

CONARD POWWOW



VOLUME FIFTY SEVEN ISSUE IV PROVIDING 57 YEARS OF NEWS JANUARY 2015

HISTORY OF THE CHIEFTAIN

By: Emma Dowd

Conard High School chose its mascot, the Chieftain, in 1957 when the school first opened. The mascot has remained the same ever since. But this year, something has changed. As fall sports came to a close, many athletes who received certificates for their sport noticed that something was missing: the image of the Chieftain head on the certificate. Last year each certificate featured a Chieftain head on the sports certificate and this year, the Chieftain head has been replaced by a large red "C".



The word "chieftain" means the leader of the people, or a powerful member of an organization. The use of Native American figures or names as mascots for schools is very common. In Connecticut, there are 26 high schools with Native American mascots, including the Hall Warriors, the Glastonbury Tomahawks, the Newington Indians, and the Killingly High School "Redmen". Also, a recent search on a website called "Mascot DB" revealed that 128 high schools around the country have the mascot of "Chief" or "Chieftain" and 828 high schools have the mascot "Warrior".

Many colleges and professional sports teams have mascots that refer to Native Americans, most notably the NFL's Washington Redskins. This mascot alone has been the source of significant controversy in Washington, DC and around the country. In recent years, many colleges have dropped their Indian-related mascot and switched to another mascot. For example, Dartmouth switched from the "Indians" to "Big Green" in 1974, Quinnipiac University switched its mascot from the

"Braves" to the "Bobcats" in 2002, and Stanford switched from "Indians" to "Cardinals" in 1972.

Even though many colleges have changed their mascots, there are still a large number of high schools and professional sports teams that have mascots related to Native Americans. So why does this mascot appeal to Americans so much? Many high schools might have wanted to pay tribute to the qualities of Native Americans related to being fearless, fierce, and resilient. These are qualities that athletes, fans, and coaches all admire.

Changing a high school mascot is not easy. One reason is the cost. To change the Chieftain mascot, Conard would have to change all the signs and pictures around the school. The school district would also have to buy new uniforms for the sports teams whose uniforms have the Chieftain name or the Chieftain head. In addition, there would have to be a process to select a new name. Some public high schools have surveyed the students, alumni, and parents, about alternate names to the Indian mascot theme. This process can sometimes be controversial with people having strong opinions on both sides. Finally, since so many fans, athletes, parents, and alumni already refer to Conard as the Chieftains, change could take a long time to implement.



Variations of the Conard Chieftain logo, found in the Conard Graphics room. All are hand drawn. Similar logos are still found around the school, including a mural in the cafeteria.

Editor's Note

Editors-In-Chief, Molly Bugos & Emma Kutscher

This issue of the PowWow is taking on a topic that has been discussed even more than the current MIA status of Homecoming-the Chieftain. In fact, the topic of our mascot is so important to the Conard community that we've devoted an entire edition of the Powwow to it.

This debate came to light in recent history at Hall High School, and spread across town to Conard, drawing into question the use of the "Chieftain" and "Warrior" as school mascots, and if the use of Native American imagery in association with the names is respectful. Instead of taking ownership of this controversy, the Board of Ed left it to the schools to initiate discussion.

The Board's "hands off" approach has turned this topic of discussion into an ugly debate at Conard, as there has been no formal stance taken by the "powers above us." However, in February, the Board will finally be making a decision regarding the mascots- and on February 12th they will be holding a public forum for discussion.

The purpose of this issue

of the PowWow is for people to develop their own opinions beyond the influence of strong-willed friends, or influential teachers. We encourage everyone to read the variety of viewpoints provided in this edition, and to form their own opinions based on what they alone believe is right. We have done our very best to provide an equally balanced amount of editorials in favor of keeping the Chieftain, in favor of changing the Chieftain, and the many opinions that aren't as easily categorized.

The PowWow as a publication is not taking a formal stance on this debate, and all editorials printed are reflections of the author's opinions, not our own.

We hope that this issue is eye opening, and makes our readers consider a side of the debate they may not be as familiar with. We always encourage feedback from our readers, so if you feel strongly about anything printed, please send us a Letter to the Editor.

Happy reading, we hope to see you at the Board of Education's public forum in February!

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION WILL BE HOLDING A FORUM FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION ABOUT OUR MASCOT ON FEBRUARY 12TH, 2015 IN THE TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM

DAYS 'TILL

- Groundhog Day.....6
- Mr. Conard.....7
- Board of Ed Hearing.....16
- Valentine's Day.....18
- Winter Semi-Formal.....25
- "Promposal" Season.....???
- Freshmen Graduate.....998,586,714

CHIEFTAIN FEATURES

INTERVIEW WITH QUYEN TROUNG

What the Woman Who Created One of Conard's Chieftain Logos Thinks About it Now

By: Leah Kelly

Recently, I had the fortune of interviewing Quyen Truong, Review and Evaluation Coordinator with the North Central Regional Mental Health Board, part-time artist, and a class of 2001 Conard graduate. She received a BA in visual arts from Brown University.

During her years at Conard, Truong was recognized by her peers and teachers as a talented artist. Her artwork was so widely appreciated that the school administration requested that she design several of the Chieftain logos that remain at Conard today. "I took pride in being asked to depict the Chieftain," says Truong. "I was asked to create original Chieftain artwork for the yearly agendas. I created Chieftain logos for track and cross country shirts. In addition, I was commissioned by the head football coach to create a clay Chieftain head that I believe still sits in the trophy case at Conard."

