

Kalamazoo

Van Buren County school board votes 6-1 to 'retire' Hartford Indian mascot

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Hartford Public Schools Offices in Hartford, Michigan on Friday, May 8, 2020. (Kendall Warner | MLive.com) Kendall Warner | MLive.com

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VAN BUREN COUNTY, MI — A school board in Van Buren County voted this week to stop using the name “Indians” as the district’s mascot.

The Hartford Public Schools Board of Education voted 6-1 to “respectfully retire” the Hartford Indian and related images during a Nov. 22 meeting, a press release from [Superintendent Kelly Millin](#) said.

Related: [2 West Michigan schools will drop their Native American mascots](#)

The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Tribal Council supported the removal of the mascot after nearly 6,000 Pokagon citizens voiced opinions on the issue, according to a letter from chairwoman Rebecca Richards. Many Pokagon citizens live in the Hartford community, the letter said.

The school board decision came after residents were able to voice their opinions during a public comment time.

The mascot will be retired at the end of the 2021-2022 school year.

A new mascot will be chosen through a student-led process with input from the community and stakeholders, the release said.

Some K-12 school districts across the state continue to use Native American mascots and imagery, despite growing calls for those schools to rebrand.

Related: [Dozens of Michigan schools still use Native American slurs, imagery](#)

Hartford is one of eight Michigan K-12 schools that call themselves the Indians, including Athens, Chesaning, Newberry, Tahquamenon, Tecumseh, Tekonsha and White Cloud.

Last year, [Saugatuck Public Schools announced that it would drop its team name](#) as the “Indians” in an effort to promote a learning culture that values diversity, equity and inclusion. After a months-long search process, the district landed on “Trailblazers” as its new team name and mascot.