

Carrie King
408 Depot Street
Chester, VT 05143
(802) 591-1660
carrieroyking@gmail.com

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GMUHS School Board Members Adrienne Williams, Steve Perani, Lois Perlah, Jeff Hance, Josh Schroeder, Rick Alexander, Julia Gignoux, Deb Brown, Katie Murphy

Lauren Fierman, TRSU Superintendent
Keith Hill, Principal
GMUHS
716 VT 103
Chester, VT 05143

Dear GMUHS School Board Members, Mr. Hill, and Ms. Fierman,

I want this letter to serve as my filing of a formal complaint under the Nondiscriminatory Mascots and School Branding policy to the GMUHS School Board for your action to rescind this policy to retire the "Chieftain" during the February 2023 school board meeting. This recent decision by the school board to reinstate the "Chieftains" branding does not offer a welcoming, positive, and inclusive learning environment for all students by prohibiting the use of discriminatory school branding, thereby it is undermining the educational experiences of members of all communities and perpetuating negative racial stereotypes.

The school board's decision in February to rescind the nondiscriminatory mascots policy that passed 7-2 at the board meeting in January in order to reinstate the use of the "Chieftains" branding at GMUHS directly contradicts the responsibility of Vermont school boards to prohibit school branding that directly or indirectly references or stereotypes the likeness, features, symbols, traditions or other characteristics that are specific to the race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity of any person or group of persons. In this community, it is impossible for "Chieftains" not to have a reference to Native American cultural appropriation due to how this mascot has been portrayed over the last 50 years at GMUHS.

The issues surrounding racial mascots led to the passage of Vermont's Act 152 in May 2022 which requires public schools to adopt and uphold a nondiscriminatory mascot policy. Please do not waste the already limited school resources attempting a rebranding of the "Chieftains" in a futile effort to whitewash this mascot name - the time for a nondiscriminatory mascot at GM is long overdue. In order to maintain this historically racist "Chieftains" mascot, does the school board plan to provide anti-racist education for all students in order for rebranding changes not to be surface level but actually be a part of a sustained effort toward repairing the racial harm done and compensating indigenous communities for capitalizing on this racial caricature for 50 years?

That the School Board would vote to rescind their decision to retire the Chieftain in the wake of the disturbing report of ongoing racial bias and harassment of an 8th grader while anticipating GM's dramatically declining future enrollment seems insensitive and uninformed, at minimum. It is essential that school board members dig deep to grapple with what is at stake in this fight and recognize the serious damage that this divisive mascot has already done for many years to detract from our learning community. It's time for GMUHS to move forward and welcome students and their families with a new, updated, unquestionably anti-racist, and nondiscriminatory school mascot. Please advise me on the next steps in order to resolve this complaint. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Carrie Roy King