Truong admits that at the time she knew very little about the potential controversy that the mascot inflicted. "In high school, I felt that the Chieftain was a figure of pride. I felt that

we were honoring Indians. I knew very little about Native Americans and had no reason to challenge the mascot."

Over time, however, Truong's opinion of the Chieftain changed dramatically. "When I went away to college, I started meeting Native Americans," she recalls. "I started to question the premise of 'honoring' people that I didn't actually know. I started to feel uncomfortable about the use of Chieftains as the Conard mascot. I realized that putting people on a pedestal as a mascot dehumanizes them. Far from honoring Native Americans, using Chieftains as mascots objectifies people and perpetuates myths and ignorance about indigenous culture."

She remembers that growing up as an Asian-American in West Hartford was difficult. In this way she believes she is better able to relate to the Native American community. "In high school, I felt unable to articulate my frustrations with growing up in a mostly Caucasian community when Asian stereotypes

were imposed on me. Now, I realize that there were no Native American voices to speak up against the Chieftain mascot. In the same way that I found Asian stereotypes offensive, I now find Native stereotypes damaging."

Truong isn't finished here. She has a lot to say about her past and present beliefs, as well as what she would do if she were a Conard student today. "I want to talk about privilege and race a little bit. I think there is a connection here with what's happening in Ferguson. I think rifts in understanding and compassion start with micro-aggressions. Using the Chieftain mascot without consulting Native Americans and then saying that we are honoring them is at best willful ignorance."

Truong has had years of experience to consider the problematic circumstances surrounding Native American mascots and how they reflect our beliefs as human beings. Long after creating the Chieftain logos and receiving much recognition and praise, she feels regret

over her past naïveté. Although she still has plenty of Conard pride, she no longer believes that an Indian head logo should be the center of that pride. In the end, she has come to one conclusion:

"To honor someone is to give them equal rights, equal access, and equal voice. We fail to honor Native Americans when we perpetuate racial stereotypes. As a high school, Conard should uphold educational principles, not ignorance. To do so, Conard must recognize the problematic basis on which our mascot was established and honor Native Americans by abolishing the Chieftain as a mascot."



WHY I NOW SUPPORT KEEPING THE CONARD CHIEFTAIN

Editorial By: Brendan Dakin

Throughout most of my high school career, I have been somewhat neutral on the issue presented by the Conard Chieftain. I never thought of the Chieftain as something derogatory or racist, but never tuned out those who thought that it was. Instead, I tuned out those who made the case that Conard should keep the Conard Chieftain because of pride, tradition, honor and so on, because I did not see it as a very convincing argument. After searching the web left and right for answers to this dilemma, I have come to the realization that many of the opposition's concerns are misguided and the Conard Chieftain is a symbol of pride and can serve as a way to honor Native Americans.

According to a school-wide survey, most students at Conard would agree with me that the Chieftain is not derogatory. This fact was revealed even in light of the recent increase in attempts by many teachers and some students to distance themselves from the Chieftain.

The major concerns expressed by those who oppose the Chieftain are that representing Native Americans in any way as a school's mascot promotes a stereotype or a false idea

about Native Americans. Additionally, some people contend that individuals who defend the Chieftain for the sake of its pride and honor are justifying qualities that don't pertain to solely to Native Americans.

If your issue with the Chieftain is that it promotes a false stereotype about Native Americans, or generates any type of false notion, then I would love to hear your rationale, if you have any, as to how removing the Chieftain would change either. It seems to me that the issue with the mistreatment of Native Americans in contemporary society and the problems they face today is a societal issue, and not one that can be effectively dealt with by altering or removing Conard's mascot.

One thing is certain: opinions differ among Native Americans. For example, on one side of the debate over Florida State University's use of the Seminole mascot, you have James Billie, the chairman of the Florida Seminole Tribe, who endorses the school's use of the Seminole. Meanwhile, many in the Oklahoma Seminole Tribe have spoken out against Florida State's use of the mascot. Minding these discrepan-

cies in opinion, it is important that we all weigh the viewpoints of Native Americans on their merits to make sense of the issue. There is no silver bullet, meaning no one Native American or group of Native Americans can provide us with a correct answer on this issue.

There is also evidence to suggest that Native Americans view imagery and logos representing them as means of honoring them. Due to lobbying from Native American groups, the NCAA deemed University of North Dakota's Fighting Sioux and 18 other mascots as hostile and abusive towards Native Americans. Members of the Spirit Lake Tribe, one of the two Sioux tribes in North Dakota, sued the NCAA in 2009 to keep University of North Dakota as the Fighting Sioux. Clearly, there are some Native Americans who oppose it, others who appreciate it and some who are indifferent.

For many in the Conard community, athletes in particular, the Chieftain provides a unifying identity for students and faculty in the past, present and future. As Jake Reynolds ('15) says, "I will continue to be a Chieftain in my years after

Conard. I do not believe that the future leaders that will go to our great school should be deprived of that title." Our school takes pride in the Chieftain. We don't attempt to model native traditions that we aren't familiar with or qualified to take part in. We respect Native Americans and their heritage.

