

Findings on the Issue of “Squaw”

July 27, 2020



 SQUAW VALLEY
ALPINE MEADOWS



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Etymology of the Word Squaw

Where does the word squaw come from?

Three Historical Roots For Squaw – None Exist in Washo

- **Algonquian:** A morpheme (smallest linguistic unit of meaning) that sounds like “squa” is found within some longer words in Eastern Algonquian languages. As a morpheme, “squaw” was understood and documented by Europeans as having primarily a denotative function—describing the supernatural world of “Woman Spirit,” or describing female members of the human race in the natural world as being “young,” “old,” “widowed,” “virgin,” of “ruling status and rank,” “deceased”, or describing female animals. It is likely that Europeans corrupted the morpheme/word part to convert it into a word that generally referred to a female Native American. Some scholars contend Eastern Algonquian is a “true genetic subgrouping.”
- **Iroquoian Mohawk:** Professor Henrietta Mann of the Univ. of Montana traced an alternative origin of “squaw” to the Iroquoian Indian language, Mohawk. Professor Mann (full-blood Cheyenne of Oklahoma, PhD 1982 from Univ. of New Mexico), states that “squaw” is a shortened form of the original Mohawk word “otsikwaw” which can be translated “female genitalia” or “vagina.” Professor Mann’s research concludes that the fur traders of the 1700s and 1800s corrupted “otsikwaw” to “squaw” to denote a woman who provides sexual satisfaction to White men. Professor Mann postulates that this use of “squaw” emphasized sexual desires when the term was used.
- **Mohegan-Pequot:** In their 1904 “Glossary of the Mohegan-Pequot Language,” J. Prince and F. G. Speck (1904) stated the “meaning of the stem [SHQUAAW] was the prepuce.” Prepuce is a technical term for specific parts of male and female genitalia.
- **Washo:** There is no word or morpheme that sounds like “squaw” in Washo, the language of the Washoe people. None of the above-referenced three languages has any relation to Washo. Washo is its own language. Some scholars note a relation of Washo to Hokan languages. The Hokan language family has no relation to the above-referenced three languages. The word for woman in Washo is “da-mo-mo.” A woman’s genitalia is “di-bis” “dum-ba-suk” or “baga-suk.”

Etymology of the Word Squaw

Early examples of the use of the word squaw, and the Princess v. Squaw Stereotype, give insight into the common and longstanding derogatory use of the word.

Early Examples

- James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, published in 1826: “the crafty ‘squaw’ ... the squalid and withered person of this hag.”
- Lt. James W. Steele (*Memoirs*, 1883): “the universal ‘squaw’ – squat, angular, pig-eyed, ragged, wretched, and insect-haunted.”
- Welcker, 1890 (as cited in *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989) in *Tales West*: “By way of expressing their utter contempt for him they called him a ‘squaw’.”
- In 1895, John McDougall (a Canadian Methodist missionary) chastised a fellow missionary for his use of the word: “In the name of decency and civilization and Christianity, why call one person a woman and another a squaw?”

The Common Stereotypes of the Princess and the Squaw

- The two most common stereotypes of Indian women are the Indian princess, who conveys natural, wholesome, virginity, and freshness, and the Squaw drudge, her opposite (Green, 1975; Green, 1993; Kessler, 1996; Valaskakis; 2005; Marubbio, 2006). A squaw is a “failed” princess, “who is lower than a bad White woman” (Bird, 1999, p. 73). The squaw is the “darker twin” of Pocahontas (Valaskakis, 2005, p. 134), and the “anti-Pocahontas.”
- Francis (1995, pp. 121–122): “Where the princess was beautiful, the squaw was ugly, even deformed. Where the princess was virtuous, the squaw was debased, immoral, a sexual convenience. Where the princess was proud, the squaw lived a squalid life of servile toil, mistreated by her men—and openly available to non-Native men.”

The Naming of Squaw Valley

Several origin stories exist for the naming of Squaw Valley. Which is true?

The primary reference for the origin story of the name of Squaw Valley is Edward Scott's 1960 Book "Squaw Valley."

The most commonly referenced origin story is some combination of the first and fourth bullet points, below.

Local historian David Antonucci calls these origin stories "mostly legend."

In fact, white settlers put the 'squaw' name on hundreds of places across the US, generally without any specific place-based reason for doing so.

Here are the direct excerpts from the Scott book:

- "Before the advent of white settlers, Squaw Valley was a summer tribal ground for the native Washoe Indians. Many theories have been advanced as to the origin of the name. Among them is the legend of the faithful squaw waiting patiently in the valley for her warrior brave to return, not knowing he had been killed in battle with the Paiutes."
- "Another is the fanciful story of one 'Indian Charlie' who murdered his common law wife in the valley during a game of 'squaw poker.' Unanimously acquitted of a jury of his fellow Washoe tribesman, after it was decided the white man's red-eye had blinded him to what he is doing, he is said to have become known as 'Squaw Valley Charlie' and left his nickname on the valley."
- "Still another source of the name is said to be the 'Indian Squaw's profile' on Squaw Peak."
- "A logical source of the name is based on fact. When the first emigrants moved through the valley in 1849-50 they were surprised to find only squaws and children at the summer encampment. The bucks were away on a trek to Long Valley, sixteen miles to the southeast over the granite ridge from Lower Hell Hole and the Rubicon River. There they hunted the 'picket pin' gopher and caught grasshoppers to augment the tribe's food supply. Since the emigrants found a majority of squaws in the base camp they named it Squaw Valley."

