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**The Farmington Board of Education Unanimously Votes to Remove
the Native American Mascot for FHS Athletics after a Comprehensive
Community Engagement Process**

The Farmington Board of Education announces a unanimous vote to remove the Native American mascot from the Farmington High School's (FHS) interscholastic athletics program effective December 7, 2020. This decision was made after a comprehensive community engagement process led by the FHS Ad Hoc Committee with a membership that included students, community members, parents/guardians, faculty, staff, administrators and two Board of Education liaisons. All meetings were open to the public. The FHS Ad Hoc Committee commenced the community engagement process in September 2020 and met over the course of several months to hear presentations from historians and experts related to the use of Native American mascots. The purpose of the FHS Ad Hoc process was to engage in a community discussion, with the assistance of experts in the field, on the subjects of race, culture, and the use of Native American school mascots, symbols and names. It was important to the Board of Education to engage in a community process to ensure that the Board could make informed decisions based on a thorough and transparent community process in which all voices were heard, respected and included. Throughout the process, the committee listened respectfully to one another's perspectives, viewpoints from the greater community, as well as experts in the field.

To view the work of the FHS Ad Hoc Committee, please visit the [committee's website](#) including communications to the Farmington community, relevant resources, meeting dates, video recordings of all meetings, as well as the final recommendations of the committee in a report to the Farmington Board of Education.

At last evening's Farmington Board of Education meeting, the FHS Ad Hoc Committee Chair, Fran Amara, advised the Board of Education of the impact of utilizing Native American symbols and names as school mascots. He reviewed the following FHS Ad Hoc Committee's report and recommendations included below:

After being charged by the Farmington Public Schools Board of Education on June 29, 2020, the FHS Ad Hoc Committee to Address the Mascot commenced on September 15, 2020. Meeting dates were as follows:

- *September 15, 2020*
- *September 29, 2020*
- *October 6, 2020*
- *October 20, 2020*
- *November 17, 2020*

Symbols, and the way in which symbols are celebrated, are important, and we are, and must always be, sensitive, open and inclusive to our approach in utilizing these symbols. In doing so, we also bear responsibility to consider whether the symbols being used promote the respect and cultural competencies global citizens need to thrive now and in the future. The Ad Hoc Committee received presentations from local historians, respected scholars, and former students. In addition, the committee's meeting structure allowed for public comment, written feedback from the community, and opportunities for FHS students, faculty and staff to engage throughout the process. With the aforementioned elements in place, the committee spent considerable time engaging in constructive dialogue around our two critical focus questions:

1. What is the educational impact of our current mascot?

- *The history of the Tunxis people in Farmington is complex. Along with stories of partnership, there is also sufficient evidence demonstrating oppression, coercion, and the forced removal of the native population. Local historians brought these issues to light during their presentation.*
- *Research has shown that the use of native mascots negatively impacts native youth self-perception. Furthermore, recent research demonstrates the use of native mascots create a culture of hostility not only for students of native descent, but for students of color in general. Studies show that native mascots authorize the use of stereotypes in schools and can be detrimental to the climate and culture. In 2005, the APA stated, "The use of American Indian mascots as symbols in schools and university athletic programs is particularly troubling because schools are places of learning. These mascots are teaching stereotypical, misleading and too often, insulting images of American Indians. These negative lessons are not just affecting American Indian students; they are sending the wrong message to all students."*
- *Some may argue that the use of native mascots "honors" the original occupants of Southern New England. This assumption is a misnomer by situating native peoples as only historical figures and often disregards their presence in communities today. The imagery traditionally used at Farmington High School*

reflects stereotypical generalizations of native peoples rather than the Tunxis Tribe specifically. In Connecticut and across this nation, native peoples are active members of communities and are indeed not relics of the past. We do all children a disservice by situating groups of people as relics of history.

2. What kind of school and community do we want to foster with respect to race and culture?

- *Native mascots perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to the creation of hostile environments in our schools. Studies show that negative stereotypes and harmful “Indian” sports mascots are known to play a role in exacerbating racial inequity and perpetuating feelings of inadequacy among Native youth.*
- *Southern New England tribes, including the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation, Mashantucket Pequot Tribe, Mohegan Youth Council, Nipmuc Nation, and Nipmuck Tribal Council of Chaubunagungamaug have issued statements urging schools in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island to cease the practice of using native mascots.*
- *Over 115 professional organizations representing civil rights, educational, scientific and mental health experts have joined Native American advocates in articulating the harmful effects of native mascots. The National Congress of American Indians, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the American Psychologists Association, and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, amongst others, have issued statements regarding the detrimental impact that native mascots have on students in schools.*

By removing our native mascot, we have an opportunity to focus on a more accurate depiction of the experience of native peoples in the past and present while simultaneously modeling respect for all.

We recognize the strong connection and nostalgia in the community. This recommendation for change in no way condemns or demeans the past history of Farmington High School. Instead, it focuses on a united future centered on acceptance, understanding, and inclusivity.

The Farmington High School Ad Hoc Committee therefore recommends that the Farmington Board of Education:

- *Vote to remove the use of the “Indian” mascot at Farmington High School. We recommend that the Board review new mascot proposals by the end of May 2021. In the interim, Farmington High School will continue to celebrate being just that, Farmington High School.*

- *If the Board votes to remove the use of the “Indian” mascot, recharge the FHS Ad Hoc Committee to engage in a mascot proposal to be considered by the Board by the end of May 2021.*
- *The Board should consider budgetary implications of adopting a new mascot and plan for the phased replacement of symbols and imagery at Farmington High School and its playing fields. With that in mind, the school colors of maroon and grey should remain. Keeping the colors allows for tradition to remain and will have fewer budgetary implications.*

As a result of the work of the FHS Ad Hoc Committee, the Board of Education unanimously voted to remove the FHS “Indian” mascot at their December 7, 2020 Board meeting effective immediately. The next phase (Phase II) of the FHS Ad Hoc Committee is to select a new mascot through a comprehensive community engagement process. The committee will report back to the Board of Education by May, 2021 with the committee’s recommendation for a new mascot. The Farmington Board of Education will take action on the FHS Ad Hoc Committee’s recommendation at that time.