I think it's important that we don't allow the Redskins debate to cloud our vision on this divisive issue. For obvious reasons, the Washington Redskins name is miles apart from the Conard Chieftain. Simply put, a Chieftain is the leader of a group or Tribe. It doesn't have to be turned into anything more complicated than it is just for the sake of opposing something. For or against the removal of the Chieftain, I believe that seeking out local Native Americans for guidance on this issue is beneficial for both sides. We need to engage in this debate with the very people who are represented by our school's mascot, and more importantly, take their views into consideration.

CHIEFTAIN FEATURES

CONARD'S HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

By: Molly Bugos

This year's Human Rights Day at Conard High School had a tremendous turnout for the presentations held each period, but one presentation in particular stood out in terms of attendance. Nearly 250 students attended the discussion about changing the Chieftain mascot. Before the presentation began, Mr. Duarte addressed the crowd, urging respectful dialogue saying, "At the end of the day, we're one family." As the crowd quieted, Tahreem Ali, Rachel Yousman, Jacob Judd, Joe Duva and Leandro Pegeas introduced themselves and started their slideshow.

After sharing background information about Conard's use of the Chieftain, the group began reasoning against the mascot- first saying that since its creation in 1957, more than 2000 schools nationwide have gotten rid of their Native American mascots. Joe labeled the use of the Chieftain name and imagery as cultural appropriation, which is, "taking good things from cultures and making them our own without asking or knowing these things true meanings." He compared the use of the deeply spiritual Native American headdress on the Chieftain face and the feathered Conard "C" to walking around school wearing a yarmulke even though he isn't Jewish. Tahreem argued that even wearing moccasins is a negative form of cultural appropriation.

Joe also shared that Natives who wear headdresses, as depicted in one of Conard Athletics' most commonly used images, would not be found in Connecticut, as headdress-wearing Natives are in fact Plains Indians, found in the Midwest of the United States. Rachel said that Native Americans across America are an

oppressed group, and putting them on the same level as animal mascots silences their struggle. She added that Conard's use of this name creates a generalization of all Native People nationally, and trivializes the honor of the title, saying, "No one at Conard has earned the title of a Tribal Chieftain."

In the discussion part of the presentation, students in the crowd offered questions and personal testimonials. Students Katie Berry ('15) and John Cannon ('14) raised their hands to share their personal ties with the Chieftain name, and that they feel they honor it and use the name proudly. When asked if they feel that the same debate applies to the Native American tribal street names and King Philip Middle School, the group's response was that naming streets and institutions is respectful, but using it as a mascot is more of a festivity, making it's use offensive. Tribe leader Brendan Dakin ('15) raised his hand and challenged the group's statistics on Native people being opposed to the use of Native imagery as mascots- citing polls from Sports Illustrated and Annenberg that claimed over 80% of self-identified Native Americans that have no problem with the imagery.

This discussion showed progress for the students of the Chieftain mascot debate, and offered the chance for different opinions to be heard within a mediated discussion. Human Rights Day was an opportunity for students to witness a public forum on a passionate topic, and it hopefully inspired more students to voice their own opinions at the Board of Education's upcoming public forum in February.



HUMAN RIGHTS DAY PRESENTERS (FROM LEFT); TAHREEM ALI, JACOB JUDD, JOE DUVA, RACHEL YOUSMAN, LEANDRO PEGEAS
PHOTO: RONNI NEWTON

MR. CONDON'S LETTER TO THE BOARD OF ED

Dear Board Members,

With the growing controversy regarding the use of the Chieftain/Warrior names and respective logos, I wanted to share my perspective on the issue. I have lived in West Hartford for over 50 years, graduating from Conard High School in 1977. I have had the privilege of coaching and teaching at Conard for 27 and 21 years respectively. Additionally, our two children also graduated from Conard. As you can see, my entire life has been intertwined with Conard High School. These cumulative experiences certainly provide me with a unique perspective on the issue at hand.

Throughout my entire association with Conard, the use of the Chieftain name and logo has been one of pride and reverence. One of the things that makes Conard special is the tradition that the school embodies. It is not a coincidence that so many of Conard's staff are either alumni or have their own children that attend Conard, or as in my case, both. People choose to return to West Hartford just to have their children share in the traditions and excellence that make Conard such a special school.

Conard High School's reputation is synonymous with the Chieftains. As the varsity lacrosse coach, this tradition takes on even greater significance. Lacrosse is the true "American game". Long before James Naismith invented basketball and Abner Doubleday supposedly invented baseball, the Native Americans played lacrosse.

For Native Americans, lacrosse is integral part of their culture. At Conard, we make sure that our lacrosse athletes are well aware of the Native American heritage and spiritual significance lacrosse played in their lives. This makes us very sensitive to how we represent our sport and the culture it has evolved from.

In our town and region we are surrounded by Native American references; streets, schools, golf courses, all bear the names of specific individuals, groups, or objects associated with Native American history. The mere existence of these names shows the significance and importance that our predecessors in West Hartford held for the Native Americans. You don't name a school for someone out of disrespect. What more tangible evidence of our respect for the past could possibly exist?

In my opinion the real question is not whether or not we should keep the name/logo, but rather, what is the most appropriate way to reflect the esteem we should have for this part of American history. West Hartford prides itself on our town's diversity, it makes us who we are. We are an educated, diverse, sensitive and caring community. We have a history of facing our issues head on, not simply taking the path of least resistance.

