



The Georgetown District High School's football team picture from 1962-63, featuring the Confederate flag. No. 91 is Dennis Martel, who helped design the team's crest featuring a fox head with eye-patch and rebel hat.

Photo from The Toronto Star via thegeorgetownvault.com

Petition against new GDHS team name nets over 650 signatures

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Martel said when the school's football began to grow in the 1960s the players wanted new uniforms and a spiffy name.

He added young people at the time were thinking along the lines of James Dean's character Jim Stark, and Duane Eddy's 1958 hit song "Rebel Rouser" which were both very popular at the time.

It wasn't chosen because we were racist or pro-slavery. That didn't even enter the discussion," said Martel, who is a longtime First Nations spokesperson and former communications director for former Ontario premier, David Peterson.

From its founding in 1887 until the 1962, Stewart says GDHS's logo was just a simple G for Georgetown before the school adopted the Rebels moniker.

"We've been the Rebels since then," said Stewart. In the '60s this name came about, I think a lot of it dealing with the idea of teenage angst and questioning authority, which was obviously very popular at that point in history.

The idea of changing the school's team name is already meeting resistance from the community. An online petition calling for keeping the name at change.org started two

weeks ago by someone named Eric Leslie, already had 666 signatures as of Wednesday (Feb. 8).

This name is something that has been part of the school's heritage and tradition for over 60 years. The school and the name bring pride to the many alumni that still live in our town, and also the many students that are still learning at the school," wrote Leslie on the petition's home page.

According to GDHS principal Paul Daignault, the investigation into possibly changing the name is in its infancy and far from a foregone conclusion. He added current discussions at the provincial level involving First Nations peoples and sports team names seemed like a good backdrop for a similar discussion at the school.

Staff on the (equity) committee brought it forward to our leadership team, which is a big decision-making body. (We) said let's agree to investigate the process, get information from all stakeholders and how that would look along with the whole equity plan to see if this is something that would help create a better learning environment for our kids," said Daignault.

With files from the Toronto Star





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