

April 30, 2015

SD Board on Geographic Names  
SD Dept. of Tribal Relations  
302 East Dakota  
Pierre, SD 57501

MAY - 6 2015

Dear Sirs:

I would like to add to my  
comments in my previous letter.

If you choose to remove Harney's  
name (which I oppose), I think  
it should not be named after  
anyone.

Instead, I would prefer  
that it be renamed Harmony  
Peak or Ponderosa Peak.

Sincerely,

Beverly Letellier

BEVERLY LETELLIER  
504 W. MISSOURI #3  
PIERRE, SD 57501

1-605-224-7993



**PUBLIC COMMENT FORM**

MAY - 6 2019

The South Dakota Board on Geographic Names (SDBGN) is a state commission created in 2009 by SDCL Chapter 1-19C to recommend revision of offensive names for geographic places. The SDBGN has adopted a Public Involvement Process which seeks public comment on the existing historic name and offering recommendations and justification for the new name as well as names for unnamed geographic features. The SDBGN follows the United States Board on Geographic Names' principles, policies, and procedures. For further information visit: <http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/policies.htm>.

**Current Name:** Harney Peak

**Proposed Name(s):** Black Elk Peak

**Location/Identification:** Pennington County: Located in the Black Hills National Forest

The above feature is currently named Harney Peak and the SDBGN is soliciting public input on the current name and the proposed new name for the geographic feature. One name has been proposed. Please complete the section if supportive of the current name or the proposed new name.

**Support naming the Feature:** ~~Black Elk Peak~~ \_\_\_\_\_ Harney Peak  \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason/Justification of support to name the feature Harney Peak or Black Elk Peak:**

Please attach any supporting documentation such as resolutions from governing boards or organizations; newspaper articles; petitions or historical references.

To propose a new name for the feature, please complete the section below:

**Recommended Name:**

**Reason/Justification for Name:**

**Origin/Meaning of Name:**

**Please attach any supporting documentation such as resolutions from governing boards or organizations; newspaper articles; petitions or historical references.**

=====

**Submitted by:**

Name: *Carol & Glen Sabner*  
Title (if representing organization or public entity):  
Organization or Public Entity (if applicable):  
Mailing Address: *2350 E Sandy Flat Rd. Wall SD 57790*  
Telephone: *605 279-2238*  
Email Address: *none*

*If the recommended name is adopted by the SDBGN, additional information may be needed to support the recommendation to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.*

**Comments should be submitted no later than May 1, 2015. Submit comments to:**

SD Board on Geographic Names  
Dept. of Tribal Relations  
302 East Dakota  
Pierre, SD 57501

Email: [David.Reiss@state.sd.us](mailto:David.Reiss@state.sd.us)  
FAX: 605-773-6592

**Or access Public Comment Form: <http://www.sdbgn.sd.gov/>**

Changing the name of the peak would certainly confuse visitors and create more animosity towards Indians, not less. General Harney was following orders. They are carrying a grudge for 147 years.

There is very few Indians who don't have ancestors who killed white women and children.

Bashing veterans seems to be in style since Vietnam. I felt the need to respond as one veteran to another as my father served in world war one, my brother in world war two, I served in Korea, my son in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hypocrisy seemed to prevail at the Rapid City meeting. Those that promote name changes should bear the full cost of meeting, publications and signs.

Glen Zahny  
23502 Sandy Flat Rd.  
Wall S D 57790

Carol Lekner  
23502 Sandy Flat Rd  
Wall, SD 57790

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**Support naming the Feature:** Black Elk Peak \_\_\_\_\_ Harney Peak

The requirement to support the status quo of the name of Harney Peak to remain the same is difficult, because the reasons for the possible name change have not been made public. According to debate protocol and legal jurisprudence, the party wishing to change the status quo must attempt to prove their point, then rebuttal is allowed, with the prosecutor required to bear the burden of proof.

In lieu of that, the current name of the peak is in honor of a man who had a distinguished career. Even our United States presidents have not been perfect; they have had less-than-braggable moments and their share of enemies. Lincoln was the head of forces fought by the South during the Civil War, yet there are "Lincoln" schools today still honoring him. General William S. Harney was such a man, a government-directed soldier during the Indian wars in the Dakota Territory and also a "defender of American Indians" according to research done by the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation (see attachment). The word "Harney" is not a vulgar nor offensive word.

No insult to Black Elk as a man, but according to common history that can be Googled, Black Elk spent most of his life as a traveling showman.

