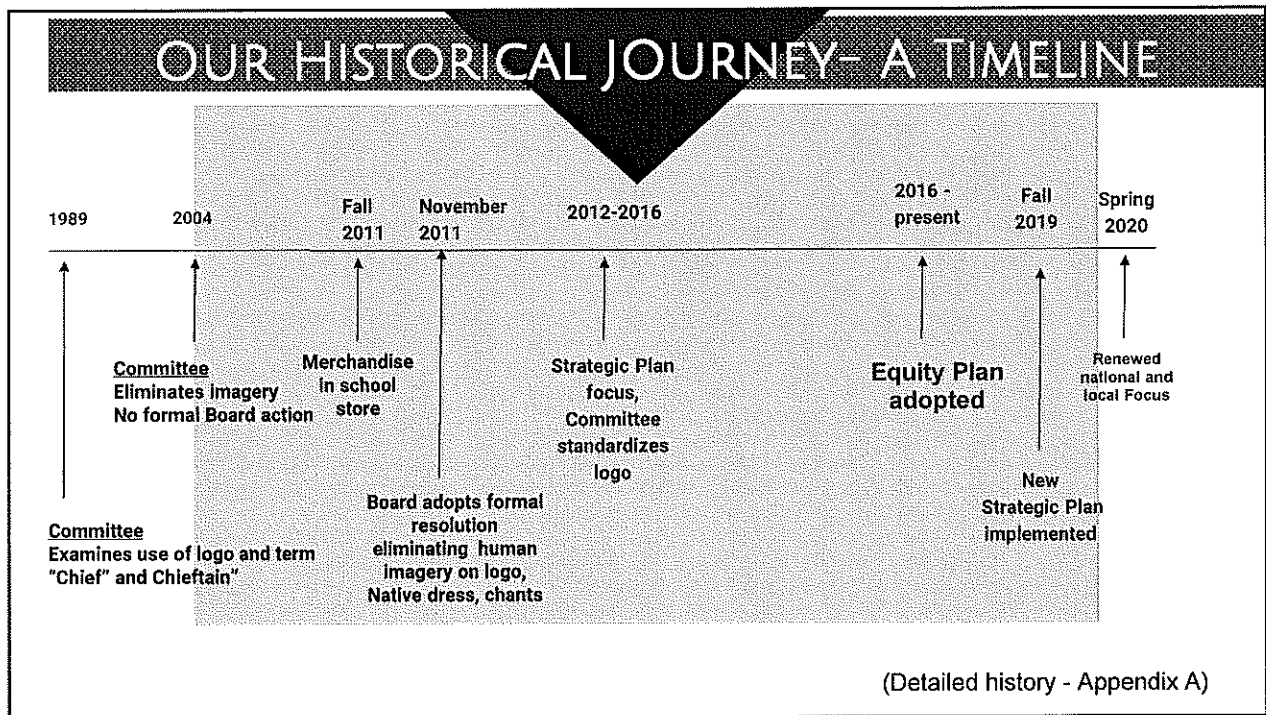
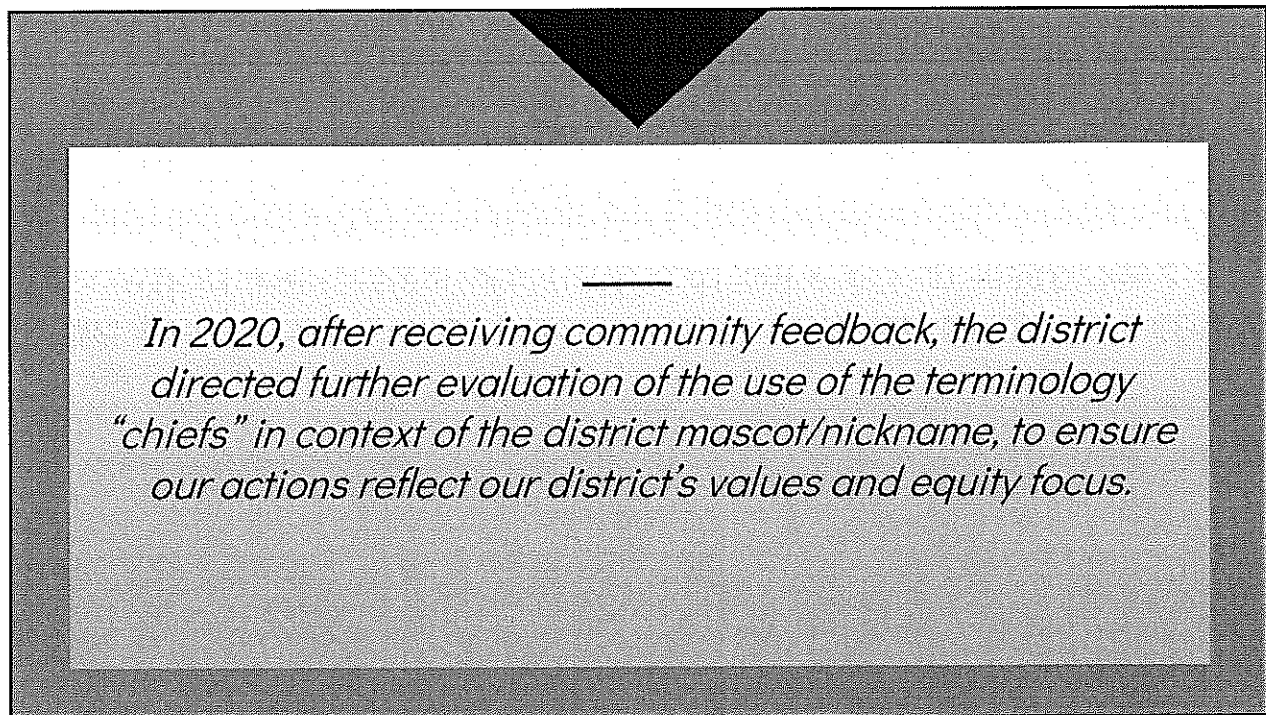