- By 1862, when Fish, Ferguson, Smith and Coggins had settled and called their land "Squaw Valley Ranch," the white settlers had completely dispossessed the Washoe from their thousands of years of use of the valley. "Gold rush" mining and the settlements of Knoxville and Claraville persisted until assay reports proved continuously barren. By 1870, Squaw Valley uses included grazing cattle, farming hay, berries, and keggering butter and cheese. These uses continued for decades. Poulsen ultimately purchased his Squaw Valley land from the Smith family.

The “Squaw’s” Place In Early California History

How can we judge the Squaw Valley origin story/legend?

Do the real experiences of an Indian woman in early California (1840s to 1900) shed some light?

Dispossession, kidnapping, rape, and enslavement were common features of an Indian woman’s life during this time.

- Autobiography of Gen. George Crook (Indian Wars in California, 1852-1861): “It was not unfrequent occurrence for an Indian to be shot down in cold blood or a squaw to be raped by some brute.”
- D’Emilio and Freedman, 1988: If white miners failed to “obtain a squaw by fair means, [they would] not hesitate to use foul.” (direct quote from 1858 newspaper report)
- The Yankee Hill Historical Society Abstracted Frontier California Papers. Here are some of the hundreds of entries about fights with Indians:

1850.04.05	Deer Creek	12 men attacked a party of Indians whom they accused of stealing animals. They killed four or five Indians and one squaw. After running some time, the Indians turned to fight gaining a strong hold in a rocky part of the mountains. The Indians wounded two of the whites. The siege lasted two days during which the Indians lost 17 men and one squaw beside those before mentioned. A party of 200 was organized at Deer Creek and is expected to start a pursuit.	Sacramento Transcript, 4-5-1850	1859.08.20	Forks of the Butte	Article written by a correspondent of the "Express" from that place challenging the statement in the Red Bluff Beacon that the Indians at the Forks of the Butte are causing all the problems in the area. There are 300 souls in the area and they have contact with the Indians daily and they have no problems. Mr. Breckenridge was wrong when he shot a blind Indian (like a dog) being led by his squaw. There may be two or three bad Indians from other tribes in the area, but the entire Indian population should not all suffer (Note: Forks of the Butte was near current day Forest Ranch).	Butte Democrat 8-20-1859
1856.08.27	Nome Lackee Reservation	Quoted article from Marysville Express about a shooting at Nome Lackee. A man named Clark went to the reservation to retrieve a squaw taken there for protection. They had been living near Stoney Creek when she was taken by a man named Cade because she was mistreated, and brought to Nome Lackee. Clark went to the reservation and was confronted by Mr. Stevenson who asked he follow him to the reservation office. As they approached their horses, Clark drew his gun and shot Stevenson in the leg. Stevenson rushed Clark, took the gun and knocked him senseless. Clark will be tried for kidnapping and assault with intent to commit murder.	Daily Butte Record 8-27-1856	1859.08.06	Butte County	A correspondent writing in the Butte Record of August 6, 1859 from the Forks of the Butte dated July 29, 1859, states: The most brutal and atrocious wholesale slaughter of Indians that has occurred in Butte County for many days was perpetrated at the Indian Rancheria yesterday. The Rancheria is situated about 2 1/2 miles from this place. The Rancheria was attacked about daylight when an indiscriminate slaughter commenced. Nine Indians were killed—five bucks, two squaws and two children, and four others were wounded, two perhaps fatally. The camp was plundered of rifles and money. The perpetrators of this inhuman and bloody crime are unknown. They were white men no one doubts. They say they were disguised, their faces being blacked and they came from the direction of the valley. These Indians have been here since the whites and are known to be peaceable. However, there were two or three bad ones among them, one in particular called Malo Jo. He seems to be a particular object of revenge, having been shot four or five times and his scalp taken by his bloody murderers.	Sacramento Daily Union 8-6-1859
1858.12.04	Humboldt-Yreka	The Humboldt Times announces that another battle had been fought with the Indians on Yager creek in which 3 rancheries were stormed, 6 Indians killed and 5 warriors and 21 squaws and papooses made prisoners. They were to be sent to Yreka where Col. Henley promised to provide for them on some reservation.	Weekly Butte Record 12-4-1858	1859.01.12	California Reservations	Article about the failure of the California reservation system. The employees of the reservations do not understand how to deal with the Indians. The Diggers are a docile group and are easy to deal with. White men are taking squaws on the reservation which does not teach virtue and morality. Mentions the California monks and their success at teaching the Indians to work.	Red Bluff Beacon 1-12-1859
1859.08.03	Deer Creek	Article about John Breckenridge and his party, under paid subscription, being sent to Deer Creek. Five Indians and a pale face (white) leader are now sleeping the sleep of death. The scalp of the white man was taken and brought back by Mr. Breckenridge. The next day they killed 10 more Indians including one squaw who tried to protect a buck. On Sunday an hour before sunset, the houses of Mr. Roundtree and Mr. Anderson were set on fire by Indians. People are leaving the area. No doubt the Indians have white accomplices. When they raided a rancheria last week, it contained flour, sugar, dishes and nearly all the comforts usually found in cabins of white people. It is understood that there are 40 to 50 white brutes living on the headwaters of Butte Creek with squaws in a state of concubinage and they uphold and protect the Indians in all their depredations. The white man shot last week is unknown to anyone here; it is no doubt he is one of the Butte Creek squaw men.	Red Bluff Beacon 8-3-1859	1859.09.07	Dogtown	Article about 10 Indian prisoners captured by John Breckenridge under Gen. Kibbe's command at Butte Creek. Among the prisoners was a squaw. A miner named Cain tried to claim the squaw as his. He was refused his request to have her. Cain left and returned 2 hours later with 45 men from Diamondville including the Deputy Sheriff, a man named Cheesman. The group took Breckenridge, G.M. Stratton and M. Amesby of Breckenridge's command as prisoners and released the Indians. Cain later married the squaw at Dogtown while her buck was still alive, although he had been shot. Breckenridge stated the motive was the desire by the locals to keep the squaws in the area. Note: Squaw men as they were called, were usually mountain men or miners who took Indian women as concubines. In some cases, they also dealt in the selling of the children after they killed the male Indian.	Red Bluff Beacon 9-7-1859
1879.04.18	Yankee Hill	Article about Yankee Jim, a Kanaka (Hawaiian) who was brought to California in 1844 by General Sutter, stabbing his squaw in the right breast because she would not stay home. She died from the wound and Jim turned himself in to the authorities.	Weekly Mercury 4-18-1879				

