

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 7, 2016

Statement from the Lady Eagles Basketball Booster Club
Flagstaff High School, Flagstaff, Az.



HUMBLE. If everything could be summed up in one word, it would be humble. We never imagined that our Lady Eagles, after being made to take down their expression of culture, their Tsiyéél, would become the topic of discussion around the world.

First of all we are proud that our non-native Lady Eagles, who without hesitation, took to wearing a Tsiyéél alongside their teammates as a true show of family and were very honored to do so. Secondly, we would like to thank the leaders of The Navajo Nation, President Russell Begay and Vice President Jonathan Nez for their quick response and support of our girls in demanding the Arizona Interscholastic Association take another look at their rules regarding 'hair control devices' and be more accepting of our ways. We are also thankful for full support of the Flagstaff High School Administration, Principal Tony Cullen, Athletic Director Jeanine Brandel, Coaches Tyrone Johnson, Danny Neal and Sharon Jackson.

We accept the apology issued by the AIA and will hold them to their promise of training and educating their officials in not only the Diné Culture, but the many other cultures represented in the state of Arizona.

The night the Lady Eagles took the court they unknowingly set an example for our Diné Navajo youth that identifying yourself by displaying a traditional hairstyle should never be questioned, nor should they have to ask permission to do so beforehand. Native Americans have long suffered the oppression of cultural identification for various reasons, length of hair being one of them. For the Diné our hair represents Nihi nit'séékes, our thoughts and intelligence. To tie ones hair up in a tsiyéél was meant to gather those thoughts in an orderly way so they are not scattered and helps us stay focused and stable. We hope that our experiences of that night and the outpouring of support afterward, will encourage our youth to continue to take pride in their heritage by wearing their tsiyéél without feeling embarrassed or stereotyped.

We are very grateful that we have the support of the many basketball teams, on and off the reservation, as they showed solidarity by sporting their own tsiyéél's at their own basketball games. The support we received through photographs and messages on social media has been overwhelming and for those that sent pictures, we say thank you! We are very proud that our Lady Eagles have set this positive example for our Flagstaff Native community.

Áh'hée'hęe Thank you!