

Tribes gathering in Yellowstone to demand names of war criminal and white supremacist be changed in National Park

Years before Charlottesville and the push to remove Confederate monuments, Tribal Nations began petitioning for the names of a war criminal responsible for an act of genocide, and a white supremacist who advocated for such, to be changed in Yellowstone National Park. On Saturday, September 16, leaders from the Blackfoot Confederacy and Great Sioux Nation will continue that appeal, gathering at Yellowstone's gateway in Gardiner, Montana.

"America's first national park should no longer have features named after the proponents and exponents of genocide, as is the case with Hayden Valley and Mount Doane," the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council (RMTLC), which represents every tribe in Montana and Wyoming, declared in a December 2014 resolution that implored federal authorities to change the names. The National Park Service and US Geological Service remain unmoved.

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Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council (Resolution 12/2014)

Lieutenant Gustavus Cheyney Doane, 2nd Cavalry, is celebrated as "the man who discovered Wonderland" for guiding the 1870 expedition that was instrumental in Yellowstone becoming the world's first national park. However, seven months prior to that, on January 23, 1870, Doane led the massacre of the Piikani (Piegan) camped with Chief Heavy Runner on the Marias River.

"I was the first and last man in [the] Piegan camp January 23, 1870," Doane wrote in his 1889 application to become superintendent of Yellowstone National Park. "Greatest slaughter of Indians ever made by U.S. Troops," he continued. Of the 173 recorded victims, authorities admitted that only 15 were men of fighting age, the rest were elders, women and children, "none older than twelve years and many of them in their mother's arms," reported Indian Agent W.A. Pease. Doane subsequently ordered the Piikani prisoners to be executed with axes.

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"Even after the passage of twenty-one years, Doane spoke of the massacre without shame or remorse," explains Paul R. Wylie, author of the critically-acclaimed *Blood on the Marias* which details the heinous slaughter of the Piikani. "Clearly, Gustavus Cheney Doane was not worthy of having a mountain named for him, then or now, and I support the effort to have the Mount Doane name changed," says Mr. Wylie.

"This September will mark the 147th Anniversary of the Washburn-Doane Expedition and the mythology of Yellowstone and its origin which has obscured not just an inconvenient, but an atrocious truth," adds Chief Stan Grier, Chief of the Piikani Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy.

"Equally incontestable is the pre-eminence, both intellectual and moral, of the white race . . . The treatment of the negro was not barbarous and many seemingly cruel laws were greatly needed as measures of self-protection on the part of the whites." Dr. Ferdinand V. Hayden

Where Doane participated in genocide, Dr. Ferdinand V. Hayden advocated it. "Unless they are localized and made to enter upon agricultural and pastoral pursuits they must ultimately be exterminated," Hayden wrote of tribal peoples in his *US Geological Survey of Wyoming*, published by the government

in 1872. Based on Hayden's report from his 1871 Yellowstone Expedition, Congress passed and President Grant signed into law, the Act that established Yellowstone National Park. "If extermination is the result of non-compliance, then compulsion is an act of mercy," Hayden rationalized his advocacy for genocide.

"The lower race" is how Hayden categorized tribal people. "Equally incontestable is the pre-eminence, both intellectual and moral, of the white race, which thus forms a natural aristocracy in the truest sense of the word," Hayden concluded in his 1883 book, *North America*.

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Eighteen-years after General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, Hayden defended slave-holding Confederate plantation owners as "chivalrous and hospitable," and insisted, "The treatment of the negro was not barbarous, and many seemingly cruel laws were greatly needed as measures of self-protection on the part of the whites."

Yellowstone Superintendent Dan Wenk's only response to the tribal appeal was a May 2015 letter in which he suggested Tribal Nations "submit the name change request" to the Board of Geographic Names. "An individual may do so online or by mail," Wenk wrote.

However, former Yellowstone National Park ranger and Park Service veteran, Tom Mazzarisi, sees no debate: "The name 'Doane' and 'Hayden' and all other place names in Yellowstone and other National Parks named after those that committed atrocities against Indigenous people should be immediately renamed by the descendants of the victims of genocide during European settlement. Yellowstone is a very special place, and to have a reminder of a black eye of history so visible in the world's first national park, is shameful. We may not be able to turn back time to right the wrongs against humanity. But, we do have the power to erase the names and symbols of hatred from our past and present," says the decade-plus Yellowstone vet.

"Over four-million visitors a year now stand awed by the beauty of that valley and the power of the buffalo and grizzly, just as our peoples did for thousands of years before. If the names of a war criminal and a white supremacist are retained, when is there disquiet that a family's album of smiles and selfies was made in a valley named after somebody who proposed the 'extermination' of another race, and vindicated slave owners because he believed 'the pre-eminence, both intellectual and moral, of the white race' was 'incontestable'? On September 16, we will call for Hayden Valley to be renamed Buffalo Nations Valley, in honor of all Tribal Nations that have treaty rights and interests to Greater Yellowstone, and an ancestral connection to this sacred landscape and our relatives, the Buffalo Nation," agree Chairman Brandon Sazue of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, and Chief Grier.

WHEN: Saturday, September 16

WHERE: Gardiner, Montana

Noon - Ceremonial ride through Gardiner to Arch Park

1 pm – Tribal Leaders presentations in Arch Park followed by ride through Roosevelt Arch to present official request from Tribal Leaders to the National Park Service

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