

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

Dear Sires or Madames:

I stand in solidarity with esteemed Lakota Elder and Korean War combat Veteran Basil Brave Heart who says the highest peak in the He Sapa (Black Hills) is named after a general who massacred Sioux women and children. I stand with Brave Heart when he says, I am in favor of changing the name of Harney Peak. According to columnist Charles Trimble Hinhan Kaga was the peak that Oglala holy man Black Elk referred to as the "center of the world," and to rename it after such a man as Harney adds insult to the stealing of their sacred He Sapa, the Black Hills. Trimble (2014) posed the question, why was the Lakota designation of Hinhan (Owl) Kaga (Make) changed to that of Harney Peak? It was, after all, General William S. Harney who led the punitive campaign of 1855 against the Sioux, which was in retribution for the Sioux annihilation of Lt. John Grattan and his troops. It was Grattan who provoked the attack by firing on the Lakota over the so-called Mormon cow incident. Harney's most famous "battle" in that campaign was at Blue Water Creek, which actually was a massacre that rivals Wounded Knee in its senseless brutality (Lakotacountrytimes.com).

General William S. Harney was described as an arrogant, abusive and bare-knuckled murderer according to a Historian George R. Adams who wrote his doctoral dissertation on the famous Indian fighter. The dissertation later evolved into a 286- page scholarly biography called "General William S. Harney, Prince of Dragoons," published by the University of Nebraska Press in 2001. Harney was an imperialist; "According to the historian Adams, Harney was firm believer in Manifest Destiny the notion that the

nation was destined by God to conquer the continent and worked tirelessly to make it happen”(2001). Adams (2001) says he should be remembered for his quick temper, foul mouth, violent nature, vindictive bent and callous behavior. In his book, Adams (2001) says he should be remembered for abusing soldiers and committing murder. According to Adams (2001), he fathered a child out of wedlock and beat a slave to death in a fit of rage, after which he stayed on the lam for several months to avoid prosecution.

According to Adams (2001) he was twice court-martialed, and disobeying orders from Washington DC, he nearly provoked a war with Britain over a boundary dispute in the San Juan Islands, leading to his removal from command.

In conclusion, the scholar Adams (2001) in his overall judgment, he state’s “I think Harney was a great military leader and a great soldier by the standards of his times” but the scholar goes on to say that he was not a great human being by the standards of his time”(Hewitt, 2005). The standards of Harney’s time, Trimble says, saw the replacement of traditional names with new Anglo designations may also have been done as a step to break the tribal structure and disappear their people into the mythical melting pot as Manifest Destiny demanded. I think it’s a healthy exercise in undoing historical racism to change the names back to their traditional place names, and, wherever it is appropriate, original names.

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Reference

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Trimble C. (2014), Indiancountrytimes.com What's in a Name?

The ancestral homeland of the Apsáalooke is a wooded area with vast bodies of water. If one can imagine where there is a wooded area with vast bodies of water it would be the Ohio River Valley near the Great Lakes region.

As far back as I can remember, the oral history that has been handed down over generations and centuries, was that we were all one mankind. As human beings we wanted to settle our disputes by fighting and having warfare. First Maker said, "You must prove to me that you are men before you can fight each other." He placed a person in the water under a cliff with a weapon and asked the men jump off the cliff if they were man enough. Many began their attempt but changed their minds when they saw the man with the weapon. One individual walked up to the edge of the cliff and without hesitation dove off into the water. The individual ~~was~~ *That dove* ~~under~~ *off* the cliff lie dead in the water with a shaft of the weapon protruding out of his collar bone and blood oozing from his nostrils. First Maker said, "This is a man, eeklak bachee, he is on my side, biilukak. I will only make a few, kooshtakatbaawiik. From this day forward try to wipe him out, baapiihaaksee haaweewiakissalah. From that moment in time we became that Biiluke of "On Our Side," the ally of the First Maker.

As Biiluke, "On Our Side," we dwelled in a wooded area with vast bodies of water, balee hua bilichkee isaatkaasuum kookukaawuok. We lived off the water, hunted small game and water fowl, dug up roots and bulbs, picked berries and nuts, and trapped the smaller fur-bearing animals for additional food and clothing. We came west searching and hunting for larger game (bison). When we reached the Big River (Missouri River), we became Awashe, "Earthen Lodges" or better known as Hidatsa. We retained our survival skills but became farmers and tillers of the soil. One day two brothers were sent out on a fasting quest to seek their livelihoods. The younger brother, Red Scout, was given the squash seeds to plant and cultivate for his sustenance. The older brother, No Intestines, was instructed to seek a certain tobacco plant that was to be found in a mountainous region.

That was the cause of the great exodus from our mother tribe, the Earthen Lodges. No Intestines, his relatives, clan members and friends broke off onto the plains in search of the certain tobacco plant. History reports that we traveled the greater western portion of the North American Continent. We dwelled in four distinct geographical areas from Canada to Mexico. We first came to a place near present day Glacier National Park where the winters were too severe and too cold and long so we traveled toward the setting sun. We came to a region where there were many lakes with salt along the shore. It rained too often and the insects were too dense so we traveled toward the rising sun. We came to a place called Arrow Head River, present day Canadian River. The summers were too long, hot, and dusty so we traveled north again to Chief Mountain. Again the winters were too severe, frigid, and long so we traveled south. We came to the Rocky Mountain Region and there along the eastern slopes of the Big Horn Mountains, under Cloud's Peak, known to the Apsáalooke as "Where Raven Owner Was Badgered," the Sacred Tobacco plant was found.