Ultimately, this issue comes down to how we best balance a town's tradition and history in the most respectful and appropriate manner possible. As educators, what a wonderful opportunity to involve our students and community in the process. This should not be one side versus another but a collective decision for everyone involved. Who knows better than us who we are and how we want to be represented? I have confidence that as schools and as a community we will arrive at the best decision for West Hartford.

Respectfully,

Bill Condon

Chemistry Teacher/Varsity Lacrosse Coach, Conard High School.



PHOTO: ANDREW STABNICK, LOWTIDE PHOTOGRAPHY

"THE USE OF THE CHIEFTAIN NAME AND LOGO HAS BEEN ONE OF PRIDE AND REVERENCE"

CONARD TEACHERS TAKE A STANCE

By: *Editors-In-Chief, Molly Bugos & Emma Kutscher*

On October 8th, 2014, the Conard and Hall communities received an email from the school principals regarding incidents that occurred at the school's rival soccer game. After citing the highly scrutinized events at the game, the note made it clear that, "hate and discrimination have no place in Conard and Hall high schools, and will not be tolerated."

This seemingly isolated incident had a snowball effect, as it called into question issues of race and religion in West Hartford's high schools. Brought to light at Conard was the topic of whether or not the Native American imagery on The Tribe's rallying t-shirts was appropriate, and broadened to a town wide discussion of our public high school's logo and mascot, the Chieftain.

At the beginning of the year, Mr. Tim Decker, The Tribe's faculty advisor, placed an order for nearly 50 Tribe shirts on behalf of Conard teachers, in order to unite faculty and students. Mr. Decker then received complaints from other staff members that the Native American imagery on the shirts was inappropriate. In response, he took the time to learn more about the issue and reached out to local Native American, Andrew Lee, a vice president at Aetna and an individual who is closely involved with Native and tribal affairs on a national level.



Teacher's Tribe Shirts
in Mr. Decker's Room

Mr. Decker then discussed with his classes what he had learned from Mr. Lee regarding a "spectrum of imagery", and how there is a line drawn between what is respectful and what is not. On one side of the spectrum lies the terms "colonials" or "patriots" and on the other side lies derogatory terms such as "red-

skins." The line, as Mr. Lee sees it, is drawn at the term "Indian" because it represents a race of people. Presently at Conard, the name Chieftain is benign because it is an idea or philosophy, but because the Chieftain is associated with the face of a Native, the school is balanced on the fine line of becoming a "generalization and a stereotype."

Mr. Decker sees the Chieftain debate as an issue without a Yes/No solution, but rather being resolved with a compromise. His ideal scenario is for the Conard community to take a non-shaming approach at resolution, and compromising by using just the name "Chieftains," and "keep Native imagery and attire out of it" because the human imagery paired with the name can lead to harmful or offensive stereotypes. He also thinks that "we need education in this school for our students on why we are the Chieftains and how that name [alone] represents honor, leadership and strength."

Dr. Tracey Wilson, a history and human rights teacher at Conard, has taken an active role along with other Conard history teachers, Mr. Chris Islaub and Mr. Sean O'Connor, in educating students and faculty about the Chieftain mascot.

Since she began her career at Conard in 1979 as teacher and girls soccer coach, Dr. Wilson has felt uncomfortable with our mascot. Her main goal is to get rid of the mascot and the Chieftain name, and would rather see an animal represent our school. Dr. Wilson says, "A mascot can really unify. I know some people think we can get rid of the Indian and keep the name Chieftain, but halfway just won't work. [This problem] won't go away."

In the last five years, this year has seen the most movement made in regards to the mascot controversy. Though she has written a letter to the CIAC about barring teams with Native American mascots from interscholastic athletic competition, and making a unified ruling so individual school districts do not have to decide for themselves, no actions were taken in response.

Many Conard athletes feel that they honor the Chieftain name and image, but Dr. Wilson believes that one can say they are

honoring, but if American Indians don't feel honored, they aren't doing so. "As a history teacher, I see [facilitating this debate] as one of my roles. People are looking for an authentic voice of a native person... but I am a human being who cares about human rights... this is what historians do. I can empathize."

"PEOPLE CAN SAY THEY HONOR THE CHIEFTAIN... BUT IF AMERICAN INDIANS DON'T FEEL HONORED, THEY AREN'T DOING SO"

Dr. Wilson thinks that as this issue has progressed, students who support changing the Chieftain name and logo have gotten little support. "A student in my human rights class feels as though he's the only one who supports changing the mascot. In some classes he is a lone voice." Students of hers feel this resistance from their peers and some of their teachers. Because the administration has not taken a stand, she feels that they are making a statement with their silence. "By not taking a stand, you're supporting the status quo."

Though the Board of Education will ultimately make the decision regarding the mascot, the Conard community recognizes that changes have already been made to disassociate with the Chieftain image. Principal Duarte confirmed, "Principals and Assistant Principals in past years have made a conscious effort to move towards the "C" as a logo, rather than the Chieftain head."

He asks the quintessential question of whether or not the mascot is uniting the Conard community or creating division, but Mr. Duarte doesn't believe it's his position to tell students what to think. Rather, it is to guide students and provide opportunities to gain knowledge about many different viewpoints. This way, students can reflect on what they have learned and form their own opinions.

In talking about the mascot debate, Mr. Duarte emphasizes that part of Conard's mission statement is that students are "active learners and productive citizens." Debates like this allow students "to work towards being leaders and global citizens."

