Documenting Change: The Nashoba Regional High School Mascot

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Abstract

In 2020, the Nashoba Regional School District Committee voted to retire a controversial Chieftain mascot, selected in 1961. Our goal was to provide the community with a resource to learn about local history and the nationwide Native American mascot debate. Methods included archival research and interviews to record attitudes and perspectives of community members in response to the mascot change. The final deliverable included a timeline of change and a framework for educational enrichment surrounding the use of the mascot.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Nashoba Regional School District (NRSD) encompasses the towns of Lancaster, Bolton, and Stow, Massachusetts, all located on land formerly utilized by the Nipmuc tribe. In 1961, Nashoba Regional High School (NRHS) was founded in Bolton, Massachusetts and chose a Native American "Chieftain" as its mascot, which depicted a Native American in a traditional headdress. In 2014, this image was phased out and changed to the letter 'N' with a spear through it after discussions about the disrespectful nature of the original iconography. Following a rise in social unrest across the U.S. in 2020, the NRSD community formed two petitions: one to remove and one to keep the Chieftain mascot. After an intense debate on July 1, 2020, the "Chieftain" name and all associated imagery was officially retired (Gottesman, July 1, 2020a). In April 2021, the new mascot, the "Wolves", was chosen by a community vote.

Figure E-1: Map of Native American tribal land occupation in present-day Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island (CTH, n.d.).

Our goal was to provide NRHS students and community members with a resource to learn about local history and the nationwide mascot debate. Our objectives were to:

1. identify the history of the mascot design in the school community;
2. document and record viewpoints of the local community and local tribes; and
3. create a timeline of the changes and actions taken within the Nashoba community.

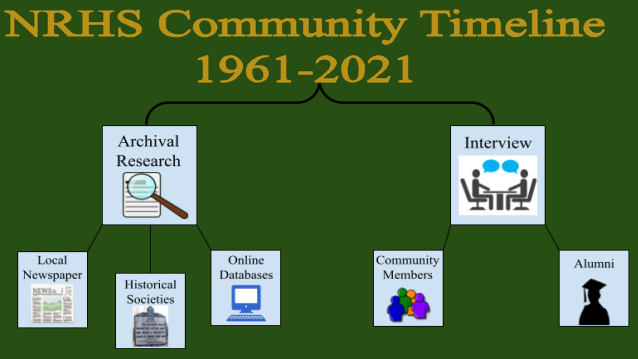
Background

The history of interactions between Indigenous peoples and European colonists in the Americas is often romanticized. War due to English encroachment on Native land decimated Native populations in New England, jeopardized constructive relationships between the colonists and the Nipmucs, and led to the effective end of

Native dominance in the region. This led the Nipmucs and other Native Americans to integrate and assimilate into English communities in order to survive. At the same time, Native American references in sports team names were gaining popularity. Since their creation in the 1800s, sport and school mascots have been tied significantly to tradition and team identity formation within communities. As the use of Native mascots developed, some considered their use offensive, while others viewed them as a way to honor Indigenous individuals. This has led to conversations about the use of Native mascots in schools and professional sports teams. Most of these conversations have focused on opinion rather than on scientific evidence. However, in the last few years alone, increasing documentation asserts that self-esteem, community worth, and achievement-related aspirations are all drastically decreased in Native individuals who are repeatedly presented with Native mascot imagery (Fryberg et al., 2010). Efforts to replace Native American mascots have increased over time, as activist organizations and Native American tribes have pushed for their removal. In January 2021, Bill SD.417 was filed in Massachusetts. If passed, this bill would prohibit the use of Native American mascots and logos by Massachusetts public schools in efforts to pave the way for a more inclusive and culturally sensitive future.

Methodology

To complete our project, we conducted archival research from local newspapers, historical societies, Native American tribal statements, and online databases. Additionally, we interviewed community members and alumni of NRHS.



Results & Discussion

Through our research, we identified the history of the Chieftain mascot. The NRHS logo was a common occurrence of the Chieftain mascot. This logo was initially depicted with a side profile of a person wearing a traditional Native American headdress. Even after the logo was changed in 2014, the old logo still made appearances, such as on club shirts, shown in Figure E-2, and in the mural on the gym wall.

Figure E-2: 2016 DECA club shirt with original NRHS logo (Mitchell, 2016).

Our interviews revealed that those in support of the mascot change primarily consisted of NRHS alumni who had ventured outside the Nashoba community for college or career opportunities, and those who had recently moved to the Nashoba community, such as NRSD parents, teachers, and Indigenous people. Mainly, this group believed that this change showed potential for a more inclusive environment within NRHS and the community. Participants against the change believed the Chieftain honored Native Americans. Moreover, many of these people felt unheard during the change, and that there was a general lack of transparency and democracy. Representatives of Native American tribes tended to reference the psychological studies showing the negative impacts Native mascots have on Indigenous youth and described the offensive stereotypes these mascots display.

Although there were varying perspectives within the community, our research showed that their responses shared common wishes and sentiments. The majority of participants agreed that the rise in discussion about the Chieftain mascot provided an excellent opportunity to learn about Native American history and culture, especially within local communities. Following community suggestion, we created a running timeline that consists of images, quotes, and dates that document the history of the Chieftain mascot and the process of the mascot change (such as the one in Figure E-3).

Recommendations

Based on our findings outlined above, our group proposes the following recommendations to Nashoba Regional School District that also addressed three United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Recommendation 1: Create a Physical or Digital Educational Resource

Our recommendation for visual-learning community members is a physical timeline of change that allows participants to physically interact with images and events in front of them. This will be most effective and accessible for the NRHS community if placed inside the school. The school district would also add a web page detailing the history of the Chieftain mascot to the district's website. This deliverable would be immediately accessible to all community members, regardless of location or access to school buildings.

Recommendation 2: Add Native American History and Modern Culture Studies to the School Curriculum

To provide students with the knowledge to contextualize the mascot change, we recommend that the school enhance current history lessons with comprehensive Native American history, culture, and current issues, with a focus on events that occurred on NRSD land. This curriculum would be adapted for kindergarten to twelfth grade.

Recommendation 3: Schedule Field Trips and Visitor Discussions

We recommend having a yearly field trip where students learn about Native American history through local Indigenous people. These experiences would introduce students to cultures unlike their own and would serve as opportunities to discuss the history of Native Americans on NRSD land. In addition, NRHS could hold annual assemblies for Indigenous people to share their experience with students, parents, and community

members. To supplement the field trips and speakers, students would watch documentaries in class and have discussions about Native American history, current issues, and the use of Native mascots.

Recommendation 4: Create K-12, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Learning Modules

Finally, our group proposes Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) learning modules, in the form of in-class presentations. Three versions of this module could be constructed for grades K-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-12. Each of these modules will explore how EDI can be implemented into our day to day lives, especially the role it plays as the school shifts away from the Chieftain mascot. By implementing these modules, NRSD will hopefully promote and teach students about equity, diversity, and inclusion, which allows the students to further learn and discuss the decision by NRHS to remove the Chieftain mascot in a safe and open-minded setting.

Conclusion

Our four recommendations revolve around education in order for the community to learn, grow, and continue to be proud of their school. Our team addressed three United Nations Sustainable Development Goals over the course of this project. Goal 4, promoting inclusive and equitable education for all; Goal 10, working to minimize inequality; and Goal 11, improving the inclusivity of cities and towns (United Nations, n.d.). All of these goals revolve around the idea of inclusivity and equality for all community members, and as echoed by a school committee member, “all means all” when it comes to education. Ultimately, our project provides our sponsors with documentation of the mascot change at NRHS along with recommendations to help the community moving forward.

Condensed Timeline of Change

Figure E-3: Sample of the timeline that runs down the right-hand side of our report.

Acknowledgements

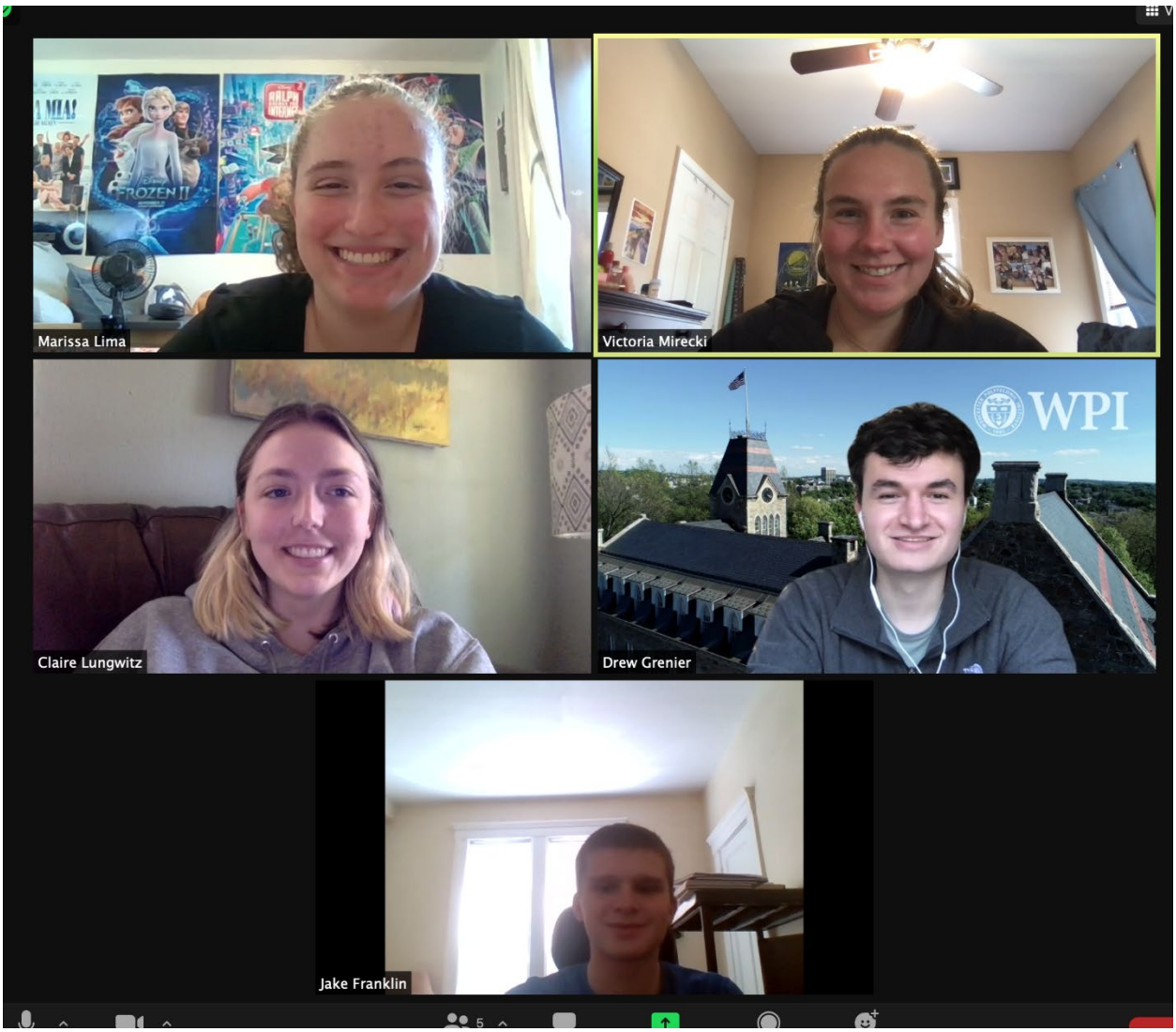
Sincerest thanks to our sponsors Elaine Sanfilippo, Joanna Miller, and Maura Sieller for all of their guidance throughout the course of our project. We appreciate their support, advice, and passion about this topic, and the time they dedicated to make this project possible.

We would also like to thank our advisors Prof. Ingrid Shockey and Dr. Curt Davis of Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) for providing us with helpful and timely feedback on our report and pushing us to think more deeply about our project. Their insight throughout the project was invaluable.

Finally, our group extends our thanks to our interviewees and the Nashoba community for taking the time to share their experiences and perspectives on a divisive topic. Additionally, we appreciate the discussions about our project within town Facebook groups, and those individuals that reached out to us as a result. Without their responses, our project would not have been possible.

Authorship

Each member of this team played a significant role in developing each of the finalized chapters and sections of this report. Whether it was through the process of outlining, writing, researching editing, organizing, or formatting, everyone was a leader in their own right over the course of this project. Team members complemented each other's strengths and weaknesses and were willing to lend a helping-hand or assist in other member's portions of the project. The team remained vigilant in maintaining an effective work ethic, with assignments and individual portions of the project completed well before the due dates.



Meet the Team

While working from our college apartments, bedrooms, dorms (while on RA duty), workplaces, cars, and different time zones our team was able to unite together to document and record community attitudes and perspectives surrounding Nashoba Regional High School's recent mascot change – all in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Jake Franklin

Hello! My name is Jake Franklin. I am a junior at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and am studying Aeronautical Engineering. I live in Bolton, MA, directly across the street from Nashoba Regional High School, where I was a student between 2014 and 2018. Although I did not have a strong opinion about Chieftain Mascot during my time at the school, I enjoyed being able to use my personal knowledge of the district, as well as my connections within it to enrich and provide a more personal feel to the project. This project gave me the chance to give back to a school community which I spent more than twelve years as a student. I enjoyed the chance to make new friends, as well as reconnect with old ones as a part of this IQP.

Drew Grenier

Greetings! My name is Drew Grenier, and I am a junior at Worcester Polytechnic Institute studying Civil Engineering. I live in Claremont, NH, but worked remotely on campus in Worcester, MA throughout the course of this project. It has been a truly unique experience listening and documenting all the thoughts, opinions, and stories of the Nashoba Regional School District community during this change. I am grateful that even during the pandemic travel restrictions and cancellation of our project in Mandi, India – both in-person and virtually – I was still able to make new friends, memories, and have an informative IQP experience.

Marissa Lima

Hello! My name is Marissa Lima, and I am a Biology/Biotechnology major with a Computer Science minor at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. I am from Lacey, NJ but am currently living on campus. Being able to listen and learn about the different viewpoints of the community is definitely an experience I never would have had if not given this opportunity. It is very eye-opening to see how empathetic community members are to those who do not necessarily agree with their own points of view. This was definitely not what I was expecting when choosing an IQP project, but I have thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of it.