No Intestines had passed away during our travels which took over a century. His son Good Growth, Alapaaliitichish, fasted on Cloud's Peak and saw the Sacred Tobacco plant glistening in the moonlight. Good Growth adopted his own son to initiate the Sacred Tobacco

Society Adoption Ceremony which is still practiced today. The first Sacred Tobacco seed planting was at the Seven Hills, a row of hills along Soap Creek in Montana.

The Sacred Tobacco Society Adoption Ceremony is a replication of our travels throughout the greater western portion of the North American Continent. The Adoption ceremony commences with a procession from a lodge representing our mother tribe, the Earthen Lodges or Hidatsa, to the Sacred Tobacco adoption lodge with four stops in between. The stops represent the four geographic areas where we dwelled before we found the Sacred Tobacco. There is a song sung at the on-set of the procession and sung four times. At the end of each song one step is taken forward and at the conclusion of the song the procession starts with the spouse of the adoption lodge keeper leading the procession with a Sacred Tobacco bundle strapped to her back. This song is as old as the Apsáalooke Nation and it is still sung today. The most prestigious sacred sites of the Apsáalooke are Where Raven Owner Was Badgered and the Seven Hills area. The Seven Hills area is still accessible but Where Raven Owners Was Badgered is heavily populated and is not accessible. Of course there are other prestigious sacred sites in the territorial homeland of the Apsáalooke. The Big Camp aka Medicine Wheel, the origin of a revenge ritual which kept our enemies at bay and caused us to defeat them, is being disturbed, destroyed, and desecrated by other indigenous nations, who know nothing about it. Grizzly Bear Lodge aka Devil's Tower is another prestigious sacred site being disturbed, destroyed, and desecrated. There is an Apsáalooke in that Large Boulder and her seven siblings went into the sky to be the place where they extend the pipe when it is offered in prayer. It is reported that the seven siblings come every once in a while to check on their sister. If ever there is some detection of a presence they are the siblings checking on their sister.

We have historical and sacred sites throughout the greater western portion of the North American Continent from Canada to Mexico but we did not leave a paper trail, rather a song trail. During our travels, mothers who lost their children would often mutilate themselves and seclude themselves in isolation for nights at a time. Spirit patrons would bestow lullabies for them to sing and raise their children to be healthy and mature. There are lullabies about Arrow Head River, Chief Mountain, and Where the Red-Headed Wolf roamed and others too numerous to mention. We have historical and sacred sites throughout northern and southern plains. We even have human remains of our ancestors in these various places that we frequented but we do not claim them because we have consecrated them back to our creator. When we lay a loved one to rest for the final time that is the last time we touch them. When they are not breathing there are no longer a part of us, they are beings without bodies and they are treacherous and can cause harm to you. They can affect your mind and emotions and can even make your face droop and your saliva drool. Whatever we put on them or place with them no one can claim, because we have consecrated them and their belongings back to the creator. To disturb them is sacrilegious.

We do not claim this vast area of the northern and southern plains east of the Mississippi River that we traveled. We only claim an area described by our great leader and statesmen, Blackfoot. At dawn on September 27, 1851, Blackfoot burned incense and revealed his sacred item, a white swan. He painted the bill blue and faced it toward the rising sun. He offered the pipe in prayer and in his prayer he described the homeland of the Apsáalooke, "Where my four base tepee poles

