



SHADY SIDE

A C A D E M Y

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
423 Fox Chapel Road
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July 1, 2020

Dear Shady Side Community,

I write today to share some important news about Shady Side Academy. On June 30, 2020, the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to discontinue the use of the Indian as the Academy's mascot and the name of our competitive teams. This decision is effective today, July 1, 2020.

As this is a significant change in the life of our school, I wanted to inform you how and why the Board of Trustees made this decision.

In 1936, Shady Side's legendary Athletic Director William "Cap" Palmer, a retired military captain, announced that Shady Side Academy's teams would be known as the "Indians." Palmer, with the input of the students running the *Shady Side News*, adopted this name as a tribute to the physical location of Shady Side Academy's Fox Chapel campus, which in the 1700s served as an encampment for a Seneca Indian tribe led by Chief Guyasuta. Palmer thought that the name would also build school spirit, as it was much easier to cheer for a team that actually had a name. On January 11, 1936, Shady Side Academy's basketball team became the first team to play as the "Indians," defeating the Arnold School 24-15 in what the *Shady Side News* described as a "listless contest."

In the early 1990s, SSA alumni, students and faculty began discussing whether the Indian should continue as the mascot and team name. This discussion centered around the question of whether the Academy's use of the Indian name, and certain Native American imagery in particular, was appropriate. In 1996, the Board of Trustees voted to reaffirm the use of the Indian so long as it was used in a respectful and honorable manner. Consistent with this mandate, the Academy removed all inappropriate Native American imagery from its branding and uniforms the following year.

In 2018, a full generation later, our student leadership again sought to have elevated discussions about the Academy's use of the Indian. As part of these discussions, several students raised concerns that the continued use of the Indian made it difficult to generate school spirit, to cheer at athletic events, and had become something that was dividing us instead of uniting us. Our student leadership continued this discussion throughout the 2019-2020 academic year, and provided the administration with survey data demonstrating that more than 64% of the Senior School student body supported changing the name. The Board had planned to discuss this topic in the spring; however, the Academy's response to COVID-19-related issues became our focus.

The Board of Trustees convened on June 30, 2020, to review this issue and to take an honest view of the Academy's continued use of the Indian. In analyzing the situation, the Board recognized that a significant portion of our community feels that it cannot embrace the Indian as the mascot and team name. For years, fans at SSA sporting events and competitions have cheered "Go Blue!" or "Go Shady Side!" but in 2020, few in the

Shady Side community feel comfortable using Indian cheers. This perspective is not unique to Shady Side, but has also been widely discussed at the collegiate and professional levels. The use of the term Indian by those who do not have a direct association with Native American history has become a passionately contested issue.

The Board of Trustees also reviewed Shady Side's 85-year history with the Indian name. Shady Side has always sought to treat it with great pride and respect. Over the years, there have been numerous meetings with members of the Three Rivers American Indian Council and other Native American groups. After each meeting, and with their support, Shady Side adapted its use of the name and imagery in accordance with the consensus reached by these groups.

The Board of Trustees is keenly aware that our Shady Side community is comprised of more than 8,000 students and living alumni, whose experience at the Academy spans more than 90 years. The Board's decision to change the name should not be construed, in any way, as a decision to change or erase our history. The Board of Trustees and administration remain fully dedicated to appropriately recognizing this chapter of our history in our archives.

Our Mission, as an institution, is to Think Expansively, Act Ethically, and Lead Responsibly. Viewing Shady Side Academy's continued use of the Indian through the lens of our Mission and Guiding Principles, the Board of Trustees unanimously voted to discontinue the use of the Indian as the mascot and team name.

The Board of Trustees has charged the administration with developing an expedited process for the selection of a new mascot and team name. This collaborative process will involve the engagement of alumni, students at all divisions, parents and faculty. We will share details about the process and timeline as they become available. The Board of Trustees will make the final decision on the Academy's new mascot and team name in the late fall, and we hope to announce it to the community by December 31, 2020.

While we recognize that this change will cause some to be disappointed, there is no doubt that this is the right decision to move Shady Side Academy forward. Consistent with the wishes of Cap Palmer, we are excited to develop a new mascot and team name that will once again unite Shady Side Academy, and that will provide our community with something to cheer about for generations to come.

Glory to Shady Side!



Jonathan M. Kamin '91
Chair, Board of Trustees