



*Our Mission . . .  
Educate All  
Students To Their  
Full Potential*

**Kathy Codianne (Lancaster), Chair  
Elaine Sanfilippo (Stow), Vice Chair**

## **Nashoba Regional School Committee's Statement on Retiring the "Chieftain" Mascot**

On June 2, Supt. Clenchy issued a statement to Nashoba Regional School District (NRSD) Families and Faculty entitled, *Promoting Equity and Acceptance*. In it, she promised to evaluate our programs and curricula to ensure they adequately stimulate students to think about racism and inequality in our nation and build their understanding of what our community can do as citizens and future leaders, to be positive contributors who ensure that voices, concerns and fears in our community are recognized and appropriately addressed. "We must better understand how our action – and inaction – impacts the lives of the people we love as well as people we will never meet."

At its next meeting, on June 17, the Nashoba Regional School Committee (NRSC) issued a statement on our responsibility for racial justice ([view here](#)). The NRSC also joined over 100 school districts across the Commonwealth in accepting an Anti-Racism Resolution and sent it to state and local government leaders ([view here](#)). At our June 17 meeting, the School Committee resolved to evaluate its policies and procedures, and change those institutional practices that create divergent outcomes for different racial and minority groups. We also made a commitment to educate ourselves about racial justice and active anti-racism, and act to create systems that support the District's goal of achieving and sustaining racial equity through proactive and preventative measures, so that we can ensure that voices, concerns and fears in our community are heard and addressed.

At our June 17 meeting, we pledged to use future meetings to articulate our plan of action and report progress toward those goals. To this end, we added Promoting Equity, Acceptance and Racial Justice as a standing agenda item. In planning this agenda item for our July 1 meeting, some members of the Committee asked that we begin a discussion about the High School's mascot, the Chieftain. We began to receive emails on the topic of the mascot and received 112 by July 1. On June 26, we became aware of the *Statement on Native American Mascots* issued by the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council on September 23, 2016 ([view here](#)). The statement includes the following:

*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 school in Massachusetts alone that still have Native American mascots, The school 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 directly ties 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.*

**Mike Horesh – Bolton Representative  
Amy Cohen – Bolton Representative  
Brett Collins – Lancaster Representative  
Leah Vivirito – Stow Representative  
Rich Eckel – Stow Representative**

**Dr. Mary McCarthy – Bolton Representative  
Joseph Gleason – Lancaster Representative  
Sharon Poch – Lancaster Representative  
Stephen Rubinstein – Stow Representative**

At the July 1, 2020 School Committee meeting, after a lengthy discussion among our members, the Committee unanimously voted to retire the Chieftain mascot. While we acknowledge that many in our community have deep, long-standing and positive connections with the Chieftain mascot, the NRSC collectively felt that any continuation ignoring the Nipmuc Nation's opposition to the use of ethnic related sports team mascots, symbols and nicknames is antithetical to our core values and commitment to active anti-racism.

The Committee acknowledged the opportunity to engage the community in decisions about a new High School mascot and voted in favor of the following motion: *...that a new team name and related symbols and iconography for Nashoba Regional High School's athletic teams and the school more broadly be developed by a representative Nashoba Regional High School committee established by Superintendent Brooke Clenchy during a transition period beginning July 1, 2020 and continuing until December 31, 2020.* The Committee also acknowledged that there would be costs associated with the change and will endeavor to make those changes without impacting the regular school budget.

In hearing from many in the community that have supported the Chieftain mascot, the Committee acknowledges that usage of the mascot had no disrespectful intent toward any Native American community. Moreover, the NRSC recognizes that the memories and experiences shared by past and current NRSD community members which they associate with the Chieftain are positive and valued. The decision to retire the current mascot provides another opportunity for our community and, in particular the current student body, to demonstrate leadership by upholding our core values of equity, acceptance and racial justice as we honor the Nipmuc Nation's *Statement on Native American Mascots*.

Nashoba Regional High School has always been a leader in academics, athletics, and fine and performing arts. We look forward to a new generation of Nashoba students who will continue to embody leadership in these areas and develop as local and global citizens who practice empathy and compassion, and who grow as individuals by finding common ground and celebrating differences.

[Click here for additional information](#)

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Visit [www.nrsd.net](http://www.nrsd.net) for representative contact information.