



Reedsport School District Native American Name and Image Committee Timeline and Options Report

The purpose of the Reedsport School District’s *Native American Name and Image Committee* is to research and make recommendations to the Reedsport School District Board of Education regarding compliance with Oregon Administrative Rule 581-021-0047, as further amended by Oregon Senate Bill 1509 (commonly referred to as the “Native American mascot ban.”)

The Committee members are:

Rachel Carter	RCCS parent; Member of RCCS Advisory Board
Jen Clark	RCCS/HES parent; Member of RSD Board of Directors
Marc Chaney ('18)	RCCS student (Junior)
Sandi Donnelly ('68)	RHS alumnus; Member of REEF Board of Directors
Dan Forbess	RSD Superintendent
James Hixenbaugh	RCCS parent; RCCS coach; RCCS Athletic Director; RCCS Dean of Students
Tom Huebner ('72)	RHS alumnus; Member of REEF Board of Directors
Vince Swagerty	RCCS Principal
Keith Tymchuk ('75)	RHS alumnus; RCCS instructor; Former Mayor of Reedsport
Joe Zelinski	RCCS volunteer; Member of Braves Boosters Assoc. Board of Directors
Anna Zetsche ('17)	RCCS student (Senior)

As part of the Committee’s efforts, the following facts are presented in the form of a chronological timeline, to help the public understand the legislative history behind the current situation. The Committee feels this timeline of events is helpful in forming the best possible recommendation to the Board of Education.

Following the presentation of the timeline, the Committee has outlined several options for its ultimate recommendation to the Reedsport School Board, as well as its current reasoning as to why each of these options seems favorable or unfavorable at this time. ***No final decision on a recommendation to the School Board has been made at this time.*** The Committee continues to gather input from students and the general public. This includes a public hearing/question-and-answer session, scheduled for **Wednesday, October 26, 2016 at 6:30pm** in Pacific Auditorium at RCCS.

Timeline:

1990s	Usage of Native American names and images as school/team mascots is the subject of nationwide debate among colleges, universities and high schools. Some schools ban the usage and opt to change team names/mascots. (Umpqua Community College switches from “Indians” to “Riverhawks.”)
1997	In Oregon, Enterprise High School drops the name “Savages”; school board citing the usage of Native American name and image was not proper.
2001-2002	Oregon Dept. of Education (ODE) receives Civil Rights violation complaint from Native American student and family. Complaint is centered on a halftime dance program that he and his family felt disrespected their Native American culture and was an act of racism. Rather than instruct schools to discontinue individual practices that could be deemed offensive, ODE uses the complaint, recent NCAA actions, and pages of supporting materials as a role model for school districts to consider as a means to voluntarily remove Native American names and images as school names/mascots.

