



Change the Mascot!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Change the Mascot: New Washington NFL Team Name Signifies Hard-Won Victory for Native Americans

The name change represents important first step; NFL must still acknowledge and apologize for the harm caused through its continued use of a dictionary defined slur.

Oneida Nation Homelands – Feb. 2, 2022 – Following the Washington NFL team’s announcement of its new mascot name, Ray Halbritter, Oneida Indian Nation Representative and leader of the [Change the Mascot](#) campaign issued the following statement:

“Change the Mascot welcomes this important moment as an historic development for Native Americans, civil rights advocates, sports fans, and most importantly, our future generations. This is a victory for all of those around the world seeking to advance inclusivity and respect in our societies.

“While the official changing of the name is cause for celebration, today’s announcement by the Washington NFL team should not be treated as a simple rebranding. Depicting this as a mere rebranding rather than righting a wrong is another indignity. It is important we never forget what it took to get to this moment, and recognize how social change like this is possible. We must not erase from history the damages done by a dictionary defined slur—nor the lack of formal apology from this organization or the NFL for its use.

“We always believed change was possible through solidarity and close partnership with Native American leaders, including those whose very work paved the path for this historic development, such as Suzanne Harjo and Amanda Blackhorse. Joined by the National Congress of American Indians, as well as a bipartisan group of policymakers, civil rights advocates, media leaders, religious institutions and national health organizations – our coalition banded together to

confront the anti-Native epithet, ultimately producing this major victory sought by Native Americans for generations.

“When societies want to address historical wrongs, the ones who have done it the most effectively have engaged in a common understanding of the history and the facts around an issue. How this team’s previous name is reflected on the NFL website and the Hall of Fame going forward – all of those things matter – and are important questions that must still be answered.

“By discarding the old racist name at last, we have taken the first step toward achieving meaningful change. Yet, equally important is how we all choose to remember what was involved in getting the team to finally change its name.”

About Change the Mascot

Change the Mascot is a grassroots campaign that works to educate the public about the damaging effects on Native Americans arising from the continued use of the R-word. This civil and human rights movement has helped reshape the debate surrounding the Washington team’s name and brought the issue to the forefront of social consciousness. Since its launch, Change the Mascot has garnered support from a diverse coalition of prominent advocates including elected officials from both parties, Native American tribes, sports icons, leading journalists and news publications, civil and human rights organizations and religious leaders.

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