

TOLEDO SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 237

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SUPERINTENDENT

CHRIS RUST

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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April 21, 2021

Re: Toledo Rebranding

Dear Friends of Toledo Indians,

For many years, there has been controversy over the name of our mascot and the symbols we use to brand our organization. A name that our community has used to honor its connection to the Indigenous people of Washington and the Cowlitz Indian Tribe in particular will not be allowed after December 31, 2021. An overwhelming majority of our legislators voted in favor of SHB 1356. This law will prohibit the use of Native American names, symbols or images as school mascots, logos or team names. This means that TSD can no longer refer to itself as the Indians or use the dreamcatcher logo.

This issue has persisted for decades because there has been no agreement on whether the use of Indians as a mascot is appropriation or appreciation. The National Congress of American Indians, the oldest and most representative group of all Native Americans, has been working to retire Indian-themed mascots. The Washington State Board of Education passed a resolution in 1993 and again in 2012 calling for Native American mascots to be eliminated. The American Psychological Association has identified Native American themed mascots as detrimental to children. This isn't happening "all of a sudden". This issue has been unresolved for many years.

You will find all groups represented on both sides of this issue. There is disagreement, even within families on this issue. Regardless of how we feel about the decision, our democratic system has produced a resolution to the issue and the district is obligated to respond. We believe that we have fulfilled our responsibility to be always mindful of our expressions of pride that they do not cross over into hurt for Indigenous people and that the impact of our actions is always aligned with our intent. We continue to look for ways to deepen our partnership with all Indigenous peoples and especially the Cowlitz Tribe as we occupy their ancestral lands.

We will continue to honor the Cowlitz Indian Tribe and to collaborate with them in respectful partnership. Our historical relationship with those who first inhabited this area is much deeper than our use of logos and mascots.

Our rebranding process will begin with collecting mascot ideas from everyone who has a stake in Toledo's mascot. Students will figure prominently in this selection, but we are also interested in ideas from the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, alumni, staff, community, parents and athletes. We will have focus groups that will narrow the selection of names until there are a few that are recommended for board approval. Once a mascot is selected, logo design will begin.

Alumni from Toledo High School, including this years' class, will always be Toledo Indians. It is expected that many will continue to wear their jerseys, letter jackets and other Toledo Indian gear. But, after January 1, 2022, our teams and brand will be different and hopefully over time, will enjoy the same support and pride that our current mascot does.

Sincerely,



Chris Rust
Superintendent