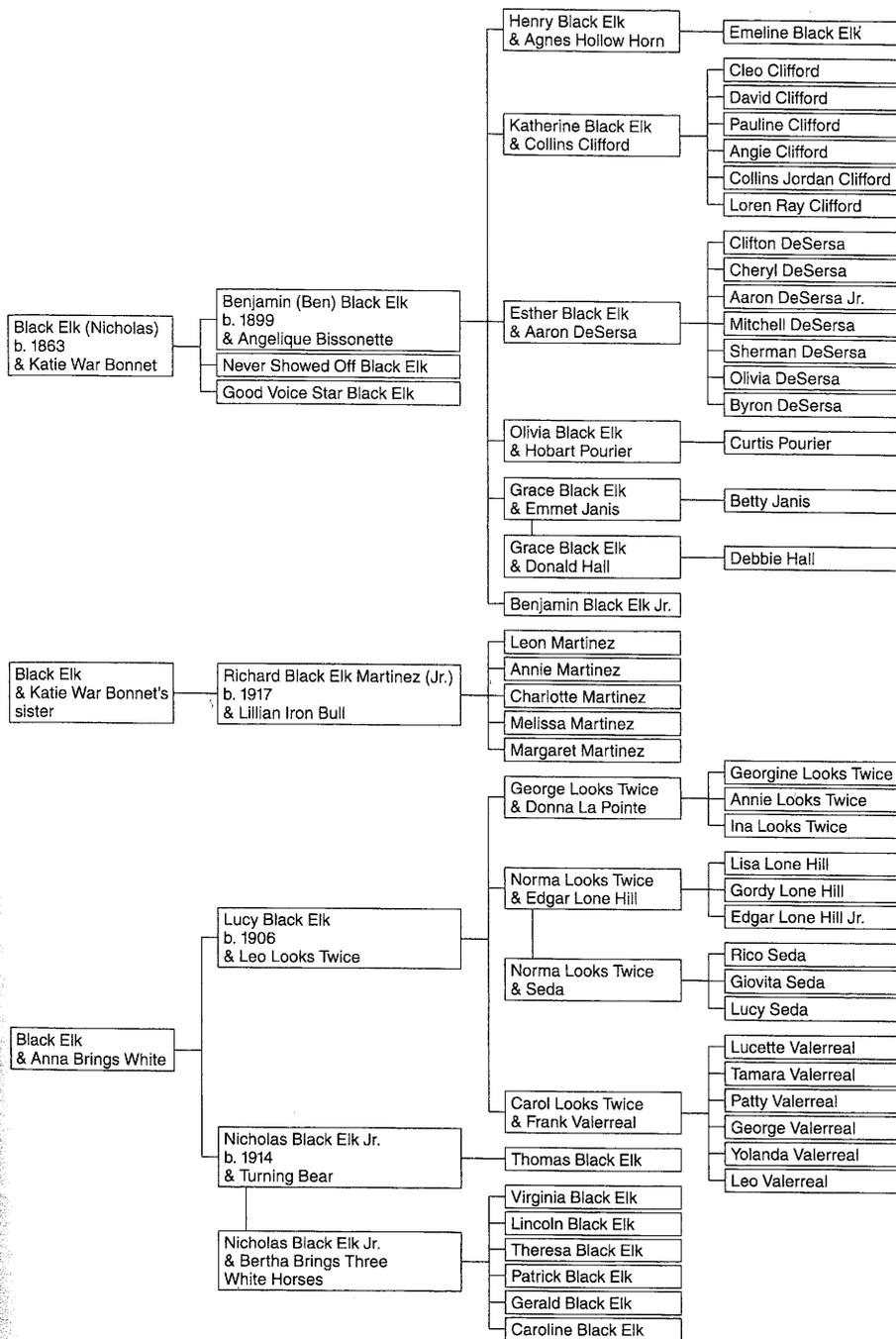
set is the homeland of the Apsáalooke. It is mine. Even if there is just one Apsáalooke left, I want that one Apsáalooke to have a place to come back home to. At the confluence of the Elk River set a base tepee pole. At the highest point in the Big Saddle in the mountain set another base tepee pole. At the Rain Hills set another base tepee pole. Along the ridge to the headwaters of the Big River set the fourth base tepee pole. If anyone interferes with what I have done, I want something to happen to them. If they are persistent, I want them to be gone. I want them to die.” At the treaty at Horse Creek later that day he reiterated his prayer but he said leave the last part out, the part causing harm and death. We only claim the area described by Blackfoot along with the territory frequented by the River Crow. Sore Belly, the principle leader of the River Crow walked away from the Friendship Treaty in 1825 never to associate with the white society, because one of the subordinate officers pointed a pistol at the temple on one of his entourage. He was killed fourteen years later by a Blackfoot warrior with a gunshot wound through the stomach. The River Crow frequented the area north of Elk River (Yellowstone River) to the White Water (Milk River), an area encompassing about one hundred nine million acres. We only claim this are going back to 3000 B.C. because that is the time we acquired the teepee. Within this vast area there are many historical and sacred sites that have been disturbed, destroyed and desecrated by other indigenous nations that know nothing about them.

The Apsáalooke Nation has never been defeated not even by the United States government. We were never displaced. We were brought here to this land of abundance around the Big Horn Mountains, our sacred mountain, by the Sacred Tobacco Plant and we have been here since. We acquired the teepee after we settled in this area. Yellow Leggings brought back the teepee from the animal world. The teepee has spiritual significance and the teepee rings that are scatted throughout the land are campsites. Campsites are sacred because that is where life is to begin and it is where life is to end. There is nothing that is perpetual on this earth except a campsite, which is forever and it will last as long as the Earth.

When the “being with four legs,” (horse) was brought to this continent, shortly after that a war party went after the animal. It all started when an individual fasted at the site where the Sacred Tobacco Plant was found; the individual was instructed to go after the “being with four legs.” The war party didn’t return for ten years. When they did return, all the wives of the war party were remarried except one who believed in her husband and waited for him. The horse changed the name of a band of the Apsáalooke to Kicked in the Belly band. There was an archeological dig performed at the Big Camp Site aka Medicine Wheel, that was dated to the mid-sixteenth century. The archeologist who reported it said it is probably the Apsáalooke or the Shoshone but the Shoshone never came around until the seventeenth century. Burnt Face, the originator of that fasting site, had gathered about forty or fifty mustangs before he fasted there before he went down off the mountain with his young wife.

We can go on and on with this history but if archeological data is used appropriately, many of the indigenous nations who claim this area would find themselves in other geographical areas before they were displaced. We have an inventory of the historical and sacred sites in Montana, Wyoming, North and South Dakota but not in Nebraska. Criteria should be established indigenous nations should be able to identify their ancestral homelands before they were

displaced, they should know the name and the story along with the names of places they claim affiliation with. If they are not able to produce names and stories, they should not be consulted. Special interest groups should not be consulted because they are not authorized representatives of their nations. Native consultant firms should have documentation or certification from the respective nations if they want to be considered bona-fide experts.