According to the South Dakota Board of Geographical Names, preferred names must be descriptive of topographic forms suggested by local history, folklore, incident, or by associated natural life or other phenomena. Harney is a name that does, indeed, suggest local history and incidents. Harney Peak lies in the Black Hills National Forest, which is not just South Dakota but also Wyoming. Input for the peak's name should be put forth to Wyoming people as well as South Dakotans. According to high school social studies teachings, "historical" and "pre-historical" are defined by the written documentation of the time; the Sioux (who originally migrated from the Great Lakes region) nor their predecessors had written languages at that time. Thus not official historical name was recorded until the name of "Harney Peak." If anything, the peak should be renamed to reflect the original people of the area, but that tribe was wiped out in an Indian-verses-Indian war.

Unlike many small or minor geographical locations in South Dakota, changing this geographical name would necessitate altering new publications of history books, world and national and state maps, and the general public designation on the highest summit in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains. This last designation comes from the South Dakota Board of Geographical Names, thus the board has already addressed the issue and the board should not need to address the issue again.

Since the peak lies within the multi-state Black Hills National Forest, might the South Dakota Board of Geographical Names be excused in not wishing to possibly over-step its authority? Since the geographical location is of such great imminence to the nation and state, might the board understandably opt to put the issue to a state vote? The issue may not get the voter turnout of a presidential election (unless on the same ballot), but it would be more representative of the general population, many of whom steer clear of minor politics until given such an easy opportunity.

To stress my opening statement, the status quo stands until the proposing side clearly and definitively proves that a change must happen. Thank you.

Del Bartels, P.O. Box 318, Philip, SD 57567

*Del Bartels*  
P.O. Box 318, Philip, S.D.

Excerpts from a 2013 article by the  
South Dakota Historical Society Foundation

William S. Harney

... Harney was one of the best-known military figures in the United States between the War of 1812 and the War Between the States.

He chased the last remaining pirates of Jean Lafitte in Louisiana, fought in the Black Hawk War, led the cavalry in the Mexican War, almost caused a war with Great Britain in the Pacific Northwest and was both a fighter and peacemaker with American Indians.

... He and about 425 troops left on Sept. 29, 1855, for Fort Pierre. The federal government had recently purchased the former fur trading post north of the present-day town of Fort Pierre. Harney and his men arrived at Fort Pierre in a sleet and snowstorm on Oct. 20, only to find dilapidated buildings and no nearby hay and wood. Harney abandoned Fort Pierre in 1857. Before doing so, he had called a peace council that included all the western bands of Lakota. A treaty was negotiated which for the first time provided an Indian police force to preserve the peace. The treaty was rejected by the U.S. Senate.

... In order to end fighting throughout the Great Plains, Congress established the Indian Peace Commission of 1867. Harney served on this commission. American Indians he had fought now saw him come to make peace. During the councils, Harney became the defender of American Indians. He stressed their need for food and clothing. He was later placed in charge of the administrative district known as the Great Sioux Reservation. This included all the land west of the Missouri River in present-day South Dakota.

Overseeing the Great Sioux Reservation was Harney's last government job. He died in Orlando, Florida, on May 9, 1889. His name lives on in South Dakota. The peak he might have observed in the distance as he and his troops skirted the Black Hills in 1855 was named Harney Peak in his honor by Lt. G.K. Warren while on a survey expedition in 1857.

This moment in South Dakota history is provided by the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society. Find us on the web at [www.sdhsf.org](http://www.sdhsf.org). Contact us at [info@sdhsf.org](mailto:info@sdhsf.org) to submit a story idea.

# Harney Peak

Coordinates: 43°51′57″N 103°31′57″W﻿ / ﻿43.86583°N 103.53250°W﻿ / 43.86583; -103.53250

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Harney Peak** is the highest natural point in South Dakota and the Black Hills. It lies in the Black Elk Wilderness area, in southern Pennington County, in the Black Hills National Forest.<sup>[2]</sup> The peak lies 3.7 mi (6.0 km) WSW of Mount Rushmore.<sup>[5]</sup> At 7,242 feet (2,207 m),<sup>[1]</sup> it has been described by the Board on Geographical Names as the highest summit in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains.<sup>[6]</sup> Guadalupe Peak and Sierra Blanca also lie far to the east of the Continental Divide and are substantially higher, but the Rockies end north of the region of that latitude.

