

OPINION: “Save the symbol of our relationship with indigenous people as a way to honor our mutual past”

“Dear Dartmouth citizens:

My name is Bob Sisson, I grew up on Smith Neck Road and attended and graduated from the Dartmouth School system in 1971. I was a member of the football and track teams, though not very good.

I feel I have a unique perspective on the current issue of the use of an indigenous person as a symbol of Dartmouth Pride. I am the 13th generation of one of the founders of Dartmouth, Richard Sisson who had a home at the Head of Westport River in 1635. My father Dick was a star athlete for Dartmouth High and is in our Hall of Fame. He was also a coach and phys ed teacher in Dartmouth.

I caught a break and was fortunate to obtain a Ph.D. in Psychology. Earlier in my career, I spent time on several Native American reservations including Pine Ridge in South Dakota in the 80s where the American Indian Movement was organized. I also have been a consultant to local school districts in the special education departments including Dartmouth.

As I grew up in Dartmouth in the 50s and 60s, as I aged, I became aware that Dartmouth was not always a shining beacon of equality for all its citizens; Jews, Blacks, and Portuguese.

On the other hand, I can honestly say I have never heard any disparaging remarks about Native Americans, Blacks, or Jews while in school or as an adult in Dartmouth. Sports and other

extra curriculum activities are a great way to make friends different from yourself. The citizens of Dartmouth I feel are great people free of prejudices and continue to make strides in equality for all.

Native American history was taught briefly in our schools. Our early settlers, particularly Quakers, were very involved with their native neighbors. Many Appongansettes became Christians and there was a Native church on Horseneck Road. More could be taught in the schools.

But this is not the first time outsiders have butted into Dartmouth's long-time residents' relationship with original inhabitants. During the King Phillip War, Puritans from Boston and Plimouth imprisoned peaceful Appongansettes and sold them into slavery.

Don't let history repeat itself. Please save the symbol of our relationship with indigenous people as a way to honor our mutual past. I know my dad would be for it as I grew up with a large similar symbol on my bedroom door." -Bob Sisson, PhD.