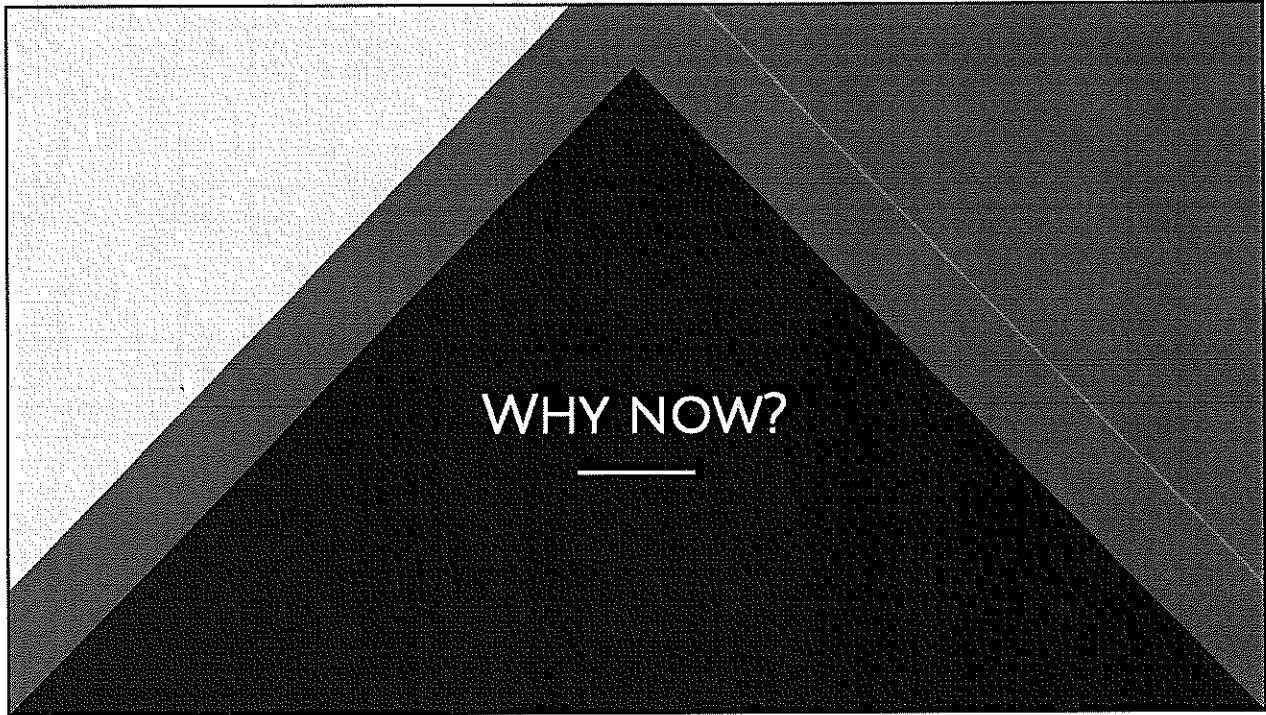