Claire Lungwitz

Hello there! My name is Claire Lungwitz, and I am from Austin, TX. I am a current junior at WPI studying Mathematical Sciences. This project has widely expanded my knowledge of Native American history and has deepened my understanding of the issues with Native mascots. Additionally, listening to a wide range of community perspectives was an incredible experience – I learned something new every interview! Although this project was completed remotely, my WPI teammates and working with a local Massachusetts community helped me feel more connected to WPI and the community. I would like to thank my advisor and sponsors for consistently having profound insight, energy, and interest in this project. I am grateful to have had this incredible experience.

Victoria Mirecki

Hello! My name is Victoria Mirecki, and I am originally from Washingtonville, NY. I am currently a junior at WPI studying Mathematical Sciences and Computer Science. In the future I hope to become a Data Scientist. Throughout working on this project, I have learned so much about indigenous peoples and the history of Native Americans throughout the United States. The passion that our sponsors have for this project is so energizing and makes me so excited. Interviewing people of different ages and backgrounds has been an amazing experience and it is just so eye opening to hear their points of view and opinions. This project gave me the opportunity to gain a much deeper understanding and appreciation for Indigenous people.

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Glossary of Abbreviations:

1. NRSD: Nashoba Regional School District
2. NRHS: Nashoba Regional High School
3. NRSC: Nashoba Regional School Committee
4. NCAA: National Collegiate Athletic Association
5. MCNAA: Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness
6. NCAI: National Congress of American Indians
7. DECA: Distributive Education Clubs of America
8. UMass: University of Massachusetts
9. COVID-19: Coronavirus Disease 2019
10. EDI: Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Chapter 1: Introduction

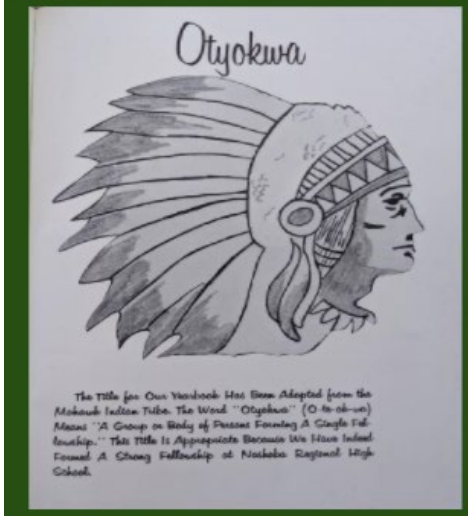
Prior to the arrival of European colonial groups, Native American[1] tribes[2] resided across the expansive territory later to become known as the Americas. As colonization efforts began to grow throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, explorers and settlers expanded into the lands inhabited by Native tribes. By the time Andrew Jackson introduced the Indian Removal Act in 1830, resulting in the forced removal of specific tribes from their homelands, Native American populations had been decimated, and their ancestral lands taken over by colonial powers. By 2019, people who identified as American Indian and Alaskan Native made up only 1.3 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). These groups continue to experience discrimination, stereotyping, and an overall lack of respectful representation in modern society.

In the early 1900s, it became popular for professional sports teams to use Native American names and symbols as mascots, such as the Boston Braves (currently the Atlanta Braves) and Cleveland Indians. The use of such names and symbols quickly permeated American culture. Companies began profiting off of products such as American Spirit cigarettes, Land O' Lakes products, and the Jeep Cherokee (Merskin, 2014). From clothing brands to American military weaponry, Native American symbols began to appear across the country. Over time, universities and high schools began to adopt Native American mascots. The rising popularity of these mascots over the past century has sparked conversation and controversy between those who support their removal, such as Native American

1961

NRHS adopted a Native American "Chieftain" mascot in honor of the school's Nipmuc namesake

1962



First explanation of the word Otyokwa – 1962 yearbook

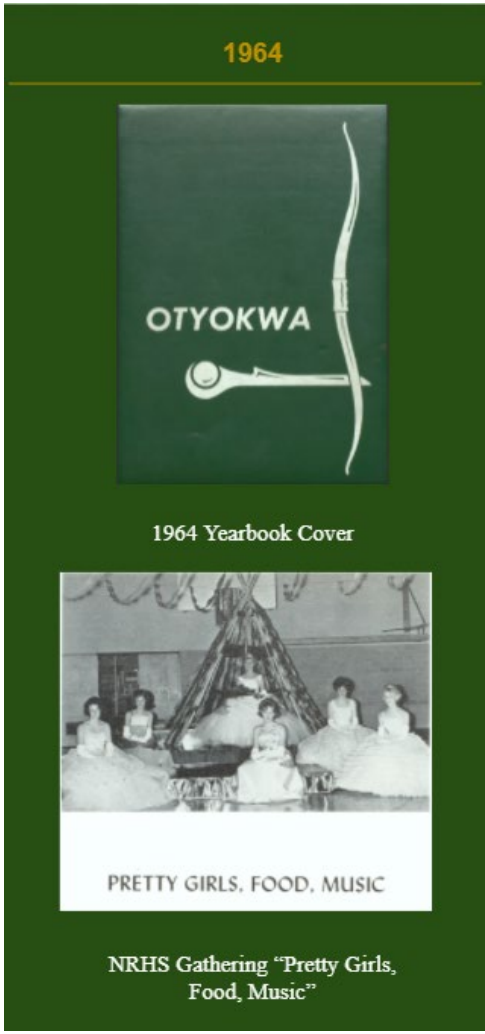
[1] While there are many terms by which groups refers to themselves (e.g. American Indian, band, native, and First Nation), the demonyms "Native American", "Native", and "Indigenous" have gained widespread acceptance amongst many of those being referenced. As such, this group of people will collectively be referred to as "Native American", "Native", and "Indigenous" throughout this document.

[2]Today there are many Native Americans that use the word "tribe" to refer to their larger political structure and several others also use the terms "nation" or "people." Throughout this document, we will attempt to use what we identify as appropriate terms whenever possible, however, for continuity, the word "tribe" will be used in instances where no direct reference to a single Native American society is made.

activists and their supporters, and those who are resistant to change in the face of social conflict. Activists argue that the mascots contribute to the discrimination and negative stereotyping Native Americans experience, while those who maintain the status quo typically have a strong attachment towards the mascots and believe them to be a symbol of pride (Sharrow et al., 2020).

In recent years, there have been efforts in the U.S. to address racist mascots, including the removal and rebranding of the Washington Football Team, formerly known as the Washington Redsk*ns[3] (Sharrow et al., 2020). However, these changes have not been adopted universally. The Kansas City Chiefs played in the 2021 Super Bowl, prompting mounting pressure to reject "Chief" as a mascot (Kelley, 2021). While national sports teams have started to take action, local communities around the country face similar challenges to remove inappropriate team and mascot names. In 2015, Massachusetts alone had thirty-eight high schools with Native American mascots (Pohle, 2015).

The Nashoba Regional School District (NRSD) encompasses the towns of Lancaster, Bolton, and Stow, Massachusetts, all located on land formerly utilized by the Nipmuc tribe. Upon the founding of Nashoba Regional High School (NRHS) in 1961, the school adopted a Native American "Chieftain" mascot in honor of the school's Nipmuc namesake. In 2007, the New England Anti-Mascot Coalition began calling on public schools in the New England area to remove mascots referencing Native Americans. The discussion continued until 2014, when the original mascot image, that of a Native American in a traditional headdress, was phased out. The discussion later resurfaced in 2016 after an NRHS alum brought up the topic with a few faculty members, but no action was taken to remove the



[3] The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest and largest American Indian and Alaska Native advocacy organization, explains that the previous name of the Washington Football Team is considered deeply offensive as it is akin to using a racial slur (National Congress of American Indians, 2013). To address this, the team name will be depicted as "Redsk*ns" for the purposes of this project.

mascot (Torres, 2016). Following several instances of social unrest across the U.S. in 2020, more specifically, the Black Lives Matter movement, the NRSD community formed two petitions: one for the removal and one against the removal of the Chieftain mascot. Those in favor of the mascot's removal felt that this change was long overdue as the mascot was incredibly offensive to the Nipmuc people, while those against the change felt a deep attachment to the mascot and its history at NRSD. These petitions sparked debates on Facebook and other social media platforms, before eventually being brought to the Nashoba Regional School Committee (NRSC). After an intense debate on July 1, 2020, the "Chieftain" name and all associated imagery was officially retired (Gottesman, July 1, 2020a).

The goal of this project was to provide NRHS students and community members with a resource to learn about local history and the nationwide mascot debate. In order to reach our goal, we identified the following three objectives:

1. identify the history of the mascot design in the school community;
2. document and record viewpoints of the local community and local tribes; and
3. create a timeline of the changes and actions taken within the Nashoba community.

Documenting the facts, opinions, and lessons learned provides an educational and historical resource that will ensure the history of this mascot change will not be forgotten with time.

Figure 1: Massachusetts high schools with Native American Mascot Logos (Pohle, 2015)

Chapter 2: Learning from Historical Narratives

The following chapter introduces background about the history of the Nipmuc Nation, Native American mascots, research about the psychological impacts of controversial mascots, and the recent legislative aspirations of lawmakers, organizations, and tribes. We examine the timeline of the use of Native American mascots and how social perceptions and ideologies have fluctuated since the practice began.

2.1: Acknowledging the History of the Nipmuc Nation: 1621-Present

The history of interactions between Native Americans and European colonists in the Americas is often romanticized and reductive. Engagement between Native Americans and Europeans during the colonization of the Americas nearly always ended in bloodshed, deception, sickness, or starvation, at the cost of many Native communities and lives (Bragdon, 2001). This story is shared by the people of the Nipmuc Nation, who occupied territory in what is now known as Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, before European colonization, as shown in the map in Figure 2.

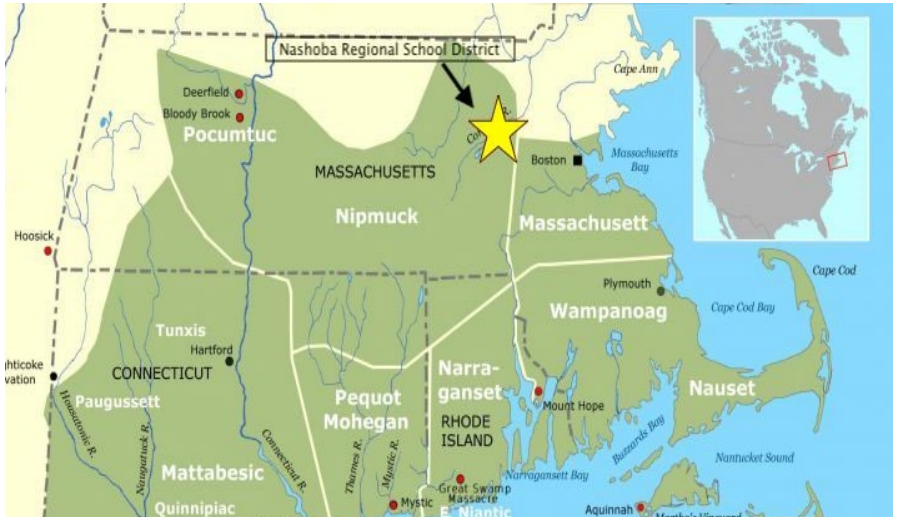


Figure 2: Map of Native American tribal lands in present-day Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island (CTH, n.d.).

The Nipmucs lived in villages connected by trade and sustained themselves through hunting, gathering, and growing crops. Formal interactions between the Nipmuc and English began upon the arrival of the colonists, with the founding of Plymouth Colony in 1620. These initial interactions were recorded as fairly peaceful, with stories of a Wabaquasset native, Acquittimaug, carrying corn to starving colonists. Documented tensions between the Nipmucs and the English began with attempts by Reverend John Eliot to convert Nipmucs to Puritanism in the 1640s (CTH, n.d.). Eliot created villages on Native land called "praying plantations" that required the Nipmucs and other local tribes to abandon their traditions and assimilate to English colonial culture (Castner, n.d.). Those who joined were influenced by various incentives, such as access to food and education (CTH, n.d.). The Nipmucs who maintained their traditional way of life were often strongly opposed to the plantations (Salisbury, 1974). In 1675, war broke out between Native people and the English colonists when the English continued to encroach on Indigenous land. The following three years decimated Native populations in New England and jeopardized constructive relationships between the colonists and the Nipmucs. At the end of the war, the Nipmucs who had converted to Puritanism were confined to four towns: Natick, Dudley (Chabanakongkom), Hassanamesit, and Wabaquasset. Those who had resisted conversion were either killed or sold into slavery, although some were able to escape to other tribes (CTH, n.d.).

With the overwhelming forces of colonization, the Nipmucs and other Native Americans began integrating and assimilating into English communities in order to survive. In 1869, the Nipmucs were granted state citizenship through the Massachusetts Indian Enfranchisement Act. Due to policy loopholes and disagreements about who is considered Native American, non-Native individuals were able to exploit the policy and buy tracts of Nipmuc land. As Native land was sold, Nipmucs spread out across towns in Massachusetts (CTH, n.d.). In 1871, the only piece of land left to the Nipmucs was the

1965

Leading the tribe on the Warpath

First instance of the NRHS drum major dressed in Native American regalia

1966

NRHS yearbook cover 1966

3.5-acre Hassanamisco Reservation in current day Grafton, Massachusetts (*About – Hassanamisco Indian Museum*, n.d.). In 1981, the Nipmucs gained a small piece of land in Thompson, Connecticut that is known as the Chaubunagungamaug Reservation. Currently, the reservations are only used to host tribal events (CTH, n.d.).

2.2: Characterizing Native American Culture Through Mascots

During colonial expansion in the 1800s, Native Americans were portrayed as savages to justify the forceful removal of the tribes. Simultaneously, the United States government framed Native people as those in need of civilizing, protecting, and honoring. This combination facilitated the United States' economic, social, racial, and political power over Native Americans. This concept is known as settler-colonialism (Billings & Black, 2018). The use of Native American caricatures, such as on brand logos and sports mascots, reinforces this power dynamic. By using Native caricatures, the United States has been able to define its own narrative of Native representation, which is often incorrect and stereotypical. Native American mascots are usually chosen to depict strength, ferocity, and courage, and many view this as a way to honor Native people. Although studies have shown that Native caricatures have negative psychological impacts on Native Americans, a dominant narrative continues to push the rhetoric that Native caricatures are used out of respect, and in doing so, maintains systemic control (Bruyneel, 2016).