Note the use of “digger,” a California-specific slur for Indians used by many including Mark Twain, who specifically used it referring to the Washoe. It is no coincidence that digger is “homophonically linked with the racist epithet [n*].” (Rowe, 2000)

The “Squaw’s” Place in Early California History

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How can we judge the origin story/legend?

Do the real experiences of an Indian woman in early California (1840s to 1900) shed some light?

California became a state in 1850, about the same time that Squaw Valley was given its name.

Upon becoming a state, California immediately enacted laws to protect and reward the kidnapping, enslavement, and sale of Indians.

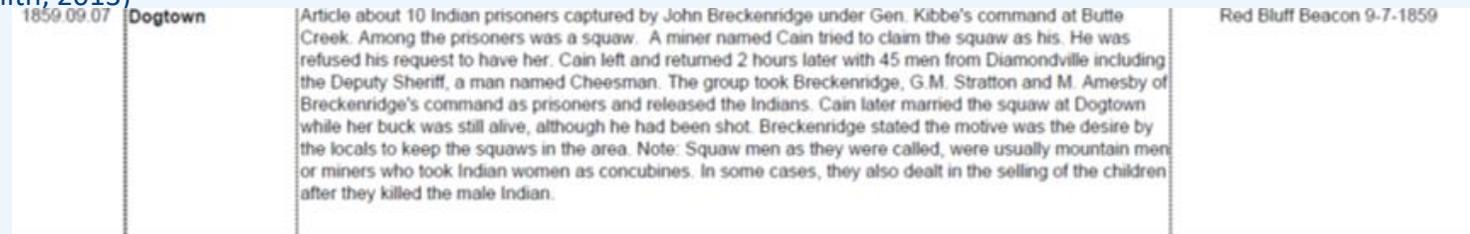
- Governor Peter Burnett, California’s first governor, giving the first “State of the State Address”:
 - “That a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the races until the Indian race becomes extinct must be expected. While we cannot anticipate this result but with painful regret, the inevitable destiny of the race is beyond the power or wisdom of man to avert.”
 - “This state of things, though produced at an earlier period by the exciting causes mentioned, would still have followed in due course of time. Our American experience has demonstrated the fact, that the two races cannot live in the same vicinity in peace.”
- The Act for the Government and Protection of Indians, April 22, 1850 (not fully repealed until 1937):
 - White persons or proprietors could apply to the Justice of the Peace for the removal of Indians from lands in the white person’s possession.
 - Any person could go before a Justice of the Peace to obtain Indian children for indenture. The Justice determined whether or not compulsory means were used to obtain the child. If the Justice was satisfied that no coercion occurred, the person obtained a certificate that authorized him to have the care, custody, control and earnings of an Indian minor, until their age of majority (for males, eighteen years, and females, fifteen years).
 - If a convicted Indian was punished by paying a fine, any white person, with the consent of the Justice, could give bond for the Indian’s fine and costs. In return, the Indian was “compelled to work until his fine was discharged or cancelled.”
 - Other 1850 and 1851 laws concerning crimes and punishments prohibited Indians, or black or mulatto persons, from giving “evidence in favor of, or against, any white person,” and while Indians or white persons could make complaints before a Justice of the Peace, “in no case [could] a white man be convicted of any offen[s]e upon the testimony of an Indian, or Indians.”
 - “Any Indian able to work and support himself in some honest calling, not having wherewithal to maintain himself, who shall be found loitering and strolling about, or frequenting public places where liquors are sold, begging, or leading an immoral or profligate course of life, shall be liable to be arrested on the complaint of any resident citizen of the county, and brought before any Justice of the Peace of the proper county, Mayor or Recorder of any incorporated town or city, who shall examine said accused Indian, and hear the testimony in relation thereto, and if said Justice, Mayor, or Recorder shall be satisfied that he is a vagrant...he shall make out a warrant under his hand and seal, authorizing and requiring the officer having him in charge or custody, to hire out such vagrant within twenty-four hours to the best bidder, by public notice given as he shall direct, for the highest price that can be had, for any term not exceeding four months.”
- Madley, *An American Genocide*, 2016:
 - California (with federal backing) spent \$1.5 million on 24 different Indian-killing militia campaigns between 1850 and 1861. Equal to approximately \$5 billion today.
 - Between 1846 and 1873, 9,000-16,000 Indians were killed in California by vigilantes, state militiamen, and federal soldiers. Together with disease and starvation resulting from white settlement, total population decreased from approximately 150,000 to 30,000.