# HISTORICAL JOURNEY IN OKEMOS





*"TOGETHER,  
EDUCATING WITH  
EXCELLENCE,  
INSPIRING EACH  
LEARNER FOR LIFE."*

**VALUE STATEMENTS** 

---

In our pursuit of excellence, Okemos Public Schools values:

**EQUITY** - Understanding, acknowledging, and responding to the diverse needs and strengths of all individuals.

**RELATIONSHIP** - Engaging in intentional interactions to nurture respect, trust, and open communication among all.

**CULTURE** - Creating a safe and inclusive environment that encourages kindness, empathy, well-being, and individuality.

**INTEGRITY** - Maintaining exceptional ethical standards rooted in honesty and transparency.

**INNOVATION** - Inspiring creativity and change to adapt to an ever-changing world.

**AREAS OF FOCUS** 

---

To promote equity and actions that are free from discrimination:

- ❖ Authentic Selves and Relationships
- ❖ Cultural Competence
- ❖ Instruction/Curriculum/Assessments
- ❖ Policies/Practices/Procedures

**CRITICAL ISSUES**

- Equity
- Instruction and Learning
- Social Emotional Learning
- Organizational Capacity
- Facilities

**OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS**

---

## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

### REPRESENTATION/PERSPECTIVES

HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR:	LAMANZER WILLIAMS
ATHLETIC DIRECTOR:	BRIAN FULLER
CMS ADMINISTRATOR/AD:	ANDRE' RIDLEY
STUDENTS:	*MARIO MIGALDI, *VIBHA MAHESHA
OHS STAFF:	DIANE DOCKUS, HEDLUN WALTON
COACHES:	CHRISSEY SCHOONOVER, *BRIAN GUGGEMOS
ALUMNI :	AUDREY MATUSZ, ADANYA GILMORE
PARENT/GUARDIANS:	JOSE QUINTERO, LESLIE GONZALES
MSU FACULTY:	MARK LARGENT
NATIVE AMERICANS:	MARY CALCATERA AND MATTHEW WESAW

FACILITATOR: JOHN J. HOOD

*\*SERVED ON COMMITTEE FOR MAJORITY OF PROCESS, FEEDBACK UNTIL EXIT INCLUDED*

## PROCESS: JANUARY 2021 TO PRESENT

- REVIEWED DISTRICT'S HISTORICAL JOURNEY
- IDENTIFIED/CONSIDERED TWO (2) OPTIONS:
  - *MAINTAIN CHIEF NICKNAME/MASCOT*
  - *ELIMINATE/CHANGE/RETIRE CHIEF NICKNAME/MASCOT*
  
- DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO ANALYZE OPTIONS, ANALYZED THE OPTIONS:
  - *IDENTIFIED IMPACT OF "CHIEF" TERMINOLOGY (POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, NEUTRAL)*
  - *APPLIED CRITERIA TO IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL IMPACTS*
  - *IDENTIFIED "I WONDERS" (ADDITIONAL RELATED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION)*

## PROCESS: JANUARY 2021 TO PRESENT

(CONTINUED)

- FORMULATED INITIAL RECOMMENDATION TO SUPERINTENDENT
- SHARED INITIAL RECOMMENDATION AND RECEIVED COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
- FINALIZED RECOMMENDATION TO SUPERINTENDENT
- PRESENTING SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION TO BOARD (TONIGHT)

### VALUES/RESPECTS/BUILDS RELATIONS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

- Does this option value and respect Indigenous people?
- Does this option build positive relations with Indigenous people?

### SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL IMPACT ON STUDENTS/LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Will this option have a positive social/emotional impact on Indigenous students? All students?
- Will this option have a positive impact on the learning environment of Indigenous students? All students?

## CRITERIA

- Will this option promote pride for all?
- Will this option eliminate or reduce controversies?
- Can/will this option address curricular aspects of history and marginalized groups?

### DISTRICT'S EQUITY FOCUS

- Will this option have a financial impact (beyond the current budget)?

### FINANCIAL IMPACT/COMMITMENT (TIES TO ACADEMIC IMPACT)

# COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

APRIL 14, 15

## PRESENTED INITIAL RECOMMENDATION

- Reviewed the history of the mascot issue in Okemos
- Shared why the mascot is being revisited again
- Provided an overview of the mascot study committee's work
- Shared the committee's initial recommendation
- Provided supporting rationale

## PANEL

- Dr. Aaron Payment, Tribal Chairperson, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians
- Audrey Matusz, Class of 2014
- Adanya Gilmore, Class of 2017
- John J. Hood, Superintendent

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

- Questions seeking clarity?
- Additional positives, negatives, neutrals for consideration?
- Additional "I wonders" to add?

# ANALYZED TWO OPTIONS

*Maintain Chief mascot*

*Eliminate Chief mascot*

## OPTION 1 MAINTAIN CHIEF NICKNAME/MASCOT

### Positives

- No additional district or family costs
- For some term is not problematic, do not see a need to change besides political correctness
- Maintains current identity for students (athletes), alumni, community
- Chief represents leaders, Okemos is a leader
- Reaffirms past work, "new" logo, elimination of human imagery and changes that respect Indigenous people
- No additional change/loss in a year of change/loss for students

(Full list - Appendix B)

## OPTION 1 MAINTAIN CHIEF NICKNAME/MASCOT

### Negatives

- Avoids engagement with equity issues, models circumvention to students
- Promotes idea that native people are not a part of the present, does not recognize continued negative impact on students and community in present
- Contradicts the identified critical issue of equity in our strategic plan, and stated values of equity, relationships, culture, and integrity
- Perpetuates stereotype that chief is accurate term/use/representation of Indigenous cultures
- Continues to de-emphasize the narrative and lived experiences of Indigenous people
- For some the name is problematic, issue will likely resurface in future
- No current opportunity to re-envision identity, mascot and logo

(Full list - Appendix B)



## OPTION 2: ELIMINATE/CHANGE/RETIRE CHIEF NICKNAME/MASCOT

### Positives

-Meets our responsibility and obligation as an educational institution to our current/future students:

- Eliminates source that perpetuates stereotypes of Indigenous people, unintended student and organizational outcomes
- Centers and honors voices of those in our history who have been and continue to be marginalized
- Improves educational environment for Indigenous students and all students
- Places well being of all students at forefront of district approach; fair and respectful treatment of all student's cultures

-Values and respects Indigenous people; offers opportunity to improve relationships with community that nickname negatively impacts, recognizable action/acknowledgement

-Supports district's stated values of equity, relationships, culture and integrity

-Addresses critical/goal areas in strategic and equity plans, with clear action and outcome

-Opportunity for a new mascot/nickname that may bring community together over time;  
closure on recurring topic of division

(Full list - Appendix B)

## OPTION 2: ELIMINATE/CHANGE/RETIRE CHIEF NICKNAME/MASCOT

### Negatives

- For those that feel strong affiliation to the term "Chief" and leaving it will be painful; a loss