As the United States was established, settler-colonial ideology became ingrained in American culture. Native American references in sports team names were recorded as early as the 1850s. Initially, Native American team names referred to Native players on the team or as a reference of the location of the team, such as a team in Brooklyn, New York, known as the Mohawks, named after a tribe native to upstate New York, or the city of Indianapolis, which contains the word "Indian". In the 1880s, Native American

1966

Chieftain Basketball 1965-66

1967

1967 Yearbook Quote: "Constructing a yearbook, trying to capture the flavor of Nashoba through pictures and print … is in itself a form of expression… and experience… Perhaps equally important to expression is the valuable experience gained in developing relationships with others...This is an integral part in self-development… maturation… Nashoba, then, deals in sensitivity, appreciation… and thus responsibility… Its hope is to have us instinctively feel that **our lives… can not be static… in our vibrant world… It is our responsibility to adjust and mature… create…**"

team names gained popularity from sportswriters searching for new, humorous ways to identify teams, rather than using their city names (Hylton, 2010).

In 1912, the Boston Braves baseball team (currently the Atlanta Braves) became the first professional sports team to use a Native American mascot, and the Cleveland Indians soon followed. This trend spread from baseball to football, and later to colleges and high schools. By the 1930s, team names became less associated with team identifiers, such as location and uniform, and more representative of the strength and toughness of the players. This shift reinforced the harmful stereotype of Native Americans as aggressive, or savages (Hylton, 2010).

In 1961, Nashoba Regional High School was founded in Bolton, Massachusetts (Matthew, 2011). The name "Nashoba" is taken from the Nipmuc term for "land between waters," as the school sits between the Nashua and Assabet Rivers. The land itself has a colonial history, with the "Nashobah Praying Village" located in the neighboring town of present-day Littleton, Massachusetts. This was the site of the slaughter and forceful relocation of dozens of Native Americans (Bunis, 2011). It is not clear which "Nashoba(h)" the school is named after, the geographic term or former village. Nevertheless, due to the school's Nipmuc namesake, the high school chose a Native American "Chieftain" as its mascot (Matthew, 2011).

Figure 3: The original Chieftain head logo (Courtesy of The Item.)

After the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) spoke out in opposition of Native American mascots in the 1960s, tribes across the country began following suit (Grose, 2010). In fact, Love T. Richardson, a former council member and tribal clerk of the Nipmuc Nation released a statement on behalf of the tribe in 2016 denouncing Native American mascots. Richardson wrote:

> Mascotting another group of people without their permission isn't about love, respect, and honor but about privilege and power; the same privilege and power that discriminates against Native American people and our nations every single day… any and all sports mascot depicting Native people is directly tied to the history of genocide in this country against our people (paras. 4-5).

Even as tribes and a growing number of civil rights organizations outwardly opposed Native American mascots, as of October 2020, 1,232 high schools and four professional sports teams in the United States continued their use of Native mascots (Allchin, 2020). The debate over the use of Native American mascots is one that is taking place across the United States.

2.3: Divided by Change

The nature of sport and school mascots is that they become tied significantly to tradition and team identity formation within the community. The removal of the Chieftain mascot does not only affect the school committee members who voted on it, but also affects the branding associated with student groups, teams, alumni, and community members of the district. Some see the use of caricatured or appropriated mascots as offensive, while others hold the view that it is a way to honor those who previously occupied the land and view mascots as symbols of pride.

Consequently, in response to the mascot debate within the Nashoba community, two opposing petitions were created. One petition, titled "Change the Nashoba Regional High School Mascot," received 3,001 signatures from community members in favor of changing the mascot. Advocates

claimed the mascot contributed to harmful school culture and stereotypes (Spectrum News 1 Staff, 2020). A second petition, titled "Save the Chieftains," received nearly the same number, with 2,807 signatures from community members opposed to the mascot change. Those who signed in opposition to the change felt that the Chieftain mascot was used in an honorable manner, and that the word "Chieftain" does not even have a Native American origin thus it is not solely a Native American reference (Aldrich, 2020).

As expressed in the 2016 statement, noted earlier by Richardson, the Nipmucs, however, remain strongly opposed to Native mascots. More recently, in response to a Native American mascot at a Connecticut high school, Nipmuc Tribal Council Chairman Kenneth Gould Sr. stated, "Native American mascots, often portrayed as caricatures or cartoons, are demeaning to Native Americans and it is our opinion that they should not be used" (K. Gould, personal communication, July 12, 2019, para. 2). Debates about Native mascots have gone back and forth for years, with non-Native people claiming that the mascots are a proud part of their identity, while Indigenous individuals' reason that the mascots are degrading to their identity. Overall, "the debate is labeled as one of change versus the status quo, but the real question is of representation: whom does the mascot represent?" (Billings & Black, 2018).

2.4: Exploring the Greater Implications of Native American Mascots

While the use of Native mascots has been controversial for several decades now, most debates have focused on opinion rather than on scientific evidence. In the last few years alone, research, surveys, and public opinion polls have led experts to startling conclusions about the negative implications of using Native mascots.

1972

NRHS yearbook cover 1972

1977

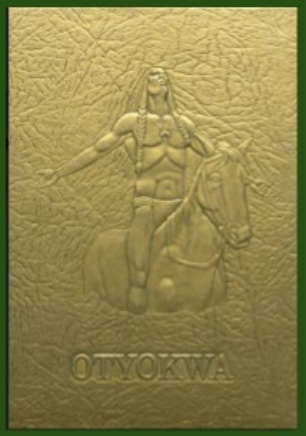
NRHS yearbook cover 1977

An opinion poll report conducted by the Washington Post in 2016, suggested that more than 90% of Native Americans were not offended by Native mascots. In response, Stephanie A. Fryberg, a professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan, and a team of affiliated university researchers, set out to conduct a similar report backed by empirical data and a sample roughly double the size of the Washington Post's polls in order to validate these claims and better understand Native American attitudes toward Native Mascots (Cox et al., 2016).

The study recruited 1,021 Native Americans from all fifty states, representing 148 tribes, becoming the largest study of Native American's perceptions of Native mascots to date. During this study, participants were asked to answer five questions assessing their attitudes towards the Washington Redsk*ns team. After analyzing the data with a series of statistical multiple regression analyses, Fryberg and her team found that Native Americans generally opposed the Redsk*ns team name and the overall use of Native mascots. The study revealed that within the sample, 49% of participants revealed high levels of opposition toward Native mascots compared to the 9% that the Washington Post reported (Fryberg et al., 2021).

Other researchers conducting related studies, but with differing goals, have found similar trends. Correlations have been made by two teams of researchers at the University of Oklahoma between Native mascots and increases in discrimination and stereotyping of Native Americans (Burkley et al., 2016). Evidence also suggests that increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression can be measured in Native Ameri can individuals that come into contact with these images, depictions, and mascots (LaRocque et al., 2011). Moreover, increasing documentation asserts that self-esteem, community worth, and achievement-related aspirations are all drastically decreased in Native individuals who are repeatedly presented with Native mascot imagery (Fryberg et al., 2010).

1980



NRHS yearbook cover 1980

1981

NRHS yearbook cover 1981

Despite the many groups and organizations that have attempted to defend the use of Native mascots, there is the documented reality that Native Americans face disproportionate discrimination on both small and large scales. Native Americans in the United States face disparities in environmental and social justice, including the contamination of drinking water, exceptionally high suicide rates (especially in younger demographics), and the unprecedented violence rates as a result of police interactions (Cox & Vargas, 2016). The misrepresentations of Native Americans and their culture promotes ignorance among non-Natives, while simultaneously diminishing cultural symbols among Native Americans. The mascot debate reflects a divide in how these two positions understand how caricatures, appropriation, and traditions can affect communities (Fryberg et al., 2010). Acknowledging Native people's existence and listening to their perspectives is required to solve the underlying problems facing Native American communities.

2.5: Efforts to Document Change

Although the mascot debate has made headlines in recent years and months, documenting this topic is not a new concept. In 1972, UMass Amherst changed its official mascot from the Redmen[4] to the Minuteman. The decision and process of change, including the opinions and concerns of stakeholders, are fully documented within the university archives and collections. The archive describes the choice of the original mascot, as well as the replacement process and reasoning. This documentation and historical record-keeping explain the culture surrounding their decisions, which adds context to the

1982

NRHS basketball court with Chieftain icon 1982

1983

NRHS yearbook cover 1983

[4] The NCAI uses an unaltered form of the controversial word "Redmen" throughout its statements regarding the use of Native American mascots (National Congress of American Indians, 2013). For this reason, our group will maintain the same standard.

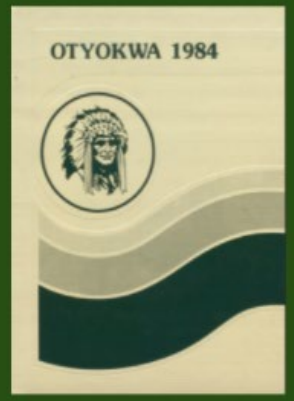
events that took place. When originally choosing the mascot of the Redmen in 1948, university students provided three reasons why this image represented their values effectively. These three reasons are listed below:

1. The courage, strength, resourcefulness, and charity of the Indians helped sustain the Plymouth settlement, which laid the foundation for subsequent settlements in what we now call Massachusetts.
2. Traditionally Massachusetts has honored the Indian – the name of the Commonwealth itself is an Indian word. The Indian also appears on the seal of the Commonwealth.
3. For centuries, the Connecticut Valley was inhabited by the red man. With the aggrandizement of the Bay Colony's white population, the Indians showed strength and fierceness in defending his lands… a strength and fierceness well suited to a football team defending its goal posts (University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2014, para. 3).

While it is now known that creating a mascot like the "Redmen" can be offensive, many viewed it as appropriate during this era. It was not until 1966 that the Student Senate at UMass Amherst discussed that their mascot could be perceived as racist, sexist, and represent ethnic discrimination. This archive in the university library serves as a valuable resource that can be used for others exploring similar change in team names or mascots, and to track in general to what extent language or symbols can become damaging.

The UMass archive documenting their mascot change is available to the public, but it is not easily accessible. However, these historical timelines can inform initiatives that follow a similar path. This documentation not only teaches viewers about the context surrounding the UMass mascot decisions, it also provides ideas for changing a school mascot. For example, providing reasons as to why a new mascot is chosen may be useful so that the reasons behind a new choice are made clear. Making

1984



NRHS yearbook cover 1984

1986

NRHS Marching Band 1986 – drum major in full headdress

the documentation of change more transparent creates an accessible opportunity to learn about evolving community perspectives and provides an example for other schools researching mascot changes.

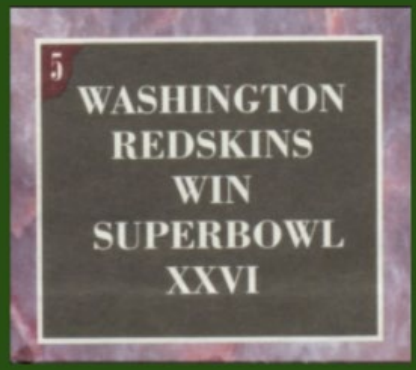
Internet and social media use allow news to travel faster and differently than before. The coverage surrounding the rebranding of the Washington Football Team inspired many schools and sports teams to change their mascots, including the Edmonton Football team (a Canadian football team) and Juanita High School in the Lake Washington School District (Evans, 2020). The Washington Football Team generated considerable media attention during their mascot change both extensively online and in the news. While this type of documentation provides some insight into the opinions of the general public, the news does not organize all perspectives and analyses of the transition into one resource. An archive about change and how attitudes and ideas shift can be an educational opportunity that ensures that the history of the school is not forgotten.

There is a resource on goodreads.com that maps out a timeline of the history of the nickname Redsk*ns, but the last time it was updated was in 2017, which was before the decision to change the mascot was definite. In addition, the site even states that this does not cover everything pertaining to this mascot change. Author Glenn Arthur Pierce states, "[t]his humble attempt crams the most relevant info into a single timeline. There will always be more polls and more persons for and against, so this summary intends only to mark the arc of the controversy" (Pierce, 2017, para. 1). Especially in the case of the Washington Football Team, there is so much information and differing opinions surrounding the mascot change across the nation that it becomes difficult to document this in one place. However, the scale of a high school mascot change that is not nationally publicized enables the gathering of information and opinions from different perspectives within the community.

1989

NRHS Chieftain mascot in the gymnasium – drum major in Native American regalia

1992



NRHS yearbook World Events 1992

In other respects, civil rights and attitude changes surrounding race, gender, and religion in towns across the country have been well-documented. One case study can be found in the Washington D.C. neighborhood of Anacostia during the 1960s. The neighborhood was heavily segregated with separate schools, facilities, and organizations for White and Black residents (Anacostia Community Museum, n.d.). At this time, the nationwide fight for civil rights had accelerated, which ultimately led to an attempt to desegregate Anacostia. This town's transition of desegregation and change of attitudes in the community is archived in the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum and as a digital exhibit. This collection contains information about Anacostia's past and present, the history of the town, and the process of segregation, a failed attempt at desegregation, and resegregation within the town. In addition, this archive is filled with images and quotations from community members, along with a slideshow documenting this change. A class picture from 1955 at Sousa Junior High in Anacostia is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Sousa Junior High 1955 (Anacostia Community Museum, n.d.)

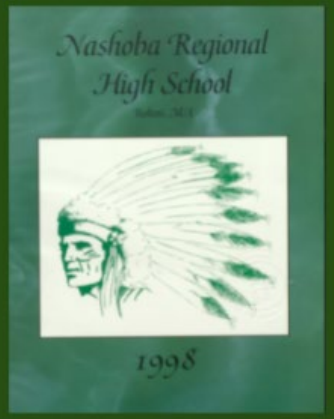
The archive includes two other class pictures from 1953 and 1960 which show how desegregation was originally unsuccessful. This source follows the story of Anacostia during change with easily accessible and understandable information. The history of the town is not lost because of the documentation from which people can learn.

2.6: Strategies for Revealing a Double Standard

For over thirty years, activists have attempted to persuade school officials, team owners, courts of law, and the public that Native American mascots and logos are legacies of a racist past. A small piece of this persuasion has been the result of juxtaposing these images in a way that allows others to better understand their message. A poster produced in 1987 by the Concerned American Indian Parent demonstrates this through a racially sensitive tactic. The poster depicts a Cleveland Indians pennant featuring Chief Wahoo alongside pennants for the Pittsburgh Negroes, the Kansas City Jews, and the San Diego Caucasians. Visual caricatures of both the Caucasian and Jewish groups (two privileged groups) are not excluded from the image furthering the poster message[5].

