

Peru elects to retire mascot name Indians

BY JOEY LAFRANCA Sports Editor Jul 15, 2020





JOEY LAFRANCA/STAFF PHOTO

Blue skies hang over the Peru Central School District's sports complex, Wednesday. Peru has decided to retire the mascot name Indians and choose a new name for its athletic programs in the near future.

PERU — Peru Central School's athletic teams will no longer go by the name Indians.

The Peru school board elected to retire the mascot name Tuesday evening.

Peru Central School District Superintendent of Schools Dr. Thomas Palmer said the process was not long.

"At Tuesday night's board meeting, (the board) wanted to discuss it, and during that discussion, the board wanted to take action and wanted the Indians mascot to be removed from Peru Central School District," Palmer said.

TASK FORCE

The board made the decision to cease the present use of mascot name Indians in

anything associated with Peru, leaving Palmer to develop a task force in the near future to help determine a new mascot.

"We will work through the process," Palmer said. "There is no limitation on what we can be. We will still try and keep the values and traditions of Peru, but moving forward, the word Indians and anything associated with that mascot of Indians will be taken off of (anything associated with) Peru."

The task force will be comprised of community members, alumni and alumna, faculty, staff, and school administrators.

PETITION

As news of the decision circulated and gained steam throughout the day Wednesday, a petition on [Change.org](https://www.change.org) began circulating asking for electronic signatures to change Peru's mascot back to Indians.

Much uproar around the situation stemmed from a lack of public input toward the decision as well as many in the Peru community seeing the name Indians as a sign of respect.

Peru wrestling co-coach Gary Edwards echoed this sentiment.

Edwards, a 1965 Peru graduate, has been involved in the school's athletic programs as an athlete as well as a coach of multiple sports beginning in the 1970s.

"The name has always been with me, and I held that name in high-esteem and looked at it as a sign of respect," Edwards said. "The feathers that are currently on the Peru logo represent respect. I am very disappointed."

THE LOGO

The established Peru athletics logo, which had already undergone changes throughout the years, showcased a blue boldfaced "P" with two feathers connected to it on the left-hand side.

Longtime Peru football head coach Larry Ewald, who led Peru to a 2001 state championship and now serves as an assistant for the team after coming out of retirement, said he hopes the new mascot name chosen is one that demands respect and symbolizes the tradition of the school's athletic programs.

Speaking to the tradition of Peru athletics, Ewald expressed some disappointment toward the recent decision but also said he understood.

"I just feel that the tradition of the Peru Indians is very special and that a name is part of that," Ewald said. "However, in our world now with so much social uproar

over things of that nature, I understand why it's being done. I am a little torn. It does bother me that we will not be the Peru Indians anymore, but I understand why.

"As traditional as I like to be, I am really steeped in tradition when it comes to Peru athletics, but things do have to change. I just hope the decisions made are thought long and hard about."

NATIONAL SCALE

On Monday, the National Football League's Washington Redskins announced they would drop their team name after 87 years.

This national topic has brought about discussions on a local scale in many regions.

"As far as the affiliation of what is going on at the pro level, no," Palmer said when asked about the comparison between the Washington and Peru mascot scenarios. "It's more about trying to make sure we are moving forward and value the support of Peru's core values, and we value diversity."

Moving forward, Palmer will meet with various stakeholders of the school district, including students, faculty and the Peru community on July 21, 22 and 23.

"The overview of what I am charged with doing is allowing people to have comments, questions and concerns and letting them express themselves," Palmer said.

Input from those sessions will be used by the task force responsible for determining a new mascot for Peru athletics.

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