- For some, term is not problematic; no reason to change besides political correctness

- Some believe it honors Native Americans, our local history

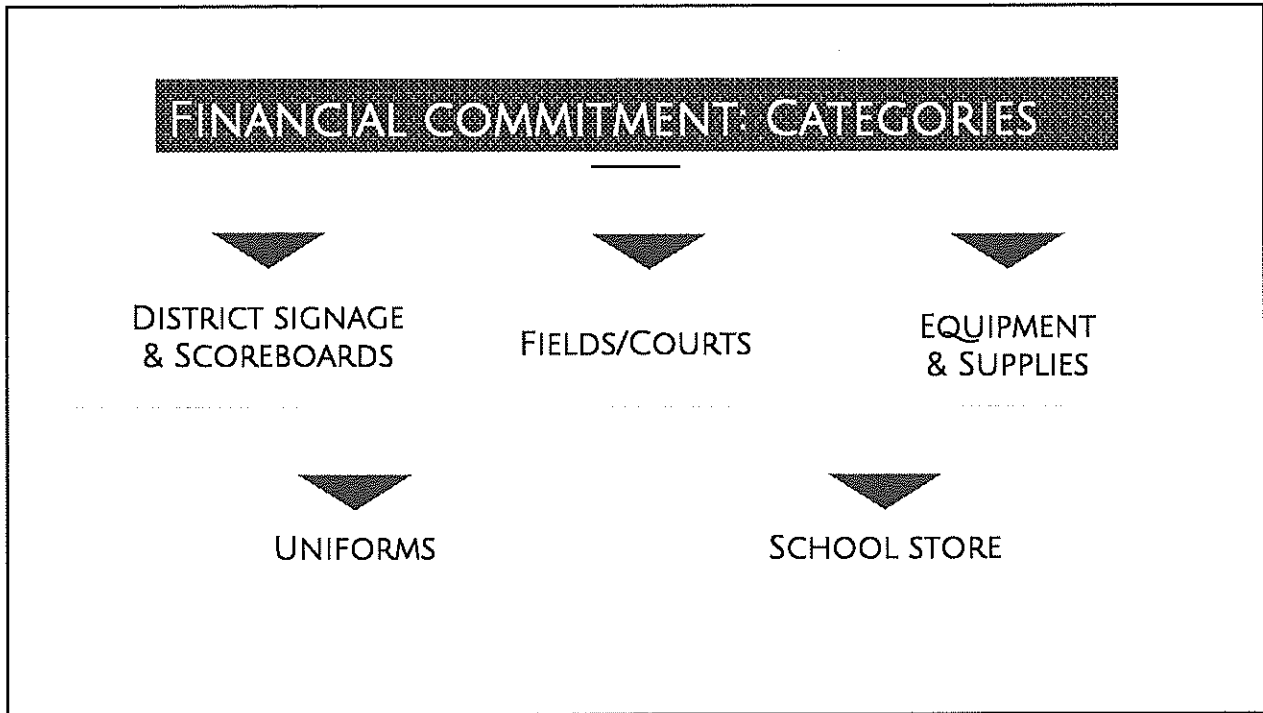
- Financial impacts may be significant

- Costs to families/students for district related gear, uniforms, etc.
- Costs to district to rebrand; overall impact on school funding (may require grants)

- Additional change for our students/staff and community during a year of change

- May result in additional division, tensions within community

- Potential for current Indigenous students/community and others to be "blamed" for change (Full list - Appendix B)



**FINANCIAL COMMITMENT: OVERVIEW**


CATEGORY	APPROXIMATE REPLACEMENT COSTS
District Signage & Scoreboards	\$70,113
Equipment & Supplies	52,131
Fields & Courts	172,915
School Store	12,000
Uniforms	120,168
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$427,327</b>

(Full list - Appendix D)

## POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Grant  
Funding

Fund  
Balance



**N.A.H.F.**  
NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE FUND

The NAHF, which was approved in 2016 as part of the Second Amendment to the Tribal-State Gaming Compact between NHBP and the state of Michigan, allocates a portion of NHBP's annual state revenue sharing payment to the fund. Since its inception, the NAHF has distributed more than \$1.4 million dedicated to promoting Michigan's Native history, cultural understanding and positive relationships with the state's nearly 100,000 Native Americans.

