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Washington NFL Football Team Name Change

In a move that is long overdue, the Washington D.C. NFL football team is finally moving to terminate the use of its racist, shameful, derogatory, and disparaging *R**sk*ns* name. While the effort to change the name of the team dates back decades, the call for this change has long been ignored by team ownership, the NFL, fans, corporate sponsors, players, and American society at large has been tolerant of the slur's continued use and harmful consequences. Despite strong advocacy from Indian country and others over the years, the team previously held firm to its position that the name honored and respected Native Americans. In 2013, team owner, Dan Snyder, infamously stated, "We will never change the name of the team."

However, in response to growing corporate pressure and the movement sweeping the country to achieve justice for all, today's decision to change the name is a significant reversal and major achievement—not just for Indian country, but for all justice-minded Americans. While the exact details of the name change are yet to be known, we celebrate this action today as an example of an evolving and progressing society, and are hopeful that the team's new name and logo reflect this progress.

"USET SPF is encouraged and heartened that, at long last, this disparaging and racist word will no longer be used in professional sports," said USET SPF President, Kirk Francis. "We extend our deep gratitude to all the advocates and allies who never wavered in their efforts to achieve today's win. While it should have been relegated to America's racist past long ago, we welcome this change as an opportunity for education, growth, and reconciliation, as the nation acknowledges its historic and ongoing shameful acts against Tribal Nations and Native people. It is our hope that the team's new name and logo will truly reflect our evolution as a society. Bottom line, our people and cultures are not mascots and the time is long past due for us to be properly respected, not only within sports teams, but in all aspects."

While the origins and meaning of the name have often been debated, the plain language use of the word is problematic enough, and would not have been tolerated for any other group in this day and

Because there is Strength in Unity

age. For indigenous people, the deeper meaning of the word represents the systematic genocide of our ancestors that served as a tool to clear the way for American growth and prosperity. It is reminiscent of centuries of coordinated efforts to exterminate our people and cultures.

As part of the often incomplete story of America and its origins is the untold despicable truth that the Massachusetts colonial government placed a bounty on the killing of Penobscot Indians, paying those who would hunt humans for the delivery of bloodied scalps and body parts of men, women, and children as proof of their slaying. Anyone who has ever suggested that the name was in honor and out of respect for Native Americans is woefully ignorant and failing to understand or recognize the atrocities committed against our people.

Today's name change announcement is a reflection of the reckoning that is taking place more broadly within the world of sports and mascots. More importantly, it is part of a larger movement and reckoning sweeping across America, seeking justice and equality for oppressed and marginalized groups; an effort that must include and begin with America's first peoples. With it comes a demand for accountability: holding America responsible for the embodiment of its founding principles and truths. This change is not about political correctness [[Donald J Trump Tweet Name Changes July 6](#)], but rather a recognition of past wrongs and the promise of a more honorable future for everyone.

Today is an example of the power and influence of people when we stand united for truth and justice; including the power that corporations hold and the responsibilities that they have to society beyond shareholder profits. While all of America should celebrate this progress, we must all recognize this as the beginning of process, not an end. There remain many more truths to be told and injustices to be righted in our collective march towards self-actualization as a nation and society. Our hope is that further change results from a broad and sustained societal awakening of consciousness that demands nothing less than basic human decency, respect, and regard for all people.

Established in 2014, the USET Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) is a non-profit, inter-Tribal organization advocating on behalf of thirty (30) federally recognized Tribal Nations from the Northeastern Woodlands to the Everglades and across the Gulf of Mexico. 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.