CARMEL HIGH SCHOOL
MASCOT STUDY REPORT OF FINDINGS

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Background

Since the founding of Carmel High School in 1940, the school’s mascot has been the “Padre”. The “Padre” figure has been synonymous with the school and the larger Carmel community for over 80 years; however, changes in public opinion over time have brought to light conflicting views on the use of this iconography. Several petitions have asked the school to reconsider its position on the mascot and have sought to make a change. In the spring of 2020, one such petition was presented to the Governing Board of Carmel Unified School District which asked school and district staff to begin a review of the mascot with the goal of conducting a thorough study and determination of next steps.

The Study Group’s role was to determine the viability of the current mascot, not make a specific recommendation as to what the new mascot might be. It was this group’s role to only answer the narrow question of whether CHS will maintain the “Padre” as the current mascot.

Over the course of the 2020-21 school year, the Study Group was formed using an open application process and began meeting to develop a process for collecting public input. A survey was put into the field to gauge public perception giving equal importance to all stakeholder groups. The group also held two open forums, one digitally and one done in a concurrent fashion, to allow community members to voice their opinions on the issue. CHS ASB also held a student forum at lunch to allow students to voice their thoughts. Due to the ongoing concerns of COVID 19, the committee halted it’s work in the spring of 2021 and returned to regular meetings in the fall. These meetings were held in person to allow for better exchange of information.

A Note about Timeline

The work by this study group was done under the shadow of the COVID19 pandemic and as such was often interrupted by other pressing needs of the school. The timing of this work may have been affected by school stoppages and almost certainly made gathering information more difficult. The group recognizes that these were not ideal circumstances for analysis to occur and has taken into account that viewpoints may not have been entirely focused on the question at hand. Many survey comments called into question the nature of the study as a distraction from the work of reopening school and those surveyed may have had different views on this question were it not for the legitimate concern about the pandemic.
Data from Surveys

The following are snapshots of the data collected through the Mascot Study Group’s survey of all stakeholders. The survey was promoted through the school website, email lists, social media accounts, and distribution to students during class time. The data presented here was used to inform the committee’s conversation along with the input from the open forums. A total of 1867 survey responses were submitted. Some of the responses were omitted if they were incomplete while some were categorized in more than one stakeholder group (i.e. Parent and Alumni)

Figure 1

TopLine Preference All Respondents

Figure 2

Age Breakdown
Figure 3

Age Group Breakdown

- Under 18: 28.9%
- 18-30: 24.2%
- 31-45: 15%
- 46-59: 20.8%
- 60+: 11.2%

Figure 4

Current Student Data: Total Respondents = 405

- Change the Mascot: 42.6%
- Keep the Mascot: 57.4%

Importance of Issue

- Level 5: 44.7%
- Level 4: 12.8%
- Level 3: 11.6%
- Level 2: 11.6%
- Level 1: 11.6%
Figure 5

Current Parent Data: Total Respondents = 378

Level 1: Little Importance – Level 5: Very Important

Figure 6

Community Members: Total Respondents: 128

Level 1: Little Importance – Level 5: Very Important

Figure 7

Alumni Data: Total Respondents = 779

Level 1: Little Importance – Level 5: Very Important
Figure 8

Current Staff Data: Total Respondents = 52

Level of Importance

Level 1: Little Importance - Level 5: Very Important

Figure 9

Influencing Factors on Decision

- Long Standing Tradition: 1005
- Oppression of a Minority: 523
- Important part of the Pride of Alumni: 725
- Symbolizes colonization: 466
- I like the current mascot: 484
- Mascot is a religious symbol: 666
- I want current students to wear the Other schools have changed theirs: 430
- The Mascot does not represent the city of: 169
- It is not inclusive of all gender types: 210
- Other: 236
Data Analysis/Committee Observations

After considerable study and conversation, the Mascot Study Group has made the following observations:

1) There is clear division on this issue amongst all stakeholder groups. Both the quantitative data above as well as the comments made at the open forums suggest two viewpoints that are entrenched and unswayed by the other.

2) The data from the survey indicates the words RELIGION, HONOR, COMMITMENT and CHARACTER as the most commonly used when thinking of the current mascot.

