

Mascot Committee Meeting

January 30, 2017

6:30 p.m.

Committee Members in Attendance: Chad Bilderback, Dave Butler, Sean Crittendon, Ginny Donaldson, Bryon Hanson, Kari Kephart, Sarah Lee, Diane Liebsch, Susan Myers, Andrew Purdy, Lee Supple, Chris Taylor, Kris Wabski, Tim Wolfe, Mya Lacey, Olivia Wabski

Committee Members Unable to Attend: Don Bratton, Tony Carter, Les Moore, Charles Wilburn, Ben Horvatic, Henry Ramsey

Introductions

Superintendent Susan Myers and Board of Education Members, Diane Liebsch and Sean Crittendon, welcomed committee members. Committee members, in attendance, introduced themselves.

Background of Committee Formation

During the December 2016 Board of Education (BOE) meeting, discussion was held regarding the AMS/AHS mascots. The BOE recently received written communications regarding the Redmen mascot and has had several community members question if there is any affiliation with the Native Americans and the Redmen mascot. The Board asked Superintendent Susan Myers to convene a larger Mascot Committee (workgroup) to include Native Americans, students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and community members, to discuss the AMS/AHS mascots and provide feedback to the BOE. Diane Liebsch and Sean Crittendon, BOE members, volunteered to serve on the Mascot Committee. Tonight is the first meeting of the committee.

Charge of Committee

Mission/Charge: To discuss the topic of our HS/MS mascot from a balanced prospective (looking at both sides of the issue) and give advice and feedback to the USD 409 Board of Education.

Summary & Discussion of Articles sent to Committee

The Mascot Committee was provided a series of articles by email that had been shared with the BOE.

Overview of Articles

Diane Liebsch provided a history overview of "how we got here" with the Redmen mascot. In 1922, the football team was called "Reid's Men," then denoted as "Red men" and evolved over the next couple of years to the Redmen.

Diane referenced a list of Kansas' schools (approximately 28 schools) that currently have mascots that are affiliated with Native Americans.

Diane provided highlights of Kansas City Chiefs' newspaper article and the "American Indian Heritage Month" booklet. While the team's name is closely associated with Native American icons, the Chiefs' name was chosen as a tribute to Mayor H. Roe Bartle, whose nickname was "The Chief." The booklet provides information on the workgroup that was convened between the Chiefs and the Native American Community with a mission to be consistent with the mission of creating an awareness and understanding of issues affecting the Native people. The Native American Community recognized the opportunity to engage in a cross-cultural consultations and dialogue with the Kansas City Chiefs to facilitate a process, and that over time, can lead to a cultural change in disrespectful behavior seen at times by some fans at NFL games. The workgroup serves as a liaison with the Native community and as an advisor to the Kansas City Chiefs to promote an awareness and understanding of Native cultures and trips in the region; the working group is comprised of four individuals who have experience working in intertribal communities with diverse Native cultures; members have a strong collective experience in working with education, job creation, culture programs and youth team sports relationships in Native American communities.

Diane also spoke of the recent decision with Manhattan High School Indians where the BOE unanimously voted to retain the mascot while creating a committee to address concerns related to the Indian mascot.

Susan Myers provided an overview of "Part I: Advancing the Conversation – Why Educators Should Not Ignore Indian Mascots." The article was written by a Native American professor from the University of Kansas. Professor Cornel Pewewardy believes the use of Native American mascots is a form of dysconscious racism, a form of racism that unconsciously accepts the White norms and privileges. He writes that Native American icon mascots offend and degenerate the American Indian.

Susan shared that her and Bryon Hanson attended Kansas State University's Indigenous People Day. They heard many different speakers regarding Native American icon mascots and the message was consistent throughout the workshop.

Sean Crittendon highlighted points from the "The Real History of Native American Team Names," which included how mascots were derived and an ongoing battle with the NFL Washington Redskins' to change their mascot. He also highlighted how the Department of Interior became involved in American Indian affairs that essentially imposed a series of rules outlawing Native American culture.

Sean also spoke of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Native American mascot decision which all of the colleges previously using Native American imagery changed except for those granted waivers when they obtained official support from individual tribes based upon the principal of Tribal Sovereignty.

Another article Sean provided highlights of is the "History in Progress- Change the Mascot.org." This article provided a timeline of events starting in 1968 where the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) launches a campaign to address stereotypes found in print and other media (during the civil rights movement) to current day activities of colleges and high schools eliminating derogatory Native American mascots.

The last article Sean reviewed was "William and Mary picks griffin as new mascot." William and Mary began searching for a mascot after the NCAA ruled that the university green and gold feather logo could be offensive to Native Americans.

Susan shared a letter that the BOE received regarding concerns of the Redmen mascot. Susan advised the letter brought this full circle and was presented to the Board to address.

Next Steps & Timelines

Discussion followed the review of materials. Comments included:

- It is the general consensus of the committee that there is no intent of negative condensation to Native Americans with the Redmen mascot, but understands the Native Americans perspective.
- Some people, inside and outside the Atchison Community, find the Redmen mascot offensive.
- Atchison Schools weren't accepted into a league because the Redmen's possible negative affiliation with Native Americans.
- Some Native Americans find that the mascots are an honor to the Native Americans and others see it as offensive.
- The media (Hollywood) portrayal stereotypes the Native American and doesn't characterize the Native Americans appropriately; Hollywood "cartoons" the Native Americans.
- Majority groups using a minority group mascot.
- Washington Redskins have lost their trademark protection, so they can't charge retailers (etc.) for using their mascot.
- If the Redmen mascot should be transitioned to another mascot, we may lose the opportunity to educate about the Native American culture. If the Redmen mascot would remain, this leaves us the opportunity to educate about the Native American culture.
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- The Redmen history will always be here even if the mascot would be changed in the future; you will always have a Redmen history.

Next Steps

It was suggested that a Native American speaker (s) present to the committee. The committee could ask questions of this speaker to get a better perspective.

Suggested leader presenters included presenters from the Indigenous Workshop (Alex Redcorn) at KSU or a leader from Haskell College (Dr. Daniel Wildcat) in Lawrence. Another suggestion was made to have a student leader from the Haskell Student Council present their views to the committee.

The next Mascot meeting will be scheduled based on presenter (s) schedule (s).