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- 1 History
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## History

The peak was named in the late 1850s by Lieutenant Gouverneur K. Warren in honor of General William S. Harney, who was commander of the military in the Black Hills area in the late 1870s.<sup>[6]</sup>

The first European Americans believed to have reached the summit were a party led by General George Armstrong Custer in 1874, during the Black Hills expedition.<sup>[7]</sup>

Harney Peak is the site of the Sioux Native American Black Elk's "Great Vision" which he received when nine years old and the site to which he returned as an old man, accompanied by writer John Neihardt, who

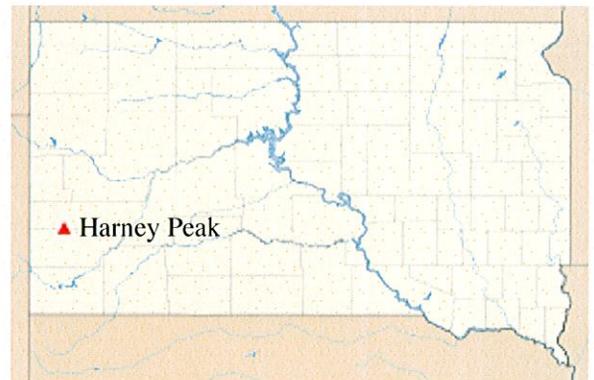
### Harney Peak



Harney Peak from Palmer Gulch (August 2006)

<b>Elevation</b>	7,244 ft (2,208 m) NAVD 88 <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Prominence</b>	2,922 ft (891 m) <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Listing</b>	U.S. state high point

#### Location



Pennington County, South Dakota, U.S.

<b>Range</b>	Black Hills
<b>Coordinates</b>	<span><span><span><span><span>43°51′57″N</span> <span>103°31′57″W</span></span></span><span><span>﻿</span> / <span>﻿</span></span><span><span>43.86583°N 103.53250°W</span><span><span>﻿</span> / <span>43.86583; -103.53250</span></span></span></span></span> <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Topo map</b>	USGS Custer
<b>Climbing</b>	
<b>First ascent</b>	July 24, 1875 by Valentine McGillycuddy and party <sup>[3]</sup>
<b>Easiest route</b>	hike, Trail 9 <sup>[4]</sup>

popularized the medicine man in his book *Black Elk Speaks*.<sup>[note 1]</sup>

Neihardt recorded Black Elk's words regarding his vision as follows: "I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world," he is quoted as saying. "And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being."<sup>[8]</sup>

Harney Peak was first used as a fire lookout tower in 1911, with nothing more than a wood crate placed at the summit. In 1920, a 12'x12' wood structure was built, and it was expanded to 16'x16' the following year. The Civilian Conservation Corps completed construction on the stone fire tower in 1938. Harney Peak fire tower was last staffed in 1967.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Hiking

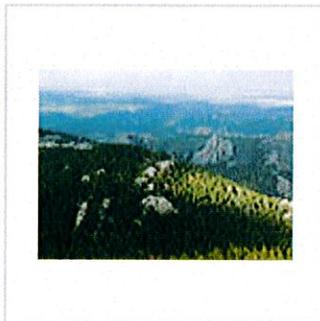
The summit can be reached from Sylvan Lake, Camp Remington, Highway 244, Palmer Creek Rd., Mount Rushmore, or Horse Thief Lake. From the trailhead at Sylvan Lake in Custer State Park, to the summit and back is about 7 miles (11 km),<sup>[4]</sup> This is the shortest, least strenuous, and most popular route. No permit is required for use of the first portion of the trail. However, the United States Forest Service requires hikers to obtain a permit at a self-service kiosk located at the entrance to the Black Elk Wilderness area, en route to the summit.<sup>[10]</sup>

An old stone tower, once used as a fire lookout tower, is located at the summit. The ashes of Valentine McGillicuddy were interred near the base of the tower and a plaque reads "Valentine McGillicuddy, Wasicu Wacan." *Wasicu Wacan* is Lakota for "Holy White Man."<sup>[11]</sup> note that "wacan" is commonly spelled "wakan" in some Lakota societies.

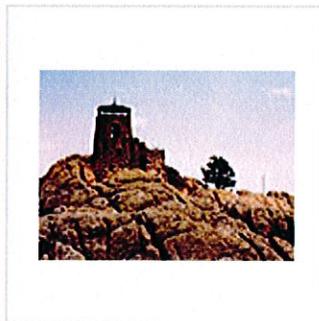
## Gallery



*Granite Knob and Harney's Peak*, by William H. Illingworth, 1874



View from the top of the Harney Peak lookout tower.



