

**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 Geonames 2005, the UNGEGN-DGSD International Conference on
Minority Names, Indigenous Names and Multilingual Areas**

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Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Name.**

Geonames 2005: International Conference on Indigenous Names/Minority Names and Multilingual Areas, Ljouwert/Leeuwarden 14-16 April 2005

1. Participation and organisation

Over 30 experts from countries with linguistic minorities gathered in Leeuwarden, the capital of the province Fryslân, almost the same area as that of the Frisian language minority area in the Netherlands. The Dutch- and German-speaking Division (DGSD) of UNGEGN had organized its third Geonames symposium here, on the theme of minority toponyms. It was sponsored by and organized by DGSD in conjunction with the Fryske Akademy (the research institute for the Frisian language which is part of the Netherlands Academy of Sciences), the Netherlands Language Union (in charge of all language matters in the Netherlands, Suriname and Flanders) and Utrecht University. The objective of the meeting was to help the newly instituted UNGEGN working group on the promotion of indigenous and minority group names with its inventory work, and to help shape the policies on minority names and multilingual areas during future UNGEGN sessions. The participants were from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Austria, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the Netherlands.

2. Proceedings

The conference was opened in the Fryske Akademy's conference hall by Hans Mol, chair of the Onomastics section, Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, Mrs Helen Kerfoot, chairperson of UNGEGN, and William Watt, vice-chair of the UNGEGN Working Group on the Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Names. The local organizers, the onomastician Dr Karel Gildemacher and cartographer Drs Arjen Versloot opened the meeting with presentations of the decline of Frisian as a language in administration and education, and its gradual and stepwise resurrection after 1950, which was also visible on modern maps. After this first session, there were sessions on Collecting, processing and presenting (minority) geographical names in order to safeguard our cultural heritage, on Repairing minority names/indigenous names: field experiences, on Legal aspects of minority names/indigenous names, on Bilingual mapping in multilingual areas, on Minority names outreach programmes, and on Developments in dealing with minority names.

Bill Watt dealt at the end with the Intent, Scope and Direction of the Working Group on the Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Names, and Ferjan Ormeling presented a survey of the developments in the rendering of minority names on official maps during the last 20 years.

3. Excursion

The conference was rounded off by an excursion led by Gildemacher and Versloot, through the northern half of Frisia, during which the participants could see for themselves, apart from the mound-dominated countryside, the many manifestations of monolingual majority or minority name versions, or bilingual presentations on street name signs, village name shields and direction posts: a rather checkered toponymical landscape.

4. Conference papers

The conference papers had been selected by Karel Gildemacher, Isolde Hausner and Ferjan Ormeling. The participants received a CD with all presentations.

A paper version of the proceedings has now been produced, and is available for the conference participants. For countries interested in the proceedings, produced by Utrecht University, a set can be made available.

The support of the UNGEGN chair and secretary in the organisation and the participation of the chair in the conference is most gratefully acknowledged.

During the conference the DGSD held its 19th meeting, during which the DGSD chair was passed to Dr Isolde Hausner, who will be in charge the next 5-year term.