

**Group of Experts on  
Geographical names**

**WORKING PAPER** No. 22

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Geneva, 29 September - 7 October 1986*

15 August 1986

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Agenda Item 5

REPORT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA - CANADA DIVISION

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Chairman of the United States of America,  
Canada Division.

**DIVISION MEETING**

The division held a single meeting in Washington on November 1, 1985. In attendance were Ms. Sandra Shaw, Chairman of the United States Board on Geographic Names, Dr. Richard Randall, Executive Secretary of the US Board, Mr. Donald Orth, Executive Secretary of the Domestic Names Committee of the US Board, and Mr. Alan Rayburn, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.

Both sides have agreed to meet at least once a year. In the past, formal meetings were not held largely because representatives felt that there was little on the UNGEGN programme agenda that required their attention. Now it is believed that divisional meetings addressing various topics could be beneficial.

The participants agreed on the following in regard to the work of UNGEGN:

1. National standardization efforts should remain the primary UNGEGN goal.
2. Exerting appropriate discipline during UNGEGN meetings is important to help expedite the flow of business.
3. Working Groups should have co-convenors to act in the absence of the convenor. This would help ensure continuity of business both between UNGEGN sessions and during them as well.
4. UN resolutions and UNGEGN recommendations should be collected and issued as a single document. The materials should have the UN resolutions organized by subject and with an index for cross referencing, procedural papers, and other relevant documents. The availability of such a document would facilitate reference to important information during meetings.



5. UNGEGN registration materials should include space for full identification of participants, including complete mailing information. The goal is to have identical data for each person to ensure that correspondence reaches the correct destination.
6. A standard curriculum should be developed as the basis for courses in toponymy offered under UNGEGN auspices. Lecturers should be selected because of their practical experience in names standardization. Students selected should have some expectation of becoming involved later in existing or planned national names authorities. A report on the success of the course, in practical terms, should be provided within a year.
7. The meeting also spent considerable time examining the question of whether a different UNGEGN structure could be proposed. The question was generated by observations such as the following: some nations may not be satisfied being part of a certain UNGEGN division; some nations constitute separate divisions; and sometimes it is difficult to know whether speakers are talking as members of a UNGEGN division or as a national delegate. While agreeing on the stated difficulties, the meeting did not bring a consensus on resolving the issue.

#### BORDER NAMES

On November 29 and 30, 1984, six representatives of the Subcommittee on Boundary Names of the United States Board on Geographic Names and five representatives from Canada's federal and provincial names authorities along with Canada's International Boundary Commissioner met north of Toronto, Ontario, to discuss problems relating to the handling of names of geographical features shared by Canada and the United States along their mutual boundary, which extends for 6,416 km (3,986.8 miles) from the Gulf of Maine in the east to Beaufort Sea in the west.

Nine recommendations and a set of procedures were worked out by the participants and presented to the respective national names authorities for adoption. The United States Board has adopted the recommendations and procedures. Some of the provincial members of the CPCGN urged more recognition for the preservation of cultural heritage and less emphasis on achieving standardization. A revision of the recommendations will be submitted to the CPCGN for adoption at its annual meeting on October 31, 1986.

#### SYMPOSIUM ON AUTOMATED DATA PROCESSING

The Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names convened the Second Symposium on the Automation of Geographical Names on May 31, 1985. As well as representatives from Canadian provincial and federal names and mapping offices, there were two representatives from the Domestic Names Committee of the United States Geographic Board: Donald Orth and Roger Payne. The papers presented at the symposium have been published in CANOMA, volume 12 number 1.

## **NATIVE GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SYMPOSIUM**

The Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names held a symposium from May 7 to 9, 1986, on the handling of geographical names of native origin. After the presentation of several papers in a series of workshops, the participants endorsed 26 resolutions, ranging from collecting names in the field to the funding of native names research. Among the 75 participants included representatives from the United States Geographic Board, the Greenland Language Commission and the Place Names Committee of the Northern Territory of Australia. A full report on the resolutions and the action to be taken by the CPCGN will be tabled at the Fifth UN Conference in August 1987.

## **UNDERSEA FEATURE NAMING**

The undersea advisory committees of the USBGN and the CPCGN continued to exchange information on undersea feature naming. Canada enlarged its committee to include the naming of major offshore surface water features.

## **PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS AND PRESENTATION OF PAPERS**

Officials of the secretariats of both USBGN and the CPCGN participated in several national and international meetings and conferences, including the Third United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference of the Americas (New York, 19 February - 1 March 1985) and the United Nations Inter-Regional Seminar on the Role of Surveying, Mapping and Charting in Country Development Programming (Ottawa, November 4 - 8, 1985). Alan Rayburn served as the president of the American Name Society in 1985, and presided at its annual meeting in Chicago in December 1985.