

Red skin OK for spuds, not mascots

Michael Costello/Lewiston Tribune

I was walking out of Walmart the other day with a container of my very favorite fast food - red skin potato salad. I like all potato salads, but there's something about the flavor and texture of Walmart's red skin potato salad that makes it stand out above all others. But as I approached my car, I began to wonder: Does this culinary preference make me a racist?

For years now, the cultural left has been cranking up the pressure on sports teams to shed mascots named after Indians. Among the first colleges to surrender its mascot was politically correct Stanford University. Formerly known as the Indians, the school now calls itself the Cardinal. The color, not the bird,. And because a color isn't much of a mascot, the school has a tree dancing on its sidelines.

Another early casualty in the mascot wars was Eastern Michigan. Known today as the Eagles, until 1991, Eastern Michigan University sports teams were known proudly as the Hurons. When the name changed, the real Hurons, an Indian tribe found these days in Oklahoma and Quebec, Canada, objected. The Huron Tribe was not in any way offended by the school's nickname and was, in fact, proud that the school honored its history. But never mind what real Hurons think. White liberals had already made up their mind. And they know what's best for everyone.

Since then, the NCAA has threatened punishment for any school that does not change its Indian mascot, although the Florida State Seminoles and the San Diego State Aztecs somehow manage to elude sanctions.

Strangely, nobody seems offended by the "Fighting Irish" of Notre Dame.

Professional sports have managed to resist political correctness. In baseball, we still have the Cleveland Indians and the Atlanta Braves. Basketball has the Golden State Warriors. And in football we have the Kansas City Chiefs and the hated Washington Redskins.

A growing number from the sports journalism community have chosen to make themselves the story through moral exhibitionism and refuse to call the team by its nickname, referring to the team as simply "Washington." One joke thoroughly cleanses the team by referring to it as the "Potomac Basin Indigenous Peoples."

And this isn't the first time that a Washington, D.C.-based sports franchise was pressured to change its name to soothe the chronically indignant social left. The former Baltimore Bullets professional basketball team moved to the Washington, D.C., suburb of Landover in 1973 and became the Washington Bullets.

However, the professional complainers moaned that the name celebrated gun violence in a city with a murder rate that ranked among the nation's worst. I personally thought that the franchise

could have shed itself of that association with violence by changing its name to the Landover Bullets, but the team instead became the Washington Wizards.

Were any wizards offended? I don't know.

But in all honesty, the Washington Redskins name is a special case that does not belong in the conversation with Hurons or Seminoles.

From an historical perspective, the word Redskins was never considered respectful. Ask yourself this question: Would you look an Indian in the eye and call him a "redskin" to his face? I doubt that you would. At least, I hope not. And because you would never say that, you should appreciate that the name is genuinely offensive and, in that context, it's inappropriate as a sports team nickname.

In fact, the only reason I can think of for refusing to change the nickname is to deny the compassion fascists a victory. Whenever they gain a victory, they react as a shark would to blood in the water. Better not to feed them at all.

And so, I have a solution that should satisfy everyone who does not embrace totalitarianism. I propose that we keep the nickname Redskins, but change the mascot. Today's Redskin mascot is a black man who dresses as an Indian chief, complete with a lengthy mane of feathers. Change the mascot to Mr. Potato Head and you've solved everything.

All associations between the derisive slur Redskin to native Americans would be severed. The name would survive and most memorabilia would preserve its relevance. In addition, this simple modification would deprive the cultural left of a treasured cause and leave them as frustrated as Bill Clinton before he met Monica Lewinsky.

And that would count as a feather in our hat.

Costello is a research technician at Washington State University. His email address is kozmocostello@hotmail.com.