

# **Wampanoag Tribe, whose members are Dartmouth alums and authored the logo, says KEEP Name/Logo; demands inclusion**

## **"School Committee**

*c/o Mrs Shannon Jenkins, Chairwoman*

*School Administration Building-Care of Superintendent's Office*

8 Bush Street

Dartmouth, MA 02748

Re: Lack of Consultation and Coordination Regarding the Name and Imagery of "Dartmouth Indians"

To All It May Concern,

This letter is intended as a formal notice from the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head Aquinnah regarding our position relative to the process for determining the continued use of the name and imagery of the Dartmouth "Indians".

The Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head Aquinnah is the first Federally Recognized Tribe in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with a government-to-government relationship with the United States since 1987.

Additionally, we are one of the only three historic and formally State Recognized Tribes in the Commonwealth, as identified in (former) Governor Michael Dukakis' 1976 Executive Order 126.

It has come to our attention that the School Committee is planning to take a position and a potential vote on the Dartmouth "Indians" logo issue, and make a recommendation to

the Town Select Board as early as this week. Neither the School Committee nor any sub-committee or task-force, constituted for the discussion or potential actions regarding the name and imagery of the "Dartmouth Indians" logo, has formally engaged our Tribal Government in any further communications or consultation regarding this important issue.

The Dartmouth School Board had been advised through previous discussions that our Tribal Government has stated that we have a significant interest in this issue, and that we must be engaged in any discussion regarding the name and imagery of the town's "Dartmouth Indians" references. Additionally, the Tribe has stated that before any decision is made regarding this issue, that there is an obligation of the Town and the School Board to engage in a meaningful discussion and consultation with our Tribal Government over this issue, and how to proceed.

Our Tribe, as well as most other Tribes and individual Native Peoples, have stated on numerous occasions that we are not "mascots" and we do not appreciate or condone the offensive or stereotypical imagery, terminologies, actions and or sounds that have contributed to the mockery, disrespect or diminishment of our Tribal beliefs, traditions and or culture. However, as also previously stated, we do not wish to be erased from today's contemporary life, society or social existence; or to be relegated into history, as if we have vanished, or do not still exist as a flourishing Tribal community, culture, and as a sovereign Tribal Nation.

As the Indigenous Peoples, the original inhabitants of these lands, our continuous and current presence in our homelands should be acknowledged and respected. We believe that the initial reference to the "Dartmouth Indians" was meant to be emblematic of our athletic abilities and excellence, an iconic level of athletic dominance and achievement; desired, and to which the teams aspired to demonstrate. In our opinion, that has not and should not change.

We have expressed a willingness to work with the Town and the Commonwealth to ensure that we, as the Indigenous Wampanoag People, are represented in a respectful and dignified manner, to promote and inspire the excellence the athletic teams wish to achieve, to elevate the importance and awareness of Wampanoag history and our contemporary presence and, most importantly, to ensure that any American Indian student attending school within the Dartmouth school system or as a visiting or host athletic team, is not hurt or offended by any negative imagery or actions taken by the town, school board, faculty or students; but instead, are inspired by what being a part of a Dartmouth Indians athletic team could mean. We believe this aspect of public education is articulated in the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's Top Five Priorities. (Relevant excerpt reads in part):

**Section V: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 's 5 Priorities** *"Support Social-Emotional Learning, Health, and Safety: Research and experience demonstrate that preparing all students for success (in school, the workplace, civic life, and more) includes attending to their social-emotional and health development.*

Furthermore, academic and social-emotional competencies are mutually reinforcing. Key levers in this work include safe and supportive school climate and culture, and effective family engagement. ESE is committed to building out supports and policies in partnership with practitioners in the field and other state agencies to advance this work in the Commonwealth, both in and out of school. It is our goal to promote systems and strategies that foster safe, positive, healthy, culturally competent, and inclusive learning environments that address students' varied needs and improve educational outcomes for all."

By working with our Tribe, we believe this is the appropriate mechanism to develop a way of coalescing around how to positively manifest that social-emotional health and

inspiration, for our Indian and non-Indian students.

Much like the historic Seminole Tribe of Florida and Florida State University agreement of 2005. In this agreement they built their collaborative relationship on respect for the Seminole Tribal Government and its People. The University's understanding and acknowledgment of the Tribe's important role as the indigenous People reference in the University's iconic identity, and, in the Tribe's right in determining what that respectful representation would be is what worked. We wish to build the same understanding here and would expect our request to be honored as well.

As stated in the previously mentioned 1976 Executive Order, this would be an expectation for the State, and the Town' as one of its subordinate governmental instrumentalities to engage with us. Executive Order 126 reads in relevant part as:

**Section I...** *"all State agencies are directed to deal directly with the listed Tribal Councils regarding any matters affecting their respective Tribes"...*

Obviously, the matter of the name and imagery of the Dartmouth "Indians", which contains the representative imagery and symbol of our Indigenous Wampanoag Peoples, our Tribe's pre-colonial presence within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Town of Dartmouth, most certainly directly affects our Tribe.

Again, as a subordinate government instrumentality of the Commonwealth, a Town in which many of our Tribal Members still live, or grew up and attended the school system, including myself and my Family, this issue has great significance to our Tribal Members and our Tribal Government.

In closing, I'm hopeful that this notice formally conveys the clear message that before any board, committee, sub-committee, task-force or any other body, which is convened to take up the issue of the Town's use of the "Dartmouth Indians" name and

logo is formally discussed that the Tribe, through our Tribal Government, is contacted to be a part of and a full participant in any discussions, deliberations and votes on this issue.

Should you have any questions, or wish to further this discussion, please feel free to contact our Tribal Council through me at: [chairwoman@wampanoagtribe-nsn.gov](mailto:chairwoman@wampanoagtribe-nsn.gov) or written correspondence can also be sent to the Tribal Council in care of myself at the mailing address listed above. We look forward to your response.

In Balance, Harmony and Peace,  
Chairwoman Cheryl Andrews-Maltais  
Cc: Tribal Council  
Senator Julian Cyr  
Representative Dylan Fernandes  
Senator Mark Montigny  
Representative Chris Markey  
Commissioner Jeffrey Riley"