

Date: April 3, 2013
To: House Education Committee
From: Reyn Leno, Chairman, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Tribal Council
Subject: Support House Bill 3397

Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Sprenger, Vice Chair Reardon and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Reyn Leno and I am the Tribal Council Chairman for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. I am here today in support HB 3397.

As a sovereign nation, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has worked diligently to build positive government-to-government relationships across all levels of government. We have done so on federal, state and local levels, including with our local school districts.

High School mascots are supposed to be inspirational. High schools do not adopt derogatory figures or slogans; they adopt admirable and inspirational figures. The banned names – Indians, Braves, Warriors, and Chiefs – are inspirational Native images and we do not view their use as derogatory.

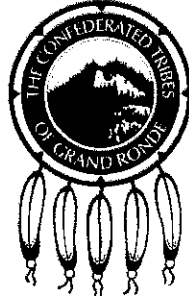
The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, along with other Oregon Tribes, prefer a solution that would allow schools to keep their Native mascots if they collaborate with a representative Tribe on positive portrayals or integrated cultural studies to combat stereotypes.

That being said, we are disturbed by the state Board of Education's apparent disregard for sovereignty and their passivity when it comes to ending racism against Oregon's Native people and mandating that schools in Oregon teach our history.

The Grand Ronde Tribe has a long-standing request in to the state Department of Education to fund an Indian Education Specialist, as well as mandate that all Oregon schools teach Oregon Tribal history. We are encouraged this legislative session that this might finally get done.

There are nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon. The history of our peoples who have lived in Oregon since time immemorial covers the breadth of the state, and is either ignored or briefly mentioned in our schools. Most Oregon students learn more about the Sioux and Apaches than they do about the Umpqua, Molalla, Rogue River, Kalapuya or Chasta.

Why are our children going to school and teaching their teachers about our history?



Rather than handing down an unfunded mandate on mascots, the state Board of Education should work towards the reduction or elimination of racism toward Oregon's Native peoples and include Oregon's tribes in its history books – fund an Indian Education Specialist and mandate that schools teach the history of the peoples who have lived on this land since long before explorers, fur traders and settlers started arriving in the early 1800s.

The history of Oregon did not start with the arrival of Lewis & Clark. It was occurring for thousands of years before they set foot on our land, and many of those Indians, Braves, Warriors, and Chiefs are worthy of being honored as high school mascots.

Let's work on something that truly makes a difference for the benefit of Tribes and all Oregonians. Let's take a long and serious look at teaching all of Oregon's students about the history and culture of Oregon's nine unique sovereign governments.

If more Oregonians were educated about Tribal history, society and culture, it would do much more to solve the problems attributed to Indian mascots than simply outlawing the practice.

Thank you for your time and I encourage your support of House Bill 3397.