



United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

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USET Statement on the United States Patent and Trademark Office decision to cancel its trademark on the name of the Washington NFL mascot

June 19, 2014

For Immediate Release

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The following statement is from USET President Brian Patterson

For many fans of the Washington D.C. NFL team, the nickname has been one that they say reflects honor and reverence for our people. But for Native Americans it is an unacceptable racial epithet that reminds us of our painful place in the history pages of this country. Penobscot Indian Nation Chief Kirk Francis told the story of why the mascot name “Redskin” is truly hurtful. “For the Penobscot Indian Nation this is a deeply rooted issue. For three decades the Massachusetts Bay Colony called for a handsome bounty for Penobscot Indian men, women, and children. When the hunters brought in the scalps for their money buyers would ask ‘how many redskins do you have?’” Chief Francis said. Indian Country continues to take steps to be heard in an effort to bring an end to the use of this disparaging term once and for all.

I am pleased to be able to share with you an update on the ‘Change the Mascot’ campaign to end the use of the racially offensive ‘R-word’ as the mascot and name for the Washington D.C. NFL team. Yesterday, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) canceled the trademark on the name of the team’s mascot on the basis that it is a term “disparaging to Native Americans.” While the USPTO action does not force the team to change the name of the mascot, USET is pleased with the cancellation of the trademarked name and views this action as progress forward.

In 1999, this same case was won, but unfortunately the NFL and the team were able to reverse the decision on Appeal in U.S. District Court in 2009. Despite the confidence expressed by the team in their ability to once again reverse this decision, we feel that the ‘Change the Mascot’ campaign has been successful in educating the public and garnering strong overall public sentiment and support in our united stance to oppose the use of this term. I am thankful to the individuals and entities who have been instrumental in raising awareness and seeking change on this issue consistently through the years; particularly American Indian Rights Advocate Suzan Shown Harjo, Oneida Nation Representative Ray Halbritter, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation Chairman Marshall McKay, and the National Congress of American Indians. It is extremely important for all of Indian Country to continue unifying our voices until we are successful in bringing an end to the use of the ‘R-word’ by the Washington NFL team once and for all.

About USET:

On October 4, 1968, the Eastern Band of Cherokees, the Mississippi Band of Choctaws, the Miccosukee Tribe and the Seminole Tribe of Florida met in Cherokee, North Carolina with the shared idea that some form of unity between the Tribes would facilitate their dealings with the federal government. The result of their vision of “Strength in Unity,” was the inter-tribal council United Southeastern Tribes. Incorporated in 1969, United Southeastern Tribes operated first out of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and then moved to Sarasota, Florida. In 1975 it relocated again to

Nashville, Tennessee, where it resides today. The organization changed its name in 1978 to United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. to better reflect its membership, as federally recognized Tribes from Maine, to Florida, to Texas affiliated themselves with the organization.

Today, United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. is a non-profit, inter-tribal organization that collectively represents its member Tribes at the regional and national level. USET has grown to include twenty-six federally recognized Tribes, operating through various workgroups and committees and providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and information amongst Tribes, agencies and governments.

USET represents and promotes the interests of its member Tribes through conferences, associations, work groups, partnerships, etc. Additionally, it serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas, works on behalf of its membership to create an improved quality of life for American Indians through increased Health, Education, Social Services, Housing, Economic Development, Transportation, and Justice opportunities, and works to promote Indian leadership to ensure Indian Country's continued growth, development, and prosperity as Tribal Nations.

USET Mission:

United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. is dedicated to enhancing the development of federally recognized Indian Tribes, to improving the capabilities of Tribal governments, and assisting the USET Members and their governments in dealing effectively with public policy issues and in serving the broad needs of Indian people.

USET Member Tribes

<http://www.usetinc.org/about-uset/member-tribes/>

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“Because there is strength in Unity”