

“We are not cartoons”: Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe backs native mascot ban in New York

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AKWESASNE ([WWTI](#)) — The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe is joining the fight to end native mascots in schools.

The local Tribe, located in Northern New York, recently backed legislation proposing a ban on native mascots, logos and names from public school use. This was introduced to the [State Senate by Senator Alessandra Biaggi in January of 2021](#).

[Lyme Central School District to change ‘Indians’ mascot](#)

As explained by Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Chief Ron LaFrance, mascots such as “Warriors,” “Indians” and “Chiefs” have been used by schools nationwide for decades. But, these are often depicted in a “cartoonish” manner, which LaFrance said is more a sign of mockery than they are of respect.

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“We are not cartoons. We are living, breathing people,” the Chief said. “Just the thought of being a mascot is very degrading because we do have a very living culture. Our culture has been alive for thousands of years.”

Although the proposed ban in New York is still being debated, LaFrance emphasized that this ban is not a big ask.

“All it is is a name change. It’s taking away something that has a negative connotation to a whole subsection of people,” LaFrance expressed. “We are not extinct, we are living, breathing people.”

He further referenced the Massena Central School District, which is one District that has already phased out its native mascot known as the “Red Raider.”

The idea behind the Red Raiders mascot was centered around an Army unit that was based in Massena. However, the District’s mascot originally depicted a Native American tribal member but was then phased out the mascot in the early 2000s.

According to the [National Congress of American Indians](#), there are still 55 school districts across New York State that continue to use this mascot. On this list is the [Lyme Central School District “Indians”](#) in Jefferson County which is currently in the discussion phase of changing its mascot.

[Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe resumes community partnership fund](#)

LaFrance continued and said it’s time to move forward and show respect to the contributions Native American cultures have throughout history.

“We suffered a lot in the history of the United States. We are a big part of that history,” he shared. “There are a lot of people that are still here. We are still here and will always be here. In this day and age with everything being politically correct, this is the correct thing to do.”

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