



Kosciuszko
Heritage

The significance of Mt Kosciuszko
as a Special Place to the
Polish community in Australia

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Kosciuszko Heritage

- Why us – who are we?
- How did we get involved (Kosciuszko Music on Mt K, involvement with NPWS)
- Working in group sessions with Aboriginal leaders - organised by NPWS
- Organisation of yearly Festivals – each year with a different theme
- Invitations to Aboriginal community were reciprocated at NAIDOC week



Acknowledgement of Significance

- 2008 – Draft Statement of Significance was on public exhibition
 - no mention of why the name of Kosciuszko was important,
 - no mention of who “Kosciuszko” was,
 - no mention of why Strzelecki gave the mountain this name, and
 - no mention of why the values that Kosciuszko fought and stood for are important to the Polish community



Mission of KHI

- The mission of our organisation is to tell Australians, a nation of so many different cultures, that the values of freedom and equality, core values within our democracy, are embedded within the name of Kosciuszko, because of who Kosciuszko was, and because of what he fought and stood for.
- Kosciuszko fought in a foreign country for the liberty of others
- When Strzelecki named Australia's highest mountain, it was for good reason. This reason forms part of the cultural heritage.
- This reason transcends any consideration of whether or not Kosciuszko ever came to Australia, which was not the case

Why the Name of Kosciuszko

- When Strzelecki named Australia's highest mountain, it was for good reason. It's this reason which forms part of the cultural heritage, and should be understood Kosciuszko fought in a foreign country for the liberty of others
- Strzelecki chose the name of Kosciuszko to honour General Tadeusz Kosciuszko. The shape of the mountain reminded him of a man-made mound in Poland's old town of Krakow, which is a monument to Kosciuszko; K fought for the liberty of others, esp. the underprivileged. When the American War of Independence broke out in 1775, K travelled to America to fight under George Washington.

- K was an expert on fortifications (Westpoint was his design) and a brilliant military strategist and engineer.
- His friend, Thomas Jefferson, main author of the American Declaration of Independence, said of him

“the purest son of liberty that I have ever known”;

Following the signing of the Polish Constitution of 3rd May 1791, **the first in Europe and the second in the World**, after the American one, Poland was subjected to the second of three partitions by Russia, Austria and Prussia. Kosciuszko led a national Uprising in 1794 in which he managed to persuade both nobles and peasants to fight, promising extensions of liberties;

- Belorussian author Vladimir Lihodedov wrote
 - - *“The name of Kosciuszko unites various people on different continents. The national hero of Belarus and of the United States of America, is also an honoured citizen of France. Everybody claims him for their own and he is remembered everywhere.
This is a wonderful foundation for strengthening understanding between peoples, developing fruitful relations at an inter-personal and interstate level”.*

Meaning of the Name

- **Kosciuszko's name is synonymous with the human quest for liberty and justice;**
- Kosciuszko's achievements and the person he was inspired the writing of celebrated authors and poets.
- Lord Byron for example wrote
*'The sound that crashes in a tyrants ear. . .
Kosciuszko';*
- and Thomas Campbell:
*"Hope for a season bade the world farewell, and
freedom shrieked as Kosciuszko fell".*

Monuments in Poland, Ukraine, the States and other countries

- **Man-made mound in Krakow;**
- The equestrian bronze statue at the Royal Wawel Castle in Krakow, where Kosciuszko was buried
- Belarus - Bir, Kobrin, Baranovichi and Brest Streets in Pinsk, Slonim and Volkovysk were named after the hero;
- Chicago - monument to Kosciuszko, unveiled in 1905;
- Detroit Milwaukee – famous, much-loved statue of Kosciuszko on horseback, placed in a park named after the US Army Brigadier General;
- Town of Kosciuszko in the USA and Kosciuszko Park;
- Kosciuszko Bridge, New York City, built 1939;



- Warsaw monument unveiled in November 2010 in the presence of the Polish President and the US Ambassador. The monument is an exact copy of one in Washington by sculptor Antoni Popiel given to Americans on behalf of the Polish nation. At its unveiling outside of the White House in 1910 the promise was made to erect a copy in Poland if ever the country regained its independence;
- US Congress not only conferred high military rank on K but awarded him large land holdings, with a life-term pension.

Kosciuszko willed his money to the purpose of buying freedom and educating Black American slaves;

- **Australia**

MT KOSCIUSZKO

**IT IS A UNIQUE MONUMENT BECAUSE IT IS
THE ONLY NATURAL MONUMENT**

**We believe it should be treasured by ALL
Australians as a symbol of Democracy,
Freedom and equal rights –**

the principles so dear to every Australian.



Why do people want to go to the summit?

- According to NPWS data, over 100,000 people go to the summit each year, to experience the highest point of Australia;
- Stunning landscape, unique environment;
- Sporting events – Bike rides and mountain runs;
- In 1913, the first Catholic mass was celebrated there
- in 2013, a centenary mass will be held. There have been other pilgrimages e.g. in 2008 carrying the Cross



Polishness – why Polish people value freedom so expressly

- History of Poland's partitions, displacement
- Loss of independence as a result of WWII
- Suppression of Democracy by Communists and the USSR after the WWII
- Migration



Going forward – Our vision

- Ongoing dialogue/friendship with the Aboriginal community;
- Ongoing cultural festivals and celebrations linked with Mt Kosciuszko;
- Ongoing education and promotion – Brochure, Music, information for schools, events

