

Native American Mascots Challenged

Washington's Board of Education passes resolution encouraging school ban them

By Donna Gordon Blankinship
The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — The state Board of Education is making another attempt at encouraging Washington schools to replace their Native American mascots.

In the past decade, about 10 schools have given up their Indian mascots. But another 50, including tribal schools, are holding fast to their nicknames as warriors, braves, redskins and red devils.

The state board passed a resolution on Wednesday urging districts to stop using Native American mascots, but as board spokesman

Aaron Wyatt acknowledges, it does not have the authority to mandate this change.

There are no consequences for schools that do not voluntarily choose a new mascot, Wyatt said Friday.

Oregon's state Board of Education voted in May to ban Native American mascots, nicknames and logos. Schools in that state have five years to comply. Eight Oregon high schools are affected.

Washington's resolution, which is similar to resolution passed by the board in 1993, was inspired by research by the American Psychological Association citing the adverse effects of Native American

can mascots on students.

The resolution also mentions the widening achievement gap between Native American and other students and the call by a number of national organizations and tribes for this change.

"We are in the business of educating students," Board member Bernal Baca said in a statement. "We need to remove any barrier

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that will impede student success."

Marcus Morgan, superintendent of the Reardan-Edwall School District near Spokane, said the issue hadn't been raised during his tenure with the school district but was open to the idea of discussing now.

All of Reardan's sports teams are the Indians and about a quarter of the district population are Native American or Alaskan Native students.

"I think it's maybe time to ask the questions," Morgan said Friday.

He said he would probably make some calls to tribal leaders as well as the school board and other community leaders to see if this is an issue the community wants to tackle.

Reardan schools have a long tradition of Native American students, as well as having enthusiastic sports fans, Morgan said. He doesn't think the Indian mascot has been seen as derogatory, but he added that the issue deserved more research.

Other Washington communities have had acrimonious battles over retiring a Native American mascot, including some districts close to Reardan. The Colville Indians asked the Colville High School Indians to find a new name in 1997, but they're still the Indians today.

Ten schools have changed their names in the past decade, including Eatonville Middle School, which went from the Warriors to the Eagles; Eisenhower Middle School in Everett, which went from the Warriors to the Patriots and Issaquah High School, which changed from the Indians to the Eagles.

About 10 tribal schools or those on Washington reservations also have Native American mascots, but the majority of schools in the state with Indian mascots are part of their community's long-standing history.



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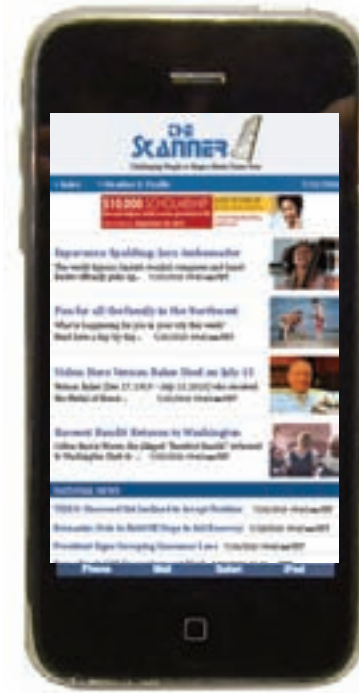
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