3) The vast number of those surveyed indicated that this issue is not of significance, rating it a 1 (low priority) on a scale of 1-5. This was true of all stakeholder groups.

4) Of those who identified as wishing to keep the current mascot, the age distribution favored those alumni who are older, with the largest portion being ages 46-59 and 60+.

5) Of those identified as wanting to replace the mascot, the age distribution was more varied, with a third of this group coming from the age bracket of 31-45.

6) The committee was keen to pay particular attention to current student viewpoints. With that in mind, a few points should be highlighted:

   a) Roughly 50% of current students (during the 20-21 school year) were surveyed, which is a significant number.

   b) The student viewpoint is split 51.6% to 48.4% to keep the Padre.

   c) About half of the students found the issue to be of little importance at the time of the survey.

7) During the Open Forums, the participants did express their clear beliefs about the issue on both sides. The first forum was heavily weighted for those who wish to see a change, particularly with representation from the local Native tribes. During this forum, the
viewpoint clearly expressed that the mascot represented the image of an oppressive church figure who enslaved the Native peoples of the region.

8) Additionally, at both forums, the view of the mascot as a patriarchal image was seen as a concern since half of the student population does not identify as male.

9) There does not appear to be any written record of the original debate regarding the selection of the “Padre” mascot when the school was founded in 1938. It is assumed by the committee that the selection of the mascot was done due to the City of Carmel-By-The-Sea having a long and celebrated history in relation to its mission and Father Junipero Serra. It is not known if the selection of the mascot was a direct link to Father Serra or for a more generic representation of the Catholic religious position of Padre.

**Committee Recommendations**

The committee conducted a vote to determine what if any recommendations should be made. The outcome was 5 members in favor recommending a change and 4 in favor of recommending that the Padre remain the current mascot. Without clear consensus, the committee is declining to make a formal recommendation at this time. The timing of the study and the highly extraordinary circumstances of a global pandemic made it of little importance to the current student population. The question has, over time, become more complex: moving from the views about the mascot to the views of how Native peoples, both in our local community and throughout the United States, have been treated throughout history. During the Study Group’s deliberations, many expressed viewpoints that acknowledged this fact regardless of their own personal stance on the question.

Making a change of the mascot, in the Study Group’s opinion, does not fully address those injustices or right the wrongs of history. In examining the contents of both the surveys and the open forums, it was clear that this issue is more about people’s feelings toward the image rather than the image itself. The committee struggled with the best way to address these concerns, many which go far beyond the walls of Carmel High. For those who oppose the mascot, it has become a representative of oppression that has not been given it’s due course in the study of history. Views expressed in the open forum especially were more about the lack of discourse around the history of the area and the marginalization of Native tribes.

For those in support, the mascot signifies what they remember about their high school experience and their affinity for CHS. The positive views of their time in school are wrapped up in the “Padre” identifier, and, as such, do not carry the imagery of a religious figure. Those supporting the current mascot believe it should be celebrated, so many stakeholders found positive things to say about their time in school and the pride in being a Carmel Padre.

Two other areas of concern were raised during the deliberations. The committee recognizes the complicated nature of having a religious mascot at a public, secular school, but
during research, found other examples of this practice at other high schools in California. The committee also recognizes that the use of a gender specific mascot is an area of concern for some, but also found this to be a common practice amongst many school mascots.

The Committee does make the following recommendations to CHS and CUSD staff:

1) The committee recommends to CUSD that there be a concerted effort to increase education about the nature of the conversation in both curriculum and school practice in order to better educate students about the history of the Padre and the Native populations of the Monterey Peninsula. As part of this education, the committee recommends the following:
   a) a stronger, more overt understanding of the Padre and Native American relationship be taught as part of the high school curriculum beyond the standards currently covered.
   b) Development of a potential K-12 program to celebrate Native peoples with the goal of creating partnerships which highlight the contributions Native peoples have and continue to make to the Carmel Community.

2) The committee recommends that any continued survey work include specific questions about how gender affects the view of the current mascot.

3) The committee also recommends that students be surveyed more often to gauge if viewpoints change on this topic. There needs to be a consistent review process to see if student viewpoints shift to a point of consensus for change.