Fire lookout tower at the summit.



A Mountain goat near the top of Harney Peak.



A man-made dam is located near the summit.

## See also

- Outline of South Dakota
- Black Hills
- List of mountains in South Dakota
- List of U.S. states by elevation

## Notes

1. See chapter 3 and the Author's Postscript of *Black Elk Speaks*, Bison Books, 2004.

## References

1. "Harney" ([http://www.ngs.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/ds\\_mark.prl?PidBox=OT0810](http://www.ngs.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/ds_mark.prl?PidBox=OT0810)). *NGS data sheet*. U.S. National Geodetic Survey. Retrieved 2008-11-08.
2. "Harney Peak, South Dakota" (<http://www.peakbagger.com/peak.aspx?pid=6236>). Peakbagger.com. Retrieved 2008-12-29.
3. James R. Macdonald, Ph.D (2009). "Museum of Geology: History" (<http://museum.sdsmt.edu/home/history/>). Rapid City, South Dakota: South Dakota School of Mines & Technology. Retrieved 2012-11-10.
4. "Harney Area Trailheads" (<http://gfp.sd.gov/state-parks/directory/custer/trails/harney-trailheads.aspx>). South Dakota Fish, Game and Parks. Retrieved 2012-11-10.
5. *Mount Rushmore, South Dakota*, 30x60 Minute Topographic Quadrangle, USGS, 1977
6. "Harney Peak" ([http://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/f?p=gnispq:3:::NO::P3\\_FID:1261770](http://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/f?p=gnispq:3:::NO::P3_FID:1261770)). *Geographic Names Information System*. United States Geological Survey. Retrieved 2010-09-04.
7. Connell, Evan S. (1984). *Son Of The Morning Star*. San Francisco, California: North Point Press. pp. 237–238. ISBN 0-86547-160-6.

8. "Harney Peak" (<http://www.southdakota.com/harney-peak/371>). SouthDakota.com. Retrieved 2012-11-10.
9. Saum, Bradley D. (2013). *Harney Peak Revealed*. Createspace. pp. 34–36. ISBN 9781478316756.
10. "Harney Peak" (<http://www.summitpost.org/page/150511>). SummitPost.org. Retrieved 2012-11-12.
11. "McGillycuddy House at the heart of city history" (<http://blackhillstravelblog.com/mcgillycuddy-house-at-the-heart-of-city-history/>). Retrieved 2012-11-12.

## External links

- Regenold, Stephen (2008-04-02). "High in the Black Hills, as Seasons Turn"



Wikimedia Commons has media related to ***Harney Peak***.

(<http://travel.nytimes.com/2009/04/03/travel/escapes/03harney.html?pagewanted=all/>). *The New York Times*.

- "Facts About Harney Peak" (<http://climbing.about.com/od/usstatehighpoints/a/Facts-About-Harney-Peak.htm>). Climbing.About.com.

Retrieved from "[http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Harney\\_Peak&oldid=646665797](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Harney_Peak&oldid=646665797)"

Categories: Mountains of South Dakota | Black Hills

| Religious places of the indigenous peoples of North America

| Landforms of Pennington County, South Dakota | Sacred mountains | Highest points of U.S. states

| Black Hills National Forest | North American 2000 m summits

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April 29, 2015

S.D. Board on Geographic Names  
D. Dept. of Tribal Relations  
02 East Dakota  
Pierre, SD 57501

MAY - 6 2015

Dear Sirs:

I would prefer that the name  
Harney Peak be retained.

Sincerely,

Leverly Letellier

504 W. Missouri #3

Pierre, SD 57501

1-605-224-7993



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**Support naming the Feature:** Black Elk Peak \_\_\_\_\_ Harney Peak  X

**Reason/Justification of support to name the feature Harney Peak or Black Elk Peak:**

Needs to Remain Harney Peak -  
- Economic impact just in signs, mapping, Tourism etc - We can find better ways to spend our money -  
It is a well known Tourism attraction and changing the name will lose that.  
If a name change is made it should be done to a Non-Race associated name - whos to say 50 yrs from now will look at it differently -

Please attach any supporting documentation such as resolutions from governing boards or organizations; newspaper articles; petitions or historical references.