The ultimate supporter of the Chieftain is Coach Rob Cersosimo, known by many as "Coach C." As a former physical education teacher and varsity football coach at Conard, Coach C.'s opinion is that being a Chieftain teaches students how to be leaders and role models with characteristics ranging from caring to discipline - qualities that he believes keep young people safe. "For us to change the mascot would be leading us away from what we have established as the history and tradition of our school."

He would like to see a course at Conard centered around the history and tradition of the Connecticut Native Americans our school mascot inherently honors. Coach C. acknowledges his personal attachment to the Chieftain, but would "never try to influence anyone in their thought process or put anyone down" for their beliefs. He has no problem with varying viewpoints, as it's a sign of the democratic process.

The opportunity for Conard



Coach C., Photo: Hartford Courant

to participate in this democratic discussion is unique because of its rarity. The chance to truly change our school's history does not present itself to every class that passes through Conard. The best way for students to take advantage of this circumstance is to advocate for their beliefs by acting on them. The most ideal decision the Board of Education could make is one based upon the voices of the students and be manifested in compromise.

CHIEFTAIN FEATURES

How To Honor The Native American

Two Sides, One Goal

Editorial By: Brian Wilson

As one of the Co-Presidents of Student Council this year I have been dealing with the mascot debate. I have attended many meetings, talked with many people on the topic, and the Student Council surveyed the school to gather information from both staff and students. I think it's important for the student body to hear what has been going on.

The mascot topic, as I quickly learned, is extremely controversial and a lot larger than just Conard High School. Many West Hartford residents feel very passionate about this issue as well. It first came to my attention at the beginning of the school year when Tribe shirts were being distributed and there were some people who found the logo to be offensive. I began researching this topic and the controversy of the Washington Redskins and agree this name and some other Native American names and mascots are offensive. However, does this mean that ALL Native American references are offensive? Is the Chieftain name offensive, is our mascot image offensive? And who is offended? Is it possible to use the Native American name in an honorable way? These are just some of the questions we all began asking ourselves.

As a Student Council, we decided to ask the school what their opinion was through a survey to get a general feeling as to what the student body thought. The survey was administered in history classes. We asked teachers to refrain from discussion with students so it would be done completely through the student's true points of view. An example of the survey can be found on Page 8.

As a result of the survey, we found that the overwhelming majority of students (80%) support the use of the Chieftain as do most of the teachers (60%). However, it is apparent that an educational program is needed for students, teachers, administrators, alumni and the community before we can make an informed decision about this. There are 40% of the student body that do not even know what the current logo image is. Even though none of us intend to offend Native Americans, we do have a responsibility to make sure that the words and the images that we originally chose back in 1957 do not inadvertently

offend today. We can never know how it felt or feels to be in the Native American's "shoes" until we hear from their perspective. This education and dialogue is an opportunity for all of us to grow in compassion and understanding, and to truly embrace the unique diversity our school is so proud of. Honoring Native Americans is all we want to do; and we need an unbiased education from the voice that matters the most, the Native Americans.

Recently, I had the privilege to talk to two Native Americans from the Mohegan Tribe. Chairmen Kevin "Red Eagle" Brown, and Chief Lynn Malerba, first female Chief in the tribe's modern history; both are very powerful in their Tribe and throughout Connecticut. In early November, I informed them about the debate going on in West Hartford regarding this sensitive topic and they contacted me about a month later after careful deliberation among their Mohegan Tribal Council. They contacted me and I invited Mr. Duarte to join me in a conference call to hear the final opinion. Their response was both interesting and educational.

We learned that Kevin Brown is in fact a part of a committee to change the name of the Washington Redskins, due to its obvious offensive nature. However, to summarize our long talk, they believed the Chieftain and the Warrior names are respectful and honorable to the Native American culture, as long as those using them do so respectfully. They want to be known as a "present culture" and not a thing of the past. These names, when used appropriately, keep their culture present and positive in our schools, unlike names such as the Redskins or Redmen. To embrace the appropriate

**"THESE NAMES,
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use of the names and allowing students to learn a little more about the Native Americans in Connecticut, they offered to send their cul-

tural department up to Conard for some educational workshops. Not only did they offer that but they invited the Conard Lacrosse team along with myself to watch the Inaugural New England Black Wolves lacrosse game at the Mohegan Sun Arena on January 2nd. Before the game there



Kevin Brown (L) and Brian Wilson (R) at Mohegan Sun Arena

was a tribute to Native American's history in the sport of lacrosse. I feel the conversation with them was very promising on the future of the Conard Chieftains. They believe there is an image of a Chieftain that is respectful and has offered to help us in creating a logo that would be appropriate.

Whatever happens throughout the upcoming months, it will be the Board of Education that will have the final say. If you have not heard there are groups on Facebook you may join to voice your opinions, "Change the Chieftain" and "Keep the Chieftain." If you do not have a Facebook you may write an email to the Board of Education or attend a meeting (they occur every 2 weeks) and read a prepared statement. I urge everyone to do a little research for themselves and make an informed decision on your own. The student's voice is extremely important on this topic and we should be heard, no matter which side you stand for on the debate.

