



Massachuset-Ponkapoag Tribal Council, Inc.
13 Day Road, Holliston, MA 01746

June 28, 2020

The Massachuset Tribe at Ponkapoag strongly supports legislation that explicitly prohibits all Native American sport team mascots/nicknames/logos in Massachusetts public schools. Additionally, we emphasize the importance incorporating, into all levels of the public school curricula, mandatory learning goals regarding local indigenous culture and the ongoing effects of colonization.

A prohibition of Native American mascots is supported by numerous research studies. First, Native American mascots/nicknames/logos in sport are harmful to Native American youth, resulting in distress, lower self-esteem, and a lowered sense of future possibilities. Native American youth have a suicide rate three times that of their peers, and Native American high-school males have a suicide rate that is eight times greater. The existence of Native mascots/nicknames/logos in Massachusetts's public schools exacerbates these existing challenges and detracts from the learning environment for all students.

Secondly, in direct opposition to the Commonwealth's education goals, Native American mascots/nicknames/logos in sport reinforce stereotypes about Native Americans. Specifically, Native American mascots/nicknames/logos increase stereotyping of and prejudice about Native Americans and other racial minorities. These names and images stereotype Native Americans solely as brave and aggressive male warriors from the past and fail to reflect the many differences between the over 500 Native American tribal nations in the United States. It is both prejudicial and damaging when people who are not Native American utilize our identities, names, images, cultural practices for their own purposes. This constitutes offensive mockery of our people and an appropriation our cultures.

Hundreds of Native American and academic organizations have issued statements supporting elimination of Native American nicknames/logos including the American Psychological Association, American Sociological Association, Massachusetts Teachers Association, National Indian Education Association, Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs, Native American Journalists Association, Native American Rights Fund, and National Congress of American Indians, which is the "oldest, largest and most representative intertribal organization" and represents over 250 Native tribes and nations.

<http://www.massachusetttribe.org>

A state law to address the problem of these mascots/nicknames/logos is both necessary and overdue. Despite repeated calls from Native communities, non-Native allies, and numerous professional organizations to eliminate the Native American nicknames/logos used by their schools, many communities maintain them while insisting that no harm is done and no disrespect is meant. The Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag urges you act on the research regarding the actual harm that is generated by Native American mascots and to listen to our and the many diverse voices calling for the prohibition of all Native American sport team mascots/nicknames/logos in Massachusetts public schools. This change will result in a more positive educational experience for all children and youth within the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Solomon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Elizabeth Solomon

On behalf of the Board of Directors
Massachuset-Ponkpoag Tribal Council