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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION: TREATMENT OF NAMES IN
MULTILINGUAL AREAS

Toponymic activities in Nunavut

(Submitted by Canada)**

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TOPONYMIC ACTIVITIES IN NUNAVUT

Paper submitted by Canada

The new Canadian territory of Nunavut was created on 1 April 1999. The Nunavut Toponymist will be working on a number of files for proposed geographical names. It has been estimated that about 2,000 traditional names are missing. Nunavut will be working on several activities related to research priorities, data input, establishing a geographical names board, and conducting field work. Much toponymic knowledge is retained by Nunavut's Inuit Elders.

The Territory of Nunavut was created on April 1, 1999; it resulted from a treaty called the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* (1993). Mr. Ammie Kipsigak serves the Government of Nunavut as the Toponymist.

Nunavut Territory is about 2.1 million square kilometres. The capital city is Iqaluit and there are 24 Hamlet Municipalities; the total population is just over 27,000. Eighty per-cent of the population is indigenous Inuit. The official languages are Inuktitut, English, and French.

Mr. Kipsigak is currently involved with 10 files involving proposed geographical names that remain to be approved. The ultimate authority in accepting or rejecting the subject names is Nunavut's Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth.

When the early explorers, and ultimately the land surveyors came to the North they named the features based on their western language and culture, and in many cases after their financial backers, in most regardless of existing traditional names. Fortunately, of late, although slow, governments at all levels have begun to replace the English, French, and other European place names with traditional Inuit names for both municipalities and geographical features; names that are representative of Nunavut, which means *Our Land*. Both the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth and the Government of Nunavut are committed to protecting the Inuit culture and heritage of the Territory. Re-establishing traditional Inuit geographical names is an attempt to do so.

Today there are approximately 6,000 traditional place names have been approved by the predecessors of the Geographical Names Board of Canada; about another 2,000 place names are missing, according to the Nunavut Geographic Names Data Base.

The plans for the Toponymic Program, a proposed names board, and new field work are outlined as follows:

PROGRAMS

The Nunavut Toponymic Program will be guided by departmental policy and that of the pending Nunavut Geographical Names Board. These activities include:

- planning research priorities
- directing data input into the Nunavut database
- interacting with and assisting local individuals, groups, and cultural organizations concerning geographical names and naming
- planning a Geographical Information System for establishing a territorial library of maps

PLAN FOR THE BOARDS

A Request for Decision (RFD) has been drafted for the establishment of the local committees. *The Nunavut Geographical Names Board* will consist of members yet to be determined. Policy will guide these appointments. The Board will be expected to meet annually in different regions of our vast Territory.

FIELD WORK PLANS

Field work activity will start with Igloolik Island, where Mr. Kipsigak is currently posted. The undertaking is called the *Igloolik Island Traditional Place Names Project*. The work will involve research of place names, of course, but it will also explore boundaries and origins of the names as well.

For the 2002 to 2003 period, and between May and June, Mr. Kipsigak plans to study the current Murray Maxwell Bay and Siorarsuk Peninsula areas.¹ This field work will be done by snowmobile.

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Mr. Kipsigak trusts that his colleagues can appreciate the special significance and effort that has to go into the recovery of Inuit traditional place names. Much of the information is maintained by Nunavut's precious Inuit Elders.

Mr. Kipsigak may be contacted by one of the methods given below.

¹ This name is locally known as Siuraarjuk Peninsula and will likely be changed once the Nunavut names board starts its work.

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