I want everyone to make sure they are respectful and polite to the people on the other side of the issue they may stand on. Throughout this process, I have been called racist and culturally insensitive on this topic. In my decision to support keeping the Chieftain name I am simply standing up for something I believe in, which is what the other side is doing too. I

respect everyone who stands up for what they believe in but no one has the right to accuse someone of being racist or uneducated just because they might disagree with one side. I have done my research, reached out to Native Americans, and heard both sides of the debate. All in all, everyone wants what is best for our school and our community. Ironically, both groups are doing their best to try to honor the Native Americans, we just have different views on the topic.

"Diversity is our Strength" is Conard's motto and I want Conard to be the most respectful place it can be. I think it is a great way to both honor the Native culture and to maintain the tradition of the name that has grown to associate with strength, leadership and courage. I feel that in using the name Chieftain in an intentionally respectful and conscious way, Conard pays respect to the Native American.

According to the United States Census of 2013, by race, the highest national poverty rates were for the Native Americans. 27% of their population is impoverished, a statistic higher than any other race in America. If our school wants to try to help them, we should start fundraising and giving back to those who once inhabited our land since we owe them so much. Changing the name will certainly not help their level of poverty. I hope our school/community can instill some form of tribute at Conard by immersing the students in the Native culture and, as a result, continue to be a place of welcome for people of all races.

My views do not necessarily reflect the views of the Student Council. However, it is my job to represent the majority of the student body. This does not mean I block out the views of the minority. There will be upcoming events at our school where both sides may present their sides and everyone's voice will be heard. Also I encourage anyone who wants to share their view to come to a community forum about this topic, February 12th from 7-9 pm in the Town Hall Auditorium. Soon after this forum is when the decision will be made. I look forward to our student body learning from Native American people about the Chieftain and hopefully observing how a democratic debate is resolved.

CHIEFTAIN FEATURES

THE TRUE MEANING OF A MASCOT

Editorial By: Jeff Remy

The respectability of using Native American names and images in sports has been controversial in the United States for more than fifty years. Some people believe that using the Native American names and images should be allowed as a team's name or mascot, because it is a way of honoring them, keeping them unforgettable, and dedicating respect to them.

Until recently, the Conard High School mascot was an irrelevant topic of discussion, but recently a student from Hall High School wrote an essay about how Conard

should not use a Native American as a mascot. The student described it in a way that seemed racist and dishonorable to Natives. Now, this once tiny problem has advanced into a big issue about school mascots.

The solution to this complication is elementary. Maya Angelou once said, "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude". What this means in terms of the mascot is that if there are people who feel offended by it, then the school should think about changing it to something more appropriate or proper. But if nothing

changes about the mascot, then it is up to these people to get used to it. The thing is, it is harder for someone to grow tolerant of something offensive than it is to file a complaint or seek change. In the end, everyone has different views. For instance, what might be seen as honoring and respecting for some schools might be seen as a disgrace for others. These schools should

change their mascots, because it is better when everyone can agree on one mascot, rather than living in dispute.

"IF YOU DON'T LIKE SOMETHING, CHANGE IT. IF YOU CAN'T CHANGE IT, CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE"
-MAYA ANGELOU

MASCOT DISCUSSION

Interview by: Leah Kelly

In my dealings with the mascot debate, I was interested to hear the opinions of different people in the Conard community. I decided to interview a couple of students and a teacher to find out their stances on the issue and allow them to share their views with the school. Here is a compilation of their individual responses, featuring two Conard seniors, Rachel Yousman and Tahreem Ali, and Ms. Connery, one of Conard's physics teachers.

What is your opinion of the Chieftain mascot?

Rachel: It is a caricature, featuring exaggerated and stereotypical facial features such as prominent, sharp bone structure, a large nose, and weathered skin.

Tahreem: We are taking cultural expressions or artifacts from someone else's culture without permission. Having our school mascot be the Chieftain is dehumanizing and degrading.

Ms. Connery: The Chieftain image on our shirts - with his big nose, weathered skin, and headdress- is stereotypical and as such, offensive and inappropriate.

Say something about the ongoing debate over the mascot change.

Rachel: It's such a heated debate because people are proud of the school and don't want to change an aspect of something they are proud of. I think [the mascot] divides us against one another. If we had a mascot that we could all rally behind, that would bring us together as a community. But seeing as it is offensive to some, it definitely has a dividing effect.

Tahreem: [This issue] has turned into a debate because the students at Conard do not wear the symbol to be racist, they wear it to be proud and to represent our school. They have school spirit and they do not want to change that.

Ms. Connery: I think debate is good and, IF we thoughtfully engage with an open mind, we will all be stronger because of it.

How do you feel about the Tribe?

Rachel: I love the idea of a group of students that regularly go to games to support their peers, but I think the name of the Tribe should be changed.

Ms. Connery: Although I do not believe it was/is anybody's intent to be culturally insensitive and I am not certain if it is "dangerous," I think members of the Tribe need to educate themselves and thoughtfully consider both sides of the issue.

THE NEW FACE OF CONARD

By: Mugdha Gurram

Now that there's discussion about keeping or changing the chieftain mascot at Conard, there's a question to be answered. What kind of mascot would represent Conard if the Chieftain were to be removed? Some of Conard's teachers and coaches weighed in on the matter.

Steve Bassi, Coach of Junior Varsity boys' soccer, said that he'd like to see a logo similar to one from the boys' soccer jersey, a red "C" without any chieftain feathers, although he'd support whatever mascot the student body chose.