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STATEMENT ON THE RENAMING OF HARNEY PEAK

Submitted to the

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE BOARD OF GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

APRIL 29, 2015

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This brief provides historical context to the ongoing debate over the renaming of South Dakota's highest mountain, Harney Peak. It first examines the personal history of General William Selby Harney, for whom the mountain has been named for some 160 years. It makes a clear case for why, no matter what the people of South Dakota decide to *rename* Harney Peak, the mountain should unequivocally be *unnamed*. The essay then explores several alternative titles and advocates returning the mountain to its original Lakota name, *Hinhan Kaga*. Changing the mountain's name to *Hinhan Kaga* honors regional Native Americans. It also offers a subtle but significant recognition of South Dakota's willingness to engage with the troubled nature of our collective past and strive toward a more historically informed and culturally aware future.

I

William Harney's name should no longer be inscribed on the Black Hills landscape. First and foremost, Harney's connection to the peak that bears his name is only tenuous. A military topographical engineer, Lt. Gouverneur K. Warren, named Harney Peak during his three military-sponsored field expeditions between 1855 and 1857. In all likelihood, Warren named the mountain after Harney in an expression of what the historian Roderick Nash calls the "explorer's prerogative." Warren saw a landmark that lacked a name in the Euro-centric world of which he was a part, and without regard for the site's existing Native title, named it after a prominent non-Native leader. Given Warren's position and that Harney himself was arguably the most powerful non-Native on the northern plains at that moment in time it is unsurprising that the engineer named the largest mountain in site after his commanding officer. Yet there is little evidence to suggest that Harney ever set foot on the mountain, and probably only ever viewed its imposing silhouette from afar.¹

Harney's actions before and during his time in the Black Hills were deplorable under any standard of human decency. While living in St. Louis in between army tours in 1834, Harney beat a slave child named Hannah to death with a piece of rawhide. It is unclear exactly what instigated this brutal murder. According to the historian George Rollie Addams, Harney grew irate with young Hannah—perhaps over a minor miscarriage of her duties—and flew into a violent rage. Harney was well known for his short temper, and according to his grand jury indictment, beat Hannah repeatedly on her "head, stomach, sides, back, arms, and legs." Broken and bruised, Hannah died the next day, as the local coroner wrote, from "wounds inflicted by William S. Harney." The attack was so vicious that Harney was indicted for murder.²

1. See G.K. Warren, "Military Map of Nebraska and Dakota," March 4, 1860, in Frank N. Schubert, ed., *Explorer on the Northern Plains: Lieutenant Gouverneur K. Warren's Preliminary Report of Explorations in Nebraska and Dakota, in the Years 1855-'56-'57* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1981); Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (New York: Viking, 2010), 83–84; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 273.

2. George Rollie Addams, *William S. Harney: Prince of Dragoons* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 47. See also Addams, p. 299, note 9, where he cites the St. Louis County Grand Jury Indictment dated July 28, 1834. The authors Bob Drury and Tom Clavin assert that Harney killed Hannah because she "had lost his house keys," but do not offer a citation for that information. See Drury and Clavin, *The Heart of Everything That Is: The Untold Story of Red Cloud, An American Legend* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 135.

Following this attack, Harney fled to the Missouri countryside and then to Washington D.C. in order to escape arrest and a local community that had grown irate over his act. Even in the antebellum South, where slavery and violence against African Americans frequently went unnoticed and unprosecuted, Harney was charged with murder. His family and friends, moreover, warned him not to return to St. Louis for fear that vigilantes might exact their own retribution. This extra attention resulted from the brutality of Harney's act, as well as the fact that he had offended many local St. Louisans when—in another fit a rage some months prior—he assaulted a man for speaking ill of President Andrew Jackson, whom Harney staunchly supported. After several months, Harney returned to St. Louis only to find that much of the scandal surrounding Hannah's murder had subsided. He nonetheless requested and received a change of venue, and his trial went forth in nearby Franklin County.³ As Addams writes, even though Harney was “clearly responsible for Hannah's death,” he was found not guilty in October 1834 because—despite the initial uproar over his actions—“[w]hite society in the 1830s” ultimately “cared little about the death of a slave.”⁴

Harney resumed his military career and furthered his blossoming reputation as a fierce Indian fighter. Over the years, Harney fought against the Seminoles in Florida and Sauk and Meskwaki warriors in Illinois during Black Hawk's War in the 1830s. He also served in the US-Mexico War in 1847. But it was his exploits at Ash Hollow along Blue Water Creek in what is now Nebraska that earned Harney the nicknames “Mad Bear” and “Woman Killer” by regional Lakotas.⁵

The wrath of Harney and those under his command reverberated across Indian Country, even in the broader context of the so-called “Indian Wars” of the nineteenth century. His 1855 actions stand in their ruthlessness alongside the atrocities committed at Sand Creek, Colorado in 1864 and Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1890.⁶ In 1854, two Lakota bands engaged twenty-nine American soldiers under the command of Lieutenant John L. Grattan just east of Fort Laramie in what is now Wyoming. Grattan had been dispatched to arrest a group of Sicangu (also known as Brulé) Lakotas accused of killing a settler's cow. The Lakotas made several overtures to peaceably compensate the settler for the dead cow, but Grattan refused their efforts and ordered

