



# Propose New Name or Name Change of Geographic Feature

The South Dakota Board on Geographic Names (SDBGN) is a state commission created in 2009 by SDCL Chapter 1-19C. 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>. Any proposed name changes for municipalities, counties or other political subdivisions of the State of South Dakota should be sent directly to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names for consideration.

Proposed Name: Hinhan Kága Pahá

Action Requested:

- Name an unnamed feature
- Change name of existing feature

RECEIVED  
APR 22 2015

Reason for requesting name change or proposing a name for unnamed feature:

See Attached Testimony, "The 'Renaming' Of Harney Peak."

Type of Geographic Feature: Mountain Peak

Location of Feature (County/Geographic Coordinates):

Great Sioux Reservation; Pennington County.

Descriptive Information of the geographic feature:

Located in the Black Hills. Highest Peak in continental US, east of the Rocky Mountains.

Meaning or Significance of the proposed name:

See accompanying Testimony, "The 'Renaming' Of Harney Peak."

Intended to Commemorate/Honor an Individual Y  N   
If yes, who?

Are you representing an organization/public entity or acting as an individual? If representing an organization or public entity, please identify the organization and your role.

Community for the Advancement of Native Studies (CANS)

Please provide any letters of support for the new name and list any public entities or organizations that have indicated support for the new name below:

Rosebud Sioux Tribe will submit a resolution of support for new name.

**Submitted by:**

Name: Edward Valandra, PhD  
Title (if representing organization or public entity): Founder  
Organization or Public Entity (if applicable): CANS  
Mailing Address: PO Box 1235, Mission, SD 57555  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address: n8tv.studies@gmail.com

*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.*

**Submit form to:**

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

Email: david.reiss@state.sd.us  
FAX: 605-773-6592

**Website:** <http://www.sdbgn.sd.gov/>

South Dakota Board On Geographical Names (SDBGN)  
Testimony Regarding The "Renaming" of Harney Peak

Edward C. Valandra  
Community for the Advancement of Native Studies (CANS)

17 April 2015

Valandra Testimony: Renaming Harney Peak

"By God, I'm for battle—not peace. Don't spare one of those damned red sons of a bitches."

General William Harney prior to September 1855 Blue Water Massacre

My name is Edward Valandra. I am Sičhánǵu Thítħurwanj from the Rosebud Reservation, and founder of the Community for the Advancement of Native Studies (CANS), which is chartered by the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. I currently teach Native Studies at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. I applaud the effort by the SD Board on Geographic Names (SDBGN) to undertake the task of renaming Harney Peak. Undertaking this task recognizes that certain groups, communities, and people have been historically excluded when American society memorializes its heroes and heroines. I also support changing the name of Harney Peak to a more appropriate designation, which I will outline in this document.

Renaming is a common practice globally, and for this reason SDBGN's decision to rename Harney Peak is not unique. For example, in anticipation of its independence, British Honduras renamed itself Belize in 1973; China "renamed" Peking to Beijing in 1949 when it adopted an alternate transliteration method; in a reconciliation effort, South Dakota renamed Columbus Day Native American Day in 1989; women from the West or western-influenced have traditionally changed their "maiden" name to that of their spouse; and celebrities often rename, i.e., rebrand, themselves, using a stage or pen name rather than their given legal name.

The motivation for renaming Harney Peak is, however, unique, and for several reasons. The first and foremost reason is that naming a landmark peak in Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Oyáte (herein Oyáte) territory for William S. Harney is inappropriate in the extreme. American narratives about Harney Peak, like the one below, present an uncritical view of the man for whom the peak was named.

Harney Peak was named by Lt. Gouverneur K. Warren in the 1850s for Gen. William S. Harney. Warren had fought for Harney in the 1855 Battle of Ash Hollow, in which U.S. forces defeated a group of Brule Sioux Indians in present-day western Nebraska, south of the Black Hills. The Ash Hollow battle was viewed as a victory of major importance by whites, because it avenged the so-called Grattan Massacre of 1854, in which Sioux Indians killed 30 U.S. soldiers. The Ash Hollow victory also brought about a period of relative peace for settlers passing through Sioux Country on the Oregon Trail. Consequently, it's not surprising that the highest point in the Black Hills and several places in Oregon and other parts of the west were named for Gen. Harney. (Source: [www.southdakota.com/harney-peak/](http://www.southdakota.com/harney-peak/))

## Valandra Testimony: Renaming Harney Peak

The narrative implies the peak did not have a designation until Warren bestowed one. This implication is, of course, inaccurate. The peak indeed has a name pre-dating 1492. Another implication from the narrative is that, if Warren or others knew of the peak's pre-contact name but nonetheless bestowed a new one anyway, then such naming represents nothing more than a colonizer's hubris.