Similarly, the 1997 cartoon by Tony Auth titled "Can You Imagine" works to uncover the deeper messages of racist stereotyping ingrained in the use of Native American mascots and blackface performances (see Figure 6). While the question posed in the title is most definitely rhetorical, it pushes readers to question how relevant racial stereotyping is in their everyday life. Simply imagining the appropriation of an Asian, African, or sombrero-wearing Hispanic mascot is a difficult task for many.

1998



NRHS yearbook cover 1998

1999

Gift from the class of 1999

[5] (Harjo, 2001) dates this strategy to a 1972 letter to the attorney of the owner of the Washington Redsk*ns. See also (Helmberger, 1999), which includes reproductions of both versions of the poster.

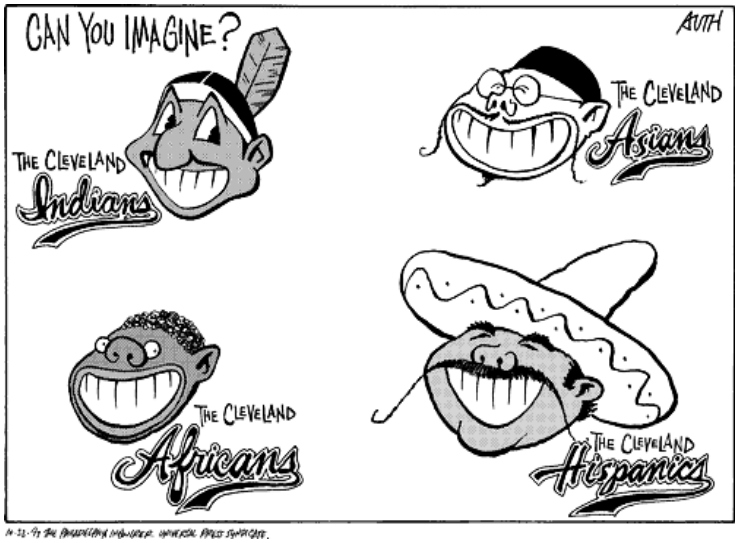


Figure 5: "Can You Imagine" cartoon by Tony Auth (Auth, n.d.)

There have also been more creative approaches that brought attention to organizations with offensive mascots. In 2002, an intramural basketball team from the University of Northern Colorado titled itself The Fighting Whites, adopting a "suit" as their logo and mascot. This multiracial team took to the court in protest of a local high school team–The Fighting Reds. Over time their protest gained more publicity and soon took on national significance. Clothing items bearing the team's "suit" logo completely sold out at many of their venues. In one year, the team had raised $100,000 which they donated to the University of Northern Colorado's UNC Foundation. Within this donation, they specified that $79,000 was to go toward the "Fightin' Whites Minority Scholarship" for Native Americans and other minority students (Strong, 2004).

Absurdist demonstrations and work like The Fighting Whites, the Concerned American Indian Parent, and the "Can You Imagine" campaign shed light on the extent to which a double standard prevails when it comes to Native American mascots and logos. However, these acts merely stand as footnotes for all those who have attempted to create a platform for change – without drawing on historical evidence, documentation, or community perspective.

2.7: Proposed Massachusetts Legislation

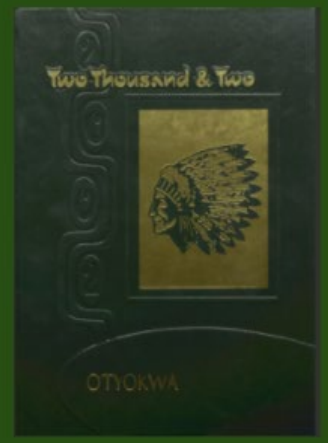
Over 115 tribal, government, educational, professional, civil rights, and religious organizations in the United States have recognized the negative implications of using Native American mascots. Within Massachusetts, key stakeholders for permanent change include the Chappaquiddick Tribe of the Wampanoag Nation, Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness, Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe, Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Progressive Mass, the Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag, and Nipmuc Nation (Fryberg et al., 2021).

In January 2021, State Senator Jo Comerford, D-Northampton, sponsored and filed Bill SD.417, titled "An Act Prohibiting the Use of Native American Mascots by Public Schools in the Commonwealth". This bill would prohibit the use of Native American mascots, logos, and team names currently being used by thirty-eight public schools in the Commonwealth (as shown previously in Figure 1). The proposed legislation authorizes:

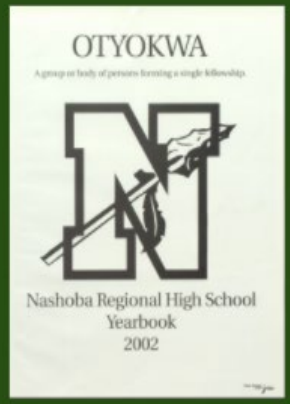
> The board of elementary and secondary education [to] promulgate regulations to ensure that no public school uses an athletic team name, logo, or mascot which names, refers to, represents, or is associated with Native Americans, including aspects of Native American cultures and specific Native American tribes. The board shall establish a date by which any school in violation of said regulations shall choose a new team name, logo, or mascot (An Act Prohibiting the Use of Native American Mascots by Public Schools in the Commonwealth, n.d.).

In addition, the bill also states that it does not prohibit Native American tribes recognized by the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs to use Native American names or logos for their sports teams (including tribal schools and intramural leagues).

2002



NRHS yearbook cover 2002

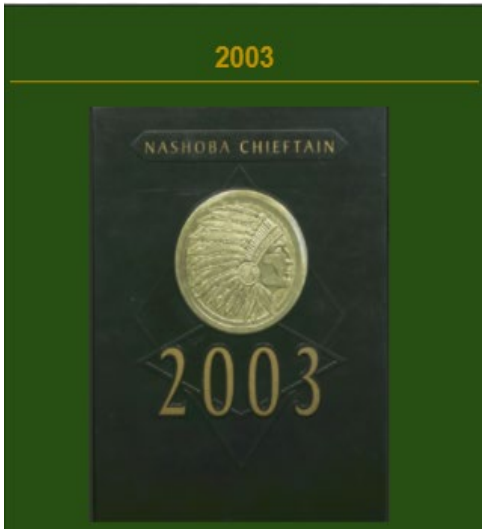


First use of the Nashoba 'N' and spear logo in the yearbook

If Bill SD.417 were to pass, it would be one major step forward in completing the three-part agenda Native American people, organizations, advocates, and lawmakers have been urging Massachusetts State Legislature to address for years. The remaining two bills would replace the Massachusetts state flag and motto and would refine laws around repatriation and disposition of Native American human remains. While in previous legislative sessions the "mascot bill" has been unsuccessful, Comerford and her team are "... confident that [the bill] will finally have the traction it needs to pass" (Poli, 2021, para. 9). Policy changes, like this, are an essential first step in the respectful transition away from misrepresented Native American symbols, traditions, and cultural ways of life.

2.8: Summary

Our literature review revealed three critical aspects of the mascot controversy. First, we observed that Native mascots have been a part of American culture for nearly two hundred years. Second, we discovered that although decisions to remove such mascots have occurred many times throughout the United States, documentation of such decisions was limited, and often difficult to access. Finally, we uncovered that the debate surrounding the use of Native American mascots was not a recent phenomenon and had been a consistent topic of discussion for decades prior to the removal of the NRHS mascot. These findings provided us with a foundation for our documentation and revealed that this debate is not only confined to the Nashoba community, but a piece of a much larger social, historical, and cultural conversation.



Chapter 3: Designing a Qualitative Research Approach to Document Change

The goal of this project was to provide NRHS students and community members with a resource to learn about local history and the nationwide mascot debate. In order to reach our goal, we incorporated these three objectives:

1. identify the history of the mascot design in the school community;
2. document and record viewpoints of the local community and local tribes; and
3. create a timeline of the changes and actions taken within the Nashoba community.

3.1: Collecting the History of the Chieftain Mascot

In order to identify the history of the Nashoba Regional High School Chieftain mascot, we conducted archival research from sources such as the Bolton and Stow Independent Newspapers, local historical societies, public records of school board emails and meetings, as well as Facebook groups engaged in the discussion of the mascot (Ward, 2019). Local historical societies, such as the Bolton Historical Society, were contacted via email to solicit information about the history of the school district. We also researched and evaluated the content of petitions on the website Change.org to record more viewpoints from members of the community.

In addition, we accessed the recordings and transcripts of school board meetings on YouTube.com. Within NRSD, all school committee meetings and internal communications are public domain. We also solicited donations of vintage photographs and other ephemera that were possessed by individuals associated with the school district. We requested that photos or other documentation of these items be provided early in the process, so we could effectively piece together the history of the mascot

2004

Slight transition away from Chieftain caricature throughout the high school

2005

NRHS yearbook cover 2005

during our limited time with the project. The high school has collections of historical documents and photographs that provided a more comprehensive and visual history of the use of the Chieftain mascot (Ward, 2019). Finally, we requested current images of NRHS from our contacts and compared them to older photographs to record external and internal visual changes related to the Chieftain mascot.

3.2: Documenting Diverse Community Perspectives

Our second objective explored and documented the perspectives of members of the local community and local tribes concerning the removal of the Chieftain mascot.

To that end, we conducted interviews with members of the NRSD community including past and present school board members, alumni, and family members of students. Our interviews were semi-structured, with a set of questions that guided the conversation, while still allowing for extended discussion so the interviewee could more fully express their perspectives and experiences with the mascot change (Cochrane, 2019). This interview guide is available in Appendix A.

Given the sensitive nature of our project, we took measures to ensure a high level of trust. We requested to interview individuals or pairs of participants rather than large groups so that the respondents would feel more comfortable to discuss their experiences and opinions (Bolderston, 2012). We designated two people from our team to administer each interview: one serving as the interviewer and the other person taking notes. Recording the interview was only done with consent and respondents had the option to remain anonymous. Past studies had indicated that even individuals who took rapid shorthand while interviewing may lose one-third to one-half of the total material of the interview, further justifying the benefits of recorded interviews where possible (Bucher et al., 1956). Additionally, due to

2011

NRHS 2011 yearbook page with both Chieftain head and Spear logo

2013

Alex Ablavsky– Valedictorian speech mentions the use of the mascot

the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, our group elected to maintain social distancing and conducted all interviews either via Zoom or phone call.

We conducted interviews with members of tribes throughout the country. Numerous methods were utilized in order to meet and interview representatives of the Nipmuc Nation, including the Nipmuc Tribal Anti-Mascot Representative. We utilized contact methods such LinkedIn, our sponsors' personal connections, and email. However, we were ultimately unable to schedule an interview. To supplement interview requests, we also conducted archival research to document media and other records indicating local tribal perspectives on the Chieftain mascot change – to the best of our ability. This interview guide is available in Appendix B.

We used a snowball sampling technique in every interview by asking each participant to refer us to two or three more people for our study. This method risked generating interviews with people of similar perspectives and thus inaccurately documenting the range of opinion in the community (Emerson, 2015). To avoid this, we began our interviews with participants holding opposing viewpoints with help from our sponsors (Ochoa, 2017). Conducting snowball sampling allowed us to reach data saturation. Reaching data saturation is determined by the content of the responses given so there is not a predetermined sample size (e.g., when we were no longer receiving new information from our interviews) (Francis et al., 2009).

3.3: Building an Educational Timeline

Once we gathered our findings from both archival research and interviews, we created a timeline of change and action taken in the NRSD community to retire the Chieftain mascot.

2013

NRHS 2013 administration wearing both logos

2014

NRHS yearbook cover 2014

In the book *Design as Democracy: Techniques for Collective Creativity*, Sybil Diver describes how to create an educational timeline in partnership with a community. We adapted the steps written by Diver in order to create our project's timeline. Diver suggests beginning by developing a set of overarching questions regarding community viewpoints (e.g., what sparked conversation to change the Chieftain mascot?). Next, we collected information through interviews and archival information. This aided our group in identifying themes and patterns to help answer our main questions. We organized the information into categories including events that initiated change, actionable events, and community outcomes. Following this step, Diver suggests creating a draft of the timeline by chronologically sorting the information and incorporating the images, quotes, and ephemera provided by community members. Our timeline begins with the adoption of the Chieftain mascot by NRHS, and continues until the new mascot, the Wolves, was chosen by the students of NRSD in the spring of 2021. This timeline of change also drew heavily on inspiration from the NCAA *Where Pride Meet Prejudice* timeline, contains a brief history of Native American mascots in the United States. After our initial creation, we requested feedback from our sponsors, made any changes they suggested, and finalized the timeline (Diver, 2017). This timeline informed an effective and accessible educational path for the NRSD community.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

Over the course of the project, we conducted considerable content analysis of archival research dating back to 1961. We conducted 26 interviews[6] with members of the school district community, which included three written responses from individuals who did not have the time to be interviewed, or who preferred to provide a written answer to our questions, rather than meeting in person.

These interviews highlighted the emotional range of responses to the removal of the Chieftain mascot. The single most common sentiment expressed during interviews was that the change not just be buried in the past, but rather remembered and used as an educational and informative opportunity.

"Change is hard and you'll see that wherever you go. There are always going to be people who don't want to let go of the past. And I've also seen a lot of people saying that we're trying to erase the past which is really not the case. We want an accurate representation of the past instead of a caricatured representation."
- Citizens for Mascot Change Committee Member

4.1: Identify the History of the Chieftain Mascot

At the conclusion of our interviews and archival research, it remained unclear exactly how the Chieftain mascot was chosen. Before Nashoba Regional High School opened in 1961, a committee of students was tasked with choosing the mascot for the new school. In 2016, a former member of the student committee mentioned that "the Renegades" was initially suggested as the mascot, but the superintendent rejected the idea (Sweeney, 2020). The committee then decided on "the Chieftains", but there is no record of how the committee made this decision or why the superintendent approved this choice (Castner, n.d.). After the mascot was chosen, the school developed a Native American theme that appeared in yearbooks, murals, athletic and band uniforms, and in other school traditions.