3. See Addams, *William S. Harney*, 47–51.

4. Addams, *William S. Harney*, 51.

5. On Harney's military service and his exploits at Blue Water Creek more generally, see Richmond L. Clow, “Mad Bear: William S. Harney and the Sioux Expedition of 1885-1856,” *Nebraska History* 61 (1980): 132–151; Addams, *William S. Harney*; Ostler, *Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 43–51; Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 41–43; Susan Bordeaux Bettelyoun and Josephine Waggoner, *With My Own Eyes: A Lakota Woman Tells Her People's History*, ed. Emily Levine (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 54–67; Richard J. Stachurski, “Harney's Fight at Blue Water Creek,” *Wild West* 15, no. 6 (April 2003); Paul N. Beck, *The First Sioux War: The Grattan Fight and Blue Water Creek, 1854–1856* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2004); R. Eli Paul, *Blue Water Creek and the First Sioux War, 1854–1856* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

6. The US military massacred some two hundred Cheyenne and Arapahos, two thirds of whom were women and children, in an unprovoked attack at Sand Creek, Colorado, in November 1864. The US similarly killed at least two hundred Lakotas, most of whom were women and children, at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in December 1890. See Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013); Jerome A. Greene, *American Carnage: Wounded Knee, 1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014); Richard E. Jensen, R. Eli Paul, and John E. Carter, *Eyewitness at Wounded Knee* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

his troops to attack. Surprised by the strength of the Indian opposition, Grattan ordered his men to retreat. The warriors pursued and killed them all. This incident has been called the “Grattan Massacre,” and was but one of several skirmishes that occurred on the Northern Plains between 1853 and 1855. As the historian Jeffrey Ostler writes, Americans harbored “an attitude of righteous innocence” about the incident, in which non-Native opinion unfairly held that “Lakotas were certainly in the wrong.” This sentiment persisted despite Grattan’s refusal to hear repeated Lakota peace entreaties.⁷

Following the Grattan incident, the Army sent six hundred soldiers under Harney’s command to arrest the Lakota leaders deemed responsible for Grattan’s death. Their other objective, as the Sicangu Susan Bordeaux Bettelyoun—who was born at Fort Laramie in 1857—recalled in her memoir, was “to punish the Indians.”⁸ Harney, who according to Ostler “had a reputation for treating ‘friendly’ Indians with compassion,” nonetheless “took a hard line against those he saw as enemies of the United States.”⁹ Indeed, during his march from Fort Kearney toward Blue Water Creek, Harney made his intentions clear: “By God,” he said, “I’m for battle—no peace.”¹⁰

Indeed, on the morning of September 2, 1855, Harney’s forces caught up with the Sicangus, who were camped along Blue Water Creek. Harney ordered his men to prepare an assault on “those d---ed red sons of b---es, who massacred the soldiers near Laramie last year.” He commanded his troops not to spare even one Native, and the soldiers obliged.¹¹ Despite peace overtures by Little Thunder and other Sicangu leaders (Iron Shell is said to have raised a white flag of surrender even before the fighting began), Harney’s attack killed eighty-six Lakotas, more than forty of whom were women and children.¹² Aided by two Howitzer machine guns, the soldiers launched their assault then pursued on horseback. First-hand accounts shared with Bettelyoun describe the carnage:

Men, women, and children were shot right down and lay strewn on the prairies everywhere, trampled under the feet of the sharp-shod cavalry horses. The wounded ones were trying to crawl away to places out of the way. Some succeeded in falling into the cutbanks of the Little Blue River. Some of the women crawled under the overhanging weeds and grasses along the banks. Some were wounded and were bleeding; children’s cries had to be subdued. They had no time to bind up their wounds. Groans from the dying could be heard. The hoofbeats of the soldiers sounded right above them.¹³

Lt. Gouverneur K. Warren—the army topographical engineer who would later name Harney Peak after his commanding officer—was at Blue Water Creek and similarly described the

7. Ostler, *Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 44.

8. Bettelyoun and Waggoner, *With My Own Eyes*, 54.

9. Ostler, *Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 44.

10. Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848 –1865* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 115, quotation 1.

11. Ostler, *Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 45, quotation 1.

12. Schubert, “Explorer on the Northern Plains,” xiv, quotation 7. See also Ostler, *Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 45 and Bettelyoun and Waggoner, *With My Own Eyes*, 62.

