
To: Mayor Watters and Members of Council**Report:** CS2024-22**Prepared By:** Pat Newson, Managing Director of
Community Services**Date:** 15 Jul 2024**RE:** Indigenous-themed Sports Logos in Township Facilities Update

Recommendation:

THAT the Council of the Township of Centre Wellington receive report CS2024-22 Indigenous-themed Sports Logos in Township Facilities Update for information purposes;

AND THAT Council directs staff to reinstall the banners at the Jefferson Elora Community Centre arena, exclusive of banners displaying indigenous themed logos or names, until such time as Council has implemented a policy on Indigenous-themed Sports Logos in Township Facilities;

AND THAT Council directs staff to continue the work with the Indigenous-themed Sports Logos in Township Facilities Working Group under the DEI Advisory Committee, to develop that policy, and that progress on that initiative be shared with the community on the Connect CW website at www.connectcw.ca.

Summary:

The Township of Centre Wellington received a letter from the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) addressed to the Mayor, regarding the harmful impact of Indigenous-themed sports logos in city facilities. Work on that file was delayed due to COVID-19, and with the newly formed DEI Advisory Committee, a working group was struck to continue the work with the objective to comply with the OHRC's mandate to identify, prevent, and eliminate discrimination and to promote human rights. This report provides Council with an update on that work, and a recommendation as to how to proceed as the work progresses, toward development of a policy.

Report:**Background**

In 2019 the Township received a letter from the OHRC, which is attached to this report. Centre Wellington received the letter as the OHRC identified the Elora Mohawks as a non-Indigenous sports organization that uses Indigenous-themed names and/or logos. Since that letter, the Centre Wellington Minor Lacrosse Association (CWMLA) changed

their name from the Mohawks to the Riverhawks. The Junior B Lacrosse team continues to use the Elora Mohawks as their name and logo for the team.

The Jefferson Elora Community Centre (JECC) is the home centre for the Elora Mohawk Junior B Team and the CWMLA. The history of banners from these organizations were displayed at the JECC. During the facility renovation, all the banners from all the organizations were all removed to perform the work. There is a desire from the facility users to reinstall the banners at the facility, however development of a policy on displaying Indigenous-themed sports logos in Township facilities is still in progress. The letter from OHRC indicates that:

"The OHRC urges the Township of Centre Wellington to take the first step in removing barriers to participation for Indigenous peoples by collaborating with diverse Indigenous communities to develop a policy on the use of Indigenous-themed logos and names in their sports facilities and arenas"

To that end, the DEI Advisory Committee's Working Group on this includes members of the DEI Advisory Committee, representation from the Elora Mohawks Junior C Team, and staff. The Working Group has engaged a consultant and has initiated collaboration on this with Grandmother's Voice. The consultant *Four Simple Words* is facilitating the relationship between the Township and Grandmother's Voice

Grandmothers Voice:

Grandmother's Voice works out of the Halton Region creates opportunities for Indigenous community members to share their teachings, healing practices and traditional handicraft creations with the broader community. Elevating Indigenous Knowledge and Culture has been the foundation of their organization. They are dedicated to enhancing capacity and illuminating the landscape of Indigenous social services and determinants of health.

Next Steps

The banners at the JECC capture the history of the lacrosse organizations in Centre Wellington. Meetings are ongoing with Grandmother's Voice to consider how the history can be preserved, while respecting Indigenous peoples' rights.

Sports organizations have authority to name their teams and create their logos, without interference from the Township. The Township does have control over what is displayed in the Township owned facilities. The work on this is in progress, and it takes time to collaborate with all parties, to listen, to learn, and to know how to respectfully move forward in regards to the Indigenous-themed logos, in order to create a policy. The letter from the OHRC shares that there is a "...growing body of empirical evidence that demonstrate the harmful effects of these (Indigenous-themed) images".

Staff are updating Council at this time to share the status and create awareness in the community of the ongoing work. The recommendation is to pause on reinstalling banners with Indigenous-themed logos in Township facilities until the work is completed

and a policy created and endorsed by Council. Grandmother's Voice encouraged transparency and open communication with everyone. To that end, staff are recommending that Connect CW website be used to share the ongoing work on this.

Corporate Strategic Plan:

The Township's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan Value "Equity, Diversity & Inclusion"

Financial Implications:

To date the project has cost \$3,000 for consultants, and Grandmother's Voice will receive an honorarium in the range of \$200-\$400.

Consultation:

Grandmother's Voice

Four Simple Words

DEI Advisory Committee Working Group

Attachments:

- [Ontario Human Rights Commission Letter](#)

Approved By:

Dan Wilson, Chief Administrative Officer

Ontario
Human Rights
Commission

Office of the Chief Commissioner

180 Dundas Street West, Suite 900
Toronto ON M7A 2G5

Tel.: (416) 314-4537
Fax: (416) 314-7752

Commission
Ontarienne des
Droits de la Personne

Bureau du Commissaire en Chef

180, rue Dundas ouest, bureau 900
Toronto (Ontario) M7A 2G5

Tél. : (416) 314-4537
Télééc. : (416) 314-7752



April 15, 2019

Mayor Kelly Linton
Township of Centre Wellington
1 MacDonald Square
Elora, ON N0B 1S0,

Dear Mayor Kelly Linton:

RE: Harmful impact of Indigenous-themed sports logos in city facilities

We are writing to urge all municipalities in Ontario to engage Indigenous communities about the use of Indigenous-themed logos and team names in their sports arenas.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) recently intervened in an Application before the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) which alleged that the use and display of Indigenous-themed logos and team names in the City of Mississauga sports arenas was discriminatory.