Moreover, the same narrative asserts that Harney deserves to have public spaces named for him based solely on a US-sanctioned criterion: fighting Indigenous Peoples. The narrative invokes military terms and phrases, like "general," "lieutenant," "Battle of Ash Hollow," "U.S. forces defeated," "victory of major importance by whites," "Indians killed 30 U.S. soldiers," and "peace for the settlers," and casts Indigenous Peoples as the aggressors in our own homelands. The narrative whitewashes what fighting Indigenous Peoples truly encompasses: demonizing Indigenous Peoples for defending our homelands and way of life. The narrative's goal is to justify whites' indiscriminate killing.

Harney Peak is not an exception, unfortunately. Numerous public spaces, not to mention buildings, towns, and monuments, have been named for Americans who either killed Indigenous Peoples indiscriminately or endorsed it in their official capacities: General George Custer (a SD town, a state park in SD), General of the Army Phillip Sheridan (a town in Wyoming, a county in Nebraska), Governor Alexander Ramsey (a county in Minnesota plus several buildings and schools), President Abraham Lincoln (a county in SD, a memorial in Washington, DC), and Commanding General of the Army William T. Sherman (a town in Nebraska, the Sherman tank). Memorializing these and other "Indian fighting" personalities, many whom are white males, normalizes whites' killing of Indigenous Peoples. In the public spaces created by these memorials, American society inevitably comes to perceive such killings as something other than genocide.

Other stories challenge mainstream's cleaned-up version of William S. Harney's conduct toward Indigenous Peoples. For example, in 1967 Robert G. Atheran, a white historian, describes Harney's actions against the Oyáte at Mní Thó Wakpá (Ash Hollow to Americans) as far from a battle.

The end result was a massacre, although in white annals it has been recorded as a battle. "I never saw a more beautiful thing in my life," wrote one infantryman [who participated in the massacre], adding in mild apology, "We, of necessity, killed a great many women and children." More formally, Harney reported eighty-six killed, five wounded, and seventy women and children taken prisoners (p. 38).

Almost four decades later, Jeffery Ostler, also a white historian, adds to Atheran's narrative. He provides details that the infantryman's mild apology did not disclose.

In contrast to Harney's sanitized version of the slaughter, Lieutenant G.K. Warren wrote in his journal of the "wounded women and children crying

## Valandra Testimony: Renaming Harney Peak

and moaning, horribly mangled by the bullets." Frank Salway, a trader who arrived at Ash Hollow shortly after the massacre, heard from Harney's interpreter that soldiers took an infant from a woman who had been shot through the leg. The child was "put up as a target and shot at by some of the soldiers who killed it" (p. 41).

The Oyáte's story of what happened at Mní Thó Wakpá in September 1855 deserves equal consideration. The Oyáte's accounts of Harney's actions contradict US history's glorification of him. In 1976, James LaPointe, then an 83-year old Oglála Thítŋuwan Elder, noted, "There were some [whites] who were despised [by the Oyáte] for their treachery, such as William S. Harney. Colonel Custer belonged to this category also" (p. 43). The Oyáte do not describe Harney's tactics as a fight but instead as *Tiapa Wičhak-te*, which indicates people being slaughtered in their homes.

General Harney made friendly overtures, and Little Thunder agreed to meet him in amiable parley. While the General and Chief Little Thunder were engaged in talk, the general, secretly deployed his soldiers, who completely encircled the encampment. After the trap was set, and people killed, Harney disdainfully told Little Thunder to go and defend his peoples. A massacre occurred that ranks high among many atrocities suffered by the red man in which women and children were the victims (*ibid.*).