"Just because you loved the Chieftains, or loved being the Chieftains, that doesn't make you a bad person."
- Citizen for Mascot Change Committee Member

[6] The quotations used in this paper were lightly edited for clarity by removing paralinguistic elements when necessary.

The most common occurrence of the Chieftain mascot was on the NRHS logo. The mascot was initially depicted with a side profile of an individual wearing a traditional Native American headdress. There were variations of the logo over the years, but the general side profile remained the same. Although this logo was representative of the whole school, it was especially prevalent in the athletics program. The logo appeared on athletic uniforms and the logo was painted on a gym wall. This was visible during basketball and volleyball games, as well as any activities occurring within the building. In 2014, the logo was changed to an "N" with a spear across the letter. However, the logo still made appearances, such as on a 2016 DECA business club shirt, as shown in Figure 7, and in the mural on the gym wall (Mitchell, 2016).

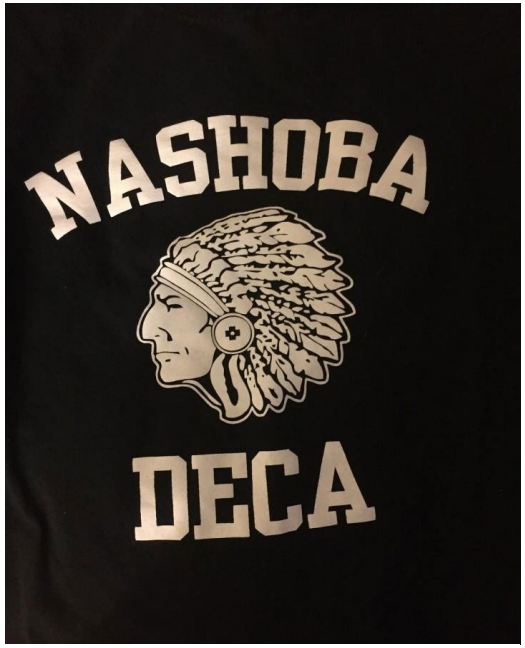


Figure 6: 2016 DECA club shirt (Mitchell, 2016).

Traditions related to the Chieftain theme were quickly adopted at NRHS. The most widely remembered and documented instances of these traditions occurred at sporting events and pep rallies. Photos from the yearbooks indicate that attire representative of Native American headdresses, warpaint, and other clothing was a staple at pep rallies. It was common for a student dressed as a Chieftain to appear at athletic events, particularly football games, often wearing a costume including a traditional Native American headdress. The drum major of the marching band was also adorned with faux Native American clothing. This tradition is documented until at least 2015, one year after the headdress was officially retired from the mascot. In addition, crowds at sporting events would sing the Nashoba Fight Song and perform a celebratory "Chieftain Chop," consisting of arm motions imitating the swinging of a tomahawk (Castner, 2017). According to a former teacher, this action has been used as recently as 2018.

"I first saw the mascot about 12 years ago while visiting family in Bolton. While attending a youth football game, the cheerleaders performed a cheer that included the term 'scalp 'em'. Needless to say, I was appalled."
- Citizens for Mascot Change Committee Member

Representations of Native Americans appeared throughout NRHS yearbooks. Between 1962 to 2002, the Mohawk term "otyokwa" was used repeatedly alongside various depictions of a Native American wearing a headdress. This term was defined in the yearbook as, "A group or body of persons forming a single fellowship," on the first page of the 1962 edition. The Mohawk tribe has been native to present-day upstate New York, and so the reasoning for choosing this term was uncertain. However, an NRHS history teacher speculated that this term "reflected a desire for the school to have the type of unity associated with Native tribes. Clearly with students from three disparate and occasionally rival towns, that desire for unity was important" (Castner, n.d., p. 26). Nevertheless, it should be made clear that Castner did not agree with the use of Native American logos, mottos, and stereotypes to create this unity. When NRHS alumni were asked if they knew the meaning of this term, most alum said they did not.

"Mascotting another group of people without their permission isn't about ... honor but about privilege and power."
-Statement on behalf of the Nipmuc Nation, 2016

4.2: Document and Record Viewpoints of the Local Community and Local Tribes

We gathered data by interviewing members of the NRSD community and Native American tribes to record their perspectives about the Chieftain mascot change. Community members who supported the mascot change tended to believe the retirement of the Chieftain mascot was long overdue. This group primarily consisted of NRHS alumni who had ventured outside the Nashoba community for college or career opportunities, and those who had recently moved to the Nashoba community, such as NRSD parents, teachers, and Indigenous people. During our group's qualitative research process, those who supported the mascot change referenced tribal letters written by the Nipmuc Nation and other Indigenous communities that directly denounced the use of Native American mascots, such as the Chieftain mascot at NRHS (see Appendix E for Nipmuc Nation statements). Those on this side of the spectrum were also well versed in both past and current psychological research endorsed by established organizations like the American Psychological Association, American Sociological Association, Massachusetts Teachers Association, and National Indian Education Association. As simply stated by one NRHS alum, "...if people are being oppressed by a symbol you should change the symbol as soon as possible" (interview 22, April 27, 2021).

"We do not feel it is appropriate for our culture to be appropriated in this way, or that we be represented in this way."
-Statement on behalf of the Nipmuc Nation, 2019

"...any and all sports mascot depicting Native people is directly tied to the history of genocide in this country against our people."
-Statement on behalf of the Nipmuc Nation, 2016

In conjunction with these findings, non-Native individuals for the change expressed a great amount of empathy for Native Americans who suffer as a result of false stereotypes imposed on them by non-Native groups through mascots and another iconography. One participant summed this perspective up by stating, "Native Americans are not mythical creatures. They are real people who are here, living in

the United States. The government has done a great deal to make them disappear, but just because Native American representation in pop culture is small, it does not mean we should pretend that they don't exist. This just further marginalizes an already marginalized group" (interview 12, April 15, 2021). In the end, the main reason this group supported the mascot change was the potential for a more inclusive environment within NRHS and the community. Many interviewees felt that if even one student was outcast as a result of the Chieftain mascot, the school district was not doing its job. An NRHS School Committee member stated, "We can't just cater to the majority and… forget about kids who might be on the fringe… that's literally what public education is all about: 'all means all'" (interview 9, April 13, 2021).

"There are many other cultures across the world that have used chieftains to describe their highest power of people."
- Ryan Aldrich, "Save the Chieftains" Founder

Community members who disagreed with the removal of the Chieftain mascot believed that Native mascots honored Native Americans. One respondent stated, "[the] Chieftain to me was just… revered, you know, the head of the tribe, it was certainly never ever meant to be a mockery" (interview 10, April 15, 2021). Even so, multiple participants mentioned that teams with blatantly derogatory mascots should change them, specifically mentioning that the Washington Football Team was right to change its insensitive name. Additionally, some participants agreed that the 2014 logo change at NRHS was reasonable. When asked for their thoughts about psychological research pertaining to Native mascots, participants either wanted more information or questioned whether the Chieftain fit the criteria of a derogatory mascot. The participants also expressed bewilderment about why the mascot was changed because the "Chieftain was used as a subtle logo, not a large cartoonish figure" (interview 10, April 15, 2021). Overall, community members that tried to keep the Chieftain mascot felt unheard by the school district when the change was made. A 1962 alum reasoned that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, "I thought it was the worst time [to change the mascot]. People were restricted, no public

"The new mascot… is a step away from cultural appropriation."
NRHS 2013 Alumnus

meetings for discussion, kids and adults needed some history re: the mascot" (interview 20, April 22, 2021). Transparency and democracy were key for these individuals, and it is their hope moving forward that community members will be more involved in decision-making concerning education and tradition.

"The quicker you make the change, the better, and… the quicker people are ready to move on."
- Citizen for Mascot Change Committee Member

While conducting our research we had the pleasure of connecting with Indigenous people of Abenaki, Mi'kmaq, Mescalero Apache, and Chickasaw affiliation, as well as familiarizing ourselves with many recent statements regarding Native mascots by tribal organizations in Massachusetts, such as the Nipmuc Nation, Chappaquiddick Tribe of the Wampanoag Nation, Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, and Massachusetts Tribal Nation. From these letters and interviews, it is clear that the 574 unique tribal organizations across the United States have been deeply affected by the stereotypes that stem from the use of Native mascots. It was even pointed out by one interviewee that the headdress displayed in the original Chieftain logo was "primarily worn in the plains, by the strong people of the Lakota, the Sioux reservations," and that "the people of Massachusetts would have been horrified to see this as a symbol of the Chieftains" (interview 21, April 23, 2021). This leads into another strong trend within this group's stance – education. During interviews, it was either stated or implied that the NRSD's current curriculum misdirects students' thoughts and opinions on colonization and the Native American perspective. An NRSD parent and member of the Chickasaw Nation stated, "Students attending our elementary schools spend a great deal of time on 'pilgrim' activities and crafts that teach them nothing about the actual history of North American colonization. So much effort is spent white-washing history that by the time they are in middle or high school they have already decided that colonizers were heroes and beyond criticism" (interview 11, April 15, 2021). Psychological studies are also at the cornerstone of this group's advocacy for retiring all Native American mascots. Many pointed

"The broader community might respect the change, but it's not a huge decision, and it ultimately comes down to what is backing up this decision."
- NRHS 2017 Alumnus

to studies endorsed by the American Psychological and Sociological Associations which have indicated that distress, low self-esteem, and lowered sense of future possibilities among Native American Youth have been connected to Native American mascots, nicknames, and logos. Finally, calls for legislation surrounding the use of Native American mascots was a common factor within this group's interviews and discussions. The letters from tribes across Massachusetts were written in support of 2021 state bills that would ban Native mascots and promote in-depth and accurate education of Native American history, culture, and current issues.

"[The mascot change] gives you an opportunity to have a conversation with your kids about racist mascots."
- Citizen for Mascot Change Committee Member

Although there were varying perspectives within the community, our research showed that their responses shared common wishes and sentiments. The majority of the participants agreed that the rise in discussion about the Chieftain mascot provided an excellent opportunity to learn about Native American history and culture, especially within local communities. Although there was some disagreement about whether removing or keeping the Chieftain mascot would provide a better learning experience, most agreed that the school needs "to do a better job of educating our students on the history on Pre-Colonial and Native American history and of honoring the land and people it was taken from" (interview 11, April 15, 2021). In addition, most participants described the purpose of a mascot to be a uniting symbol within a community, or something to "rally around." However, many felt the controversial Chieftain mascot divided the community. Some described themselves as worried about the community division since change is difficult, a notion echoed by all demographics in this study. There was some hope that the new, less controversial mascot, the Wolves, would provide an opportunity for the community to unite. Despite perspective differences, most alumni expressed a sense of pride in the school and community. Alumni either exhibited pride in the Chieftain mascot or pride in the change. Either way,

"[The mascot is] an opportunity to teach kids where it came from and where it should be headed… It was an opportunity to learn about more culture."
- NRHS 2005 Alumna

one 2004 NRHS graduate noted, “schools would be doing something wrong if students left without some pride” (interview 7, April 12, 2021).

“...if we keep these mascots in our schools in the Commonwealth we are harming the ability of Native children, and maybe other children of color, to get a fair access to education.”
- Jo Comerford, Massachusetts State Senator

4.3: Future Learning Pathways for NRHS Students

The overall consensus among NRHS alumni, teachers, community members, and current members of the NRSD school board is that the school district needs to develop more lessons about the interactions between White colonial settlers and Native Americans. Very few classroom and public discussions were had about whether or not the Chieftain mascot is offensive, racist, or harmful to Native Americans, even throughout the 2010s. As previously noted, this controversy resurfaced in 2020 following several instances of social unrest within the United States and calls to reform institutional and systemic racism. These actions prompted an Anti-Racism Resolution to be drafted internally by the Nashoba Regional School Committee outlining the key principles school districts will embrace moving forward. Figure 7 is an image of this letter and describes five of these principles.

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility that every district provide to all district staff, including School Committee members annual professional development on diversity, equity and inclusion; and

WHEREAS, every district will commit to recruiting and retaining a diverse and culturally responsive teaching workforce; and

WHEREAS, every district will examine their policies for institutional and systemic racialized practices and implement change with sustainable policies that are evidence based; and

WHEREAS, every district will incorporate into their curriculum the history of racial oppression and works by black authors and works from diverse perspectives; and

WHEREAS, we as school district leaders can no longer remain silent to the issues of racism and hate that continue to plague our public and private institutions;

Figure 7: Nashoba Regional School Committee Anti-Racism Resolution (Codianne et al., 2020)

“ We’re at a racial justice inflection point. People around the nation are understanding that this is the time for racial justice, and Indigenous rights are a part of racial justice.”
- Jo Comerford, Massachusetts State Senator

Conversations with stakeholders involved or affected by this change have revealed that they thought a similar curriculum should be created at NRSD. However, many interviewees did not have an exact answer to how this curriculum should be structured or facilitated. They agreed that the curriculum should be created by a group of educated faculty within the social studies and history departments. It was also echoed that this curriculum would be refined and evolve overtime as needed. While this resolution is an important step forward, it must be guided by specific modules to ensure that NRSD acts on these principles.

"When you're an educator or involved in the school system your job is to make all students feel like they belong… we can't just cater to the majority and… forget about kids... who might be on the fringe."
- Nashoba Regional School Committee Member

The lack of clear structure and guidance for conversations around race came up in other ways as well. Many stakeholders complained about the use of social media as a forum for discussions. Community members voiced that the online conversation about the NRHS mascot change, cultural appropriation, and racial sensitivity does not help the community heal. Bringing these conversations into the classroom and other mediated, safe, face-to-face settings is key in promoting understanding through thoughtful discourse of individual viewpoints. One alum went on to say that the availability of different perspectives helps them to process this issue from different points of view, and ultimately understand why individuals feel a certain way – but social media can be polarizing and does little to promote connection or build compassion for viewpoints.