The OHRC conducted extensive outreach with Indigenous peoples to learn more about the impact of this use, and heard directly from youth across the province through the Indigenous Youth Council of the Ontario Federation of Friendship Centres. We intervened in the case to amplify the perspectives and voices of Indigenous youth and to highlight the harmful impact of stereotypes on youth.

The OHRC reached a settlement with the City of Mississauga and the Applicant. In the settlement, the City of Mississauga committed to:

1. Remove from its sports facilities all Indigenous-themed mascots, symbols, names and imagery related to non-Indigenous sports organizations.
2. Develop a policy on the use of Indigenous images and themes at its sports facilities, in collaboration with different groups such as the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, the Peel Aboriginal Network, the Indigenous Youth

Council of the Ontario Federation of Friendship Centres and Indigenous Sport and Wellness Ontario.

3. Supplement its Diversity and Inclusion training with expanded material addressing reconciliation and Indigenous peoples.

The OHRC is now contacting municipalities in Ontario to ask that they follow suit. This is in keeping with the OHRC's mandate to identify, prevent, and eliminate discrimination, and to promote human rights within the province using a range of powers under the *Human Rights Code*.

Harmful Impact of Stereotypes on Indigenous Youth

Sports are drivers of social inclusion; they bring communities together and help youth develop their self-esteem. We recognize that municipalities are committed to providing environments that promote healthy and active lifestyles in the most inclusive manner. To this end, the OHRC and municipalities have a shared goal of actively removing barriers to participation in sports for Indigenous youth.

The OHRC recognizes that the use of Indigenous-themed names and logos by sports teams has been a long-standing norm in our society. However, it is time to revisit these pervasive images.

One of the purposes of Ontario's *Human Rights Code* (*Code*) is the "creation of a climate of understanding and mutual respect for dignity and worth of each person so that each person feels a part of the community." As service providers, municipalities have obligations under the *Code* to provide a service environment free of discrimination. Human rights law has found that images and words that degrade people because of their ancestry, race, color and ethnic origin, among other grounds, violate the *Code*.

Derogatory images and words can have a significant impact on the ability of affected individuals and groups to participate and benefit equally in services such as participating as a member of a sports team or attending games as a spectator. There can also be broader social and psychological impacts on such individuals and groups, including how they are viewed and treated in their community.

The American Psychological Association is among over 100 professional organizations that have adopted formal resolutions recommending the immediate retirement of Indigenous-themed names and logos by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams and organizations. These resolutions are based on a growing body of empirical

evidence that demonstrate the harmful effects of these images. The scientific literature shows that Indigenous-themed names and logos:

1. Misuse cultural practices and sacred spiritual symbols;
2. Deny Indigenous peoples control over social definitions of themselves;
3. Perpetuate stereotypes of Indigenous people;
4. Create hostile environments for students and others;
5. Negatively impact the psychological functioning of Indigenous people (decreased self-esteem and community worth).

This research is summarized in Appendix A, the expert report of Dr. Jesse A. Steinfeldt, a sports psychologist.

In 2015, the Honourable Murray Sinclair and Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) noted the profound impact that stereotypes in sports have on young Indigenous people.

The TRC Final Report documents the challenges Indigenous youth face in forming their identities and the important role of sports in developing self-esteem. One of the TRC's Calls to Action includes a call to ensure that sport policies and programs are inclusive of Indigenous peoples.

Additionally, the TRC calls for Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination to be integrated into civic institutions in a manner consistent with the principles norms and standards of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The Indigenous Youth Council of The Ontario Federation of Friendship Centres has stated: "For too long Indigenous peoples have been branded by communities other than our own... We are the ones who can best create images of identity for our people". Indigenous communities must have ownership over their own images.

Next Steps

In our strategic plan, the OHRC committed to using our mandate and powers to engage in sustained trusting relationships with Indigenous communities that are built on dignity and respect, and by working to advance reconciliation and substantive equality.

The OHRC urges the Township of Centre Wellington to take the first step in removing barriers to participation for Indigenous peoples by collaborating with diverse Indigenous communities to develop a policy on the use of Indigenous-themed logos and names in their sports facilities and arenas. We have copied Peel Aboriginal Network.

We have identified the following non-Indigenous sports organizations that use Indigenous-themed names and/or logos: Elora Mohawks.

We believe that the City of Mississauga is taking important steps to show leadership and a commitment to reconciliation. The above-noted settlement sets a positive path forward for other municipalities to follow.

In keeping with the OHRC's commitment to public accountability and its duties in serving the people of Ontario, this letter and the response received may be made public.

Thank you for considering this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Renu Mandhane".

Renu Mandhane, B.A., J.D., LL.M.
Chief Commissioner
Ontario Human Rights Commission

CC: Clerk's Office
Peel Aboriginal Network