13. Bettelyoun and Waggoner, *With My Own Eyes*, 62.

gruesome scene. “[W]ounded women and children crying and moaning, horribly mangled by bullets,” lay sprawled across the ground.¹⁴ According to historian Frank N. Schubert, Warren, who had tended Lakota wounded after the slaughter, held mixed feelings about the massacre. On one hand, his official report declared that the battle taught the Sicangus “a useful lesson, which they will not soon forget,” and encouraged his commanders to continue fighting Lakotas in order to demonstrate American military power. In his private writings, however, Warren revealed his distaste for the violence at Blue Water Creek: “I was disgusted,” he wrote, “with the tales of valor in the field” boasted by his comrades. There “were but a few” soldiers, he continued, “who killed anything but a flying foe.”¹⁵ After the initial attack, according to a group of Lakota women who would live to tell of their experiences, it was Harney who “with great difficulty, stopped [his] soldiers from making a complete slaughter,” instead ordering them to take more than seventy survivors prisoner.¹⁶

Together, the Grattan and Blue Water Creek incidents are called the “First Sioux War.” They helped ignite a series of military conflicts that would span several decades across the Northern Plains. These included, among others, Red Cloud’s War and the Battle of the Little Bighorn, and culminated with the murder of famed Oglala leader Sitting Bull at Standing Rock Reservation and the massacre of several hundred Lakotas at Wounded Knee in December 1890.¹⁷ By that time, the federal government had parceled vast tracts of land stretching from the Missouri River to eastern Wyoming and northern Nebraska—which the US promised to the member nations of the *Oceti Sakowin* (commonly called the “Great Sioux Nation”) in the treaties of 1851, 1854, and 1868—into reservations that were, and are, a mere fraction of their former size.

Harney, however, would not participate in these conflicts. Following Blue Water Creek he was reassigned to Florida and with the onset of the Civil War, was pushed into semi-retirement in 1863. He continued to serve “light duty” in an administrative capacity throughout the decade. Beginning in 1865 Harney “assumed the role of Indian friend and advocate” on three peace commissions—including the meeting that produced the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. That agreement reserved all of what is now western South Dakota to the member nations of the *Oceti Sakowin*. It would be broken by white settlers and the US Government less than a decade later in what Supreme Court Justice Harvey Blackmun called a “ripe and rank case of dishonorable dealing” unmatched in American history.¹⁸ Addams argues that Harney’s vast experience and wide personal connections in Indian Country led him to argue for equitable treatment of Native peoples at the various negotiations of the Indian Peace Commission. Harney even managed part of the reservation for more than a year, and may have also made amends with some former Lakota enemies.¹⁹

14. Ostler, *Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 45. For the quotations used here, see p. 202, note 24.

15. Schubert, “Explorer on the Northern Plains,” xvi, quotations 1 and 2.

16. Bettelyoun and Waggoner, *With My Own Eyes*, 58.

17. On the legacies of the Grattan Fight and the Massacre at Blue Water Creek, see Beck, *The First Sioux War*; and Paul, *Blue Water Creek*.

18. Addams, 240. For Blackmun’s quote, see Frank Pommersheim, *Braid of Feathers: American Indian Law and Contemporary Tribal Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 204.

19. On Harney’s time with the Indian Peace Commission, see Addams, *William S. Harney*, 242–273

II

Broad consensus suggests that if Harney Peak is renamed, it should be done so in a way that honors the American Indians who inhabited the Black Hills prior to non-Native settlement.²⁰ While many Native groups have significant historical and cultural ties to the region, Lakotas have the strongest historical, cultural, and legal ties to the Black Hills. 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.²¹ Along with the other nations of the *Oceti Sakowin*—Lakotas have legal claim to the land as set forth in the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, which included the Black Hills. Finally, Lakotas presently make up the majority of the Black Hills' Native population. It is both fitting and logical, then, that Harney Peak's new name speak to and honor the region's Lakota inhabitants, both past and present.

Some have suggested that Harney Peak should be renamed "Black Elk Peak" (or *Hehaka Sapa*, the Lakota translation of that title) after Nicholas Black Elk, a prominent Oglala Holy Man who lived from 1863 to 1950. Black Elk was certainly a visionary and venerated leader whose life transcended many of the major historical developments of his lifetime. Indeed, Harney Peak itself already resides within a specially designated "Black Elk Wilderness" area. According to his conversations with John G. Neihardt—a non-Indian who edited Black Elk's words and published them in *Black Elk Speaks*—the Oglala leader prayed often at Harney Peak. Without question, Black Elk was an individual whose character, actions, and personal connection to Harney Peak—unlike Harney himself—make him an excellent candidate for the high honor of being forever inscribed on the Black Hills' highest mountain.

This thoughtful and respectful nod is of kind intent, but does not comport with Lakota custom. Very few geographical features bear the names of individual Lakotas, the most prominent of them being Crazy Horse Memorial, which was named in 1948 by a non-Native sculptor, Korczak Ziolkowski and Sicangu/Oglala leader Henry Standing Bear. Another would be the long plateau covering the western edge of the Pine Ridge Reservation, known as Red Shirt Table, which was named for the Oglala leader Red Shirt. Yet Crazy Horse and Red Shirt Table are outliers in the broader pattern of Lakota place names. For example, the following well-known landmarks all have Lakota names: *Mato Tipila* is officially called "Devil's Tower;" *Pte Tatiyopa* is known as "Buffalo Gap;" *Mato Paha* is called "Bear Butte;" *Pe Sla* is also known as "Reynolds Prairie;" and *Wasun Niya* is "Wind Cave."²² As these Lakota names suggest, there is no long-standing precedent for naming

20. See for example Kevin Woster, "Black Elk Family Joins Effort to Change Harney Peak Name," *KELOLand TV*, September 19, 2014, www.keloland.com/newsdetail.cfm/black-elk-family-joins-effort-to-change-harney-peak-name/?id=169609, accessed April 14, 2015; Seth Tupper, "Lakota Elder Wants Harney Peak Renamed," *Rapid City Journal*, September 16, 2014, http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/lakota-elder-wants-harney-peak-renamed/article_f9827a0e-1301-500a-a830-fb9325a3511f.html, accessed April 22, 2015.