To propose a new name for the feature, please complete the section below:

**Recommended Name:**

**Reason/Justification for Name:**

**Origin/Meaning of Name:**

**Please attach any supporting documentation such as resolutions from governing boards or organizations; newspaper articles; petitions or historical references.**

**Submitted by:**

Name: *Patricia Reed Leif*  
Title (if representing organization or public entity):  
Organization or Public Entity (if applicable): *NA*  
Mailing Address: *Custer, SD*  
Telephone: *Ø*  
Email Address: *Ø*

*If the recommended name is adopted by the SDBGN, additional information may be needed to support the recommendation to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.*

**Comments should be submitted no later than May 1, 2015. Submit comments to:**

SD Board on Geographic Names  
Dept. of Tribal Relations  
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Pierre, SD 57501

Email: [David.Reiss@state.sd.us](mailto:David.Reiss@state.sd.us)  
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**Support naming the Feature:** Black Elk Peak \_\_\_\_\_ Harney Peak X

**Reason/Justification of support to name the feature Harney Peak or Black Elk Peak:**

- #1. Historical Data should not be changed!  
History is History no matter what!
- #2. Changing the name would not change what General Harney did or what Black Elk did. Again that's history! Native Americans cannot eliminate the fact that their history as to how they obtained their considered rights to the Black Hills was attained! Mainly they don't want to discuss that!
- #3 The inconvenience that a name change would cause and the confusion that would result is not worth it! Same as Mt. McKinley to Denali that still exists today.

Please attach any supporting documentation such as resolutions from governing boards or organizations; newspaper articles; petitions or historical references.

To propose a new name for the feature, please complete the section below:

Recommended Name: Powderosa Peak or Black Hills Peak

Reason/Justification for Name:

Please if it has to be changed. No Person  
or No Cultural Names!

Origin/Meaning of Name:

Historical

Please attach any supporting documentation such as resolutions from governing boards or organizations; newspaper articles; petitions or historical references.

=====

Submitted by: David L. Coppess

Name:

Title (if representing organization or public entity):

Organization or Public Entity (if applicable):

Mailing Address: 807 Harney St. Custer, S.D. 57730

Telephone: 605-673-4998

Email Address:

If the recommended name is adopted by the SDBGN, additional information may be needed to support the recommendation to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.

Comments should be submitted no later than May 1, 2015. Submit comments to:

SD Board on Geographic Names  
Dept. of Tribal Relations  
302 East Dakota  
Pierre, SD 57501

Email: [David.Reiss@state.sd.us](mailto:David.Reiss@state.sd.us)  
FAX: 605-773-6592

Or access Public Comment Form: <http://www.sdbgn.sd.gov/>

## Reiss, David

---

**From:** chargatje@aol.com  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 07, 2015 2:06 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Harney Peak

I believe the name should remain Harney Peak. If we get rid of all reference to historical figures that are considered offensive to some people, we would no longer have any reference to history. Both Black Elk and Harney may be equally offensive judging by what they did. The Lakota were not the first indigenous peoples to inhabit the Black Hills. They fought wars and chased off other Native American tribes, similar to what happened to them. I'm sure that those people would especially be offended by the name Black Elk, as their tribes were massacred by the Lakota.

History is there for all of to learn from and not repeat the same mistakes. If we whitewash history, we only cover up what really happened. We have bent over backward to be "politically correct" in dealing with the Natives. If we grant every request, they will never stop requesting until there are no more white people left in the Black Hills. That is what they really want and these are just tiny steps to achieving that goal. Please also consider the other races that live here and what is important in history to them.

**Reiss, David**

---

**From:** David Olsen <david.olsen@coldwellbanker.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 08, 2015 9:41 AM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Cc:** Jimmyczy@aol.com; UNITYSODAK1@KNOLOGY.NET  
**Subject:** ABSOLUTELY RIDICULOUS!

To re-name Harney Peak, to a name that nobody can pronounce!!  
What a waste of our money and time. It is clear that the decision-makers have not listened to the citizens. Any name change should go through 3-5 years of hearings so everyone is heard instead of just the protesters. The re-prints alone will cost. How can you use those costs toward creating jobs for those that protested the name Harney Peak. What a waste!  
Dave Olsen....born and raised in the Black Hills.

*David T. Olsen, Broker Associate  
Coldwell Banker Commercial Real Estate, Inc.  
2700 West Main Street  
Rapid City, South Dakota 57702  
Licensed in South Dakota  
Of 605-343-2700 Fx 605-342-2247  
C 605-484-9744  
[David.olsen@coldwellbanker.com](mailto:David.olsen@coldwellbanker.com)  
Website: davidtolsen*

**Reiss, David**

---

**From:** Callie Wockenfuss <callielee78@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 08, 2015 12:05 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Harney Peak name Change

Dear Mr. Reiss,

Please DO NOT change the name of Harney Peak. I am adamantly opposed to such a move!