2012	<p>State Board of Education takes official action on banning Native American names and images affiliated with Oregon schools and votes unanimously to ban their usage entirely, in Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 581-021-0047. Names specifically banned are: “Redskins”, “Savages”, “Indians”, “Indianettes”, “Chiefs”, “Chieftains”, and “Braves”.</p> <p>July 1, 2017 is set as the deadline for schools to comply.</p>
2015	<p>Members of the 2015 Oregon Legislature develop legislation (Senate Bill 1509) to rewrite the State Board of Education’s administrative rule. The legislation added a provision that would allow any federally-recognized Native American tribe in Oregon to enter into an approved written agreement with an Oregon public school district for continued use of a Native American “mascot.” Specific definition was provided as to what constitutes a “mascot”, from team names, images, even school letterhead.</p> <p>Senate Bill 1509 states that any approved written agreement between a tribe and a school district must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. approval by the State Board of Education B. an acceptable mascot image approved by the tribe C. a description of how the acceptable mascot image can be used D. acceptable implementation of additional Native American/Alaska Native history and culture curriculum in the school district E. description of how the agreement will be enforced F. a maximum ten year agreement, after which time a renewal agreement must be negotiated G. a review of the agreement by the tribe and school district at least once every five years H. a description of how disputes and complaints relating to the agreement will be resolved I. a renewal process J. updated school district polices that address complaints on harassment and bullying K. updated school district policies that address complaints based on race, color, religion, and other protected classes L. the ability of the tribe to revoke the agreement at any time by petitioning the State Board of Education.
January, 2016	<p>The revised administrative rules are published. Affected school districts across Oregon begin considering options to be in compliance with Oregon law by the deadline date, which is July 1, 2017.</p> <p>Reedsport School District (RSD) makes an effort to communicate with the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians (CTCLUSI), assuming this tribe is the “tribe with a traditional area of interest” for the Reedsport area, as the law requires.</p>
February, 2016	<p>A meeting between RSD Superintendent Dan Forbess and the Coos/Lower Umpqua/Siuslaw tribe is scheduled for March 3, 2016.</p>
March, 2016	<p>At the meeting with the Coos/Lower Umpqua/Siuslaw tribe, tribal leaders presented Dan Forbess with their Tribal Council Resolution #12-038, dated May 3, 2012, as well as a legal opinion, dated February 3, 2016. The tribal council resolution was written in support of the <u>original</u> (2012) OAR 581-021-0047, that banned the use of Native American names, images, and symbols. Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw tribal leaders indicated they would <u>not</u> enter into any agreement with the Reedsport School District because they believe the use of Native American names, images, and symbols by Oregon public schools “encourage biases and prejudices and have a negative effect on contemporary Native people as fellow Americans.” Their attorney’s opinion from 2016 confirmed their position – the tribe will not enter into any agreement to support the continued use of the Reedsport Braves name, image, and symbol.</p> <p>(continued)</p>

	<p>(March 2106, continued)</p> <p>Coincidentally, on the same day RSD Superintendent Dan Forbess meets with Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, RSD receives a letter from the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians (CTSI.) The Siletz letter indicates they are a “tribe with a traditional area of interest” in Reedsport, and the Siletz tribe would be willing to talk to RSD staff about entering into a written agreement.</p> <p>With the revelation of the Siletz tribe also claiming Reedsport as a “traditional area of interest”, RSD Superintendent Dan Forbess contacts the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) for guidance in determining which tribe(s) have a “traditional area of interest” in the same areas as the Reedsport school district. In response, ODE officials, in working with Oregon Indian Affairs staff, determine there are <u>three</u> tribes with traditional areas of interest in Reedsport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians (CTSLUSI) • The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians (CTSI) • The Coquille Indian Tribe (CIT). <p>Despite the willingness of the Siletz tribe to enter into an agreement with RSD, out of respect for the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw position to <u>not</u> establish such a partnership, Superintendent Forbess attempts to meet with all three tribal leaders to determine if the Siletz leadership could share with the other two tribal leaders their reasoning as to why a partnership with Reedsport could have a positive, respectful outcome. A joint meeting is scheduled for May 19, in Florence, where leaders from all three tribes are already scheduled to meet for other purposes.</p>
<p>May, 2016</p>	<p>For various reasons provided, none of the three tribal leaders attend the May 19 meeting.</p> <p>With the attempt of a joint meeting having failed, Superintendent Forbess has follow-up phone conversations with the Coquille and Coos/Lower Umpqua/Siuslaw tribal leaders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Coquille Chairperson said her tribe will <u>not</u> partner with Reedsport because, as a tribe, they were divided on the Native American mascot use issue. • The Coos/Lower Umpqua/Siuslaw Chairperson indicated their Tribal Council’s position would not change, and he encouraged Reedsport to drop the Native American name and image. <p>It becomes clear that RSD’s only option in securing a tribal agreement is with the Siletz (CTSI) tribe alone.</p>
<p>June/July, 2016</p>	<p>Coos/Lower Umpqua/Siuslaw attorneys indicate they, and possibly other “unwilling” tribes, will likely file lawsuit against the Oregon Department of Education, if <u>any</u> school in Oregon enters into an agreement with any “willing” tribe. Coos/Lower Umpqua/Siuslaw warned that such legal action could result in any agreement between RSD and the Siletz tribe still being overturned by the courts at a later date.</p>
<p>July 1, 2017</p>	<p>Deadline for schools to be in compliance with (OAR) 581-021-0047, as amended by Senate Bill 1509</p>

Based on review of the current OAR 581-021-0047, the history of Oregon Department of Education, State Board of Education, and Oregon Legislature action on this matter, and the feedback from the three tribal leaders, **the Reedsport School District’s Native American Name and Image Committee has determined there are three viable options** with regard to how the RSD can move forward, in compliance with the law.