Dr. Tracey Wilson, history teacher at Conard, said "I think a mascot is something that students should be able to rally around without any sort of negative feelings." She would like to see a contest to determine the next mascot, and said she'd support any mascot that students want to see. She did, however, say that she'd prefer it to be an object that students can dress up as, like an animal.

Others brought up the idea of an animal mascot, too. After discussion with her students, Holly Coleman, coach of freshmen girls' field hockey, said she'd like to see a cardinal as the next Conard mascot to keep the red theme and have an alliteration. Some are still hesitant to see a new mascot. Coach Joshua Greenberg said he didn't know what else he'd want to see other than the Chieftain; he'd rather the mascot stay the same.

The changing of the Conard mascot depends on how West Hartford's Board of Education votes in February. Perhaps they'll take into consideration these opinions and most importantly, the student body's opinions.



Conard's School Store apparel does not feature any clothing with the Chieftain image; Photo: WHPS

CHIEFTAIN FEATURES

RELIGION AND MASCOTS

Editorial by: Joe Duva

Though I am not a Native myself, I will use my voice to advocate and be an ally to Natives who need my help in order to project their voice.

Many claim the use of the Chieftain and the headdress is a way of honoring Natives and that it respects their culture. How can we honor a culture that has said over and over that they don't want to be honored that way? The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is the largest and oldest national organization consisting of all 565 tribes in the country. The NCAI, founded in 1944, took a stance on changing Native mascots in the early 1970s. They said, "Specifically, rather than honoring Native peoples, these caricatures and stereotypes are harmful, perpetuate negative stereotypes

of America's first peoples, and contribute to a disregard for the personhood of Native peoples". The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) established an extensive policy to remove Native mascots in 2005. That same year, the American Psychiatric Association called for the "immediate retirement" of all American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities. The use of Native imagery is used with little consent from indigenous people. This leads to an unwelcome learning environment for Native students in schools with mascots that affirms negative images and stereotypes.

The CDC recorded the number of suicides of each race and the statistics showed that the suicide rate of Natives was the highest in

the country with 27.61 suicides per 100,000 males and 7.87 per 100,000 females.

For those who believe we are honoring them, ask yourself how and why are we honoring Natives? Natives can honor their own culture and do not need others doing it for them. The Chieftain and the headdress further disrespect Natives as they have no relation to Northeast Indians. They're indigenous to Plains Natives, which reiterates our misunderstanding and morphing of Native American culture.

Using a Chieftain or any other Native American related mascot in America is the same as a German sports team using a Rabbi as a mascot, because in case you didn't know, America is the home of countless genocides of American Indi-

ans. According to Ward Churchill, a professor of ethnic studies at the University of Colorado, the reduction of the North American Indian population from an estimated 12 million in 1500 to barely 237,000 in 1900 represents a "vast genocide . . . , the most sustained on record." David E. Stannard, a historian at the University of Hawaii states Native Americans have undergone the "worst human holocaust the world has ever witnessed." These wounds from genocide are still healing and historical grief is prevalent within the Native American community. When we characterize Natives as Mascots we're reopening the wounds of the dehumanization and caricatures of Native people that were inflicted upon them for hundreds of years.

CONARD STUDENTS SPEAK

By: Jeff Remy, David Bekele, Molly Bugos

Tessa, Grade 12: "As an athlete at Conard, it's such a privilege to be associated with the Chieftain. It represents pride, leadership, and strength; such ideals I strive to possess on and off the field. To be a Chieftain is to be something so much bigger than just a student at Conard, it's to be a part of a respected legacy that the Chieftain name upholds. I hope the deep rooted tradition of being a Chieftain is carried on for decades to come."

Paris, Grade 10: "I feel like [the logo is] derogatory and racist, it should be removed since only sports teams use it and, because of that, [changing the logo] should not matter."

Tatianna, Grade 10: "I believe that we should keep the mascot the way it is. It links together all the past Chieftains and the Chieftains of the future. Getting rid of the name gets rid of something [worth] so much more than just a name, it rips apart the community."

Alanna, Grade 10: "I think the Chieftain is our identity and Native Americans have more pressing issues. I cannot speak for the community and I do not know if Native Americans find the logo offensive. However, if it offends people, I would understand changing the mascot."

Bridget, Grade 11: "I think it's unnecessary to change the mascot because [nobody] had a problem with it until it was brought up by teachers... Almost everyone at this school is honored to be a Chieftain and we would never speak of it in a derogatory way, so I think it should stay."

Eilish, Grade 12: "I want to keep [the mascot and logo] because it properly reflects the image of our school. In both academics and extracurriculars we display perseverance, determination, and even bravery which allows us to try new things. That's how the Chieftain represents Conard students, and how the Conard students respect the Chieftain."

Andrew, Grade 11: "We should still keep the logo, there are other things like the Fighting Irish, or the Vikings, that are [seen as] racist... but go unchecked"

Brandon, Grade 10: "It is an homage to the strength and pride of Native Americans. Conard sports teams refer to themselves as Chieftains as an analogy, comparing their strength and perseverance to that of the Native Americans."

Hanna, Grade 10: "We should change the Chieftain logo, but not the name. The indian headdress with red seems very offensive to

me, and I feel like it should change but still keep the name Chieftain name."

