

CAYUGA NATION

HAUDENOSAUNEE

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March 27, 2023

Gene Cvik, Board President
Corey A. Green, Superintendent
Owego Apalachin Central School District
5 Sheldon Guile Boulevard
Owego, New York 13827

Re: Request for Permission to Use Racially Insensitive Motto

Dear Messrs. Cvik and Green:

I write on behalf of the Cayuga Nation to decline your request that the Cayuga Nation provide the Owego Apalachin Central School District consent to continue using "Indians" as the school district's name and mascot. I also wanted to take the opportunity to provide some education around the Nation's position on offensive racial tropes and our ancestral homelands.

The use of Native imagery and references as school mascots is a remnant of an era in which racism and bigotry were tolerated. That era has come to an end for all other races and it is time it is put to an end with respect to Native Americans mascots also. The attempts in your letter to normalize your district's use of "Indians" as a name and mascot is just as offensive as the use of the word itself. Decades of racial insensitivity by your district does not make it right to continue that use. The Cayuga Nation's non-negotiable position is that school mascots based on Native imagery are symbols of disrespect that degrade, insult, and harm Native people, particularly our youngest generations. The Nation urges you to follow the lead of the New York State Education Department and replace the offensive mascot with one that is inclusive and sensitive to all races.

We presume you wrote to the Cayuga Nation as Owego is located within our historic territory, dating long before colonial times. We see in the presentation posted on your website that you have also written to several other nations. We appreciate that you are likely following the Education Department's proposed regulations¹ regarding the possibility that another federal or


¹ Available at:

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=0CBsQw7AJahcKEwjI2uH2l-39AhUAAAAAHQAAAAAQAw&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.regents.nysed.gov%2Fcommon%2Fregents%2Ffil>

state recognized Nation within the State of New York could provide consent for continued use of the mascot. However, you should know that the Tyendinaga and Nanticoke nations to which you apparently also wrote are not recognized by either the federal² or state governments. In fact, it appears they do not even claim a location within the state.³

Moreover, the St. Regis Mohawks and Onondaga Nation, while sister Haudenosaunee nations to the Cayuga, have historic territories in other parts of the state. We trust our sister nations will respond similarly, but know that the Cayuga Nation does not consent to any use of racial tropes as mascots within our historic territory and will challenge the continued use if necessary.

As you know, even if you receive consent from some other nation, it can be revoked at any time in the future. Rather than leave the possibility of future disruption in place, the Cayuga Nation urges you to take this opportunity to correct the racial insensitivities of the past and move to a new mascot that is inclusive of all races and does not trade on stereotypes.

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Clint Halftown
Cayuga Nation Federal Representative
Cayuga Nation Council Member

cc: Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe
Attn: Tribal Council

Onondaga Nation
Attn: Sidney Hill

es%2F1222p12d2.pdf&psig=AOvVaw2AtrDku64CDzUKMQDjvG7Z&ust=1679493730845920

² Available at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/01/12/2023-00504/indian-entities-recognized-by-and-eligible-to-receive-services-from-the-united-states-bureau-of>

³ The Tyendinaga appear to be a Canadian based “first nation” while the Nanticoke is a non-federally recognized nation with roots in the area currently designated as the state of Delaware.