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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names****2019 session**

New York, 29 April–3 May 2019

Item 13 of the provisional agenda\*

**Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity,  
including indigenous, minority and regional languages  
and multilingual issues (Working Group on Geographical  
Names as Cultural Heritage)****International policy scan of indigenous and minority-  
language geographical names****Summary\*\***

The recognition and increased awareness of traditional geographical names contribute to the preservation, revitalization and strengthening of indigenous histories, languages and cultures. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that indigenous peoples have the right to designate and retain their own names for communities and places. The national naming authority of Canada, the Geographical Names Board of Canada, has a long-standing interest in researching, documenting and approving geographical names that have indigenous origins.

In early 2018, a policy scan was commissioned to examine the naming policies of a select group of countries with indigenous or minority-language populations. The full report highlights the findings of the policy scan. Policies, procedures and approaches differ in each naming jurisdiction, reflecting regional geography, history and circumstances. Consolidating the information provides invaluable material for federal, provincial and territorial naming authorities in Canada and will allow Board members to identify gaps, share best practices and work together to improve the policy framework on indigenous geographical naming in Canada.

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\* [GEGN.2/2019/1](#).

\*\* The full report was prepared by Steve Westley of the secretariat of the Geographical Names Board of Canada, Natural Resources Canada. The report will be available at [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEKN/1st\\_session\\_UNGEKN.html](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEKN/1st_session_UNGEKN.html), in the language of submission only, as document [GEGN.2/2019/71/CRP.71](#).