"I don't think that the goal [of an educational tool] should be, personally… to get everyone in the Nashoba community to think a certain way about this issue."
- NRHS 2004 Alumnus

The majority of participants agreed that *now* is the time to capitalize on this change to leverage a learning opportunity during a relevant point in our nation's trajectory. In fact, many suggested teaching younger generations in the NRSD community about the significance of this change, a comment reiterated by participants on both sides of the debate. Ideas included classroom lessons, conversation about diverse cultures, and field trips to Native American historical locations in Massachusetts. Two

community members explained that these ideas are key places to start with younger children to build a foundation of cultural sensitivity. One participant went on to say that this conversation can transition later on to the psychological implications of racism as the students move onto middle and high school. Finally, taking responsibility for self-education and ongoing learning from experiences outside the Nashoba community was brought up in interviews on both sides of the Chieftain debate. Some participants noted the personal obligation to understand official statements from the Nipmuc Nation and other tribal organizations, to read scholarly works about Native American mascots, and to work with Indigenous communities to better understand the complexity of racist depictions of Native Americans. Self-study in all of these topics was reported to have led to perspective changes and further understanding between stakeholders during the Nashoba change. An NRSD alum stated that not many individuals take the time to go back and learn about the other side; however, in doing so, one's perspective could ultimately change completely or 'soften' to a level that falls somewhere close to the middle of the debate's spectrum.

"Get the conversation off social media and just get into spaces where we're hearing from one another... I think when we view it as 'we're trying to beat the other side,' that's what leads to fracturing in the community. "
- NRHS 2004 Alumnus

4.4: Discussion on Change

The results of our study raised a range of questions about how we learn from change and how to most effectively learn together. The removal of the Chieftain mascot was meant to be a step towards inclusivity and unity within the NRSD community. Some people we interviewed understood this as the intent, but ultimately felt that the decision further divided the community through polarizing the two positions. The community members who either felt strongly for the mascot change or strongly against the mascot change vocalized their opinions through Facebook, online articles, or word of mouth. Our interviewees felt as though there was still a rift after the mascot change, with the belief that not enough

"You should be proud to have graduated from Nashoba and not for being a Chieftain. Nashoba has its own culture and that's what should be celebrated."
- Former NRHS Teacher

time was taken to listen to the community first. Many community members suggested that the mascot debate turned political, reinforcing tension between community members. Some felt that until the community as a whole is able to listen and learn from each other, the divide cannot heal and move forward.

"Frankly, some people peaked in high school and hang onto or are clinging on to the past. This is unhealthy as their values and memories should be centered elsewhere like the experiences they had and the friends they made."
- NRHS 2013 Alumnus

Our respondents believed that NRHS provided an exceptional learning experience; however, since NRHS is a predominately White school, by the time students graduate, they have not been routinely exposed to connections and friendships that build respect for diversity. Several alumni and current Nashoba community residents stated that they were not familiar with a Native American person, not to mention affiliated with a tribe. They believed that NRHS meant well when initially choosing the Chieftain mascot since leaders at the school "didn't think about these things in 1960" (interview 18, April 21, 2021). The mascot no longer represents the school's core values, which currently revolves around practicing empathy, compassion, and appreciating differences, according to the NRHS mission statement. Many participants believe we are currently in an age where equity, diversity, and inclusion have never been more important – especially in school settings.

"There are right ways and wrong ways to do so. Education and conversation work better than being told this is changing no matter what you say."
- Nashoba District News Editor

We also saw many of our non-Native interviewees acknowledge their own race by taking a step back and examining their own perspective. These interviewees noted the importance of highlighting Indigenous voices, and some declined an interview because they believed that their voice was not as important as the voices of Indigenous people. They argued that it should not be a decision for the school to make, and that the Native American stance on the issue should be the final word.

Chapter 5: Recommended Strategies to Enhance Education

At the close of our research and data collection, we can see clear recommendations as to how the Nashoba Regional School District could effectively and appropriately present the Chieftain mascot change as a community-oriented learning opportunity. Here we have outlined four recommendations that will leverage this change in mascot to form a foundation for learning and healing. To further support these recommendations, we have included a list of educational resources tailored for each grade level in Appendix F.

Recommendation 1: Create a Physical or Digital Educational Resource

For community members who are more interested in learning through images and interactions, we recommend a permanent physical timeline of change that allows participants to physically interact with images and events in front of them. Interactive components of this timeline might be hidden by flaps that provide more in-depth information about the topic. This timeline would be most effective and accessible to students and faculty members if placed inside the high school so they can learn about this important transition in history.

As for a more technical preservation of the change, community members and members of the school administration suggested a web page detailing the history of the Chieftain mascot, or a page that is added to the school district's website. This deliverable would be immediately accessible to all community members, regardless of location or access to school buildings. Additionally, other high schools considering a mascot change could use this website as a historical resource and guide for their community. This type of resource would rely on the school district's IT infrastructure and would need to

be monitored and managed in the same way as the district website. If the school was to change website platforms, the project would need to be manually moved to the new platform. This would require a member of the administration to address the project during the transition period, which may be forgotten.

A digital resource for this project could look similar to the NCAA's online timeline which features the history of racist mascots in the United States. This timeline, titled *Where Pride Meets Prejudice*, contains a brief history of Native American mascots in the United States. An example of this webpage is shown in Figure 9. The webpage presents the bulk of the information in a paper-like format on the left side of the page. Running down the right side of the page is a timeline of events pertinent to the history of native mascots. These two information streams have regular intervals of historical images which enrich the educational experience. This type of digital product is extremely effective at delivering information in a way that remains entertaining to the reader, while condensing a large amount of content into a smaller article. This report and timeline can be used as a guide for the educational material included on the website. Additionally, Appendix F has a number of educational websites for a wide range of grade levels that are available to reference on the website.

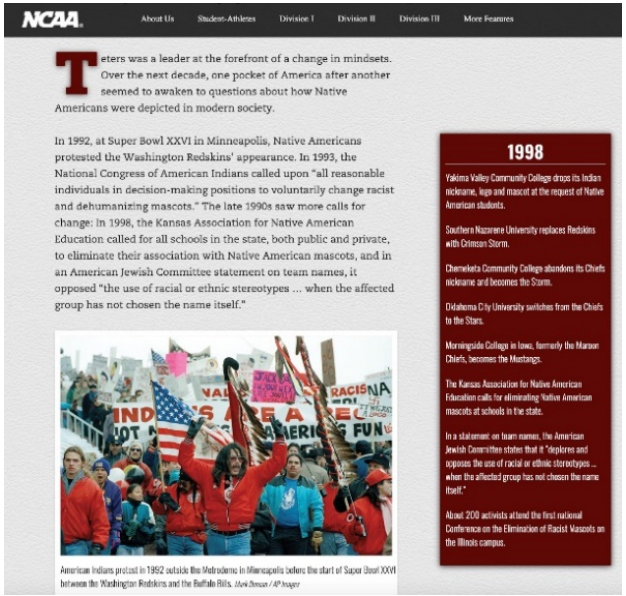


Figure 8: NCAA's online timeline surrounding the history of racist mascots in the United States (Schwarb, 2016).

Recommendation 2: Add Native American History and Modern Culture Studies to the Curriculum

To provide students with the knowledge to contextualize the mascot change, we recommend that the school enhance current history lessons with comprehensive Native American history, culture, and current issues, with a focus on events that occurred on NRSD land. Some of these events can include:

- The "Nashobah Praying Village" in Littleton, MA, which is memorialized by a historical marker in the community, as seen in Figure 10.
- King Philip's War and the battles that occurred in nearby communities.
- Acts that facilitated colonialism and led to present-day town formations across Massachusetts, such as the Massachusetts Indian Enfranchisement Act in 1869.

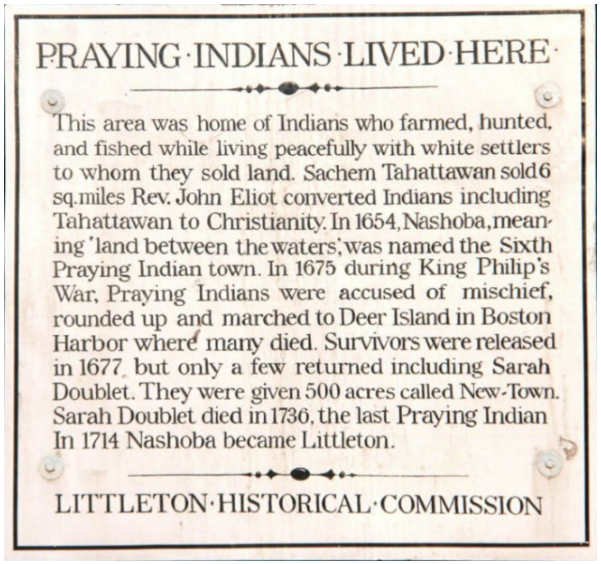
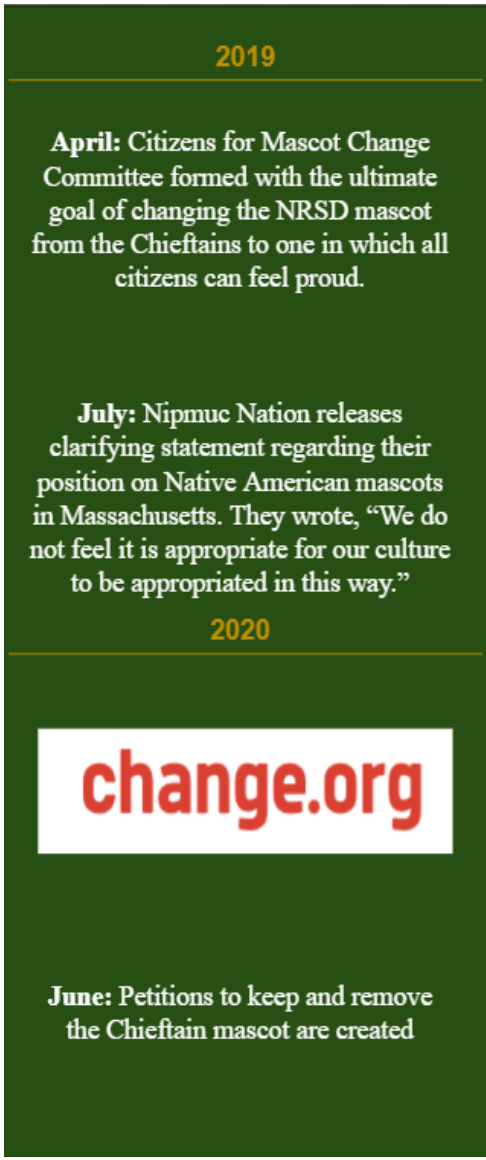


Figure 9: Littleton's historic Praying Indian Village of Nashobah Plantation (Littleton Historic Commission, n.d.).

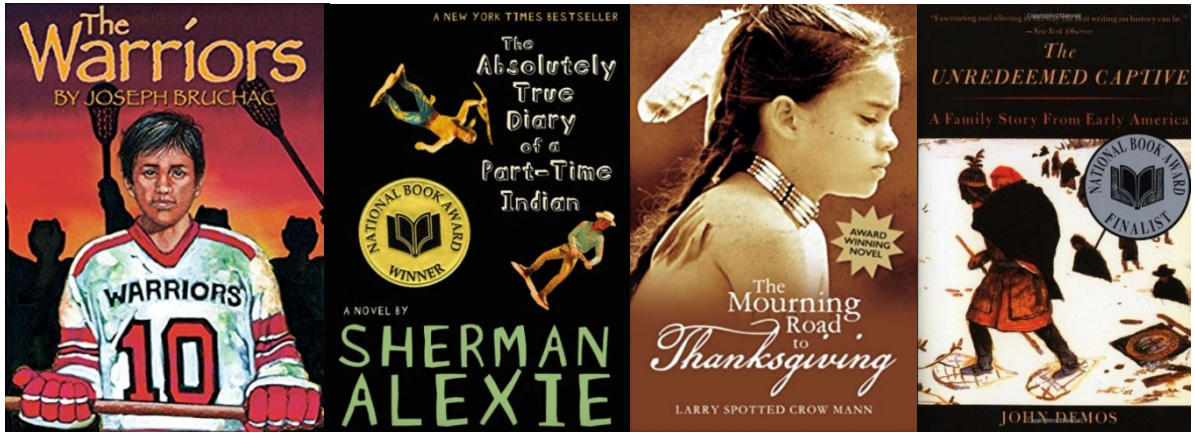
During interviews and on Facebook posts, multiple alumni of NRHS discussed that the land encompassing NRSD has a long, unpleasant history of colonist and Indigenous relations, yet this history was hardly discussed in school. Several faculty do make attempts to cover this history in their classes, although there is no official requirement from the school to include this information (interview 14, April 16, 2021). Many believe that the easiest way to minimize tension is to inform the community about the mascot. Our suggested curriculum follows the proposed 2021 Massachusetts Bill SD.1529 titled, "An Act Relative to Celebrating and Teaching Native American Culture and History". The bill would require public schools to teach accurate and in-depth local and nationwide Native American history, culture, and current issues. Throughout NRSD, this curriculum would include the discussion and history of Native American mascots and would be adapted for kindergarten to twelfth grade:

- Elementary school students are introduced to the subject through historically accurate lessons about major events, such as Columbus Day (Indigenous People's Day), Thanksgiving, local history of the culture and geography, and field trips.
- Students in middle school are taught an in-depth history of colonist and Native American relations throughout the United States.
- Students in early high school focus on a comprehensive local history of colonist and Native American relations.

This provides context for older high school students to learn about the history of Native American mascots in the United States, to read and discuss studies showing the negative psychological effects on Native Americans due to these mascots, and to study the history of the removal of the Chieftain mascot at NRHS.



Appendix F contains educational resources for teachers; however, this appendix does not cover the entire curriculum and is dynamic to encourage collaboration and creative adaptation. As Bill SD.1529 states, "The board shall consult with tribal nations in developing these standards" (An Act Relative to Celebrating and Teaching Native American Culture and History, n.d.). Therefore, to adequately develop this curriculum, we recommend discussing the curriculum with local tribes, the Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness (MCNAA), and/or predominant teaching websites hosted and curated by Native Americans.



Elementary School Middle School High School

Figure 10: Examples of resources available in our Teacher Guide with Educational Resources (Appendix F)

Recommendation 3: Schedule Field Trips and Guest Speaker Discussions

In order for students at Nashoba Regional High School to learn about Nipmuc history, we recommend the District host annual guest speakers and organize field trips where students have the ability to connect with Indigenous people. A field trip would be taken to the Hassanamisco Reservation in Grafton, Massachusetts, where the Nipmuc Nation currently hosts events. Students could also visit the Hassanamisco Indian Museum (which is currently undergoing restoration) or the nearby Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center. NRHS could also hold annual assemblies for Indigenous people to share their experience with students, parents, and community members. This would allow for a deeper exploration into the culture, perspectives, and daily life of a present day Native American away from the classroom. This provides Indigenous people with a platform to share their perspectives and cultures – an important theme that emerged from our research and discussions with NRSD community member Figure 11 is an image of Ray LaChance, who is of Mi'kmaq and Abenaki descent, sharing his stories and culture with community members (Stow TV, 2016).

