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The Register-Guard

Board says to review team names

TOPPENISH, Wash. (AP) — School districts should review the use of nicknames for sports teams and mascots to ensure they are not offensive, the state Board of Education has decided.

The board met Friday on the Yakima Indian Reservation, where it heard emotional testimony from Indians who said team names like Chiefs and Redskins are offensive.

"If you want to honor Indian people, I suggest you name mountains after us," said Loretta Wilson, a member of the Yakima Tribe who wept throughout her statement to the board.

Some members of area tribes said they had no problem with such nicknames, however.

The panel stopped short of recommending that Indian names be dropped after several members argued the issue should be decided at the local level.

"If we take a stand, we could hurt some schools and tribes as well as possibly help others," said Marvin Norman, a board member from Enumclaw.

The board also decided that all mascots, nicknames and school names should be reviewed.

"This is bigger than Native Americans," said Dorothy Hollingsworth of Seattle, the board's only black member. "If next year this is about niggers, I'd feel equally hurt."

Kathleen Anderson of Coupeville, the board president, was directed to write a letter to the state's 296 school districts asking them to review their use of mascots and other symbols, and to involve the community in the reviews. The districts will be asked to report back to the board.

The state board does not have the power to ban nicknames that some groups might find offensive. Only the Legislature can do that.

There are about 31 high school teams with nicknames that could be associated with Indians, according to the board. Elementary and middle schools also use such names.

It was a coincidence that Friday's long-scheduled meeting was in the towering Winter Lodge building of the state's largest tribe. But the location ensured plenty of testimony.

Wilson, of Kennewick, wept during her lengthy description of the humiliation such team nicknames have caused her family.

"I'm sure that there are Indian children in real distress over this today," she told the board.

Wilson recounted how her daughter, a high school volleyball player, was called Sacajawea by other students, who also sometimes made tomahawk-chop gestures in her direction.

"I consider that cultural harassment," Wilson said.

'If you want to honor Indian people, I suggest you name mountains after us.'

— Loretta Wilson,
Yakima Tribe member

Joanna Meninick, a member of the Yakima Tribal Council, opened her presentation with a lengthy speech in the Yakima language.

When she translated, it was a searing story of being sent away at the age of five to English-speaking schools, where she was taught to ignore her language and her family's religious beliefs and values.

"I was whipped and beaten by your government," she told the board. "Now who is civilizing who?"

Many speakers criticized the Washington Redskins football team for using that nickname in the nation's capital.

"Utilize your own names," Meninick demanded. Indian titles such as chief have specific meanings of respect, and should not be demeaned by inappropriate use, she said.

Kugie Louis of the Colville Tribe, executive director of the National Indian Athletic Association, said he considers use of Indian mascots acceptable if the depiction is dignified.

"I would angrily denounce references that degrade Indians," Louis said.

Don Hatch, a Tulalip Tribes member and a Marysville school board director, said he opposes a ban on Indian mascots.

"If you take any of it away you are going to take part of the culture away," said Hatch, who was wearing an Atlanta Braves jacket and Pilchuck Tomahawks shirt.

Stan Jones, chairman of the Tulalip Tribes, said the Marysville-Pilchuck High School's Tomahawks nickname honors Indians.

Mike Colbrese, the director of the Washington Intercollegiate Athletic Association, said the organization's board voted earlier this month not to take a position on the issue.

"The board of the WIAA believes this is a local issue," Colbrese said.

Patricia Martin, director of Indian education for the state, said the use of Indian mascots has a negative impact on Indian students.

In recent years some Indian groups have asked professional sports teams like the Washington Redskins and Atlanta Braves to change their names.

The states of Minnesota and Wisconsin have banned use of Indian mascots.

Portland girl has fun in new movie

PORTLAND (AP) — An 11-year-old Beaverton girl says she met lots of interesting people while making *The Joy Luck Club*.

Melanie Chang plays the lead character, June, as a young girl in the film version of Amy Tan's

popular novel.

Her family traveled to San Francisco earlier this month for a screening of the movie.

Melanie and her mother, Annette, also attended the Portland premiere this week.

Her piano-playing skill and fluency in Mandarin and Cantonese helped her land the part.

Melanie says all her friends want to see the movie. They're excited because their parents will let them go even though it is rated "R."

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