



## North Hills School District proposes resolution to change Native American logo while keeping 'Indians' name



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North Hills School District has proposed a resolution to discontinue the use of the Indian chief logo, while keeping the name “Indians” as an identifier for their school and athletic teams.

The district decided to add the motion to change the “Indians” mascot to its next committee meeting on Oct. 6, when the resolution to keep the name while changing the logo will be voted on.

The proposed resolution was debated on Thursday night during a legislative meeting of the North Hills school board.

Board members, who said they remain largely divided on the resolution, admit it serves as a compromise to the debate about the change in the school’s name and logo.

Allison Mathis, school board president, said the resolution is based on the varying feedback from the community, where they received a slight favor in change of the mascot from the town hall and unfavorable reaction to the mascot change from the written feedback.

“It's my opinion that sweeping change without the support of a certain percentage of the community would be a mistake and a failure,” Ms. Mathis said. “This resolution is obviously a compromise and I do feel that we need a path forward as leaders in this community who have put a lot of time and work into soliciting feedback.

“And in a world that is so often polarized. I'm hopeful that we can come together on this compromise and move forward beyond it, to focus on education.”

Marlene Ozel, a parent in the school district, said the resolution gives a “false impression” of change.

“My fear is that eliminating only the imagery but keeping the names does very little to address the actual problem of the misrepresentation of the American people and gives a false impression that we're actually doing something about the issue,” Ms. Ozel said.

Valerie Aquila, another parent in the school district, said she doesn't believe the resolution is a compromise, but rather a “half measure” that is yet to be finished.

“I want to make sure that it's not really discussed as a compromise because I don't think that teaching our students and teaching our children that compromising on racism is OK,” Ms. Aquila said. “I see that this resolution is sort of a half measure ... it's trying to maybe get us to something but it's not there yet.”

Mike Santucci, the school board's chief liaison for building and grounds, called the mascot change debate “silly” and said the proposed resolution was a way to meet in the middle.

“No one asked me about the new tennis courts,” Mr. Santucci said. “No one asked me how the marching band was doing or how the wind ensemble won another award. So it's ... I hate to use the word silly, but it is in the big picture of things, something that is sometimes somewhat less important.”

Board member Deanna Philpott brought up concerns for fiscal responsibility as well as stating that only changing the logo and keeping the name would inevitably cause a need to rebrand again in the future, creating more expenditures.

“How can we say we're being fiscally responsible when we spend money on designing a new logo now, under the name of Indians when we all know the national trend is to change for Native American mascots,” Ms. Philpott said. “At some point we will find ourselves back in the same room arguing that we cannot afford to replace uniforms, fields and signs that are simply swapping the image for the word.”

Other schools in the Pittsburgh area have changed the use of Native American names and images in their school iconography in recent years.

In April, the Penn Hills School District held a town hall to gather community feedback about its mascot, also the “Indians.” The Seneca Valley school board unanimously voted last year to discontinue its use of Native American imagery, though it retained its “Raiders” moniker, while Shady Side Academy’s athletics retired its former name and rebranded as the Bulldogs in 2020.

Ms. Philpott said she believes the board can do better than the proposed resolution.

“I do not believe in baby steps when it comes to discrimination,” Ms. Philpott said. “I believe we should and can do better than this resolution.”

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