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Item 16  
of the Provisional Agenda

**STANDARDIZATION OF MULTILINGUAL AREAS**

**NATIVE AMERICAN NAMES POLICY**

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Submitted by Roger L. Payne (USA).

## NATIVE AMERICAN NAMES POLICY

Roger L. Payne (USA)

The attached document represents the new policy approved by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names regarding the treatment of geographical names of Native American origin in the United States of America.

**POLICY X:**

**NAMES OF NATIVE  
AMERICAN ORIGIN**

Geographic names derived from the languages of Native Americans are an important and integral part of the cultural heritage of the United States. As part of its standard review procedure for proposed names, the Board will consult with Federally-recognized tribes having an historic or cultural affiliation with the geographic location of the feature. In addition, the Board may consult with such other organized Native American entities as it finds may have an interest in the feature being proposed for naming. The following policy clarifies the Board's position concerning the official use of names derived from Native American languages used in the United States, and its territories and outlying areas.

**Policy sec. 1**

**Official Use of Geographic Names Derived From Native American Languages.** The U.S. Board on Geographic Names supports and promotes the official use of geographic names derived from Native American languages. To this end, the expert documentation of these names in current use is encouraged. The final selection, spelling, and application of the names for official use on Federal maps and other publications are based on policies and orthographic guidelines established by the Board.

**sec. 2**

**Changing Established Geographic Names Derived From Native American Languages.** The U.S. Board on Geographic Names generally will not consider proposals changing the spellings and/or applications of long-published, well-established geographic names of Native American origin in order to conform to current standards of spelling correctness and/or name referent accuracy.

**sec. 3**

**Changing Established Geographic Names Derived From Non-Native Languages Within Areas of Native American Tribal Jurisdiction.**

- a. Proposals to change widely known, long-published geographic names derived from non-Native American languages for major (primary) features within, or partly within, areas of Native American tribal jurisdiction rarely will be considered by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names unless such changes have extensive public support and are approved by appropriate State and tribal authorities.
- b. Proposals to change published names derived from non-Native American languages in order to conform with local usage for other than major (primary) features within, or partly within, areas of Native American tribal jurisdiction will be considered by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. Decisions affecting such name changes will be made in cooperation with tribal and State authorities.

sec. 4

**Proposing Geographic Names for Unnamed Features Within Areas of Native American Tribal Jurisdiction.** Proposals to name unnamed natural features (that is, features for which there are no published or local names in current use) within, or partly within, areas of Native American tribal jurisdiction must conform to established Board guidelines for such naming and be supported by the tribal government before being considered for approval by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.

sec. 5

**Geographic Names of Native American Language Origin in Local Use Outside Areas of Tribal Jurisdiction.** Unpublished geographic names used by Native Americans for places and features outside areas of tribal jurisdiction will be given appropriate consideration with similar unpublished non-Native American names for the same places and features. The U.S. Board on Geographic Names, in each case, will decide on a name for official use according to routine decision criteria.

sec. 6

**Proposing Geographic Names Derived From Native American Languages for Unnamed Features Outside Areas of Tribal Jurisdiction.** Proposals to apply names derived from Native American languages to unnamed features (that is, without published or local names in current use) outside areas of tribal jurisdiction will be considered for approval by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. Proposals of this kind:

- a. Must meet the requirements outlined in the Board's guidelines for proposing names for unnamed features.
- b. Should be linguistically appropriate to the area in which each is to be applied (that is, in each case, the language from which the name is derived is, or once was, spoken in the area by a relatively permanent population).
- c. Must conform to the Board's orthographic guidelines for the writing of Native American geographic names.

sec. 7

**Generic Terms Recommended for Geographic Names Derived From Native American Languages.** The U.S. Board on Geographic Names recommends the use of generic terms with names derived from Native American languages that are easily understood by the general public and are common to the areas in which the names are applied. This policy applies even though the Native American names may already contain generic elements.

Approved by:  
Board on Geographic Names  
April 18, 1996

Approved by:  
Secretary of the Interior