

The Adolescent Community at Knoxville Montessori School

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11/23/23

Andrea DeKoter, PhD

Committee Manager

Reconciliation in Place Names Committee

Office of Policy, National Park Service

Subject: Support and Recommendations for Renaming Derogatory and Racist Place Names

Dear Federal Advisory Committee,

Knoxville Montessori School is dedicated to promoting active youth engagement in educational development, following each student's unique learning journey. Through personalized and student-centered approaches, the school empowers young minds to take ownership of their education, fostering a sense of curiosity, self-discipline, and a lifelong love for learning. During our fall humanities, the Adolescent Community had a guest lecturer introduce the renaming movement. This inspired us to further explore the subject and to participate in local renaming initiatives. Our overarching goal is to create a more inclusive environment within our Knoxville community and to lend our voices to the broader national renaming conversation.

We, the Adolescent Community, are writing to express our sincere appreciation for the significant work undertaken by the Reconciliation in Place Names Committee. Your commitment to addressing derogatory and racist place names is a commendable step towards fostering a more inclusive and compassionate society. We believe that this work is instrumental in laying the foundation for a future where our nation can heal from the wounds of its history.

As we look to the future, it is clear that our youth will be the torchbearers of change and progress. The actions taken today, particularly by the Reconciliation in Place Names Committee, will be the cornerstone upon which our future leaders will build. It is imperative that we actively engage and involve young minds in the renaming process to ensure a sense of ownership and responsibility in shaping a more respectful and understanding community.

We would like to offer the following recommendations to further amplify the impact of the renaming process:

1. Engage Youth in Renaming Process:

Actively involve youth in the renaming process through workshops, educational programs, and community discussions. By fostering a sense of responsibility among young individuals, we are laying the groundwork for a future generation that values diversity and respects the power of language.

2. Integrate Indigenous' History into K -12 Curriculum:

Advocate for the integration of the history of derogatory place names and the renaming process into the K-12 curriculum. By providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the impact of language on communities, we empower them to be informed and compassionate leaders in the future.

3. Address Gaps in Indigenous Education:

Recognize the significant gaps in education by emphasizing the inclusion of indigenous peoples' history in K-12 curriculum. The absence of such content in 27 states denies students a complete understanding of our nation's heritage and perpetuates historical inaccuracies.

4. Increase Public Awareness and Support:

Make the local renaming process transparent and accessible to the public. Provide clear guidelines and steps for communities to follow in the renaming process and offer resources to support their endeavors. This ensures that the broader community is informed and engaged in the positive transformation of our shared spaces.

The power of education and awareness cannot be overstated. By sharing an honest history, we equip our youth to become well-rounded leaders who advocate for justice, empathy, and equality. Your continued efforts, as demonstrated by the Reconciliation in Place Names Committee, are instrumental in shaping a future where our nation can heal and move forward.

In closing, we would like to express our deepest gratitude for the tireless work of the Reconciliation in Place Names Committee. Your dedication to fostering positive change is an inspiration to us all, and we are confident that your efforts will leave an indelible mark on the future of our nation.

Sincerely,

The Adolescent Community at Knoxville Montessori School:

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