Thank you for listening to the citizen's opinions!

Callie Wockenfuss  
Grant Specialist  
Boys and Girls Club of the Sioux Empire  
<http://www.bgcsiouxempire.org/>  
[cwockenfuss@youthenrichment.org](mailto:cwockenfuss@youthenrichment.org)  
605-864-0355  
605-338-8061

## Reiss, David

---

**From:** Kim <i90csc@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 08, 2015 1:39 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Harney Peak Name Change

You might want to check the "comments" as a result of the Rapid City Journal story about changing the name of Harney Peak. So far they are 35 comments against and 2 in favor.

I think changing the name without a vote would be a huge mistake. I am drafting my own comment and will forward it later.

Kim R. Smith

## Reiss, David

---

**From:** Allen Scot <scottenv@gwtc.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 08, 2015 3:07 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Harney Peak name change

I am very unhappy about the proposed name change for Harney Peak. I am a Custer resident with businesses here in Custer and my family feels that the name change is not needed. Leave well enough alone. Where will this stop? When we have renamed everything to suit a minority of the population for whatever reason they come up with? This is ridiculous! Please let me know when the comment period begins so that I might comment on this change. Thank you, Allen Scott.

## Reiss, David

---

**From:** Howard Schrier <schrierh@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 08, 2015 10:43 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Harney Peak

I lived within looking distance of HARNEY PEAK from 1969-1979. Went to college and then moved back to the Black Hill in 1984 and have lived here ever since so as long as I have lived here HARNEY PEAK has been know as HARNEY PEAK!. Leave it alone. I don't care what happened before I was born! I am not interested in taking the blame or the credit for what someones grandpa did to or for someone else's grandpa. Stop, just stop! 2 wrongs do not make a right!

Howard Schrier

Never give up.  
Never give in.  
Fight' Til you lose...  
Or fight "Til you win.  
Never let up.  
Never let down.  
Never let the frightened...  
See you frown.  
Wield your weapons.  
Conquer your fears.  
Work 'Till your sweat...  
Replaces their tears.  
Learn from your losses.  
Savor your wins.  
Prepare for the next one.  
And Battle again.

## Reiss, David

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**From:** Shane Matt <shanematt@rap.midco.net>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 09, 2015 12:23 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Inquiry from SDBGN website

Mr. Reiss,

I am emailing you because your address is the only email address on the South Dakota Board on Geographic Names website. I am hoping you can pass this onto the board for me.

I am very disappointed with the name that the board came up with, Hinhhan Kaga. I have no issue with the name Black Elk Peak. There are going to be so many issues of mispronunciation. It seems like this came out of no where and was forced by the board. I hope they reconsider. I am all for reconciliation with Native Americans, but let's at least use English. I like Black Elk Peak better.

Sincerely,

Shane Matt  
Rapid City, SD

**Reiss, David**

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**From:** Ezra Hays <ezrahays@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 09, 2015 4:26 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Harney peak

I am against the name change. I don't like the PC police. The name is part of SD history.

## Reiss, David

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**From:** Paul Rasporich <paulrasporich@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 10, 2015 8:45 PM  
**To:** Myron W. Pourier; Coralie Hughes; Robin Neihardt; Seth Tupper; Reiss, David  
**Subject:** A Case for Black Elk Peak

Hi all,

I wrote this tonight.

May 10, 2015

### **A Case for Black Elk Peak**

Renaming Harney Peak (the disreputable General Harney) in South Dakota, to Black Elk Peak (the Lakota Visionary Nicholas Black Elk), as Black Elk's great-grandson Myron Pourier eloquently points out, "exemplifies that the continuous reconciliation exist from two worlds that are striving to make our Nation a better place to live and enjoy, a Nation that is free from racism, hatred and the misunderstanding of who we are as people."

Perhaps in no other literature than *Black Elk Speaks*, has there been such an attempt by the two cultures to understand one another through Nicholas Black Elk and John Neihardt. The two men had an immediate, profound understanding of one another in my opinion, because both had Near-Death experiences at the age of nine years old. It is said that having such an experience gives one a sense of profound oneness that supercedes all cultural and religious barriers. The collaboration of John Neihardt and Nicholas Black Elk was in one seamless voice, likely because both had experienced that ineffable sense of oneness that Near-Death Experiencers purport to have.

