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For Immediate Release

## The Overdue Retirement of Chief Wahoo

(Nashville, TN)— With the final game of its 2018 baseball season, the Cleveland Indians have ended something they should have resolved years ago: the organization finally retired the Chief Wahoo logo, ironically on October 8, Indigenous Peoples' Day. For decades, the Native community has protested the mascot/logo as an offensive, degrading, and racist stereotype. The logo depicts Native peoples in Jim-Crow era imagery that would be patently unacceptable if used for any other ethnic group in the United States.

The image became an official part of the Cleveland Indians in 1947, when owner Bill Veeck hired a designer to create the logo. After 1950, the caricature became known as Chief Wahoo.

**"As Native peoples we know that our culture, our history and our values are poorly understood by most Americans,"** stated Kirk Francis, President of the United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund. **"When Native peoples are depicted in this cartoonish and racist fashion, it only reinforces negative stereotypes. I am glad that at least one professional sports team has finally been willing to do the right thing."**

For a number of years, Native advocates have sought to have racist mascots, imagery and team names eliminated. This action by the Cleveland Indians is one of the first times that a professional sports team has taken action to address this issue. **"If other professional teams with offensive names or mascots get the message, there could be real change in American society, continued President Francis. For example, we are tired of our children being taunted in school with the R-word, which is reinforced by the failure of the Washington NFL team to change its racist name. "The problem of how Native peoples are depicted in popular culture does not go away with this one action, but perhaps this moment will be a turning point, especially with regard to professional sports teams."**

A number of academic studies have demonstrated the harm caused by offensive names or mascots, including specifically the Chief Wahoo logo. Notably, the [American Psychological Association](#) (APA) passed a resolution in 2005 "Recommending the Immediate Retirement of American Indian Mascots,

Symbols, Images, and Personalities by Schools, Colleges, Universities, Athletic Teams, and Organizations" on the basis that these images created a hostile environment, had a negative impact on the self-esteem of Native children, and reinforced stereotypes held by Non-Indians about Native American culture.

**"These images are extremely disrespectful of our beliefs, our traditions and our values,"** concluded President Francis.

The United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) was established to provide a strong voice for Tribal Nations in the south and eastern regions of the United States. USET SPF is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-seven federally recognized Tribal Nations, ranging from Maine to Florida to Texas<sup>1</sup>. USET SPF is dedicated to enhancing the development of federally recognized Tribal Nations, to improving the capabilities of Tribal governments, and assisting USET SPF Member Tribal Nations in dealing effectively with public policy issues and in serving the broad needs of Indian people.

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#### **United South and Eastern Tribes (USET)**

Established in 1969, the United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET) is a non-profit, inter-Tribal organization representing twenty-seven (27) federally recognized Tribal Nations, from Maine to Florida to Texas. USET is dedicated to enhancing the development of Tribal Nations, and improving the capabilities of Tribal governments, improving the quality of life for Indian people through a variety of technical and supportive programmatic services.

#### **USET Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF)**

Established in 2014, the USET Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) is a non-profit, inter-Tribal organization representing twenty-seven (27) federally recognized Tribal Nations, from Maine to Florida to Texas. USET SPF is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and advancing the inherent sovereign rights and authorities of Tribal Nations and in assisting its membership in dealing effectively with public policy issues.

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<sup>1</sup> USET member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians (ME), Catawba Indian Nation (SC), Cayuga Nation (NY), Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (ME), Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (LA), Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe (CT), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida (FL), Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut (CT), Narragansett Indian Tribe (RI), Oneida Indian Nation (NY), Pamunkey Indian Tribe (VA), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (ME), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (ME), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Poarch Band of Creek Indians (AL), Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (NY), Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL), Seneca Nation of Indians (NY), Shinnecock Indian Nation (NY), Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (LA), and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).