Figure 11: Ray LaChance at Stow West School (Stow TV, 2016)

In order for the students to prepare for these interactions, we also recommend that students watch documentaries in class and have discussions about what they watched. These topics could include Native American history, culture, art, current events, and the misuse of mascots and other stereotypes in the media. These discussions and engagement will help move the mascot conversation off social media and into a controlled educational arena where students and teachers have the opportunity to listen, understand, and learn

from Indigenous perspectives. In order for this to happen, NRSD could collaborate with local tribes and the MCNAA to organize these trips and assemblies within the school.

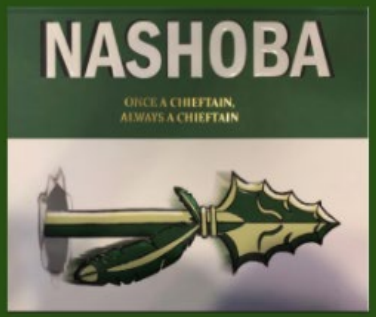
Recommendation 4: Create K-12 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Learning Modules

For our final recommendation, our group proposes learning modules, in the form of in-class presentations, that allows for active questioning and discussion throughout the Nashoba Regional School District, spanning across the three concepts of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Three versions of this module should be constructed for grades K-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-12. Each of these modules will explore how EDI can be implemented into our day to day lives, especially the role it plays as the school shifts away from the Chieftain mascot. These learning modules are important as the concepts of equity, diversity, and inclusion are at the heart of this change.

From the data that we have gathered from participant interviews, two recurring themes connected to equity, diversity, and inclusion emerged. The first theme demonstrated that participants on both sides felt that there was a general lack of community understanding about why this change was important. This could be the result of the overlooked exclusive environment fostered by the Chieftain mascot. The second theme showed that alumni who moved outside the Nashoba community 'bubble', usually somewhere else in Massachusetts or across the United States, have experienced a perspective shift over time. This shift was often due to life experiences participants had while working or in college that changed the way they think about equity, diversity, and inclusion. With these modules, students will become better prepared to live in a society that strives for these three EDI concepts.

The NRSC Diversity, Equity, and Racial Justice Advisory, established in November of 2020, would sponsor, and advise the creation and training for each version of these modules. The Audubon

2020



NRHS Yearbook Cover 2020
"Once A Chieftain Always a Chieftain"

2020

July: Nipmuc Nation's most recent statement denouncing the use of Native mascots/nicknames/logos, and supporting legislative steps to prohibit any use moving forward

Society's EDI guide states, “We cannot have equitable outcomes if decisions and systems are not designed, approved, and implemented by the full spectrum of people impacted” (Vasi & Bell, 2020, p. 12). This is a factor that this committee must consider while implementing these modules, especially in a module that ties into the use of the Chieftain mascot and the history of the Nipmuc Nation and other Native American groups. Therefore, a wide range of people with different backgrounds and statuses must be assembled for the creation of these modules – especially those of Native American origin.

By implementing these modules, NRSD will not only be able to promote and teach its students about equity, diversity, and inclusion – which are all concepts that carry over into the collegiate and professional field – but also allow the students to further learn and discuss the decision by NRHS to remove the Chieftain mascot in a safe and open-minded setting.

2020

June: “Anti-Racism Resolution” created with six outlined principles

July: School committee votes to officially retire the Chieftain mascot and establish an official NRHS committee during the transition period to formulate a new name and iconography for the school – HEARD Strategies & Storytelling.

2021

January: Bill SD. 417 is sponsored and filed by Senator Jo Comerford – banning the use of Native American mascots in the State of Massachusetts

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The documentation of community perspectives and the collection of historical documents and images in this report provides an accessible archive of a major change in NRSD history. The information from this report can be used to promote community understanding, inclusivity, and to ensure these offensive actions of the past are not repeated. We found that most individuals did not view the removal of the Chieftain mascot with shame, and instead considered this change a learning opportunity. It would be easier to sweep the history of dysconscious racism[7] into obscurity, but this would be a missed opportunity to teach students and community members about how moral consciousness shifts locally, and to provide an accurate, Indigenous-centered history that connects students to the land they live on and contextualizes the removal of the Chieftain mascot.

In response to the requests of those individuals interviewed, our four recommendations revolve around developing a more comprehensive historical education so the community can learn, grow, and continue to have pride for their school. On a larger scale our team addressed three United Nations Sustainable Development Goals over the course of this work. Goal 4, promoting inclusive and equitable education for all; Goal 10, working to minimize inequality; and Goal 11, improving the inclusivity of cities and towns (United Nations, n.d.). Through this project we found the clear thread between local and global outcomes in developing a thoughtful dialog that pushes acceptance and understanding of differing opinions within the community.

2021

March: Final survey sent out to community stakeholder where the Wolves mascot won the majority vote

2021

May: Class of 1999 gift and old Chieftain logo remain

[7] Dysconscious racism refers to the "unquestioned acceptance of culturally dominant norms and privileges" (Anderson et al., 2019).

All of these goals revolve around the idea of inclusivity and equality for all community members, and as echoed by a school committee member, “all means all” in education. Ultimately, our project provides our sponsors with documentation of the mascot change at NRHS along with recommendations to help the community moving forward.

Figure 12: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, n.d)

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Interview Guide for NRSD Community Members

Goal: Record perspectives of mascot change within the NRSD community.

Type of sampling: Snowball sampling: following leads from NRSD

1. How long have you lived in the NRSD area?
2. What is your affiliation with NRSD?
    a. Have any of your relatives attended NRHS?
3. Are you a registered member of a Native American tribe or do you know anyone who is?
4. If the interviewee is a former student or faculty member: are you familiar with the term "Otyokwa"? (This term is referenced often in old yearbooks).
5. What is the purpose of a school's mascot?
6. If the interviewee is a current or former student: What was your level of involvement within the school district? (e.g. What extracurricular activities were you involved in at NRHS?)
    a. What did the mascot mean to you?
7. Prior to the removal of the Chieftain mascot, how did you feel about NRHS using a Native mascot?
    a. Do you feel as though the change between the Chieftain 'Head' mascot and the Spear mascot in 2014 was an appropriate one?
    b. How did you feel when the Chieftain mascot was removed in 2020?
    c. How do you feel about the removal of the mascot now?
8. When was the first time you remember hearing discussions about removing the mascot?
    a. If the interviewee was a student or faculty member at NRHS: Was there any significant movement or discussion toward mascot change during your time at NRHS?
9. How would you describe the sense of NRHS pride and unity before and after the mascot change?
10. Do you think the removal of the Chieftain mascot has changed how other communities view Nashoba Regional High School? If so, how?
11. Some people have suggested that the use of Native American imagery for a mascot causes psychological harm to those depicted.

    a. Do you have any thoughts on these statements?
    b. Is this something that has been discussed within the Nashoba community?
12. What are your thoughts on the new mascot?
13. What do you think is the most effective way to educate the community about the history of this mascot change?
14. Can you think of individuals who may be interested in talking with us about the mascot change?
15. What is the main takeaway or something you learned during the process of removing the Chieftain mascot?
16. What has the community learned during this process? How do you think the community feels in general? What do your friends think about the change?

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Nipmuc Nation Representative

Goal: Record perspectives of mascot change within the Nipmuc Nation community.

Type of sampling: Snowball sampling

Questions as a Representative of the Nipmuc Nation:

1. As you might imagine, not everyone supported this change. Now that Nashoba Regional High School (NRHS) has changed their mascot from the Chieftains to the Wolves, how do you hope community education and understanding would proceed?

2. Ideally, what would be included in a potential MA K-12 school curriculum regarding Native American history, culture, and mascots?
    1. Can you point us to any educational resources you would consider essential for a curriculum that includes grades K-12?

3. Has the Nipmuc Nation as a whole changed perspectives about Native American mascots over the years, and do you feel there is a generational aspect to those with differing views?

4. How did the discussion of local schools with Native American mascots take shape? Is it one that evolved over time? And what do you view to be your part in the discussions individual schools/districts are having?

5. In 2014, the NRHS logo changed from a person dressed in a Native headdress to an "N" with a spear through it. Was this change noted at all within the Nipmuc community? If so, what were the feelings about it? If not, do you have any response to it retroactively?

6. If the Nipmuc Nation could send a message to all schools with communities deeply attached to racist Native American mascots, what would that message be?

7. What is one lesson you hope high school students and community members will take away from mascots changing?

Personal Questions:

1. Have your personal views on Native mascots ever differed from those of the Nipmuc Nation?

2. Have you noticed a change within the Nipmuc community as more people began discussing the cultural insensitivity of racist Native American mascots around the Commonwealth within the past year?

3. What are your thoughts on the new NRHS mascot, the Wolves?

Appendix C: Consent Form

Informed Consent Agreement for Participation in a Research Study
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in the United States. We are conducting interviews to learn more about the history and perspectives of the Nashoba Regional High School Chieftain mascot change. Your participation is voluntary. At any point, you may leave the interview or request for your responses to be discarded.

Do we have your permission to record this interview?
Yes ☐ | No ☐

Do we have your permission to use your responses in a final report?
Yes ☐ | No ☐

Do we have your permission to include your name and other identifying information?
Yes ☐ | No ☐

Sign:

Print:

Date:

Appendix D: Consent Script

Consent statement at the beginning of the interview: Hello, thank you for joining us today. We want to remind you that your participation in this interview is voluntary and at any point, you may leave the interview or request for your responses to be discarded. According to your consent form we [do/do not] have your permission to record this interview, so we will [not] record unless you say otherwise. If you choose to record, the recording will be used solely for team purposes and will be deleted at the end of the project. [If you would prefer for only your audio to be recorded, we ask that you turn your camera off. If you have no objection to us recording, we will begin recording now]. Additionally, we want to remind you that, according to your consent form, we [do/do not] have permission to use your responses in our final product. At any point after this interview has concluded, but before the project has been completed in mid-May, you may reach out to us using any of the emails listed in the correspondence that we have previously had, and make any adjustments to our information about this interview.

Interview end statement: Do you have anything else you would like to share? Thank you for taking the time today to meet with us and sharing your story. Would you be willing to let us use direct quotes from this interview? And are you okay with us associating your name or other identifying information with the quote? If you have any further questions about how the information from this interview may be used feel free to reach out to us at the group email address (gr-NashobaMascot@wpi.edu), which was included in the emails sent previously to you, or feel free to contact any individual group members. If you would like to change your response to anonymous or vice versa, you can also reach out and let us know. Again, thank you so much speaking with us today, the information you have given us will allow us to create a more effective and educational final product. Have a great day!

Appendix E: Tribal Letters

E.1: Nipmuc Nation Statement 2016

25 Main Street
South Grafton, MA 01560
774-317-9138
council@nipucnation.org

September 23, 2016

Re: Statement on Native American Mascots

The misrepresentation of Native Americans has been an issue that the United States has struggled with for some time. Native American youth have a suicide rate 3 times that of their peers, and Native American high school-aged males have a suicide rate that is 8 times greater. Mascotting Native Americans in light of these statistics is reckless and endangers the most vulnerable population of young people in the country; and is done purely for entertainment purposes.

The Native American mascot establishes a hostile learning environment. The impact of stereotypes of any social identity of a group has been proven to cause mental health effects such as low self-esteem among Native Americans, and negative attitudes towards Native Americans amongst non-Native Americans. When non-Native students are shown stereotypical Native American sports images, they are more likely to endorse stereotypes about other minority groups. The practice of mascotting a people gives the community the license to act out on the ugly stereotype and causes them to perpetuate it in public much like the offensive "war whoop" and "tomahawk chop."

Imagine, for a moment what these negative stereotypes mascotting would cause for African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos. There is a reason no one wants to be mascotted. There is a reason no other ethnic group is mascotted to the degree that Native Americans are. It means having our culture misappropriated without our consent and to have it clowned. Mascotting another group of people without their permission isn't about love, respect, and honor but about privilege and power; the same privilege and power that discriminates against Native American people and our nations every single day.

There are 43 high schools in Massachusetts alone that still have Native American mascots. The schools can argue to keep their ethnic related mascot if they have the permission of the local Native American tribe; however, the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council has unanimously voted that any and all sports mascot depicting Native people is directly tied to the history of genocide in this country against our people.

The use of ethnic-related sports team mascots, symbols, and nicknames has to stop.

THE NIPMUC NATION

Love T. Richardson
Council Member & Tribal Clerk
Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council

E.2: Nipmuc Nation Statement 2019

Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council

Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council
25 Main Street
South Grafton, MA 01560

July 12, 2019

Steven Rioux
Superintendent of Schools
Killingly Public Schools
79 Westfield Ave
Killingly, CT 06239-0210

Dear Mr. Rioux:

Per the request of the Board of Education, and per the request of you directly after our recent phone conversation, the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council would like to clarify our position on Native American mascotry;

The Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council has very publicly decried the use of Native American mascots, even when the organization using said mascots believes that they are in some way flattering or used as a means of honoring Native Americans. We had representation at the recent Board of Education meeting where this was discussed and made our position crystal clear; Native American mascots, often portrayed as caricatures or cartoons, are demeaning to Native Americans and it is our opinion that they should not be used. We do not feel it is appropriate for our culture to be appropriated in this way, or that we be represented in this way.

Our position on the matter is well documented and I welcome you to review the attached public statement the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council made in September of 2016 on this matter, specifically regarding Native American mascotry in Massachusetts. Our opinion on the matter has not changed, and we sincerely hope that this letter finds you well and makes our position abundantly clear.

Sincerely:

Kenneth Gould Sr.
Tribal Council Chairman
Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council

E.3 Nipmuc Nation Statement 2020

25 Main St
South Grafton, MA 01560

July 7, 2020

To All Interested Parties:

The Nipmuc Nation stands in opposition to all sport team mascots/nicknames/logos that falsely impersonate the lives of Indigenous People. We support legislation that will remove and prohibit those mascots/nicknames/logos and prohibit them in the Massachusetts school system. We also encourage the school systems of Massachusetts, both public and private, to create and integrate into their regular curriculums educational units dedicated to indigenous culture and the long-lasting effects of colonization.