What About The Squaw Man?

What is a ‘Squaw Man,’ and what does the name tell us about the word ‘squaw’?

The meaning of Squaw Man evolved over the 19th century, from relatively benign/descriptive origins to unquestionably derogatory use.

- Early references to the Squaw Man likely originated in California in the 1850s, and were relatively benign. A squaw man was a white man who was assimilated into an Indian tribe, typically “married” to an Indian woman, and having mixed children. (Smith, 2013)
- As emigration and violence escalated, the term was more typically applied as “an epithet for those whites who bought and sold Indian women or compelled them to live in their homes as wives and concubines.” (Smith, 2013)
- From the Red Bluff Beacon 1859:



- Peter Kyne, *The Land Just Over Yonder*, Saturday Evening Post – 1915. A tale that takes place in the Washoe Valley and surrounds:
 - “To Toyiabe’s primitive way of thinking Billy Boy’s girl was a squaw, and according to his code a squaw man was in the same social category with rattlesnakes and ore thieves.”
 - “‘She ain’t a squaw, Billy Boy retorted hotly. ‘She’s three-quarters white, an’ she’s too durned good for any white man.’ Toyiabe hooted. ‘Is an octoroon a nigger?’ he demanded. ‘Of course,’ Billy Bob replied innocently. ‘Then a quarter-bred Washoe girl is an Injun, an’ a female Injun is a squaw, an’ a man that takes up with a squaw is a squaw man, an’ a squaw man – well, Billy Boy, I shore hope I don’t have to tell you what a squaw man is?’ *** “Well, Billy Boy, have it yore own way. I only got one thing to say an’ then I’m through for keeps – these mixed bloods ain’t go no moral sense.”
- Framing the Squaw Man as from the dregs of society (“the lowest, meanest, most contemptible, worthless and abandoned trash that ever disgraced the earth”), the portrayal of the Squaw Man as outside of “respectable” white society helped conceal the reality that middle class whites “avidly bought, sold, and held Native American women and girls.” (Smith, 2013)
- “It would be hard to over emphasize the importance of the ‘squaw-man’ story to early American cinema. Filmmakers retold the story hundreds of times, and it was the dominant plot of the Indian western genre.” (Smith, 2000)
- “Constantly risking the wrath of White cowboys, the miscegenation in these films functioned as a morality tale of warning to anti-miscegenation, which “emerges as the primary source of danger to white society.” (Marubbio, 2006)

The idea that the name Squaw Valley originally came about as an “honorific” to Indian women is contradicted by history and context. Its use today is considered to be derogatory and offensive. Can you honor someone with a name that they consider offensive?