Xavier, Grade 10 "I don't feel the Chieftain logo is racist. Just because it's stylised in a certain way doesn't necessarily mean that it's racist. Because they have done tons of stuff like that like with Irish teams... Stereotyping isn't racist, its more of a way to identify. It's only racist when you're making fun of it in a harmful way or pointing it out as a flaw."

Bella, Grade 12: "In my opinion, the Chieftain mascot and logo are a huge part of Conard and school spirit. For athletes, it's important to have a meaningful and unique mascot to represent in competition. As a student body, we should act in a way that respects and upholds the spirit of the Chieftain."

Anna, Grade 11: "I personally think that the Chieftain logo is disrespectful considering where the country is today on racism. I think that the logo should be changed or a compromise should be made on the logo. However, I do think that the Chieftain name is acceptable given it's most simple definition."

Sophie, Grade 11: "I think that the name "Chieftain" itself is not disrespectful and the fact that we don't have someone dressing up

as a Native American for our mascot, and that sports teams don't use derogatory cheers shows how we aren't disrespecting Native American traditions. I can see how the Chieftain face logo could be seen in a mocking way and I would be okay with changing it."

Prescott, Grade 12: "I personally think that we should keep the Chieftain mascot and logo because it shows not only pride and power, but shows that we are a community that is powerful and together as a whole."

Julia, Grade 12: "I think we should keep the Chieftain because the students view it as a symbol of power, and leadership that influences the manner in which we live our lives here. It is viewed as a symbol of respect and an idol to the entire student body."

Chloe, Grade 9: "I like the Chieftain name but it is my opinion that it can be somewhat offensive. A good compromise would be the big C with the feathers."

John, Grade 12: "A Chieftain is a leader, someone who sets an example for which others can follow. Having the Chieftain as our mascot is symbolic of who we are and what we stand for at Conard-being active learners and productive citizens."

CHIEFTAIN FEATURES



1. Circle your grade: 9 10 11 12
2. Circle the image that is Conard's official logo.



3. From your perspective, does the Chieftain head logo honor Native People?

Honors	Does not Honor	I Don't Know
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4. Put yourself in the perspective of a Native Person. From this perspective, does the Chieftain head logo honor Native People?

Honors	Does not honor	I Don't Know
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5. Do you support using the Chieftain as Conard's mascot?

Yes	No
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CHIEFTAIN MASCOT SURVEY RESULTS

Results: Brian Wilson

Editor's Note: This survey was not distributed to every student. About 900 students took this poll through their history class. As Brian Wilson states in his editorial, teachers were asked not to discuss the survey or the topic beforehand, to ensure that the survey results would accurately represent student opinions. This survey is not intended to represent the opinion of the entire student body, or to take the place of a formal vote.

60% of the participants know that Conard's official logo is currently the "C without feathers"

56.87% feel the logo honors the Chieftain;
 19% feel it does not;
 24.13% did not know how they feel about it.
 80% want to keep the Chieftain mascot;
 20% do not

Teachers were polled with the following question:

Do you support keeping the Conard Chieftain as the School Mascot?

42% want the mascot to stay the same;
 32% want the mascot to change;
 18% said they support the Chieftain name but not the Native American head logo;
 8% are undecided.

**INTERESTED IN
 SENDING A LETTER TO
 THE EDITOR?
 PLEASE LEAVE ALL
 RESPONSES IN
 THE POWWOW OFFICE,
 RM. 252B**

CONARD STUDENTS SPEAK CONTINUED FROM PG. 7

Emma, Grade 11: "I think that the Chieftain logo is an essential part of the identity of the Conard student body, it's a symbol we rally around and associate with the family-like atmosphere of Conard. However, unless we can get a Native American tribe to endorse it, we should find a different way to represent our school."

Emma, Grade 10: "The Chieftain mascot should not be changed because our school is not using the mascot in an offensive or derogatory manner... the Chieftain mascot represents leadership and strength, two traits that exemplify Conard in a positive way."

Annie, Grade 9: "I would love to be able to keep both the mascot and the name, but I do un-

derstand why it is a problem. I definitely want to keep the name even if we can't keep the mascot because it is a huge part of Conard's identity."

Joe, Grade 11: "Would you feel comfortable being dropped in the middle of a reservation in South Dakota wearing a shirt with the Conard Chieftain head on it? It's disrespectful, and it should be changed."

Kyle, Grade 12: "I believe we should keep the Chieftain. It gives our students something to stand behind. My parents and all of their siblings went to this school, and the Chieftain has been here for a long time. It means something to people, it's more than just a mascot... it shows where they came from."

THANK YOU!

WE'D LIKE TO EXTEND A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES, PICTURES, TIME AND RESOURCES TO THIS EDITION OF THE PAPER.

FOR THIS ISSUE SPECIFICALLY, THANK YOU TO THE FACULTY MEMBERS FOR MAKING TIME TO SIT DOWN WITH US FOR INTERVIEWS.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU AGAIN ON UPCOMING ISSUES, AND WE WELCOME ANYONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE POWWOW!

POWWOW TOTEM

Editors-in-Chief: Molly Bugos, Emma Kutscher

Public Opinion Correspondents: Jeff Remy, David Bekele

The goal of this Newspaper is to keep the students of Conard High School informed and provide a forum for their opinions and interests.

This organization welcomes any student who shares the PowWow's dedication to promoting the flow of information and knowledge. We

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Molly Bugos or Emma Kutscher if you have an issue with anything printed, or wish to join the Powwow Staff.