

Mascot Committee Meeting
BOE Community Room
February 5, 2018
6:30pm

Welcome and Introductions

Diane Liebsch and Sean Crittendon, USD 409 Board Members, welcomed the committee members. Introductions were made of committee members. (see sign in spreadsheet)

Origin of Topic – Review of Topic

Diane and Sean provided information on the origin of the mascot discussion, history of the mascot committee, and reviewed highlights and summarized the three meetings held in the spring of 2017.

Initial mascot discussion began last spring after the USD 409 Board of Education received a letter of concern, regarding the mascot name, from Ree Greenwood, an Atchison community member. Ree is a member of the committee and read the letter to the mascot committee.

Diane advised that as this committee moves forward, three things need to be considered:

- Honoring our history
- Focusing on students of today and tomorrow
- Educating ourselves and the community

Presentation – Dr. Alex Red Corn

Susan Myers, superintendent, introduced Dr. Alex Red Corn, Assistant Professor and Coordinator for Indigenous Partnerships, Educational Leadership, Kansas State University.

Alex's presentation provided information on the history of Native Americans, appropriation (identity theft of Native Americans), imagery (symbolic meanings attached to racist images – distorts Native American culture, diminishes native culture, broad impact) and mascots, culture, place, and curriculum, current trends, and issues (people don't see the difference).

At the completion of Alex's presentation, the floor was opened for questions from the committee.

Discussion - Reflections

Question: Is there a consensus at this time to change the Redmen mascot? No comments from the committee were made.

Question: What is keeping us from changing? – Education of the community? – Alumni doesn't understand the issue?

Comment: An organizer for the classes of 1970-1979 reunion advised that an informal survey/discussion were taken last fall, during their 1970s class reunion, regarding the Redmen mascot. The general consensus of the 1970's classes was that they were never disrespectful of the Indian mascot. The Indian-Brave on the gym floors were never walked on; it was always walked around. Discussions also included that if today's kids are being disrespectful of the mascot, then remove it. The general consensus of the 1970s classes was that if the Native American community sees the mascot of Redmen as deeming, then remove it.

Question and Discussion: It was asked if any discussion has been held regarding what the new mascot would be? It was suggested to talk to alumni and current students. A comment was made that they hope it is more than just the "A" – maybe "Ahs."

A comment/suggestion: was made about rebranding the Redmen – educating people – work to change the negative condensation of the Redmen mascot.

A suggestion: was made and discussion followed to possibly contact the Native American tribe (s) that neighbor Atchison and ask their opinion of the Redmen mascot. Alex's response was all Native Americans don't agree on this nor should they. It was suggested to talk to a couple of respected Native American families in the Atchison community. A response to this was that you couldn't ask one family to be a spokesman for the Native Americans. Alex reminded the committee (from his presentation) that two organizations that speak on behalf of Native Americans are the National Congress of American Indians and the National Indian Education Association.

It was asked if people want the beautiful Indian in the commons area removed. There is also other Redmen imagery in both schools, do people want this all removed. The committee was reminded that one of the outcomes of this committee, as we move forward, is to honor our history. With this comes preserving the Redmen history in Atchison. Education will be key as we move forward.

A student who is a Native American and participating committee member, voiced that her family participates in Native American rituals yet today and Redmen is not an image, but a racial slur.

A comment: was made not to rabbit hole, that taking the name Redmen is identity theft. If people are not in the situation, they are not in a position to determine a racial slur for another group. That is like me wearing a t-shirt that says "Honkey."

A comment: was made that changing the meaning of Redmen or rebranding Redmen won't change anything, it's the underlying condensation of Redmen that will remain the same – it was compared to the "N" word, it really doesn't mean anything, but it's more with the underlying negative condensation.

A comment: was made that one of the AHS classes recently went to another school to attend an event. The school had a wall of Black history. It keeps the history and teaches the students about their history. We can keep our history while teaching the students.

A comment: was made that if the Redmen name offends any of our students, we need to change it.

