

My name is Diane Oltarzewski from Belfast. Thank you for letting me share my thoughts. We live our lives in Wabanaki territory, and we need to slow down and think about what that means. We owe each other respect, and we only disfigure ourselves by withholding it. Honor and pride are better served by teaching indigenous history in our social studies classes, to make sure our students grow up knowing America's truth rather than her myth.

When I saw the Langlais' sculpture titled "Skowhegan Indian" with its dedication to the Maine Indians — "The First People to Use These Lands in Peaceful Ways" — I liked it. It makes a truthful statement of respect.

However, taking "Indian" as a team mascot, symbolized by a caricature of a Native man kneeling and attacking with a spear, is clearly offensive to many Wabanaki citizens. Such a mascot belittles their rich identity and their complex reality at this moment in history.

If I were a Wabanaki child, I would know my culture intimately as a source of strength and pride. To find it mis-represented by people who don't understand my heritage—how would that make me feel?

As a non-Native, I have to accept that I can never fully understand why this is so objectionable, because I have not experienced their intervening history.

Native or non-Native, children can't possibly feel comfortable and free to enjoy themselves in this environment, let alone compete with confidence.

The mascot plants something dishonest in our children's minds, because in 2019, we know that the real savagery came from colonial bounty hunters, from the ethnic cleansing and relentless land seizure through which our country was established.

And plenty of non-Native Skowhegan students and alumni "get this" ... So they ALL deserve a mascot they can be unconditionally proud of.

Let's make a world that works for ALL of us.