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Natick High School votes Red Hawks as new mascot name

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Natick High School voted to change its mascot name from the Red and Blue to the Red Hawks, based on ballots cast by the students this week.

By Jaclyn Reiss, Town Correspondent

Goodbye to the Natick Red and Blue.

Natick High School students and staff voted overwhelmingly this week to change their mascot's name to the Red Hawks as the student body makes the move to the newly constructed high school in the fall.

Natick High School Principal Rose Bertucci said the name reflects a bird indigenous to the town, and said the bird was symbolic in multiple ways.

Bertucci said Chief Caring Hands of the Natick Praying Indians told her the tribe uses the clever bird of prey as a symbol when training their warriors, since hawks hunt their prey in a calculated manner, swooping down and then exiting swiftly.

Bertucci also said the students saw it as a different symbol: last December, a hawk flew through a window of the school and survived - a rarity for the numerous birds who fly into the school's windows.

"The Red Hawks have a lot of meaning," Bertucci said. "It represents Natick, and there's a little folklore."

The mascot change comes after a 2007 School Committee vote ridding the town of the Redmen name, considering it offensive to Native Americans.

The board reopened discussions in 2008 after receiving a nonbinding ballot question, backed by two-thirds of the voters, asking the board to reconsider its decision.

However, the board stuck with its initial ruling, and Natick sports teams began playing under the [Red and Blue name](#).

Bertucci [called for a vote this spring](#) after being approached by many students, staff, and residents, she said, with one stipulation: there would be no return to the Redmen.

Bertucci helped organize the vote with five new choices - the Knights, the Legacy, the Pride, the Red Hawks, or the Tribe. Students also could vote to keep the Red and Blue.

Out of 1,500 potential voters at the school, 750 cast ballots, and 53 percent of those voted for Red Hawks. The Knights came in second place with 22 percent of the vote, and the Tribe came in third with 18 percent. The Pride, Legacy, and Red and Blue each got 2 percent or 3 percent, Bertucci said.

"I think the kids can picture a red hawk, but they can't picture a Legacy or Pride," she said, adding that some people were worried the Natick Tribe would also bring up old wounds.

Bertucci said an informal vote at the 8th grade level showed the middle schoolers favored the Red Hawks as well.

"Only 2 percent wanted the Red and Blue â€“ it shows there is no real spirit around that name here at the school," Bertucci said, adding that the school will keep red and blue as its school colors.

Overall, Bertucci said she hopes the town will embrace the new name, and that it will take on a legacy through future years.

"The whole premise is to bring the school back to unity," she said. "The town really feels like their history is going to be gone, and it's not. It's there, but things do change."