

Get Wild: Honoring those who came before us on this land

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The Gore Range is pictured from Ute Pass in fall 2022.

Karn Stiegelmeier/Get Wild

The Gore Range is a group of mountains that runs north from Interstate 70 along the western edge of Silverthorne into Grand County. The range attracts thousands of visitors annually who seek to step out of the hustle and bustle and into the serenity offered by this special place in our community. While many of us avail ourselves of bounty offered by these mountains, most of us remain blissfully ignorant of the dark history of the range's namesake: Lord St. George Gore.

Who was Lord Gore?

Gore was a 19th century Irish aristocrat with an affinity for hunting. In 1854, Gore traveled to America for a three-year hunting expedition. On his journey, Gore passed through Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and the Dakotas. In his wake, Gore left a trail of death and waste. While exact numbers are unknown, Gore claimed to have killed 2,000 buffalo, 1,600 deer and elk, and 105 bears. These kills were primarily for sport and most of the meat was left to spoil. While natural resource conservation was a far lesser concern in the mid-1800s than today, Gore's needless devastation of these animal populations managed to draw criticism from both average citizens and U.S. government officials alike. Alfred Cumming, the superintendent of Indian Affairs, accused Gore of wasting a precious resource that the Indians needed to survive.

Why was the range named after Gore?

Gore's interaction with the range was transient at best. Gore crossed what is now Gore Pass west of Kremmling on his expedition, but never set foot in the heart of the range. There is no clear explanation as to why Gore's name was first associated with this set of mountains, but it is believed that early explorers and cartographers ascribed Gore's name to the range and it stuck. Under today's U.S. Geological Survey standards, Gore would not even be considered for such an honor because he neither had "a direct and long-term



November is Native American Indian Heritage Month. It should be at the forefront of all of our minds that we consider removing Gore's name from the range and replacing it with one that pays homage to the people who lived off these lands for thousands of years. Until their forced relocation in 1881, the Ute Indians resided in the range and its surrounding areas. Had Gore actually made his way into the range, he likely would have encountered these Native people. The Utes and their ancestors thrived in this area because they respected the land and its resources by taking only what was needed to survive.

Today we have the opportunity to pay tribute to these people by renaming the range in their honor. Three Ute tribes were consulted about this potential change, and they proposed the Nuchu Range. The word Nuchu means "the people" or "Ute" in the Ute language and is a way to reconnect these great mountains to the people who called them home for millennia, while simultaneously removing all reference to a man who was little more than a wealthy animal abuser.

The name change process is working its way through formal channels, with the proposed change submitted to the Colorado Geological Naming Advisory Board, but this process is expected to take some time. In the meantime, each of us can spread the word to friends and family about the importance of making this change. With enough support for the Nuchu Range, we can make this change and revive the memory of those Indigenous ancestors who were on the land for many thousands of years.



Mike Harrison

Mike Harrison is a local attorney with West Huntley Gregory PC and is a volunteer and committee member of Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance, an all-volunteer nonprofit that helps the U.S. Forest Service protect and preserve the wilderness areas in Eagle and Summit counties.

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