If these two men had never met, the world would have been at a significant mainstream cultural loss. Both the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung and the American mythologist Joseph Campbell were profoundly influenced by the book, *Black Elk Speaks*. In fact, the mythologist Joseph Campbell, cited *Black Elk Speaks* as the most influential work in his penning *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. A young filmmaker by the name of George Lucas was greatly influenced by Campbell's work when he developed his movie - *Star Wars*. After *Star Wars*, another screenwriter Christopher Vogler created a mythic story structure based on George Lucas's, that has become a formula for success in Hollywood. One might say that movies such as *Star Wars*, *The Matrix*, *The Lion King*, and countless other films –would not exist were it not for Black Elk and Neihardt.

Also, the revered talk show host Dick Cavett said that he had never received more mail after an interview, than the one that he did with John Neihardt in which Cavett stated that, *John Neihardt told his immortal story of Black Elk and the vision this mystic and noble American Indian had so fortunately settled upon Neihardt as the man with the skills and understanding to bring his colorful and spiritual vision to the world.* Cavett also said that, *The author, Dee Brown mentioned seeing my show with Neihardt, adding, "Thousands of books have been written about Indians, and there are many fine ones. But if you could only preserve one book about the American Indian, it would have to be "Black Elk Speaks."*

Many might ask, why the need for reconciliation between mainstream society and the First Nations? Up here in Canada, the gulf of misunderstanding is no different than in the U.S.A. In fact, South Africa's system of Apartheid and segregation and separation was based on the Canadian system of Indian reserves. Despite having had apologies to residential school survivors from our Federal government, and recently had Truth and Reconciliation committees struck, Canadian children still don't learn much about the truth, let alone understand or have the tools to begin and think about the lofty concept of reconciliation.

Watching the debate over renaming Harney Peak from afar – especially the insensitive comments about the need to rename the peak, sadden me, and highlight the gulf of misunderstanding that still exists. South Dakota's Attorney General recently accused the Black Elk family's fund raising initiative to rename the peak as not being a legitimate charity. They have so far raised around 250 dollars to lobby for this initiative. I would suggest that the Attorney General visit the Black Elk family in Manderson, South Dakota himself. Then he might see that from his position of power and privilege, that he is using a sledgehammer to squash a fly.

Renaming Harney Peak to Black Elk Peak, is greatly symbolic of starting a process of reconciliation on many levels. After all, it was on this peak, both as a vision form, and our shared reality, that Black Elk experienced a beautiful vision of understanding among all of mankind, and he may have also predicted that this would occur during the generation that we are at this moment in history. Hopefully this happens.

Paul Rasporich

Artist/Teacher

Okotoks, Alberta,

Canada

**Reiss, David**

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**From:** robinjcox48@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Monday, May 11, 2015 9:31 AM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Inquiry from SDBGN website

This is the first time that I have ever commented on a state matter. I am very disappointed in the manner in which your board has chosen to change the name of Harney Peak. If you were to change the name of every entity in SD that is offensive to a small group of complainers, you would indeed be busy coming up with new names. The name that you have chosen for Harney Peak is not user friendly for people in South Dakota nor those planning on visiting South Dakota.

Robin Cox

## Reiss, David

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**From:** Larry Robinson <lbrobinson@cox.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 12, 2015 8:18 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Renaming Harney Peak

Mr. Reiss:

Just read an article in the Omaha World Herald about the proposed change to Harney Peak, and was perplexed, but not surprised, by the initiative. My family and I, having just returned from our annual hike to Harney Peak and patrolling the other attractions of the Hills----it was the week before this big snow storm, thank God-----are big fans of the area. I am there multiple times during the year to simply enjoy the ambiance of the Black Hills. That's why I am against some hypersensitive rational for shelving the name "Harney Peak". Thomas Jefferson owned slaves, and I think George Washington did as well; so does that mean you should change faces on Mr. Rushmore-----maybe you should push for a defacing and replacement of those two "less than perfect" individuals. All of us have some sort of negative perception problem with others of a different mindset, so it seems unreasonable to change names to accommodate a need for political correctness-----I urge you to leave the Harney Peak name alone.

We went skiing in Montana this year because the greedy operators of the resorts in Colorado raised their lift tickets 15-17% and many of the skiers are toking marijuana on the slopes---we don't need that, and I'm sure Colorado will survive without our money-----as will South Dakota survive without my/our multiple annual visits, which is exactly what will happen if you people change the name. I, too, stand on principle. Do what you think you need to do, and I'm hoping that it will be the much more appropriate course of action, specifically, leave Harney Peak unchanged.

