

February 9, 2018

TO: Human Rights Commission

Subject: Chief Hiawatha "Peace Maker"

I grew up in La Crosse and am concerned how a statue can be viewed as racial, derogatory or hateful when holding a sign of peace - a peace pipe.

Who did the Native Americans share the peace pipe with? Between their own, yes, but also the "white man". In this statue I see a joining of people and cultures. I believe the placement of the statue is purposeful and symbolizes the unity of three rivers coming together to form one mighty river. Could that not be said of men too?

Art is the interpretation of history, or a snapshot of a particular time period. Maybe the art of the 1960's is more "folk" in nature than realistic - that is a different question to address.

In the statue of Hiawatha I see someone standing tall, proud, strong of character and conviction. His gaze following the flow of the river into the future.

I agree with Dan Solie's article on the opinion page of the La Crosse Tribune dated January 31st. Let's present Hiawatha,

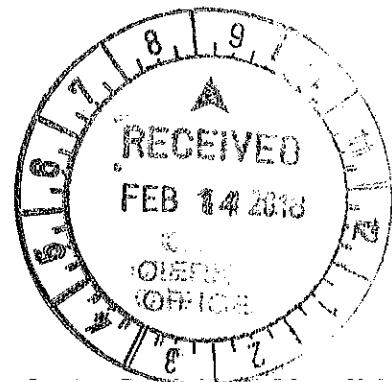
Chief of the Mohawk tribe, his tale of living peace, and eventually the unification of the five warring tribes of New York into the Iroquois Nation, as a learning tool of how we can work together to overcome differences.

Instead of debating how Mr. Zimmerhabel depicted the statue, we could eliminate the discussion of who Hiawatha represents by understanding the back story of Hiawatha and why Mr. Zimmerhabel depicted the statue as he did.

This could be a learning experience as we continue to learn more of the history behind the statue we have become accustomed to over the years. The sad part is it has taken until now to know Chief Hiawatha's story. The good news is now we know it and can appreciate its meaning. A plaque at the base of Chief Hiawatha could bring together both the history and purpose of the statue.

Sincerely yours,  
Judith Peterson  
W7848 Cty Rd MH  
Holmen, WI 54636

C.C. Mayor Kalbat  
Gary Padesky  
Dan Solie  
La Crosse Tribune



2/14/18 C: Planning