21. Ostler, *Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 6–7.

22. "Reservations in South Dakota," map created by the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies, 2013; "En Route: Lakota Lands and Identities," presentation prepared for the "Classroom on Wheels," Rapid City Area Schools Office of Indian Education and Rapid City Public School Foundations, June 9–13, 2014, slides in author's possession.

landmarks after individual Lakotas. Therefore, renaming Harney Peak after any one Lakota—even one as venerated as Black Elk—would be inappropriate.

A recent online petition has offered another alternative name for Harney Peak, based on an effort to respect a variety of Native peoples who have connections to the Black Hills. The document calls for renaming Harney Peak *Opahata'I*, and claims that doing so will reflect the mountain's role as the "center of all that is" in a variety of Native traditions.²³ In his edited examination of *Black Elk Speaks*, the anthropologist Raymond DeMallie points out that Black Elk himself once referred to the Black Hills as "the heart of the earth" and Harney Peak as the "center of the earth."²⁴ While Harney Peak is certainly important to Lakota cosmology and oral traditions, the phrase "[the] center of everything that is" usually refers to the Black Hills as a whole, not Harney Peak. The term *Opahata'I*, moreover, does not appear in either of the two most trusted Lakota/English dictionaries.²⁵ Questions about its genesis have aroused some suspicion that the term may be a recent linguistic construction, thereby making it a less desirable alternative name than Harney Peak's original Lakota moniker, *Hinhan Kaga*.

The most suitable replacement name for Harney Peak, then, is *Hinhan Kaga*, or "The Making of Owls." According to the Sicangu poet and educator Lydia Whirlwind Soldier, Lakota oral tradition connects the peak to tribal ceremonies. The mountain "is called *Hinhan Kaga* because of the rock formations that appear to look like owls . . . it is a sacred site already know[n] to the Lakota," and her "people go to *Hinhan Kaga* every spring to pray. It is a time of gratitude for the return of Thunder and the return of the renewal of life."²⁶ *Hinhan Kaga* offers a simple return to a traditional place name that predates non-Native contact and comports well with Lakota tradition. It is therefore the best option for replacing Harney Peak's current title.

Finally, recognizing the mountain as *Hinhan Kaga* fits with a recent international trend toward returning geographical locations to their indigenous place names. The Alaska Board of Geographic Names, for example, re-designated North America's highest mountain, *Denali*, in 1975. Although the federal government still officially calls Denali "Mount McKinley," the US changed the name of "Mount McKinley National Park" to "Denali National Park and Preserve" in 1980.²⁷ In another case from the other side of the world, Australia officially ascribed the dual name "Ayers Rock/Uluru," to an internationally-known landmark in 1993, in order to better

23. "DIA FYI: Register Your Opinion on the Possible Renaming of Harney Peak," online petition forwarded via email to the author, April 1, 2015.

24. See Raymond DeMallie, ed., *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 310 (on the Black Hills) and 295 (on Harney Peak).

25. Perhaps the two most oft-used Lakota/English dictionaries are Eugene Buechel and Paul Manhart, *Lakota Dictionary: Lakota-English/English-Lakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002) and *New Lakota Dictionary Online* (Lakota Language Consortium, 2014), <http://www.lakotadictionary.org/nldo.php>, accessed April 20, 2015.

26. Lydia Whirlwind Soldier in correspondence with the author, April 13, 2015. See also James LaPointe, *Legends of the Lakota* (San Francisco, Cali.: Indian Historian Press, 1976), 87-92; Ronald Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology*, 2nd Edition (Rosebud, S. Dak.: Sinte Gleska University, 1992), 12. See also Amos Bad Heart Bull and Helen Heather Blish, *A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 289. Bad Heart Bull and Blish drew a famous map of the Black Hills, but it does not list a name for Harney Peak.

27. Olmstead Center for Landscape Preservation, "Cultural Landscape Report for Park Headquarters, Denali National Park and Preserve: Site History, Existing Conditions, Analysis, and Treatment," prepared for the National Parks Service, US Department of the Interior (Boston: 2008), 3.

reflect the name regional Aboriginal peoples gave it prior to non-Native arrival.²⁸ Efforts to return Native landmarks to their indigenous place names are underway in many corners of the globe, and replacing Harney Peak with *Hinhan Kaga* would complement this important trend. In so doing, South Dakota will send a message of awareness and reconciliation to its own residents, as well as the millions of visitors who enter the Black Hills each year.

III

The debate over Harney Peak's name has little to do with matters of "political correctness," as has been repeated many times by opponents of the proposed name change. Quite the opposite, this decision can and must hinge on the extent to which we citizens of the twenty-first century can reconcile the actions and legacy of a nineteenth century man with the core values we hope represent South Dakota (and the United States) both in Harney's time and now.