- The etymological history tells us that by the time the name Squaw Valley was placed (1850s to 1860s), the term squaw had already taken on a primarily dehumanizing and derogatory context. All of the historical context shows that the term, when applied to the valley itself, was not an “honorific,” and it is clearly not an honorific today.
 - Goddard, 1997: “First let me say that I have never ‘disputed the fact that the term is offensive....’ I have always tried to emphasize that squaw is now generally considered disparaging, as current dictionaries rightly indicate.”
 - Bruchach, 1999: “When we choose to change “squaw” place names, we can claim the opportunity to recover original indigenous place names, reinforce respect for local indigenous histories, and support Native language reclamation efforts. Out of respect, we can cease using “squaw” as a generic term for Native women, just as we can cease using “brave” as a generic term for Native men.”
 - Mihesuah, 2003: “The ‘squaw’ is the dirty, subservient, and abused tribal female who is also haggard, violent, and eager to torture tribal captives.”
 - E. Sanders, 2004: The term “squaw . . . turned into a slur on the tongues of white settlers, who used it to refer derisively to Indian women in general or a part of their anatomy in particular.”
 - O’Brien, 2005: “Today, as reported by dictionaries, the American people view “squaw” as an offensive and contemptuous term. Thus, we believe that the word “squaw” has acquired a pejorative connotation over the years, regardless of its correct linguistic history. The present-day vulgar, derogatory, degrading, belittling, demeaning, insulting connotation of the word “squaw” has been documented by lexical studies, and reported in publicly available dictionaries. Those to whom the word “squaw” refers (directly or indirectly, historically or contemporaneously) are most apt to take offense at the word. That is the American Indian. Not because of the way it might have been used in the 1600s (when none of us were alive), but today when we do live, and know it is insulting when used by non-Native Americans.”
 - Merskin, 2010: “Two primary representations are revealed in the discourse defining squaw: as sexual punching bag and as drudge. The opinions and attitudes of reporters, citizens (Indian and non-Indian), government officials, agencies, and tribal representatives are included as reflected in journalistic accounts of the land form debate about the use and meaning of the label squaw.”
 - Bright, 2011: “To put matters bluntly, the derogatory use of ‘squaw’ has a background in racism, and racism is a continuing fact in American society.”
- When we apply our modern and extensive access to accumulated knowledge, facts and history to the old origin story legend, it is impossible to accept that legend as anything other than a legend.
 - The settlement history of California during this time period, and all around this very valley, incontrovertibly shows us that white settlers frequently killed, kidnapped, enslaved and raped Native American women at the time of the settlement of Squaw Valley.
 - The legislative history of California during this time period incontrovertibly shows us that there were legal incentives and protections regarding the enslavement of Native American women by white settlers at the time of the settlement of Squaw Valley.

Squaw is listed and accepted as offensive, derogatory, racist and misogynistic by the vast majority of modern sources and references. Stated differently, our name is generally accepted to include an offensive and derogatory slur.

- Dictionaries uniformly refer to squaw as offensive:
 - Oxford Language Dictionary: “Offensive”
 - Dictionary.com: “Disparaging and Offensive”
 - Merriam Webster: “Now, usually offensive” and “Dated, usually disparaging.”
 - American Heritage Dictionary: “Offensive”
 - Cambridge Dictionary: “now considered offensive by many people.”
 - Collins Dictionary: “Offensive”
 - Macmillan Thesaurus: “offensive,” synonyms include “coon, colored, coolie, dago, and gipsy.”
- Press Coverage generally starts from the accepted premise that squaw is a derogatory term:
 - Associated Press: “derogatory term”
 - Reno Gazette Journal: “derogatory term”
 - San Jose Mercury News: “derogatory term”
 - LA Times: “derogatory term”
 - Powder Magazine: “racial slur”
 - Snowbrains: “racial slur”
 - Sierra Sun: “deemed offensive”
 - Fox affiliates: “derogatory term”
 - Teton Gravity: “racial slur”
 - USA Today: “considered offensive”
 - London Telegraph: “racist slur”



Squaw place names have been undergoing change in North America over the last several decades. Seven states have codified that it is offensive and needs to be replaced.

- Minnesota, 1995: state law enacted to change the names of 19 geographic features with squaw names “to other nonderogatory names.”
- Montana, 1999-2009:
 - “A decade-long project to remove the derogatory word ‘squaw’ from the names of 76 streams, buttes and mountains across Montana has been completed. Most of the name changes are official, although a few are winding their way through the process. More than 150 people gathered during early March in the Capitol rotunda for the ‘Old Places, New Names’ ceremony.”
- Maine, 2000 (1 M.R.S. sec. 1101): state law enacted to change all names including the word ‘squaw.’
 - “1. OFFENSIVE NAME. "Offensive name" means a name of a place that includes: A. The designation "nigger" or "squaw" as a separate word or as part of a word; or B. The designation "squa" as a separate word.”
 - “Members of the Penobscot, Pasamaquoddy, Micmac and Maliseet tribes were present as the bill was signed Monday.”
 - “It took a lot of work from people in the native communities to open up and talk about something that's as heartfelt as this,” said Rep. Donald Soctomah, the Passamaquoddy Tribe's representative and sponsor of the bill.
- Oklahoma, 2000: Concurrent Resolution No. 94: “WHEREAS, the word "squaw" is offensive to Native Americans, and a national movement exists to remove this offensive word from all geographic names. ... NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the word "squaw" be removed from all geographic names used in Oklahoma.”
- Idaho, 2002: Concurrent Resolution No. 42: stating the “goal of the eventual renaming of all geographical place names in the state to eliminate the use of the word ‘squaw,’” stating “Native Americans and many citizens of the state find the term ‘squaw’ objectionable and offensive to Native Americans.”
- South Dakota, 2003:
 - Offensive place names in South Dakota by county are replaced as follows: ... Squaw Lake[changed to] Serenity Lake ... Squaw Flat [changed to] Hat Creek Flat ... Squaw Creek [in Jones County changed to] Pitan Creek ... Squaw Creek [in Lawrence County changed to] Cleopatra Creek ... Squaw Hill [changed to] Six Mile Hill ... Squaw Lake [in Marshall County changed to] Six Mile Lake ... Squaw Creek [in Moody County changed to] Jack Moore Creek
- Oregon, 2003:
 - Oregon Revised Statutes §271.600 (2003) 271.600. Prohibition on use of term "squaw.“ ... (2) Except as required by federal law, a public body may not use the term "squaw" in the name of a public property.