These mascots/nicknames/logos are derogatory and harmful to our people. They perpetrate negative stereotypes associated with Indigenous people. And, despite the claims of their supporters, these mascots/nicknames/logos do NOT honor us in any way.

As humans living among the many communities in the Commonwealth, we would prefer to speak and reason with townspeople about the harmful effects of their school mascots. Unfortunately, our voices are not heard and many, many schools and individuals still cling to these images claiming that their lives will be disrupted by removing them.

Therefore, we support state-wide initiatives and laws to remove and prohibit indigenous mascots/nicknames/logos from all schools and sport teams in the Commonwealth and beyond.

Respectfully,

Cheryll Toney Holley
Sonksq
Nipmuc Nation

Appendix F: Teacher Guide with Educational Resources

All grades:

- **Lesson plans and student activities:**
  - **National Museum of the American Indian - Smithsonian.** Builds on the ten themes currently integrated into national curriculum standards with Native American history. Provides an abundance of academic resources and lesson plans across grade levels. Supplies virtual field trip opportunities. https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/about/native-knowledge-360
  - **Boston Children's Museum.** Provides student activities, YouTube videos from Native perspectives, and an extensive list of additional resources. https://bostonchildrensmuseum.org/learning-resources/native-voices
- **Educational videos:**
  - **"The Web of Life - Ray LaChance at Stow West School" from Stow TV.** "Ray LaChance… will captivate all ages with his stories about growing up in two cultures: Algonquin Abenaki and contemporary Stow (late 1940 - 1962)... All ages will be mesmerized as he also relates Native American folk tales, plays the wooden flute, and gathers a few participants to play several Native American games." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAfeA8-OfUY
- **Statements about Native mascots from Native American tribes:**
  - **Statements from Nipmuc Nation regarding Native American mascots.** The Nipmuc Nation released multiple statements denouncing Native mascots in 2016, 2019, and 2020. These letters can be viewed in Appendix F.
  - **Statements from Massachusetts tribes regarding Native American mascots.** As legislation has pushed for the removal of Native mascots across Massachusetts, multiple tribes have released statements in support of this legislation. http://maindigenousagenda.org/native-mascots/
- **Field trips and speakers:**
  - **Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center in Mashantucket, CT.** Tribally owned-and-operated museum with exhibits describing the history of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, from the Ice Age to the present. The museum is "committed to transforming how indigenous culture and peoples are represented to accurately portray a next generation Native narrative that gives greater understanding to the evolution of a new Native voice." http://www.pequotmuseum.org/default.aspx
    - A virtual tour of the museum can be accessed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRyUmvaDsL0
  - **Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness (MNAA).** This organization was developed "to preserve Native American cultural traditions; to assist Native American residents with basic needs and educational expenses; to advance public knowledge and understanding that helps dispel inaccurate information about Native Americans; and to work towards racial equality by addressing inequities across the region." The MCNAA offers a variety of speakers who present educational workshops, panel discussions, and lectures covering topics such as Native American history, culture, and current issues. Claudia A. Fox Tree, M.Ed. "teaches courses and workshops on transforming curriculum and

culturally responsive teaching practices." Larry Spotted Crow Mann is a Nipmuc author and storyteller who speaks about Nipmuc history, stories, and colonialism. Annawon Weeden shares the culture of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe and dispels misinformation and misrepresentations of Indigenous people. https://www.mcnaa.org/, https://www.mcnaa.org/claudia-fox-tree, https://www.mcnaa.org/larry-spotted-crow-mann, https://www.mcnaa.org/annawon-weeden
    - **Hassanamisco Indian Museum in Grafton, MA.** A homestead and museum located in Grafton, MA on the only Nipmuc land that has never been owned by colonists or the United States government. The museum labels itself as the "principal repository of Nipmuc history and culture." https://www.nipmucmuseum.org
- **Teacher development:**
    - ***Native American Heritage* from Penguin Young Readers Group (2005).** Includes a list of important points to consider while teaching Native American history, provides activities, and recommends books. https://www.penguin.com/static/images/yr/pdf/tl-guide-nativeamericans.pdf
    - **National Museum of the American Indian - Smithsonian.** Educators have the opportunity to attend webinars with the goal of "build[ing] more inclusive and culturally-responsive classrooms, and to support social justice for Native Americans." https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/professional-development/upcoming-webinars.cshtml

Elementary (K-5):

- **Books:**
    - ***Where Are You From?* by Yamile Saied Méndez (2019). Fiction.** "When a girl is asked where she's from—where she's really from—none of her answers seems to be the right one. Unsure about how to reply, she turns to her loving abuelo for help. He doesn't give her the response she expects. She gets an even better one… With themes of self-acceptance, identity, and home, this powerful, lyrical picture book will resonate with readers young and old, from all backgrounds and of all colors—especially anyone who ever felt that they don't belong." https://yamilesmendez.com/book/where-are-you-from
    - ***The Warriors* by Joseph Bruchac (2003). Fiction.** "Twelve-year-old Jake Forrest… move[s] away from the Iroquois reservation he's lived on his entire life… The lacrosse coach and players at his new school in Washington, D.C., believe that winning is everything, and they don't know anything about the ways of his people. As Jake struggles to find a place where he truly belongs, tragedy strikes and he must find out who he really is. Can he find courage to face the warrior within—the warrior who values peace and leads other to more noble pursuits than outscoring the opposition?" https://www.amazon.com/Warriors-Joseph-Bruchac/dp/1581960220
- **Educational videos:**
    - **BrainPOP and BrainPOPJr.** Both websites provide a variety of videos about Native American history, tribes, people, traditions, and colonization.

https://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/nativeamerica/
https://jr.brainpop.com/socialstudies/nativeamericans/

- **Teacher development:**
  - ***Choosing books - How to Tell the Difference: A Guide for Evaluating Children's Books for Anti-Indian Bias* by Doris Seale, Beverly Slapin and Rosemary Gonzales (2000). Non-fiction.** Provides criteria for teachers when choosing books about Native American people or with Indigenous themes to avoid stereotypes and to show more accurate portrayals of Indigenous peoples. http://oyate.org/index.php/resources/41-resources/how-to-tell-the-difference

Middle School (6-8):

- **Educational videos:**
  - ***Gather* directed by Sanjay Rawal. Movie.** This movie documents "the growing movement amongst Native Americans to reclaim their spiritual, political and cultural identities through food sovereignty, while battling the trauma of centuries of genocide." https://gather.film/
  - **"Land of the Long White Cloud" from RNZ. YouTube series.** New Zealand has a similar colonial history to the United States. This YouTube series documents White New Zealanders reflecting on their colonial past and present. https://www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/land-of-the-long-white-cloud
  - ***The West* directed by Stephen Ives. Television series.** This series chronicles North American history, beginning when the land was only inhabited by Native Americans and ending in the 1900s. The documentary introduces a variety of individuals, including Native American leaders, cowboys, and gold seekers, "whose competing dreams transformed the land, and turned the West into a lasting symbol of the nation itself, a tragic, inspiring intersection where the best of us met the worst of us." https://kenburns.com/films/west/, https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/the-west/
- **Books:**
  - ***The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie (2009). Fiction.** "Junior is a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian reservation. Born with a variety of medical problems, he is picked on by everyone but his best friend. Determined to receive a good education, Junior leaves the rez to attend an all-white school in the neighboring farm town where the only other Indian is the school mascot. Despite being condemned as a traitor to his people and enduring great tragedies, Junior attacks life with wit and humor and discovers a strength inside of himself that he never knew existed." Educator's guide: https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/pr5057_absolutelytruediary_eg_redesign_final.pdf
  - ***The Mourning Road to Thanksgiving* by Larry Spotted Crow Mann (2016).** "This riveting tale challenges the narrative and conceptions we have of American history and exposes the untold stories and lingering scars of our past… Haunted by his childhood, and furious about the treatment of his people since the landing of Mayflower; a 40-year-old Native American man sets off on an unforgettable quest to heal himself and Native people everywhere. He believes he can

accomplish both by putting an end to America's beloved Thanksgiving—Forever." https://www.amazon.com/Mourning-Road-Thanksgiving-Larry-Spotted/dp/1540337677

High School (9-12):

- **Educational Videos:**
  - ***Imagining the Indian: The Fight Against Native American Mascoting* directed by Aviva Kempner and Ben West. Movie.** This documentary "examines the movement that is ending the use of Native American names, logos, and mascots in the world of sports and beyond. The film details the current uprising against the misappropriation of Native culture in a national reckoning about racial injustice… It examines the origin and proliferation of the words, images, and gestures that many Native people and their allies find offensive. Imagining the Indian explores the impact that stereotyping and marginalization of Native history have had on Native people. It chronicles the long social movement to eliminate mascoting." https://imaginingtheindianfilm.org/
  - ***In Whose Honor?* directed by Jay Rosenstein. Movie.** This movie "takes a critical look at the long-running practice of 'honoring' Native American Indians by using them as mascots and nicknames in sports… Native Americans speak out about the hurtful and harmful effects of stereotyped sports images on both Natives and non-Natives alike. The program follows the remarkable story of Charlene Teters, a Spokane Indian and mother of two, and her impassioned transformation from a graduate student into a leader of a national movement… [This documentary] captures the passion and resolve articulated by both sides of this contemporary controversy, and also shows the extent to which one community, that of Champaign, Illinois, will go to defend and justify its mascot." http://jayrosenstein.com/pages/honor.html
  - **"Preserving New England Native American Culture Today" by Stow TV.** NRHS alumna Katherine Hamilton presents her documentary about the Nipmuc Nation in Grafton, MA. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDrM2ZZ68gU
  - ***A Good Day to Die* directed by David Mueller and Lynn Salt. Movie.** *A Good Day to Die* recounts "the life story of Dennis Banks, the Native American who co-founded the American Indian Movement (AIM) in 1968 to advocate and protect the rights of American Indians." Additionally, "the film provides an in-depth look at the history and issues surrounding AIM's formation. From the forced assimilation of Native Americans within boarding schools, to discrimination by law enforcement authorities, to neglect by government officials responsible for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, AIM sought redress for the many grievances that its people harbored… *A Good Day to Die* charts the rise and fall of a movement that fought for the civil rights of American Indians." https://www.kinolorber.com/film/view/id/1223
- **Books:**
  - ***The Indians of the Nipmuck Country in Southern New England, 1630-1750: An Historical Geography* by Dennis A. Connol (2007). Non-Fiction.** "The first comprehensive history of [the Nipmucks] way of life and its transformation with the advent of white settlement in New England… This history focuses on Indian-

white relations, the position or status of the Nipmucks relative to the other major New England tribes, and their social and political alliances. Settlement patterns, population densities, tribal limits, and land transactions are also analyzed as part of the tribe's historical geography." https://www.amazon.com/Indians-Nipmuck-Country-Southern-1630-1750/dp/0786429534

- ***Mascot Nation: The Controversy over Native American Representations in Sports* by Andrew C. Billings & Jason Edward Black (2018). Non-fiction.** "The issue of Native American mascots in sports raises passions but also a raft of often-unasked questions. Which voices get a hearing in an argument? What meanings do we ascribe to mascots? Who do these mascots really represent? Andrew C. Billings and Jason Edward Black go beyond the media bluster to reassess the mascot controversy… The result is a book that merges critical-cultural analysis with qualitative data to offer an innovative approach to understanding the camps and fault lines on each side of the issue, the stakes in mascot debates, whether common ground can exist and, if so, how we might find it." https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/catalog/54dfh9gr9780252042096.html
- ***The Grass Dancer* by Susan Power (1995). Fiction.** "Set on a North Dakota reservation, The Grass Dancer reveals the harsh price of unfulfilled longings and the healing power of mystery and hope. Rich with drama and infused with the magic of the everyday, it takes readers on a journey through both past and present—in a tale as resonant and haunting as an ancestor's memory, and as promising as a child's dream." https://www.amazon.com/Grass-Dancer-Susan-Power/dp/0425149625
- ***How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi (2019). Non-fiction.** "Ibram X. Kendi's concept of antiracism… reshapes the conversation about racial justice in America--but even more fundamentally, points us toward liberating new ways of thinking about ourselves and each other… Kendi asks us to think about what an antiracist society might look like, and how we can play an active role in building it." https://www.ibramxkendi.com/how-to-be-an-antiracist
- ***The Unredeemed Captive* by John Demos (1994). Non-fiction.** This historical book takes place in "colonial Massachusetts, where English Puritans first endeavored to 'civilize' a 'savage' native populace. There, in February 1704, a French and Indian war party descended on the village of Deerfield, abducting a Puritan minister and his children. Although John Williams was eventually released, his daughter horrified the family by staying with her captors and marrying a Mohawk husband. [This book] opens a window into North America where English, French, and Native Americans faced one another across gilfs of culture and belief, and sometimes crossed over." https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/39448/the-unredeemed-captive-by-john-demos/

- **Educational websites:**
  - **Change the Mascot.** Documents the movement to remove the former name of the Washington Football Team started by the Oneida Indian Nation. Provides news articles, press releases, research, and a historical timeline leading up to the Washington Football Team name and mascot change in 2020. https://www.changethemascot.org/

- **Where Pride Meets Prejudice.** An NCAA page with a historical timeline and description of Native mascots in college sports, including their use and the fight for their removal. https://www.ncaa.org/static/champion/where-pride-meets-prejudice/index.php
- **Ending the Era of Harmful "Indian" Mascots.** The National Congress of American Indians was the first activist organization to launch a national campaign to remove Native American mascots, beginning their advocacy in 1968. This website provides information about the work being done at a national level to remove Native mascots. https://www.ncai.org/proudtobe
- **Ohketeau Cultural Center.** The website for the Ohketeau Cultural Center contains virtual events, discussing topics such as Thanksgiving and the Land Back Movement, and an extensive list of additional resources to learn about Native American history and contemporary cultures. https://www.ohketeau.org/

- **Teacher development:**
  - **"Stereotypes of Contemporary Native American Indian Characters in Recent Popular Media" by Virginia A. Mclaurin (2012).** Mclaurin's master's thesis "examines the ongoing trends in depictions of Native American Indians in popular mainstream media from the last two decades. Stereotypes in general and in relation to Native American Indians are discussed, and a pattern of stereotype reactions to colonists' perceived strains is identified… At the end of the thesis, some possible methods for grappling with these problematic portrayals will be discussed." https://scholarworks.umass.edu/theses/830/