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Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

New York, 21 - 30 August 2007

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Measures taken and proposed to implement United Nations resolutions on the standardization of geographical names

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

Submitted by the Working Group on the Promotion
of Indigenous and Minority Group Names**

* E/CONF.98/1.

** Prepared by William Watt (Australia), Convenor of the Working Group on the Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Names.

1. Background

The Working Group was formed to address Resolution 1 of the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names (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.

Recognising the fundamental link between place names, language and heritage, it was deemed important to promote the work being undertaken around the world to record and use names associated with indigenous and minority group place names. Such efforts are seen as assisting with a range of initiatives including the following:

- Language retention / revitalisation.
- Reconciliation initiatives.
- Cultural retention / revitalisation

2. Objectives

The objectives of the working group can be summarised as follows:

- To undertake the initial task as per the resolution mentioned above. This task has both a developmental stage, which is now completed and a maintenance function.
- To consider other methods by which countries can be assisted in the promotion of indigenous and minority group names, and, subject to acceptance of such initiatives by the body of this conference, proceed with implementing such methods.

3. Initial Task

The resolution stated that geographical names authorities throughout the world are to be invited to present a summary of all activities aimed at the promotion of indigenous and minority group place names.

This information is to be compiled into 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.

To that end, a data input form was created in Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word and PDF format and distributed with an invitation to submit any information seen as relevant.

4. Protocol

At the 23rd UNGEGN Session, the following protocol was established in relation to this project.

- 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.
- 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 relating only to the inclusion of the project in this database, not necessarily for the results of project itself.

In summary, projects can involve place names research in a range of situations including:

- Recording projects carried out in the past or being carried out currently.
- Languages can be currently spoken, subject to revitalisation initiatives or may be extinct.
- Languages can be official or unofficial.
- The place names recorded can be included in the general geographic nomenclature or stand as a separate body of information, used only by a particular community in an unofficial sense.
- Place names can be written in a standard orthography for the whole country or can be transcribed in their own orthography.

5. Results

At the time of writing this report, 47 projects were identified relating to the promotion of indigenous and minority group names from 11 countries. Some of the countries involved have a single naming jurisdiction and others have State or province based jurisdictions. It is estimated that the projects represent the efforts of 19 jurisdictional bodies.

The attached Appendix A provides a sample of the summary report table as of the date of writing this report.

It is considered that this is not a full representation of the number of initiatives being undertaken throughout the world and the Working Group seeks the assistance of all countries in gaining a more complete picture of these projects, both in scope of number of names and also in regard to the reasons and objectives of these projects.

Efforts are being made to contact other countries where we know similar projects have been undertaken to add the relevant details to the database.

In a general summary, projects associated with indigenous or minority group place names have been undertaken for the following reasons:

- Place names surveys
- Language retention programs
- Ethnographic research projects
- Treaties and Government instructions
- Mapping purposes – including gazetteers and topographic databases
- Heritage purposes
- Removal of offensive names

In relation to the names recorded as a result of the projects currently identified:

- 18 reported that all the names collected are regarded as official names,
- 9 indicated a mixture of official and unofficial,
- 2 reported the names are semi official,
- 14 stated that the names are unofficial,
- 1 advised that names were rescinded,
- 2 indicated no status for the names.

6. Reports

A sample from the summary report is included as an appendix to this document. The full document is available on request as a PDF file.

Steps will now be taken with the Secretariat to determine how this information can be placed on the web to enable new versions of the report to be available.

7. Next Steps

The primary task is to continue to populate the summary data. This will be an ongoing task that Australia will initially undertake.

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

- Canada has approved the concept of a review and adaptation of the publication a "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. This could bring together the experiences from a range of environmental, political and cultural situations together.

- Utilising 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 – utilising academic procedures to research and establish information to be used in a wider scope.
- Establish dialog and relationships with other initiatives / academic bodies etc who may be involved in recording of place. This should lead to:
 - Functional relations with other parties working in similar fields.
 - Better exposure of the role of UNGEGN.
 - Better understanding of the functions, responsibilities and processes of country jurisdictional bodies.
 - Greater use of indigenous and minority group names within established geographic nomenclature.
- Such bodies include:
 - PPGIS – Public Participation in GIS – a forum aimed at supporting public participation for variety of possible applications, including place names.
 - Native Web (www.nativeweb.org)
 - Foundation for Endangered Languages (www.ogmios.org)
 - Terralingua (www.terralingua.org)
 - Peak National bodies for linguistics and anthropology.