## SUPPORTING RATIONALE

---

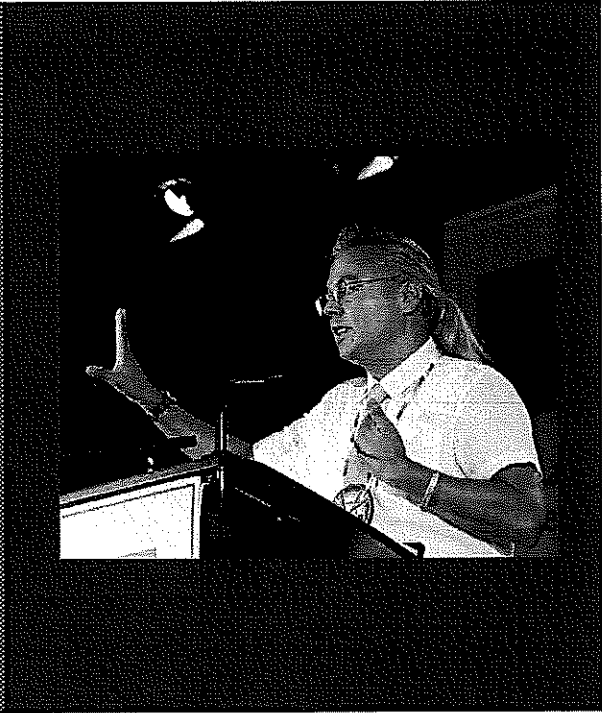
**DR  
AARON PAYMENT**

Chairperson  
Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

First Vice President  
National Congress of American Indians

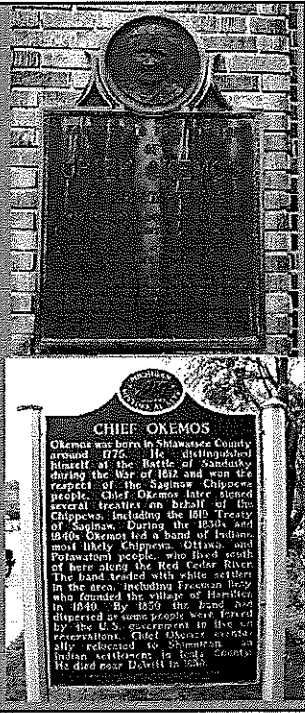
Presidential Appointee  
National Advisory Council on Indian Education,  
US Department of Education

Member  
2015 ESSA Negotiated Rulemaking Committee



MANY BELIEVE THE TERM "CHIEF" HONORS NATIVE AMERICANS, THE MAN OKEMOS AND OUR LOCAL HISTORY.

IF THE DISTRICT IS TO HONOR NATIVE AMERICANS AND OKEMOS, WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD WE CONSIDER?





HOW IS CHIEF OKEMOS AS A MASCOT (OR THE "CHIEFS" NICKNAME) DIFFERENT FROM A BUILDING NAMED AFTER CHIEF OKEMOS?



WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY ABOUT THE IMPACT OF NATIVE AMERICAN MASCOT ON STUDENTS?

### Educational Professional Response

In 2005 the American Psychological Association (APA) called for the immediate retirement of all American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams and organizations.

The APA's position is based on a growing body of social science literature that shows the **harmful effects of racial stereotyping and inaccurate racial portrayals**, including the particularly harmful effects of American Indian sports mascots **on the social identity development and self-esteem of Native young people.**

### Academic Research Says

According to Dr. Stephanie Fryberg, University of Arizona:

*"American Indian mascots are harmful not only because they are often negative, but because **they remind American Indians of the limited ways in which others see them.** This in turn restricts the number of ways American Indians can see themselves."*

WHAT DO PROFESSIONAL  
ORGANIZATIONS SAY REGARDING  
THIS MATTER?