“Squaw” Name Changes In Other Locations

Across North America, numerous sites and landmarks have eliminated ‘squaw’ and renamed their locations. Many more places are in the process of doing the same.

Historic Squaw Name Changes

- In 1988, the Squaw Rapids Dam on the Saskatchewan River was renamed the E.B. Campbell Dam.
- In 1999, the Montana Legislature created an advisory group to replace the word squaw in local place names and required any replacement of a sign to bear the new name.
- In 2000, the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission and the Maine Legislature collaborated to pass a law eliminating the words squaw and sqa from all of the state's waterways, islands, and mountains. Some of those sites have been renamed with the word moose; others, in a nod to Wabanaki language-recovery efforts, are now being given new place-appropriate names in the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy languages.
- In 2003, Squaw Peak in Phoenix, Arizona, was renamed Piestewa Peak to honor the first Native American woman to die in combat for the US.
- In October 2006, members of Idaho's Coeur d'Alene Tribe called for the removal of the word squaw from the names of 13 locations in Idaho
- On January 15, 2008, the British Columbian portion of a tributary of the Tatshenshini River was officially renamed Dollis Creek by the BC Geographical Names Office. The name "Squaw Creek" had been previously rescinded on December 8, 2000.
- In 2011, the State Office of Historic Preservation updated the name of a California Historical Landmark formerly called "Squaw Rock" to "Frog Woman Rock" as a way to honor and respect the cultural heritage of the Pomo peoples of this region.
- In 2015, the Buffalo Common Council voted to change the island formerly called "Squaw Island" to "Unity Island", after being petitioned by members of the Seneca Nation of New York.
- In 2017, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service renamed the Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Missouri to Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge
- In September of 2018, Squaw Ridge in Sierra Nevada was formally renamed Hungalelti Ridge, after a proposal by the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California.
- On November 20, 2018, Saskatchewan's Killsquaw Lake - the site of a 19th century massacre of a group of Cree women - was renamed Kikiskitotawânawak Iskêwak, which, in Cree, means "we honour the women".

Current Squaw Renaming Efforts

- The Squaw Valley Academy has just renamed to Lake Tahoe Prep.
- The Pointe Hilton Squaw Peak in Arizona has announced it will change its name.
- Governor Polis has convened a committee to review place names in Colorado, including Squaw Peak.
- Phoenix is currently in process of changing name of their street “Squaw Peak Drive” because “squaw is a demeaning and degrading word.”
- Whistler council to start renaming process for Squaw Valley Crescent (a street named in honor of Squaw Valley as Winter Olympics host)
- Activists are currently petitioning for Pennsylvania town to change name of Squaw Valley Park in addition to roads and waterways
- Squaw Creek in Iowa is the subject of a name change movement.
- There are 20 active name change petitions in Oregon, many involving Squaw.
- Canmore, Alberta is being pressed to change the name of a popular climbing mountain named “Squaw’s Tit.”

Federal agencies have aligned policies to facilitate and/or require the replacement of squaw place names.