Appendix A – Sample of Summary Report



**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names**

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

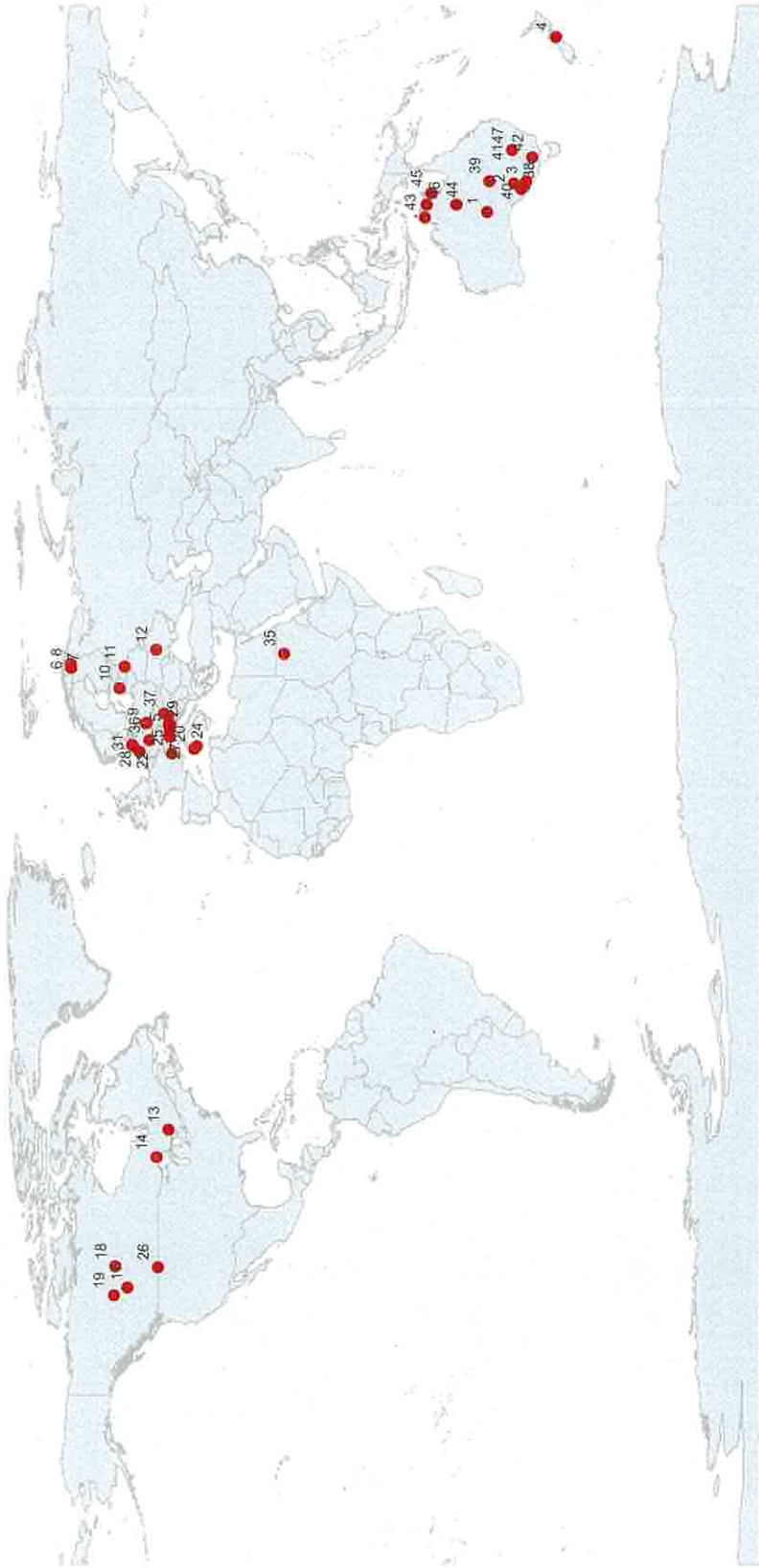
**Summary Report on Indigenous and
Minority Group Place Names
Projects and Initiatives**

Edition 1

Information sorted by country then language / cultural group

Version 1 Thursday, 14 June 2007

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Country	Australia	Record Number	45
Language / Cultural Group	Anindilyakwa		
Date of input	12/06/2007	Date of last update	12/06/2007
Status of Language	Unofficial		
Number of names	50		
Status of Names	Official		
Latitude	-14.028802518575		
Longitude	136.673728023295		
Reason for collection	Place names survey		
Collected by	Stuart Duncan		
Date span of collection period			
Relevant publication			
Comments	Coastal Features of Groote Eylandt		
Size of Community / Speakers of language			
Standard Orthography			
Single / Multiple language			
Region / Area			
Contact people	Secretary, Place Names Committee Department of Planning & Infrastructure, PO Box 1680 DARWIN NT 0801		
Legal framework			