**Culturally Appropriate School Climate:**

School Leaders at the K-12 level used to follow the ISLLC ~ Inter-State  
School Leader Licensure Consortium for ensuring,

**“A Culturally Appropriate Environment for all students to learn”.**

### Education Professional Standard for School Climate:

Now, the National Policy Board for Education Administration provides professional standards for Education leaders (2015)

**Under Standard 1** the National Policy Board describes that Effective Educational Leaders:

Develop an educational mission for the school to **promote the academic success and well-being of each student.** [S1,a]

....promote a vision for the school on the **successful learning and development of each child** and on instructional and **organizational practices that promote such success.** [S1, b]

...advocate and cultivate core values that define the school's culture including...**child-centered education, equity, inclusiveness, social justice, openness, caring, and trust.** [S1, c]

### Education Professional Standard for School Climate:

Further, **Standard 2 "Ethics and Professional Norms"** calls for:

...**placing children at the center** of education and accept responsibility for each student's academic success and well-being; [S2, c]

Safeguard and **promote the values of...equity, social justice...and diversity.** [S2, d] &

Lead with...**an understanding of all students' ...backgrounds and cultures.** [S2, e]



## Education Professional Standard for School Climate:

**Standard 3**, "Equity and Cultural Responsiveness" identifies that effective educational leaders:

Ensure each student is **treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student's culture and context.** [S3, a]

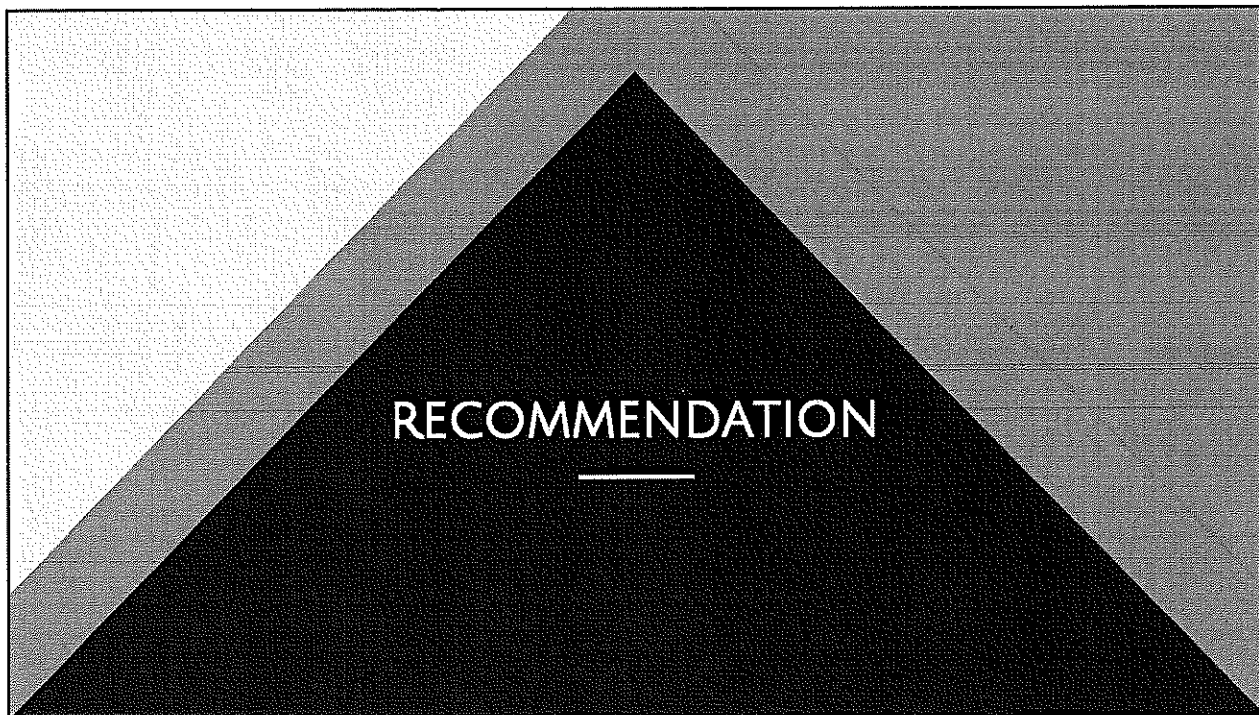
**Recognize, respect, and employ each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning.** [S3, b].

**Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization...and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language...** [S3, e].

Promote the preparation of **students to live productively in and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts.** [S3, f]

SOME NATIVE AMERICANS MAY EXPRESS THEY ARE AGAINST THIS CHANGE

WHAT DOES THE GOVERNANCE OF MICHIGAN NATIVE TRIBES SAY REGARDING NATIVE AMERICAN MASCOTS? NATIONALLY?



***"TOGETHER...  
EDUCATING WITH  
EXCELLENCE,  
INSPIRING EACH  
LEARNER FOR LIFE."***

**VALUE STATEMENTS** \_\_\_\_\_

In our pursuit of excellence, Okemos Public Schools values:

**EQUITY** - Understanding, acknowledging, and responding to the diverse needs and strengths of all individuals.

**RELATIONSHIP** - Engaging in intentional interactions to nurture respect, trust, and open communication among all.

**CULTURE** - Creating a safe and inclusive environment that encourages kindness, empathy, well-being, and individuality.

**INTEGRITY** - Maintaining exceptional ethical standards rooted in honesty and transparency.

**INNOVATION** - Inspiring creativity and change to adapt to an ever-changing world.

**AREAS OF FOCUS** \_\_\_\_\_

To promote equity and actions that are free from discrimination:

- ❖ Authentic Selves and Relationships
- ❖ Cultural Competence
- ❖ Instruction/Curriculum/Assessments
- ❖ Policies/Practices/Procedures

**CRITICAL ISSUES**

- Equity
- Instruction and Learning
- Social Emotional Learning
- Organizational Capacity
- Facilities

*When we know better, we must do better.*

PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION:

**ELIMINATE THE CHIEFS MASCOT.**

**Our Hope:** District's students and reputation impacted positively as result of the work!

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

### HONOR

Native Americans

### EDUCATE

Increase Understanding  
Curricular Impacts

### CONNECT

Students, Staff, Community,  
Alumni

## CURRICULUM

The history and culture of the Indigenous People is incorporated into social studies and ELA instruction and learning through the district. Literature is incorporated that offers historical information from multiple perspectives and highlights Native American authors.

A few specific examples:

- Students in 3rd grade learn about Indigenous People in Michigan's history.
- In 5th grade, as part of the Indigenous Peoples' Lives in the Americas unit, students read about Chief Okemos of the Chippewa.
- In 8th grade, students learn about the Native American perspective and interactions/consequences with Lewis and Clark's Expedition (besides Sacagawea).
- English 10 students read Code Talker- a story about the Navajo soldiers who encoded much of the U.S. military's communication- and examine issues such as assimilation and acculturation.
- American History at OHS studies early Native American literature, including "The Iroquois Constitution" and the influence of this piece tied to the US Constitution, as well as its role in promoting peace.

## NEXT STEPS

Board Discussion, Public Input/Comment (Tonight through May 24)

Board Action (May 24th - 7pm)

*If approved:*

Develop and implement inclusive process to identify new mascot (students, staff, alumni, parents/guardians)

Identify and pursue additional funding sources, use of fund balance

Transition from current to new mascot (September, 2023?)

(Formal Timeline would be established after decision)

## QUESTIONS

---

# THANKS

## OPS Mascot Committee

Dr. Aaron Payment, Chairperson, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

Matthew Wesaw, Chairperson, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi

Frank Ehtawageshik, Executive Director, United Tribes of Michigan

Jamie Stuck, Chairperson, Huron Band of Potawatomi

Melissa Kiesewetter, Native American Specialist, Michigan Department of Civil Rights

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by Slidesgo,  
including icons by FlatIcon, infographics & images by Freepik