Options:

1. Attempt to enter into an agreement with the Siletz tribe.

- Will likely allow Reedsport to keep the “Braves” name.
- Will still require removing/ changing our current Native American images and symbols.
- Will require Reedsport schools to adopt and teach additional curriculum designed by the Siletz tribe.

This option is currently deemed **unfavorable** by the Committee, for these primary reasons:

- It could be deemed disrespectful to the Coos/Lower Umpqua/Siuslaw and Coquille tribal positions to not partner, potentially harming future relations with these area tribes.
- The curriculum stipulation of the agreement presents an additional burden upon RSD, taking more control of curriculum out of the hands of RSD and local community. Unanswered questions remain as to the nature of a tribe-provided curriculum, and whether that curriculum would fit other state guidelines and best practices.
- There is no guarantee of an enduring agreement, either by a change of mind of Siletz tribe, additional legislative action, or legal action by other tribes, whether directed specifically at Reedsport schools or not.
- Even with an agreement, sensitivity to the Native American affiliation issue—on a nationwide scale-- is unlikely to subside anytime soon.

2. Without entering into any tribal agreement, change the Reedsport school mascot from “Braves” to something completely different.

- Lions, Tigers and Bears, oh my! Loggers, Hawks, and Salmon too. Which name says “Reedsport” to you?

This option is currently deemed **unfavorable** by the Committee, for these primary reasons:

- Our community has a long-standing affiliation with the “Braves” name—past and present students, alumni, staff, and community members.
- A new mascot will create an undesired division among future alumni and residents— some “Braves” and some “Not Braves”.
- This option will still require removing/ changing our current Native American images and symbols.

3. Without entering into any tribal agreement, change from “Braves” to “Brave” (as a verb or adjective), dropping the associated Native American images, and symbols.

- The term “Brave” would be used to describe all individuals from our school and community, in a positive manner, not affiliated with any race. (As in “Land of the free, home of the brave.”)
- This option will still require removing/ changing our current Native American images and symbols.
- Long-standing cheers and phrases would be easily modifiable. Some existing signage will be more-easily modifiable.
- In recent years, new uniforms and other gear have already avoided the “Braves” name and Native American image, using only “Reedsport” and an “R” as an image.

This option is currently deemed **favorable** by the Committee, for these primary reasons:

- Maintains a very close affiliation with the existing “Braves” name, but makes it inclusive of all races and people, rather than Native American in nature.
- Avoids engagement in any further political and/or legal fights with the State of Oregon and/or Native American tribes in Oregon.
- Shifts away from having a “mascot” as a singular entity, and instead positions the school and community population as a whole— as the “Reedsport Brave”— describing all people in a non-race/culture/ethnic-affiliated manner. The word “Brave” would be used to describe how Reedsport students, graduates and residents act – bravely – with honor, respect and patriotism.
- Provides an opportunity to re-brand our school in a more modern and positive way, while maintaining historical ties and familiarity with the core word “brave”. “Be Brave!”

Imagery:

The Committee recognizes the need for some sort of imagery to be decided upon. However, this is not deemed to be the critical decision at this time. The issue of the name must be resolved first. The Committee feels that further discussion and input on imagery will be much easier, and focused, once a name is determined.



The Committee feels It is worth noting at this time that none of the available options to the Reedsport schools— even within an agreement with the Siletz tribe— will allow the existing Native American image (shown at left,) or any similar image, to be maintained. In all cases, usage of this imagery will have to cease.



The existing school crest image (shown at left) can likely be modified to remove or replace the Native American image at top (prototype at right).

Within the shield itself, the existing fisherman, tall ship, and axe and saw remain acceptable (and fitting) symbols of Reedsport’s history and culture. Increased usage of this modified image may be an option where more formal images are desired.

