

**Twenty-third Session
Vienna, 28 March – 4 April 2006**

**Item 16 of the Provisional Agenda:
Activities relating to the Working Group on the
Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Names**

**Report of the UNGEGN Working Group on the Promotion of Indigenous and
Minority Group Place Names**

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Indigenous and Minority Group Names.**

Report of the UNGEGN Working Group on the Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Place Names.

1. Background

- 1.1 Each country has one or more naming systems in place, representing different aspects of the culture of the country.
- 1.2 For example, in Australia there are two distinct systems, one being the naming methodology of the Australian Aboriginal people which has been in place for over 40 000 years. The other being the system introduced following colonisation.
- 1.3 In comparison to Australia, the system evident in a country such as England appears to be quite different. It could be said that the English system has, over the history of the country, evolved a number of naming systems into one, with components from a range of historic sources, representing, among others, Celtic, French, Danish and Saxon backgrounds.
- 1.4 Whether there is one or more naming systems in place and irrespective of the historical rationale whereby the systems came into place, all are culturally significant and provide both evidence of and aids to understand the complexity of historical social geography.

2. Establishment of Working Group

- 2.1 The Working Group was formed to address Resolution 1 of the Eighth Conference (Berlin, 2002), regarding the promotion of indigenous and minority group geographical names as a means of cultural retention / revitalization. The aim of the working group is to oversee the activities relating to this resolution.

3. Initial Task

- 3.1 The recommendation stated that geographical names authorities throughout the world are invited to present a summary of all activities aimed at the promotion of indigenous and minority group place names.
- 3.2 This information will be compiled into a general report for presentation at the Ninth Conference in 2007 and will be available for all interested parties as both a reference source and a means to make contact with other agencies involved in similar projects.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 It is proposed that the report takes two forms:

- 4.1.1 A written summary report, outlining the objectives and presenting the information submitted in a table format as an appendix. This report when tabled at the conference will obviously be limited to that information submitted to that time, but the appendix can be updated as additional data becomes available.
- 4.1.2 A web-based summary, using a world map to indicate the sites across the world where such activities are being undertaken, linked to the summary table. This method can be updated periodically as additional information is available, and can also have a copy if the conference report included.

5 **Progress**

- 5.1 The following progress has been made on this task:
 - 5.1.1 Data input form devised as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, with comments for each column to explain what type of input is requested. This has been tested by the including of information relating to a number of projects from various countries and amended slightly from the original design. Note that none of the test information will be retained beyond this point unless the relevant jurisdictional authority approves its inclusion.
 - 5.1.2 A Microsoft Access database created as the repository of the data to provide a spatially enabled database.
 - 5.1.3 A world map prepared showing location of various projects and linked to data held in the Access database.

6. **Suggested Protocol**

- 6.1 It is suggested that there needs to be some protocols established in relation to the inclusion of information into this database. The database is now ready to populate to enable the report to be prepared for the 2007 meeting, subject to agreement on how this should be accomplished.
- 6.2 The following is suggested as a protocol for the inclusion of information.
 - 6.2.1 Each country will need to determine if data is to be submitted. This will probably require a formal decision of the relevant naming authority or officer and / or the political authority associated with this function. The naming authority or officer will then be the conduit for the supply of information.
 - 6.2.2 Any project that has official recognition can be added, even if it is being carried out by an individual or agency other than the

naming authority – it can be associated with relevant legislation, mapping, linguistics, signage, tourism, anthropology, history or any other activity. The important point is that the activity gains recognition by the naming authority, however, such recognition can be before or after the project is undertaken and is relation only to the inclusion in the database, not necessarily for the project itself.

Examples of different types of situations whereby indigenous of minority group names are used in a wider concept include the following:

- New Zealand – Indigenous names recorded and used through three distinct paths, being:
 - Treaty of Waitangi, – this treaty, made in 1840, formed the basis for many aspects of the relationship between the Maori people and European settlers. Decisions made from 1975 onward relating to earlier actions that were contrary to the treaty have seen the restoration of a number of Maori names as part of the cultural redress.
 - The Survey Regulations associated with the Land Act of 1885 required surveyors to record the ‘native’ names for features associated with the surveys. Such instructions were maintained in subsequent legislation.
 - New Zealand has two official languages – Maori and English.
- The Netherlands – official use of Frisian names for both the name of the Province and the waterways by converting the names from the former Dutch spelling into Frisian, based on the principle that the naming authority rests with provincial governments.
- Finland – officially a bilingual country using both Finnish and Swedish as national languages. In addition the three Saami languages (North Saami, Inari Saami and Skoult Saami) are recognised in Finnish Lapland. The basis for the determination of which language(s) are to be used is the population of the municipalities (the basic administrative unit). A municipality is considered to be bilingual if there is at least an 8% representation of speakers of the minority language in its overall population. Saami is regarded as a minority language in the four northernmost municipalities.

6.2.3 Information can be forwarded on the spreadsheet provided, and updated as deemed appropriate by the submitting authority.

7 **Next Steps**

7.1 Obviously, the most important task is to populate the summary data, and prepare the report for the 2007 meeting. From that point onward, it will be necessary to ensure its currency. This will be an ongoing task that Australia will initially undertake.

7.2 Other possible tasks that this group could undertake are as follows:

7.2.1 With the permission of Canada, review and adapt the publications “A manual for the Field Collection of Geographical Names” and “Guide to the Field Collection of Native Geographical Names” to develop a practical guide to assist in field collection methodologies for indigenous and minority group geographical names, bringing the experiences from a range of environmental, political and cultural situations together.

7.2.2 Utilizing the various areas of experience, establish a number of models for this type of activity, including:

- Legislative method – authority established by an Act of Parliament
- Procedural / policy method – authority established by the development of policy or creation of procedures associated with a mapping program or similar activity.
- Academic – utilizing academic procedures to research and establish information to be used in a wider scope.