

Hi all!

I've addressed this to high school principals, secretaries, and counselors. If you feel that others need this information, please share. Thank you.

This is the time of year for my annual reminder regarding Native American regalia, eagle feathers, beaded mortar boards, etc.

I wanted to double check that our Native students will not be asked to remove eagle feathers during graduation ceremonies. It is especially important that non-Indians and, well, people who are not family or the individual, do not try to touch the actual eagle feather as well. And it is law now, according to new HB 2498.

We had a great deal of cooperation from Josten's to get kids their mortarboards early, if wanted, so that they could have ample time to bead them, or have them beaded by family members.

I wanted to reiterate the cultural significance and spiritual weight these items and traditions have for our students. When the national graduation rate for this population is around 50%, honoring our graduating seniors is truly a big deal in many of our families. A lot of our students have relatives "back home" that have not, nor will not graduate high school.

Please take a few minutes and look at the links provided. And please call me with any questions.

From the National Congress of the American Indian, a statement supporting the wear of eagles at graduations.

<http://www.ncai.org/resources/resolutions/in-support-of-allowing-native-students-to-wear-eagle-feathers-at-high-school-graduation>

A news article/video about a girl being told she could not wear it. Please take note of the language used to describe her eagle, and her reaction to it.

<http://www.kansascity.com/news/nation-world/national/article76052302.html>

From a couple months ago, a Lawrence 8th grader testifying about the regalia bill sponsored by Rep. Ponka-We Victors. The 8th grader, Georgia Blackwood, was even recognized by our school board for her advocacy:

<https://www.usd497.org/Page/10628>

<http://www.cjonline.com/news/20180201/native-american-student-endorses-bill-establishing-legal-right-to-wear-tribal-regalia>

From a NASS parent's email:

"Do you know of any restrictions on graduation with regards to wearing anything traditional? They obviously can have beaded caps, but are they allowed to have feathers, wear moccasins, etc? Lawrence is pretty diverse but still wanted to check, I try to ask R. but you know how teenagers are...lol." From a parent in 2016

"K. would like to wear her mama's shawl for graduation. What is the word on wearing regalia?" from a parent email I received today, 5/17/18

So, one can see that parents continue to be concerned. The use of the parent's term, "traditional", means traditional Native American regalia, like dresses, ribbon shirts, jewelry, braids/hairties, mocs, etc. I also have received a few phone calls. I think the news on Facebook and elsewhere about other students receiving a hard time are giving my parents anxiety.

Thank you for any reassurance you can give.

Urah,

Jennifer Attocknie
Coordinator
Native American Student Services (Title VII & Johnson O'Malley)

"It is necessary that the weakness of the powerless is transformed into a force capable of announcing justice. For this to happen, a total denouncement of fatalism is necessary. We are transformative beings and not beings for accommodation."
— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*