

Tewksbury High School to Consider Changing 'Redmen' Mascot

by Kyle Scott Clauss | January 19, 2016 12:14 pm



The Tewksbury High School Logo

Tewksbury High School is one of the 40 or so schools in Massachusetts whose mascot is a Native American, and the last bearing the "Redmen" moniker since Natick ditched it in 2008 and rebranded as "Redhawks" four years later. Tewksbury could soon be the latest to make the change, and like Natick, a bitter fight could lie ahead.

Superintendent of Schools John E. O'Connor has called for a public forum later this month to discuss the topic, and requested a poll of students in February. (*The Lowell Sun* conducted an [online poll](#) in December, with 53.9 percent in favor of changing the name and 46.1 opposed.) The debate has gained new attention since Adidas announced a [nationwide initiative](#) offering financial assistance and design resources to any U.S. high school contemplating a change of its Native American mascot.

Supporters of the Redmen name have flocked to a [Facebook group](#) with more than 1,400 members, started by former Tewksbury cheerleader Heidi DeSisto and titled "REDMEN...HERE TO STAY!!!!!" There, the Adidas offer, which bears a three year agreement to only buy the German sportswear giant's products, wasn't received so warmly — somewhere between "radical political correctness" and a PR stunt. From the group's Facebook page:

"Adidas name comes from a german bootmaker during Nazi Germany great job people. why not be associated with Nazis instead. the uber liberals want to change everything that is traditional because they hate tradition or anything that has ties to the past." — Carmine Bonavita

"What Adidas offers to the schools they contact is a total joke and an insult. They aren't wanting to help support natives they want to contribute to the eradication and destruction of native culture." — Steve Peters

Both sides claim members of Native American heritage. Lowell resident and Greater Lowell Indian Cultural Association chief Tom "Eagle Rising" Libby [told the Globe](#) the name bothers him "just a little bit," but that keeping it would "not necessarily be a bad thing." Scott Ringwood, another commenter in DeSisto's group, said he has Native American blood "running through [his] veins," and doesn't find the name offensive.

Activist Claudia Fox Tree of the Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness, meanwhile, [told The Sun](#) that not only are Native American mascots racist, but the term "redmen" is especially offensive, as it harkens back to the practice of scalping.

DeSisto has taken orders for \$15 Redmen T-shirts to be worn at the upcoming forum, with all proceeds benefiting the Tewksbury Community Food Pantry. According to one post, more than 700 orders were placed.

Source URL: <http://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/2016/01/19/tewksbury-redmen-name-change/>