

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

**Item 15 of the Provisional Agenda:
Activities relating to the Working Group
on Pronunciation**

The Value of Pronunciation of Geographical Names on Web Sites in Canada

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In Canada, there are three web sites that include pronunciations of some Aboriginal names within the boundaries of a particular province or territory. British Columbia and the Northwest Territories have had their web sites up for several years now. The web site in the Yukon is relatively recent.

A brief description of the web sites and how to access the information is provided below. For details on the contents of the web site, you are encouraged to visit it.

Nisga'a Names, Nisga'a Lands <http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/bcnames/g2_nl.htm> is on the BC Geographical Names web site. Click the "What's New" link. Under the heading 'Audio File Format Conversion', you will see the following note. "The Audio Accompaniment offered for 'Nisga'a Treaty names' utilizes streaming audio. This file format requires RealMedia Player available for free from RealNetworks.com". By clicking on 'Nisga'a Treaty names', you are taken to a map showing the limits of the Nisga'a lands. By moving your cursor over the map the northern and southern sections are highlighted. Clicking on either section, you can get an enlargement of that section showing Nisga'a names.

The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre museum in the Northwest Territories has put together some virtual exhibits that include sounds and images as well as text and maps. Among others, input was provided by the Territorial Archaeologist, who is also the current member of the Geographical Names Board of Canada member for the territory.

1. *Lessons from the Land: a cultural journey through the Northwest Territories – Idaà Trail* <<http://www.lessonsfromtheland.ca/IdaaHome.asp?lng=English>>. This web site is also available in French and Dogrib. Before you start your journey, it would be a good idea to check the link to "plug ins" so as to be able to access the site properly. Links may be found on the "Home" page of the site or through the "Online Help".

2. *The Inuvialuit Place Name Virtual Exhibit* [Exposition sur les noms de lieux inuvialuit] <<http://pwnhc.learnnet.nt.ca/inuvialuit/index.html>>. This web site is also available in French and Inuvialuktun. After entering the web site, click on the link called "Map and Journey" below the banner. When you get to the map, you can click on one of the names shown. This will take you to a page with information about the name selected. Below the banner, near the top left you will see an ear symbol with three rays and the words "Hear the name ...". Click on these words or the name itself. As with the Idaà Trail site, it is a good idea to check the "Help" page to ensure that you have the proper "plug ins" in order to hear the names pronounced.

The Yukon Geographical Place Names Board (YGPNB) web site <http://www.yukonplacenames.ca/YGPNB_flash.html> is relatively recent - as mentioned. It uses Flash Player. Unfortunately, there is no link on the site for the user to link to get Flash Player. However, a search on your web browser for "flash player" will give you several places to obtain the plug in needed. On entering the site, the top half of the page slides back and forth and a picture is shown. Most are of physical features. This happens all the time during your visit to the site. The bottom left half of the page changes to match the picture shown above. Here you get a description of the picture. Below this is a horn with three ray symbols. Click on the icon and you get a text box indicating the name of the person pronouncing the name and when this was done.

There are some things to take into consideration if you are thinking about having pronunciations on your web site. While you might be able to get a speaker to provide the pronunciations, you may have to pay that person. You may have to pay for a translator, and travel expenses to go to the speaker or to bring the speaker to a place where the name(s) are to be recorded. There are also costs for web page design and layout that should be taken into account. One must also consider that there might be more than one pronunciation for the same name depending on the age of the speaker and what part of the country they are from.

Are there advantages of providing pronunciation on web sites? For small language groups, this provides a way of teaching the youth of these groups how to say things in their own language. It provides cultural and historical information that might otherwise be lost as the Elders pass away. It provides a way of retaining this information for future generations. Having pronunciations available may encourage the use of the name by non-Aboriginal speakers. The place names in written form and their pronunciations can be shared with non-Aboriginal speakers giving them a better understanding of their own country and its rich heritage.

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