

From: Amanda Benedict <agetty@taftschool.org>
Sent: Tuesday, December 8, 2020 9:29 AM
Subject: In support of changing Watertown's mascot

Dear Watertown Public School Board of Education, Mascot Committee Members:

I am a current parent of a 1st Grader in John Trumbull Primary School and a resident of Watertown for the past 10 years. I currently teach science at the Taft School, but I am a proud public school graduate of a high school in Vermont. When I learned that my children might one day attend Watertown High School, who's mascot is an "Indian," I was disgusted and immediately started thinking about other options for my children.

All of us on this land are colonizers. We live on stolen land. The genocide and spirit murdering that occurred in this state during its origins must never be forgotten. To tokenize a First Nation culture with an "Indian" Mascot is highly inappropriate, insulting, and degrading to the Indigenous people of our region and reciprocally, to our town. Nostalgia is not appropriate in this situation. We know better, we must do better.

I invite members of this committee to investigate the ancestral lands of this region with this website resource: <https://native-land.ca/>

I invite members of this committee to learn about the heritage of the people who were here before us and consider a land acknowledgement and reparation to those people through reaching out to the relevant, currently present, **Indigenous people who do still live in CT. The Institute for American Indian Studies in Washington, CT** is a fantastic resource for looking into and connecting with Indigenous people in this area.

Further, in order to educate the community, and again make reparations for the offensive mascot, **I propose that Indigenous Peoples Day be celebrated in our schools instead of Columbus Day. That that day be not a day off from school, but instead the true stories of the Colonization of CT be told.**

Rather than celebrating the myth of the Pilgrims and Indians and the first Thanksgiving, I challenge you to dig deeper and learn about the genocide, the conflict, and the horrors of the original schools that attempted to wipe the Indigenous cultures from our land. November is Native American Heritage Month and they deserve far better than a mythical Thanksgiving story and a ridiculous mascot.

Taft is going through its own reckonings with its history and its origins. The work is necessary to move our school forward and promote a stronger school, better education, and more justice in our world. Watertown Public Schools must do the same. Listen, learn, grow, and do not block the progress asked for by your students and community members. **Change the Mascot.**

I am happy to help provide resources, continue the conversation, or simply speak my views to relevant parties. Feel free to contact me at my school email address, or at my cell: 802-238-7016.
Thank you for your consideration.

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