Larry Robinson

## Reiss, David

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**From:** Melissa Darby <madarby.teacher@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 12, 2015 11:20 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** The Renaming of Harney Peak

Mr. Reiss,

I am not sure if you are still taking comments for the Harney Peak renaming. I am just a citizen of South Dakota. However, I would like to share my opinion on the matter.

I am not Native American, but I grew up on two different reservations, Standing Rock and Cheyenne River, in South Dakota. I love the Lakota culture, history, and the people. I can empathize with why that particular name, Harney Peak, is so very offensive to them, especially because of the peak's religious significance to them. I personally find it offensive as well. When I was competing for BHSU's Speech & Debate Team I started researching doing a persuasive speech specifically on renaming Harney Peak. There are many other sacred Native American places throughout the U.S. that I would have also included in my speech. While I was living in Phoenix, AZ (as a military wife) they renamed Squaw Peak (an insanely derogative name) to Piestewa Peak for Lori Ann Piestewa, the first known Native American woman to die in combat in the U.S. military. It was a proud and a "duh" moment for me. I was mortified by the previous name. Later, when I was in college, studying to become a teacher, I learned about the insensitive name given to the highest peak and the sacred place of the Lakota people in my own home state. As I previously stated, even though I grew up on the reservation, we were never taught this information in school, nor did my Native American friends discuss the matter. As a human being, as an educator in South Dakota, as a friend to Native American people, as a mother, as a child, and as a spiritual person I proudly and enthusiastically support the name change.

Also, I appreciate all the hard work and research that you and the board have done for this matter. Thank you for your dedication.

Sincerely,

*Melissa Darby*  
S.D. Certified Teacher

**"Fair doesn't mean everyone gets the same; fair means everyone gets what they need."  
-- Anonymous**

## Reiss, David

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**From:** Eric Zimmer <ericzimmer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 13, 2015 3:42 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Correction to Statement on Harney Peak Renaming  
**Attachments:** CAIRNS\_Statement on Harney Peak Renaming\_Corrected.pdf

Dear Mr. Reiss,

I recently authored a document entitled "Statement on the Renaming of Harney Peak" on behalf of the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies (CAIRNS) on the Pine Ridge Reservation. This report was submitted to the SD Board of Geographic Names during the public forum held in Rapid City on Wednesday, April 29, 2015.

Upon reviewing my report, I noticed an error in the first paragraph of page five. The passage currently currently reads:

"Lakota oral traditions and creation stories tie them to the region, while archaeological evidence places their arrival in the mid-seventeenth century. By any count, then, Lakota presence predates non-Native settlement in the Black Hills by at least a century and a half." (This information is cited to Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills*, pgs. 6-7.)

However, it should read:

"Lakota oral traditions and creation stories tie them to the region, while archaeological evidence places their arrival in the **mid-eighteenth** century. By any count, then, Lakota presence predates non-Native settlement in the Black Hills by at least a century." (This uses the same citation.)

While this is a minor error of fact, and does not alter the overall argument of the report, I thought it pertinent to inform your office of my mistake. Please find a revised PDF of my report attached to this message.

Thank you for the work you and your office do on behalf of the people of South Dakota.

All the best,

EZ

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**Eric S. Zimmer**  
Doctoral Candidate  
Graduate Instructor, American History  
Walton/Dean's Graduate Fellow  
**Department of History**  
**University of Iowa**

## Reiss, David

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**From:** Emery, Steve  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 13, 2015 4:19 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David; Hansen, June  
**Subject:** Fwd: Harney Peak: Thank you for your decision

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Paul Stover Soderman <[paul.stover.soderman@gmail.com](mailto:paul.stover.soderman@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** May 13, 2015 at 3:16:36 PM MDT  
**To:** <[Steve.Emery@state.sd.us](mailto:Steve.Emery@state.sd.us)>  
**Subject: Harney Peak: Thank you for your decision**

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the Harney and Little Thunder families, Basil Braveheart and Myron Pourier, I am thanking you and the Board for your unanimous decision to suggest Hinhan Kaga as the new name Harney Peak.

It our understanding that during the 30 day open comment time, many more will need to come forward with translations of Hinhan Kaga that could form a consensus for the final suggested new name. Is that accurate? We realize this is not finished and will work to get the word out.

Thank you for all you do.  
Sincerely,  
Paul Stover Soderman  
[720 454 3797](tel:7204543797)