Basil Brave Heart's September 2014 letter, with supporting documentation to SD Tribal Relations Secretary LaPlante, provides graphic depiction of the Mní Thó Wakpá Massacre. Because of Harney's conduct during this US sanctioned, punitive campaign, Harney acquired different names amongst the Oyáte. But he is most remembered as *Óhuŋkešni Tokawichaya*—one who plunders or rapes the weakest of the people. Atheran, Ostler, LaPointe and Brave Heart called out Harney's behavior with candor, and they deserve our gratitude.

This testimony and others give evidence of how disparate the narratives have become—one sanitized, one not. The disparate narratives between the Oyáte and Americans about Harney's actions at Mní Thó Wakpá are but one example of the contested narratives between Indigenous Peoples and whites in South Dakota and in the United States generally. Unaddressed, the disconnections that result from this disparity widen with each passing generation. Recognizing the disparity in the narratives and wanting to address it has evidently brought SDBGN to where it is at today: a commitment to re-naming Harney Peak.

Having established that Harney is an inappropriate name for the Black Hills' highest summit, the question not only for the SDBGN but also for all those who care deeply about social and restorative justice and reconciliation becomes: what name is appropriate? Fortunately, Oyáte history and culture provide the answer. Prior to and after European Contact, the formation of the United States, and the establishment of South Dako-

## Valandra Testimony: Renaming Harney Peak

ta, the Oyáte have always called this peak Hiŋhaŋ Káġa Pahá. Beyond serving as a significant, physical landmark, Hiŋhaŋ Káġa Pahá has also served the Oyáte as a multi-purposed cultural and ceremonial space.

Culturally, Hiŋhaŋ Káġa Pahá is not literally about owls. The area has cosmological associations that are mirrored in the land formations in and around the greater Black Hills. When a person learns the Oyáte's story about why the peak is called Owl Making Place, other celestial-to-land (and vice versa) relationships become clear. These relationships frame the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Oyáte's way of life. For example, the Wičhíŋčala Šakówiŋ narrative and its constellation are both associated with Hiŋhaŋ Káġa Pahá. The story teaches people, among other things, about how valuable our children are and instills the desire to ensure that no harm comes to them. The constellation reminds us of that story and transmits its teachings to the next generation. Valuing and protecting children is a custom shared by all; yet the Oyáte's historical name exposes that the peak's present name memorializes a man whose values were the opposite.

Ceremonially, when the sun is in the Wičhíŋčala Šakówiŋ constellation, the people know to Welcome-Back-The-Thunders at Hiŋhaŋ Káġa Pahá. This communal ceremony coincides with the Spring Equinox, and it signals to the people to start making preparations for upcoming summer ceremonies. These timed ceremonies ensure that the people will continue on, stay connected to each other, and are thankful to the Natural World. From the historical record, we learn that Harney held views opposite from what Hiŋhaŋ Káġa Pahá represents.

Therefore, I submit this testimony to support those who have recommended that the SDBGN approve "Hiŋhaŋ Káġa Pahá " to replace the name of "Harney Peak."



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Edward C Valandra  
Box 1235  
Mission, SD 55105  
Email: n8tv.studies@gmail.com

## Valandra Testimony: Renaming Harney Peak

## Glossary

Mní Thó Wakpá:	Blue Water Creek
Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Oyáte:	People of the Seven Council Fires
Hįŋhaŋ Káŋa Pahá:	Owl Making Place
Wičhiŋčala Šakówiŋ:	Seven Girls

## Sources

- Athearn, Robert G. 1967. *Forts of the Upper Missouri*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Brave Heart, Basil. 2014. Letter to Secretary Leroy "JR" LaPlante, The Department of Tribal Relations, regarding Harney Peak.
- LaPointe, James. 1976. *Legends of the Lakota*. San Francisco: Indian Historian Press.
- Ostler, Jeffery. 2004. *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ullrich, Jan. 2011, 2d. *New Lakota Dictionary*. Bloomington, IN: Lakota Language Consortium.

4/23/15

South Dakota Board on Graphic Names:

Please consider the request to change the name of Harney Peak in the Black Hills of South Dakota to Black Elk Peak.

General Harney ordered an attack on innocent Lakota people, slaughtering children and adults. It is a matter of moral decency and respect to name this cherished place after someone notable, especially someone who has so deeply showed veneration for the area.

