



G W Y A D B F
CHEROKEE NATION[®]
P.O. Box 948 • Tahlequah, OK 74465-0948
918-453-5000 • www.cherokee.org

Office of the Chief

Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Principal Chief

Bryan Warner
Deputy Principal Chief

July 8, 2020

Port Neches-Grove Independent School District Board of Trustees and
Superintendent Dr. Mike Gonzales

Sent via email to: Board members Scott Bartlett, Dustin Marsh, Eric Sullivan, Lana Parker, Brandon Cropper, Rusty Brittain, Jake Lefort and Superintended Dr. Mike Gonzales

Dear Board of Trustees and Superintendent Gonzales,

On behalf of the Cherokee Nation, I write to express our concerns about Port Neches-Groves Independent School District's continued use of idealized Native American culture, practices, and symbols in the name of the Cherokee Nation. We have reviewed certain traditions of your school, which include the "Indian Spirit," the "Indianettes," the lyrics of the official fight song "Cherokee," and the use of headdresses and totem poles and find that each of these uses perpetuate inaccurate misconceptions of Native American culture and invokes ideations of savagery which only perpetuates harmful stereotypes and inaccurately depicts our culture.

Native Americans have suffered horrific transgressions throughout history, with the Cherokee people suffering specific misery during the infamous Trail of Tears where a quarter of our population perished. In the face of this torment, the deeply rooted culture and traditions of the Cherokee people helped our Nation persevere despite the traumas associated with historical genocide and mass land dispossession and today, our traditions are passed on to help guide the next generation to greater heights.

We believe that the current national dialogue has provided Port Neches-Groves with the opportunity to reevaluate its use of Native American culture, practices, and symbols in its own school traditions. While I recognize the value of using traditions to unite a community and understand that sentimentality will no doubt remain, times are changing and community traditions rooted in derogatory imagery and names should change with the times. The Nation invites Port-Neches Groves to take a leading role in the cause by reevaluating its current traditions.

I understand that in 1979 a former chief of the Cherokee Nation issued a certificate recognizing Port Neches-Groves as "Ambassadors of Goodwill" in an apparent attempt to condone the use of an Indian mascot. This letter serves as official notice that Cherokee Nation formally withdraws any support of Port Neches-Grove's use of Cherokee Nation's name and use of any Native American culture, practices, or imagery in the name of supporting school traditions. This specifically includes revocation of the October 1979 "Ambassador of Goodwill" certificate. The sovereignty and humanity of both the

Cherokee people and Native Americans at large should be respected. Therefore, the Cherokee Nation respectfully urges Port Neches-Groves to reconsider its school traditions that are premised on Cherokee Nation and stereotypes of Native American culture. Continued use by Port Neches Independent School District of its current mascot and imagery does further injury to a proud Indian Nation and a people who have endured enough. It should stop.

For many years, community members, students, and school officials have stated that the Port Neches-Groves community honors the Cherokee Nation. A decision to embrace change and honor this request to change the mascot, practices, and symbols of the school would demonstrate respect for the Cherokee Nation and Native Americans everywhere in a way that no one could ever question.

Wado,



Chuck Hoskin, Jr.
Principal Chief
Cherokee Nation

Port Neches-Groves Board of Trustees

Scott
Bartlett
sbartlett@pngisd.org

Dustin Marsh
dmarsh@pngisd.org

Eric Sullivan
esullivan@pngisd.org

Lana Parker
lparker@pngisd.org

Brandon Cropper
bcropper@pngisd.org

Rusty Brittain
rbrittain@pngisd.org

Jake Lefort
jlefort@pngisd.org

Superintendent
Dr. Mike Gonzales, Superintendent
mgonzales@pngisd.org