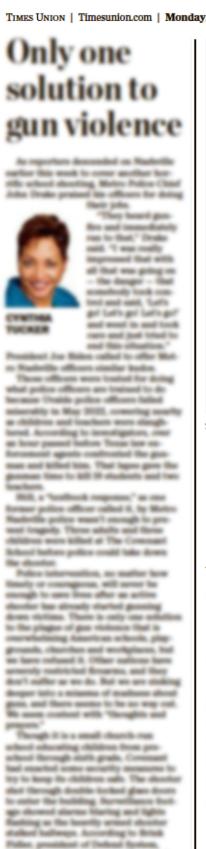
PERSPECTIVE

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EDITORIAL

Symbols of change

tip of the hat - or a salute from a big furry paw - to the students of the Glens Falls City School District. They're showing us all how to turn a directive into an empowering experi-

Glens Falls is one of the districts that must retire its "Indians" name and mascot to comply with the state Education Department mandate banning Indigenous team names, As The Post-Star recently reported, a cabinet of student leaders put four new options up for a community vote: Hawks, Wolves, Knights or Black Bears. It's the culmination of a process in which the students sent out ranking surveys to gauge preferences on new symbols, held workshops to identify key values and even met with the city historian. They're scheduled to present their recommendations to the school board on Monday.

Letting students guide a community process turned it into an experience of discovery, collaboration and identitybuilding. It's an approach that other Capital Region schools might consider as they finally run out of appeals for

As some schools face the selection of new mascots, this district's students demonstrate how to do it right.

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keeping their own Indigenous team

A state Education Department advisory panel has brought that process a little closer to its end by ruling recently that names like Raiders, Braves and Warriors had to go - even if the accompanying imagery had changed.

The panel, which is tasked with vetting requests from schools that are seeking exceptions to the ban, rejected proposals from schools that have long been, say, the Warriors but had recently morphed their Native American Warrior" into a Spartan "Warrior," or a Visigoth, or some such. Sorry, the committee said; words that have meant one thing in a community for decades are not so easily unmoored and attached to another target.

If the Department of Education,

which has the final say, upholds the panel's decision, that would mean changes for a number of Capital Region mascots, such as the Red Raiders (Mechanicville), Garnet Raiders (South Colonie), and Warriors (Lake George and Averill Park). Fonda-Fultonville sought to remain the Braves, hoping to redirect the word to point to "the Brave," as in "Land of the Free, Home of the Brave" from the national anthem: That, too, was a no.

The Education Department which told schools 20 years ago that they should change their mascots, but which only last year told them that they must or risk their state aid should absolutely stand behind the rulings of the panel. Its members, who are Indigenous, have taken on the responsibility of delivering to communities a difficult "no," and they deserve for the state to have their backs.

There are so many choices of imagery that can evoke strength, determination, spirit, creativity, resilience whatever it is a community wants a mascot to represent about them and their school. Anything except reducing other human beings - human beings who are living here with us, in our cities, in our state — to violent caricatures of a stereotyped past.