Changing the name to Black Elk Peak would be very meaningful to a number of people, both Lakota and others.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Derenne

Green Bay, WI

**Reiss, David**

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**From:** Donna Kluthe <garydonnak@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 25, 2015 8:55 AM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** HARNEY PEAK

Greetings,

Granted General Harney wasn't such a good guy. So what? It's pretty hard to find someone of his era and his vocation who didn't do some harsh things. That goes for both sides in battles fought in all of history.

We hear of horrific cruelties inflicted by both Indians and Soldiers. Indian warriors and soldiers alike earned their status for their actions in battle. As did Harney and Crazy Horse and Custer and Black Elk and Patton, etc.

So, if the name of our majestic Harney Peak must change please don't name it after a person.

How about something like Granit Peak or Majestic Peak.

Thank you,  
Gary Kluthe

**Reiss, David**

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**From:** Barb <pries1@earthlink.net>  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 25, 2015 7:18 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Cc:** Barb Pries  
**Subject:** Harney Peak name change

Dear Mr. Reissue,

Harney Peak is beautiful part of the Black Hills. The name has been used since the 1850's and people come from far and near to view and hike it.

Why would anyone consider changing the name? The rebranding effort and expense do not justify this. I question why government tax money is spent on such a process. Let's focus our tax money and government labor on projects that are needed and actually help improve the lives of our citizenry.

Sincerely,  
Barb Pries

**Reiss, David**

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**From:** Joe Jedrykowski <joejed@q.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 26, 2015 10:38 AM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Harney Peak Name Change

**I am against this change!**

Why is there a need for it?

Is there something in General Harney's background that suddenly makes this change necessary?

## Reiss, David

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**From:** Jean-Claire <jc.hamblin@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 26, 2015 10:51 AM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Renaming Harney Peak

I am very much in favor of changing the current name of Harney Peak, believing that it will rectify a mistake made some years ago when folks decided to assign the name of someone with the record he had, particularly when the mountain had a name at the time. I would appreciate some consideration given to changing the mountain's name to He aka Sapa Peak or Mountain. In the alternative, perhaps it would be attractive to those interested to use the Lakota term for their original name for the mountain (which I'm not recalling right now...Thunder --??--).

When traveling in New Zealand it was impressive to note the multitude of place names that were Maori in origin and used today. It gives everyone a sense of who first named the places and a pervasive respect for those who came before us. South Dakota residents and tourists can benefit from that mindset.

Good luck in your process. I look forward to learning the opinion of others on this matter and the outcome of this inquiry into change.

Thank you for taking these suggestions,  
Jean-Claire Hamblin  
(Rapid City and Belle Fourche)

Sent from my Verizon Wireless 4G LTE smartphone

Reiss, David

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**From:** Joe Jedrykowski <joejed@q.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 26, 2015 11:04 AM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Fwd: Harney Peak Name Change

I just researched some info about General Harney. I'm sorry to learn that he massacred Lakota villages. Nevertheless, I'm fed up with all this nonsense concerning continually changing names because someone is slighted. Enough is enough. **My vote stands as NAY!**

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**From:** "Joe Jedrykowski" <joejed@q.com>  
**To:** "david reiss" <david.reiss@state.sd.us>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 26, 2015 9:37:38 AM  
**Subject:** Harney Peak Name Change

**I am against this change!**

Why is there a need for it?

Is there something in General Harney's background that suddenly makes this change necessary?

**Reiss, David**

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**From:** Brenda Malone <tanagila@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 26, 2015 12:38 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Harney Peak Name Change

Hello,

I am commenting on the proposed name change of Harney Peak to Black Elk Peak. It is my feeling that this is the least we can do as a white race to give a little something back to the People who were here on the land before us. Please honor this request and change the name to Black Elk Peak. Especially, since the decedents of Harney are in support of this change.

Sincerely,

Brenda Malone

## PUBLIC COMMENT FORM

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>.

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

I am IN SUPPORT of renaming Harney Peak to BLACK ELK PEAK, for the reasons that it is one of the most sacred Peaks to the Indian People, because Col. Harney was a disgrace who slaughtered Indian men, women and children and was a part of the wrongful taking of these sacred Hills. I support in doing what is right in History, for righting our wrongs and returning these lands to their rightful caretakers. Mitakuye Oyasin. Thank you.

