

Honored and Thriving: The Squaw Law and Eradication of Offensive State Place-Names

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This essay discusses the policy development and passage in the state of Maine of LD 2416, an act to eradicate offensive state place names containing the word "squaw." As with the use of similar dehumanizing words, I align the use of this "s-word" to historical racism and, in addition, to the epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women. An investigation of the law's legislative development is framed by the author's role as an active organizer and Native women's personal experiences with the s-word. For Maine Waponahki women who organized LD 2416, to dismantle the racialized epithet celebrated in place-names throughout the land indigenous to their people meant no less than reclaiming their identity.

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