



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on August 17, 2023

Petitions Seek to Restore Indian Names to Pro Teams

In an unlikely effort to reclaim pride in sports teams with Indian or Indian-related names, an outfit called the [Native American Guardian's Association](#) (NAGA) has mounted petition drives to give two venerable organizations their original names.

Their targets: pro baseball's Cleveland Guardians and pro football's Washington Commanders. NAGA petition drives seek to return the teams' original and much-beloved names.

The Commanders' petition has collected more than 100,000 signatures. The petition to rename the Guardians, begun this week because of the success the first one has enjoyed, has almost 4,000 signatures.



Josh Hallett/flickr

The Petitions

The two teams were subject to a years-long leftist propaganda campaign that falsely claimed their names offended Indians. Indians were more likely worried about the grinding poverty in which so many live and the poor health they suffer, which changing the names did nothing to help.

But the two organizations surrendered before the ideological scalping parties. The "Washington football team" went nameless for some time, [then finally chose](#) the ridiculous and uninspired "Commanders."

That didn't sit well with Indians who found nothing "offensive" about "Redskins." Thus, the petition.

"The name 'Redskins' carries deep cultural, historical, and emotional significance, honoring the bravery, resilience, and warrior spirit associated with Native American culture," the [petition says](#):

It was never intended as a derogatory or offensive term but as a symbol of respect and admiration. Changing the name abruptly disregards the positive legacy that the Redskins name has built over the years and disorients the passionate fans who have invested their emotions, time, and unwavering support in the team.

We acknowledge the concerns surrounding cultural sensitivity and the need to foster inclusivity. However, we firmly believe that there are alternative ways to honor and respect Native American heritage without erasing it. By reclaiming the Redskins name, we have the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue, educational initiatives, and collaborations with Native American communities. Together, we can promote cultural appreciation, address misconceptions, and work towards a more inclusive society.

NAGA's website explains the history of the term Redskins, and how the team was named.



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The term is not racial, but martial. “It is specific to those early, red-painted native warriors who were known for their bravery, skill and fighting spirit,” the [website explains](#). The men painted red were for prepared to fight:

Redskins is derived from Native Americans’ use of the blood root plant and dye as ceremonial preparation for war. Redskin tribes used it to cover their shaven heads, arms, torsos and legs. They believed this color would protect them like a spiritual suit of armor – in a belief that they had made a connection with their war spirits who would guide them and provide strength and courage. Red symbolized blood, energy and power.

The team name was intended to honor Indians. In 1971, 38 years after the team was christened, “coach George Allen consulted with the Red Cloud Indian Fund on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation when designing the logo.”

As far as what real Indians thought of the name, as opposed to leftist activists, surveys were clear:

Two national political polls, the first in 2004 by the National Annenberg Election Survey and another in 2016 by The Washington Post came up with almost identical results. When a respondent identified themselves as Native American, both polls asked, “The professional football team in Washington calls itself the Washington Redskins. As a Native American, do you find that name offensive or doesn’t it bother you?” In both polls, 90% responded that they were not bothered, 9% that they were offended, and 1% gave no response.

At this writing, the petition has more than 115,000 signatures. More than 7,000 signed it today.

That success led to the petition to resurrect the Cleveland Indians, a [name dumped](#) in 2021, two years after Chief Wahoo, the team mascot, was kicked off Major League Baseball’s reservation.

“There is a profound significance to the Cleveland Indians’ name for our people’s history and culture,” the [petition says](#):

The name “Cleveland Indians” holds a complex legacy, one that embodies our resilience, strength, and enduring presence. It serves as a reminder of our shared history and the struggles we have overcome. By reinstating this name, we acknowledge the role our culture has played in shaping this nation.

Signatures are quickly approaching 4,000.

More-important Matters

Petitions aside, changing the names of the teams did nothing to help Indians solve the very real problems that, sadly enough, afflict so many today. Life on America’s socialist reservations is awful:

- The poverty rate on Indian reservations is about 25 percent, the most [recent data show](#).
- Per capita annual income on some reservations [is shockingly low](#).
- The Indian Health Service reports that Indians [suffer higher rates of disease](#) than other



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Americans. Alcoholism and chronic liver disease and cirrhosis are 6.6 and 4.6 times higher.



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