A student made the comment: it's not that we don't respect the Indian images, we don't use it – it's on the wall, but we don't associate with it – it's just the Redmen name we use. We don't have the image on our uniforms – we are using the A. In response, a student made the comment: We don't accept intolerance.

A student made the comment: we recently were at a school competition; I was asked what our school colors and mascot were. I had to explain to this person what the Redmen is.

The committee was reminded that the Redmen history wouldn't be erased; the history would be preserved. A classroom or something similar could be used as a museum with plaques (or something similar) to explain the history or maybe a wall of history as the Black history wall that was mentioned earlier.

Comment: Redmen is a slur and offensive. A mascot is not a real person or thing. Given any mascot, you would honor that mascot. If it were a Negro or black mascot, it would be offensive to most everyone.

Question: What do we do with educating alumni – making the issue known?

Question: How would a mascot change transition? Would we use something similar like "Red Hawks?" Keeping the "Red."

Comment: We don't want to look back and we don't want to erase our history, but we need to think of current and future students.

Comment – Question: We got to open up our eyes. Could a new mascot be the modern Indian? Alex cautioned the committee to hanging onto threads – it would rear its head back up again. A mascot suggestion was made of the "River Hawks."

Comment: The Atchison Redmen is my culture, like Apple has their own culture, and the Chiefs have their culture, and the Royals have their culture, Atchison has their own culture.

Comment: The Redmen is the district's history and culture, but it's the Native American's history. It has been stolen from the Native Americans - It's a Native American heist.

Comment: Redmen is offensive, I think most of us are in agreement with this.

Comment: I wouldn't want to be called a Spic.

Comments: We should choose a generic mascot – people shouldn't be a mascot.

Comment from a student: Mr. Crouse applied for a grant to bring us more Native American education. Sadly he wasn't awarded the grant. We wanted to learn more about the modern day Native Americans including visiting a Native American tribe. We don't associate ourselves with the Native American logo – the logo isn't on our uniforms – we are not as connected to the logo as the older people are.

Comment from a student: our generation is more progressive, we don't fall under that's how we were or how we did it, but the history will stay.

Comment: Atchison culture is not the same as the Native American culture.

Questions: What does moving forward look like? What symbol do we want to use? Do we unity as one mascot?

Discussion was held regarding the AMS school colors and the Kittens. Many were proud to be called the Kittens. A comment was made that the Blacks were called Kittens because they were perceived weak and not strong.

Comment: I'm coach at Haskell College, Lawrence. The Redmen feel like they are Indians, we are true Indians. With being on campus, I've learned that preserving the Native American culture is an important part of planning for the college – we don't want to loose the culture. When my kids take the floor, they take it as Indians. We are truly Indians. Leadership is a point to lead.

Comment: Time and time again this community has faced change and it's painful. I want to move forward for the kids.

A story was shared of when the Blacks and White were fighting during a time in the 1970s. A teacher pulled the students together and said we are not black and we are not white, we are the Redmens. A student made a comment that effective ideas doesn't mean it's a good idea – solving a racial issue doesn't mean we can call ourselves this.

A comment: was made that they appreciate the high school students being part of the committee – they have been impactful and have a really good grasp on the issue.

A student commented: that a white boy (AHS student) approached her and said the Native American logo or being called a Redmen didn't offend him. Discussion was held regarding educating the students at an earlier age, maybe middle school. Bryon Hanson reminded the committee that Native American education has been included in

the district's curriculum and is starting in grade school. This was intentionally developed for our district's education.

Comment – Being a Redmen didn't make me then and it doesn't make me now.

Our district's mission was shared –the Atchison School District shall be to identify and remove all barriers to promote equal opportunities for success by all students.

Next Steps

Focus on the community from the young to the adult.

Community education outreach.

Comment: if the alumni are upset, what is it going to hurt?

Comment: we need to think of the future of current and future kids.

Educate parents including consequences – move forward.

Develop a community education – include stereotyping of all ethnic groups.

Next Meeting (s)

The dates of the next meetings will be sent out by email.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.