- In 2012, the Pacific Southwest Region of the United States Forest officially determined that the word 'squaw' is offensive:
 - "The Pacific Southwest Region policy on geographic names in relation to maps, signs, markers and administrative use of names is that the name "squaw" is derogatory. That name is to be removed from all markers, signs, and maps and will not be used administratively."
- In the 1990s, the Domestic Names Committee of the United States Bureau of Geographic Names (a function of the Department of the Interior) considered adding 'Squaw' and 'Negro' to the offensive names list, however it ultimately declined to do so on the basis that "a few Tribes" don't consider 'Squaw' offensive, and one NAACP chapter (Salt Lake City) and one museum director (South Dakota) contend that 'Negro' is not offensive.
 - Based on this "dispute," the Committee elected not to add 'squaw' and 'Negro' to the offensive names list, rather the Committee "has been considering changes with 'Squaw' and 'Negro' case-by-case since the mid-1990s."
 - All proposed changes have been approved.
 - The only other such words on the offensive names list are 'Nigger' and 'Jap.'
 - Recent BGN/DNC determinations include:
 - December 30, 2017: change Squaw Creek to Swaram Creek (Washington)
 - March 31, 2018: change Squaw Island to Eagle Island (Michigan)
 - July 3, 2019: change Squaw Creek to Nestucca Bobb Creek (Oregon)
 - April 15, 2020: change Squaw Creek to Ioway Creek (Iowa)
 - April 15, 2020: change Squaw Creek to Paatstel Creek (Washington)
 - July 10, 2020: change Squaw Teats to Crow Woman Buttes (Wyoming)
 - As late as 1989, the NAACP was still pursuing the Committee to change place names with N*.

Squaw Valley's History of Challenges to the Name

As areas across North America dropped the 'squaw' name, Squaw Valley ski resort has come under pressure as well.

- In 1997, members of the American Indian Movement pushed SV Ski Corp to change its name. Press reports indicate:
 - Efforts to change 'squaw' names were known to date back to the 1960s.
 - The effort was spurred anew by the Minnesota law passed in 1995.
 - Nancy Wendt Cushing stated: "We will hope to come to (a) resolution that can please all sides involved while holding true to and preserving our history and future."
 - Alex Cushing stated "We could call it 'Native American Woman Valley' or 'Cushing Valley,' but that doesn't have much of a ring."
 - This may have been when the "Papoose" lift was changed to "First Venture," and "Papoose Peak" changed to "Snow King." [additional research pending]
- In 2006, SV Ski Corp was denied several applications to register "Squaw One" and "Squaw" as US trademarks on the basis that the term "squaw" was derogatory as a matter of then-applicable United States Trademark Law: The United States Trademark Appeals Board ruled:
 - "We find that the evidence made of record by the examining attorney is sufficient to establish prima facie that applicant's marks disparage a substantial composite of Native Americans when used in the context of applicant's goods and services."
 - "The record includes statements from Native Americans that the term is "damaging and offensive," "the worst of the worst," an "insult" and "obscene." The record also demonstrates that the opinions of Native Americans regarding the term are not limited to particular contexts. Certainly, as a term considered "damaging and offensive," "the worst of the worst," an "insult" and "obscene," the term "squaw" is encompassed within the definition of "disparage." (See definition of "disparage" in Webster's Third New International Dictionary (unabridged ed. 1993), of which we take judicial notice: "to speak slighting of: run down: DEPRECIATE.")
 - "Additionally, the record includes a statement from Senator Ben Campbell, a Native American United States Senator [born in Auburn, California], that the term is 'one of four terms most offensive to Native Americans.'"
 - "Applicant would have us assume that the views of Native American activists and sympathetic legislators do not represent the views of a substantial composite of Native Americans. Applicant provides no basis for concluding that their views would not be shared by a substantial composite of Native Americans."

What Does the Washoe Tribe Say?

Many comments and questions have asked....

The Washoe Tribe considers the term squaw a slur.

- The Washoe Tribe is constituted of approximately 2,000 people. They are governed by a Tribal Council, consisting of 12 representatives. The Council is responsible for the cultural preservation of the Washoe history and culture, and the Chair is responsible for the daily operations of the tribe. The Tribe are landowners in Olympic Valley, where they own a large parcel adjacent to the Park.
- Serrell Smokey, Washoe Tribe Chair:
 - The name is a constant reminder of efforts to disparage native people.
 - “People around here, we’re Washoe people. And so that was a way to break us down and to devalue us and view us not as humans so we would be easier to push out.”
- Darrel Cruz, Washoe Tribe Historic Preservation Officer:
 - “It is a word that has more or less become a slur used to identify Native American women. By disrespecting them, they also disrespect the tribe as a whole.”
 - “We have been in the area for thousands of years. Olympic Valley is within the ancestral homeland of the Washoe people.”
 - “Years ago our tribal people really never had a voice. We have an opportunity here to speak with the right people and have our voice heard.”
 - “The word itself is a constant reminder of the unjust treatment of the native people, of the Washoe people. It’s a constant reminder of those time periods when it was not good for us. It’s a term that was inflicted upon us by somebody else and we don’t agree with it.”
 - “To have our own place in our own land with a name associated like that ... can you see what I’m saying?”

What Do Other Native Americans Say?

Tribes and members of Tribes across North America have pushed to change squaw place names.