Current Name: Harney Peak  
Proposed Name(s): Black Elk Peak  
Location/Identification: Pennington County: Located in the Black Hills National Forest

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: Whitney Ryan Chandler

Title (if representing organization or public entity): Organization or Public Entity (if applicable); Mailing Address: 320 W. Platte Ave. Colorado Springs, CO 80905

Telephone: 720-382-4742

Email Address: whitneychandler10@yahoo.com

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 Email: David.Reiss@state.sd.us 302 East Dakota FAX:  
605-773-6592

Pierre, SD 57501

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

**Reiss, David**

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**From:** Marc Ohms <marcohms@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 26, 2015 5:17 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Harney Peak

Please do NOT change the name of Harney Peak. Where do we end with this? A lot of history is not pleasant, but hiding from that fact by trying to remove anything that might offend someone does not help.

There are a ton of unnamed peaks throughout the Black Hills, name one of those! In fact, there are 3 unnamed 7,000 foot peaks that could use a name.

Marc Ohms

**Reiss, David**

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**From:** linda anderson <lindaanderson1948@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 26, 2015 9:21 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Harney Peak

David,

I would like to tell you my thoughts on renaming Harney Peak. We do not need another Black Elk name on something else in the hills there is already Black Elk Wilderness and should not be used for Harney Peak as it would be confusing. I disagree with all of these name changes anyway but know that it will happen anyway as everyone wants to be politically correct. I am a 6th generation who have lived in South Dakota and would like to have Harney Peak to be a neutral title. I feel my family is a "Native" South Dakotan also. If you read your history the Sioux were not originally in South Dakota either!!

Please consider my request for the name: Trail Peak

Thank you  
Linda Anderson

**Reiss, David**

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**From:** Susan Anderson <acc5@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 26, 2015 11:28 PM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Renaming Harney Peak

Dear Mr. Reiss,

I am writing this email to encourage the renaming of Harney Peak.

I believe that naming this ground, sacred to the Lakota people, after Black Elk, who had his vision there, is the right thing to do.

It would be a truly healing and compassionate action.

Thanks for your positive action in this regard.

Sincerely,

Susan and Jonathan Anderson

**Reiss, David**

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**From:** leslie england <lesliengland@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 27, 2015 9:26 AM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Renaming Harney Peak

**Renaming Harney Peak to an Indian name is a very good action we should take as a nation.**

**My great grand father homesteaded near White River and his family built many of the roads, bridges and dams we use today. I was born and raised here, live here, have climbed the mountain too many times to count, was carried down by my father the first time, and know many Indians and respect their "plight".**

**Respect is probably key and many comments here make light of the issue of racial discord, history as we know it, and treating our neighbors right. That Harney's family members today support this action is a deeply respectful measure that softens the wound these people have endured for hundreds of years. Harney's military record is colored by the times but it is clear he was ferocious in tactics from Florida Indian Country, Mexico, to Dakota Territory. Our military, Harney himself, and portions of government were clearly engaged in a genocidal plan aimed at killing all Indian men, women and children with high power weaponry and starvation. In the case of Blue Water, our military was engaged because an old Mormon cow was killed in an Indian camp along the Platte River. A year later Harney was poised before his troops at midnight on the Platte river-bank, exhorted them to give maximum damage to the sleeping Indian camp, surrounded them, gave Little Thunder an hour to run, and then attacked at dawn with infantry as the Indians evacuated into the rifles of the hidden calvary.**

**Not a military veteran (high draft number), however I do not believe our military today would sanction this action.**

**It is not my place to say which new name should be adopted, but I fully support Black Elk for what ever it signifies, or another appropriate Indian cultural word that honors "all there is" or "the center of everything".**

**That local elected officials and government employees attempt to**

**speak against renaming by virtue of their office seems to be a usurpation of power.**

**Sincerely,**

**Leslie England**

**Reiss, David**

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**From:** GAYLE JORGENSON <gnjorgy@live.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 27, 2015 9:57 AM  
**To:** Reiss, David  
**Subject:** Harney peak

I strongly object to changing the name of Harney Peak. It will always be Harney Peak to the locals. Changing a name of any location is extremely expensive. Maps, gps maps, signs, flyers, history books, tourist info and the list goes on.

It accomplishes nothing. Harney Peak is a very nice name.

Just because it was named after someone that it would not be named for today does not mean it should be changed.

After 2 generations, the reason for the name is forgotten and its just a name. Leave it alone.

Regards, Gayle Jorgenson