



For immediate release:

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YAKAMA NATION AUTHORIZES WAHLUKE WARRIOR IMAGE

YAKAMA NATION AGENCY, YAKAMA RESERVATION – On Friday, November 5, 2021, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (“Yakama Nation”) authorized Wahluke School District (“WSD”) to continue use of Wahluke Warrior Image to allow sufficient time for development of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Yakama Nation.

The Wahluke Warrior image is representative of a relationship that began generations ago between WSD and the Wanapum Indians of Priest Rapids (“Wanapum”) where Native American culture and heritage are intertwined into the daily lives of students that attend WSD.

The relationship between Wanapum and WSD was established since the conception of the school in Mattawa. “‘Wahluke’ is a Wanapum word meaning rise. The school campus sits on the slope of the Saddle Mountains and its geographical location is elevated above its surrounding area,” wrote Wanapum Leader Rex Buck, Jr. in a letter to WSD. “In the 1980s, the WSD approached the Wanapum of Priest Rapids with the desire and idea to respectfully use the Warrior,” said Buck. He continued to describe the conversation and guidance provided by the leader of the Wanapum at the time Frank Buck. “Frank shared the concept of the Warrior identifying what the students should strive to be and shape how student would succeed as they grew and passed through the school district. The Wahluke Warrior is somebody who values the land, their family, is respectful, and will grow into becoming a leader. The meaning of the Wahluke Warrior was not interpreted nor intended to convey the characteristics of a fighter, nor a person of war and bloodshed,” wrote Buck.

Principal Cody Marlow shared the history of the Wahluke Warrior image during his testimony to Yakama Nation identifying Tobias Tapia and Harry Buck as the Wahluke students who drew the image as a way to honor the Wanapum and the history of the Wahluke community. The construction of the new High School was achieved with significant contribution from Wanapum leadership with elements of the gentle slope, circular design, school mural, and seven-point star on the gymnasium floor honoring the culture and history of the Wanapum.

LaRena Sohapp, Vice-Chair of Yakama Nation General Council shared her family history from Wanapum, and said the Wahluke School District Consultation is “an observance of what can be done with one mind and one heart.”

“The Yakama Nation Tribal Council is pleased to support Wahluke School District and our Wanapum relatives to continue the positive relationship developed honoring the Warrior image that honors the land, water, and people of the land,” said Delano Saluskin, the Yakama Tribal Council Chairman.

For additional information or comment, please contact Yakama Nation Executive Secretary Athena Sanchez-Yallup at (509) 865-5121 or Yakama Nation LEEH “Education” Committee Chairman Raymond Smartlowit.