Some representative quotes from Native Americans pushing for specific place name changes:

- Gabriella Cazares-Kelly, Tohono O’odham (2019): “Yes, I’m an Indigenous woman being honored in a hotel that is named after a slur used to describe Native American women as sex objects. It was painful to bring my Native sisters here to celebrate with me. *** This is one of the openly racist, anti-Native American terms that people still justify the use of.”
- Patti Hibbeler, Salish/Kootenai (2020): “It’s time to change the s-word on the street to match the name of Piestewa Peak. The s-word continues to be one that is highly derogatory and of the sexual nature to American Indian women, and one that continues to be used as a negative tool, as a weapon, to make us feel less than human.”
- Eugene Tapahe, Navajo (2020): “The r-word, which is ‘redskins,’ the s-word, which is ‘squaw,’ and the n-word, which is really bad for black people – those are all in the same category. But we throw ‘squaw’ around like it’s nothing.”
- Waste’ Win Young, Sioux (2018): “It makes me want to throw up. It has been used against me and many of my relatives in a derogatory manner.”
- Connie Louise Smith, Oglala Lakota (2018): “The word sq-aw is offensive and ignorant. Using this word is the same thing as calling someone a n-r and is so racist it doesn’t bear repeating the full spelling.”
- Native Daily Network, Sioux (2018): “Squaw was a settler word, not an indigenous word, and since been used to disparage indigenous sisters for centuries. Despite the self-righteous chest beating of those claiming that the benign meaning is valid, the more common usage is offensive.”
- William Quackenbush, Ho-Chunk (2020): “Ho-Chunk Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Officer William Quackenbush said the Ho-Chunk nation would be pleased if the name was changed.”
- Mark Miller, Methow (2017): “Over the past month I have struggled to find an answer considering the protests against change. This river, valley and communities are the reason we choose to live here. With these shared commonalities, my unanswered question to the protest argument is this: Why do you fight so hard, to offend the Native Methow People?”
- Chauma Jansen, Navajo/Sioux/Assiniboine (2017): “For me, the term is racist and derogatory. It is meant to belittle somebody or belittle their worth. Historically it has been used to (mean) prostitution as well as sexual violence against women.”

What Does It Look Like When A Name Is Changed?

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Is history erased? The answer is “No.”

- As an example, take the Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, renamed the Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge in 2017.
 - When you search the refuge, google automatically sends you to Loess Bluffs NWR.
 - Wikipedia notes the name change in the very beginning of the entry.
 - All of the history is preserved on the web and elsewhere.
 - Typically, there is a discussion of the issues around the renaming.
 - People who are “regulars” may continue to reflexively refer to the place by the old name.
 - People who come for the first time, and people who wish to honor the name change, begin to refer to the place by the new name.
 - Missouri News Press Now (2018):
 - “After a year, a controversial name change for an area wildlife refuge has died down. In the months since the Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge in Mound City, Missouri, changed its name from Squaw Creek, the issue has become less of a controversy and more of [a] fact of the times.”
 - “It’s probably done and like anything, it’ll take awhile for everybody to get used to saying it.”
- It’s a simple fact: changing a name does not erase history. It puts a new name on an old place. Claims that name changes “erase history” are simply false. History persists, and in the world of the internet, we are able to access more history than ever before.
 - This place will always be the location of the 1960 Winter Olympics.
 - This place will always be the place where “film skiing” was born.
 - This place will always be the place where “extreme skiing” pioneers changed the sport forever.
 - This place will always be the home of KT-22.

If we accept that the word 'squaw' is offensive and derogatory, what actions do we take?

Should We Change the Name? To paraphrase former President Obama's comments about the name "Redskins," should our attachment to the name Squaw override the real legitimate concerns that so many Native Americans, including our local Tribe, have?

- Pros:
 - Local Washoe Tribe, extensive history, and overwhelming knowledge make it clear that the word is offensive and derogatory.
 - Majority of submitted reactions support a name change.
 - Sentiment has grown over the years, both locally and nationally, to change offensive names, particularly including squaw names.
 - Sponsors, partners, visitors, agencies, and groups increasingly express concern.
 - Making a change will start to put the controversy behind us.
 - Our name will no longer be a racist slur.
- Cons:
 - Some disagreement locally, particularly among those with longer tenure.
 - Strong brand recognition and loyalty may take new work to maintain.
 - There may still be a "few" tribes nationally (out of 574 total) that don't take a public position that the word is derogatory.
 - Change will be costly.
- The Company's points of consideration:
 - We recognize that when the ski area was named (Poulsens and Cushing), there was no intent whatsoever to be derogatory or offensive. The name was there when they got here, and the times were such that it would be unlikely to be questioned.
 - We recognize that when guests and community members say the name today, they are not doing so with an intention to be racist or sexist.
 - We recognize that times change, societal norms evolve, and we learn things we didn't previously know.
 - As a company, we seek to do the right thing.
 - We seek to be inclusive.
 - We believe in collaboration and building consensus, but we recognize that consensus is not a substitute for leadership.
 - We know that the "easy way" is not synonymous with the "right way."
 - Do we want to be the last ones holding on to a derogatory and offensive name? Why? What would we achieve?
 - How many potential guests never even consider us because they are offended by the name?
 - How would our leadership on the matter have impacts nationally?