Summing up Harney's life and legacy, the historian Addams casts a balanced judgement. He notes, on the one hand, that Harney "[s]hould be remembered for his courage and boldness in combat and his innovative [military] tactics," as well as "his familiarity with [N]ative people, his contributions to the work of the Indian Peace Commission" and "his advocacy for fair treatment of Indians within the context of federal Indian policy," both of which came later in his life. But Addams also emphasizes the many negative aspects of Harney's character and the raw facts of his personal story. Harney "should be remembered for his quick temper, foul mouth, violent nature, vindictive bent, and callous behavior . . . for abusing soldiers and committing a murder," and finally, "for his impulsiveness, arrogance, quarrelsomeness, and obstinacy."²⁹

These latter critiques are central to any discussion of Harney's character and the extent to which South Dakotans should consider his actions a reflection of the message we send to our residents, children, and the millions of visitors who drive past or ascend Harney Peak each year. On one hand, we must remember that Harney was—as those who defend him frequently state—a man of his time. Indeed, he worked as a soldier and did what he considered to be his duty. And he did it with horrifying alacrity. He even served in what some consider a less destructive capacity—and probably befriended some individual Native people along the way—toward the end of his career.

But these facts can no longer paper over Harney's violent history. Harney Peak is named for one man, who was remarkably violent even by the standards of his own time. In the end, it is Harney's actions—and his alone—that we must evaluate as we consider striking his name from our landscape. South Dakotans should remember that when visitors see Harney Peak emblazoned upon maps, road signs, and trail heads, they receive a subtle but significant message about the extent to which our residents are willing and able to think critically about our past and its relationship to the communities of our present. Continuing to call Harney Peak by its current name suggests a willful blindness of the dark legacies of history and a blurred inability to forge a clear, thoughtful, and positive future.

28. See Robert Layton, *Uluru: An Aboriginal History of Ayers Rock* (Canberra, Australia: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2001), and Warren, "Military Map."

29. Addams, *William S. Harney*, 286.

Above all else, perhaps, South Dakotans must recognize that by holding public debates over the name of Harney Peak, the South Dakota Board of Geographic Names extends to William Selby Harney the second chance that he neither offered Hannah, the innocent slave child he brutally murdered, nor the eighty-six Sicangu men, women, and children who lay dead at Blue Water Creek as a result of the attack he planned and the orders he gave. For that reason alone, South Dakota's highest peak must no longer bear his name.

The name Black Elk Peak has a great ring to it

My old friend and Holy Rosary schoolmate Basil Brave Heart is proposing to have Harney Peak, the highest point east of the Rockies, renamed after Oglala Holy Man Black Elk, an idea I think is so very appropriate. I was contacted by Myron Pourier, great great grandson of the elder Black Elk, to ask if I might help in this effort, and I am honored to do so.

The summit that is known as Harney Peak was central to the great dream Black Elk experienced when he was a child, as he lay in a coma near death. In the book *Black Elk Speaks*, which he told to the author and poet John Neihardt, the holy man related:

“I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. 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. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy.”

As with other landmarks like Bear Butte and Peh sla, that peak held great significance to the spirit of several Native cultures. In the Lakota legend of the great deluge, it was where the people went to survive when the water monster Unktehi and her children swelled themselves to flood the great Missouri and its tributaries. The people called upon Wakinyan Tanka, the great Thunder being who lives in the sacred Black Hills, and with his Wakangli lightning he killed Unktehi and saved them.

There are two place names in the Black Hills that are offensive to the history of our Native tribes: Custer and Harney. The name Custer is offensive for obvious reasons, but if the citizens of that town want to live with the name of a historic loser, perhaps we can leave them be. But the name of Harney should not be given to a sacred pinnacle in a most sacred area, He Sapa.

It was, after all, General William S. Harney who led the punitive campaign of 1855 against the Sioux, which was in retribution for the Sioux annihilation of the brash young Lt. John Grattan and his troops in their unprovoked attack on the Lakota over the so-called Mormon cow incident. Harney's most famous “battle” in his punitive campaign was at Blue Water Creek which actually was a massacre that rivals Wounded Knee in its senseless brutality.

One historical account tells of treachery added to the brutality: “Harney concluded the more than 250 Brules and Oglalas camped on Blue Creek were the guilty parties. He divided his force and led his infantry towards the village. While Harney engaged in a delaying parley with Chief Little Thunder, the mounted troops had circled undetected to the north.

“The infantry opened fire with its new, long-range rifles and forced the Indians to flee toward the mounted soldiers, who inflicted terrible casualties. Eighty-six Indians were killed, seventy women and children were captured, and their tipis were looted and burned.”

Naming the peak that Oglala holy man Black Elk referred to as the “center of the world” after such a man as Harney adds insult to the presumption of conquest of the Sioux people, and the stealing of their sacred He Sapa.

In their quest, Basil Brave Heart and Myron Pourier will be faced with the attitude, “now those damned Indians want to change the names of our great mountains, like they want to change the names of our favorite sports teams. Aren’t they ever satisfied?”

Disposing of the name Harney and replacing it with Black Elk is not too much to ask of the state of South Dakota or the federal government, whichever has the jurisdiction in the matter.

Injustice should have no bounds, no statute of limitations, until the offense is corrected.

This effort, under the auspices of the Black Elk Development nonprofit organization, is paid for out of their own pockets. They are asking for your help, and if you are so inclined, check them out at www.blackelkdevelopment.com to make your donation.