggested Citation: National Congress of American Indians (2021). National School Mascot Tracking Database: The Current Numbers. Washington DC, April 13, 2021).*

*Let's Honor Native Students by
Being on the Right Side of History*

Change the Mascot



Thank You from Our Next Generations

References

- National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015). Professional standards for educational leaders, 2015. Reston, VA: Author.
- American Psychological Association. (2005). *APA resolution recommending the immediate retirement of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams, and organizations*. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/indian-mascots.aspx>

Seeking Clarity

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Questions
for our
panel members

Directions

1. *Use the chat feature on Zoom to submit a question. Be sure your chat message is directed to our moderator.*
2. *Questions that seek clarity regarding the recommendation will be shared with our panel.*
3. *Questions seeking clarity that cannot be addressed in the time allotted for the evening will have responses posted on our website.*
4. *Specific feedback regarding the recommendation will be collected later in the presentation.*

**To submit a question
seeking clarity
on the initial
recommendation**

**Providing
Feedback**

...

**Providing
additional
thoughts for
consideration**

Directions

1. *The link below will be pasted into the zoom chat feature by our moderators.*
2. [Initial Recommendation Feedback](#)
3. *The form will be open through Friday, April 16th for feedback.*

To provide written input regarding the opportunities, challenges and “I wonders” regarding the initial recommendation

Thank you for participating!

Next Steps

Study Committee Review (April)

- *Reviews feedback and finalizes recommendation to superintendent*

Board Presentation (May 10th- 7pm)

- *Superintendent presents final recommendation to Board of Education*
- *Public comment to Board of Education*

Board Action (May 24th - 7pm)

- *If approved:*
 - *Develop and implement inclusive process to identify new nickname*
 - *Identify and pursue additional funding sources*
 - *Transition from current to new mascot/nickname (September, 2023?)*