

ONEIDA INDIAN NATION



ONEIDA NATION HOMELANDS

October 30, 2013

Roger Goodell, Commissioner
National Football League
345 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10154

Dear Commissioner Goodell:

Shekóli. As proud sponsors of the National Football League, the Oneida Indian Nation was encouraged by your recent statement that the league should be listening to critics of the Washington team's use of a racial slur as its team name. Today's meeting between our Nation and league officials about the Change the Mascot Campaign is an important first step in facilitating the dialogue.

Over the last many years, civil rights organizations, religious leaders, Native American governments and groups, Members of Congress and, most recently, the President of the United States have said what should be obvious: the league's continued marketing and promotion of a dictionary-defined racial slur should end. The Oneida Indian Nation's Change the Mascot Campaign is designed to amplify that message for two key reasons.

First, we want to finally halt the destructive effects of the "R-word" on our people and Native peoples everywhere. Additionally, as financial sponsors of the league, we are concerned that the league's marketing of a racially derogatory term undermines the NFL's ability to be a unifying force in America.

To that end, we are providing the following materials to you, with a request that you distribute it to NFL team owners for their review. These materials include:

- A detailed forensic report by Dr. Michael A. Friedman that looks at the systemic public health consequences of the NFL's use of the "R-word" on the Native populations that this slur targets. This analysis, compiled by a respected clinical psychologist, draws upon a body of scientific study, including from such esteemed organizations as the American Psychological Association, the American Sociological Association and the American Anthropological Association.
- A list of editorial boards, news organizations, Native American organizations, experts, governments, civic leaders, political leaders and journalists that have called for the Washington team to change its name. This list should at minimum dispel any pretense among NFL owners that the R-word is, as some have previously suggested, a "unifying force" in America or is

acceptable to Native Americans. As important, it proves that organizations and individuals representing millions of people want the league to stop promoting the derogatory epithet that was screamed at Native Americans as they were dragged at gunpoint off their homelands.

For purposes of framing today's discussions and discussions in the future, and in the spirit of transparency and mutual respect, we believe it is important to outline four specific action items that we are asking the league to take:

1. In conjunction with the events surrounding Super Bowl XLVIII during the week of February 2nd, 2014, we are asking that you schedule a meeting between the Oneida Indian Nation and NFL team owners during which Dr. Friedman and I can brief you and the owners on his report and the importance of the Change the Mascot campaign.
2. Because the effects of the R-word are so personal and acute, we believe you and Washington's team owner would benefit from speaking directly to our people about the R-word. We request an official visit to our homelands by you and Washington team officials. During your visit, we will facilitate a meeting between our community and league officials during which our people can have a conversation about the day-to-day effects of the Washington team name.
3. We request an amendment to the league bylaws that prohibits the league from naming teams with dictionary-defined racial slurs.
4. According to section 8.13 of the existing NFL bylaws, the Commissioner is empowered to initiate action against any owner who is "guilty of conduct detrimental to the welfare of the League or professional football." As Commissioner, you have exercised your authority to act pursuant to this provision under circumstances that are far less egregious than the use of a racial epithet as a team's name, including imposition of sanctions for salary cap violations, prohibition of on-field celebrations that do not reflect well on the game and punishing off-field misconduct by team officials. The actions you and the NFL Executive Committee can take against an offending franchise include "cancellation or forfeiture of the franchise in the league" and "requir(ing) the sale of any stock or interest in a member club" by an offending owner. We request that you use your power under section 8.13 to refer Washington team owner Dan Snyder to the league Executive Committee for possible sanctions should Mr. Snyder continue to promote a dictionary-defined racial slur that is clearly "detrimental to the welfare" of the NFL's image. If the Commissioner lacks the power to act, we request that you publicly say so.

We look forward to discussing these action items with you and to beginning a dialogue that we hope can be conducted in the spirit of mutual respect. Our guiding ideals in these discussions are very simple: no group deserves to have as powerful and as culturally influential an organization as the NFL treat it as a target of a racial slur. As this country's first people, we deserve simply to be treated as what we are: Americans.

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Ray Halbritter
Nation Representative