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English

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**Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda \***

**Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names**

**Greenlandic place names: status and future plans**

Submitted by Greenland\*\*

Summary

**Greenland's Language Secretariat: polygons and updating the data**

Beginning in January 2023, Greenland's Language Secretariat (Oqaasileriffik) is now permanently funded by the Government of Greenland, allowing two positions for place names work instead of one. This is a historic milestone: for the first time, Greenland will have two permanent employees carrying out work on place names, which means that data updates of the place name register will improve considerably.

Updating of data has proceeded in parallel with the last part of the polygonization of place names in Greenland, but with updating postponed somewhat after polygonization. During polygonization, about 33,000 place names are divided into different categories depending on whether the item has already been approved for official use or whether it should be examined further before approval. Approved place names will be publicly available, while the rest will be available once formally approved by the Greenland Place Names Committee.

The polygonization of place names has been carried out in collaboration with the Danish Agency for Data Supply and Infrastructure under the project to map the ice-free area of Greenland from 2018 to 2022.

**Greenland Place Names Committee: updating authorization guidelines**

The Greenland Place Names Committee has updated the basis for its approval of proposals for place names, which are often sent by tourists and researchers who would like to name certain places based on personal preferences. Greenland's inland ice melts, forming "new" islands, straits, bays, reefs and nunataks. In the authorization guidelines, it is emphasized that the local population itself must name

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the “new” spaces when it begins to use these places and begins to name them according to the Greenlandic cultural naming method.

### **Telework during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) lockdowns**

The COVID-19 lockdown periods have been real eye-openers into the need to focus on the digitization process again. Before the pandemic, the digitization of the place name archive happened randomly and was unsystematic.

At present, Oqaasileriffik has taken the first steps towards a digital archive, and place name lists derived from the 1930s and 1950s have already been digitized for internal use. Maps containing references to the lists are in the process of being examined and tagged to give an overview of their different characteristics, for example which maps are too large for the scanner, which ones are copies of the originals, and which ones are fragile. Once an overview along these lines has been established, the next step will be to plan for future digitization.

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## **Greenlandic place names: status and plans**

### **The Greenland placename register: history, updating the data, and polygons**

**Historic milestone:** Beginning January 2023 Greenland's Language Secretariat (*Oqaasileriffik*) is now permanently funded by the Government of Greenland, allowing two positions for place names work instead of one. This is a historic milestone: for the first time, Greenland will have two permanent employees carrying out work on place names, which means that data updates of the place name register will improve considerably

### **Short introduction of the history of the placename register**

The legislative responsibility of the Greenland place names work was transferred to Greenland from Denmark in 1984, while the archive of place names was first handed over to Greenland in 1993. The first Greenlandic law on a Greenland Place Names Committee came into force on January 1, 1990.

Before the transfer of responsibility to Greenland, *Grønlands Styrelse*, the administrative authority of Greenland in Denmark established a Place Names Committee for Greenland in 1934 whose task was to formally name Greenlandic localities. The committee carried out both the first systematic collection and authorization of place names in Greenland. The first systematic authorizations date back to the 1930s, while the second collection of place names occurred in the 1950s. These data from the two periods are the ones we call the original place name register and contain approximately 27.000 placenames in total.

There are other updates of the place name register, but the original ones are the most systematized data Oqaasileriffik can access in the archive in daily work. Today the register contains approximately 33.000 polygonised placenames.

Since the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, there has always been only one employee to handle the 27.000 placenames, the administrative and legislative responsibility of maintaining the place name register, the board's meetings, and responses to inquiries regarding place names.

There will be two employees carrying out work placenames in Greenland for the first time, approx. 35 years later since the beginning. Along with in terms of legislation take care of the Greenland Place Names Committee's legislative tasks besides the administrative responsibility, which includes collecting, registering, and authorizing place names in Greenland.

### **Updating of data**

Updating of data has proceeded in parallel with the last part of the polygonization of place names in Greenland, which took place in the last two years. The polygonization of place names has been carried out in collaboration with the Danish Agency for Digital Supply and Infrastructure under the project of mapping the ice-free area of Greenland from 2018 to 2022, and during this time, about 33,000 place names were divided into different categories depending on whether the item was considered approved for official use or whether it should be examined further before approval. Approved place names will be publicly available, while the rest will be available once formally approved by the Greenland Place Names Committee.

In this way, data updates will take place in a controlled manner and at the same time the contents and locations of the archive will be considered for future changes and corrections. Therefore, in the long term, there will be better opportunities to do research changes to both locations and place names in the register over time since the 1930s.

The most important subsidiary aims are, among others, to get an overview of the registers' entire content in general. The contents are the following: the official placename, the alternative placename, feature class, sources, the district area the placename is located, notes, archive information, created date, the last edited date, the authorized date, coordinates of the location, the name giver of the place, whom the place was named after, the meaning of the placename, and the history of the placename.

Currently, Oqaasileriffik has an overview of the official placenames and the feature classes and is in process of correcting the spelling errors in the feature classes that according to the committee must be used in the register. In the rest of the content, employees have come across some inconsistencies between what the committee's minutes say and what the register says. In these cases, the differences are being researched when the employees come across misinformation.

In general, Oqaasileriffik aims to have a register that is consistent and based on quality and not on quantity.

#### **Plan for moving the current register to the Government of Greenland's Basic Data Programme**

The polygons will this year become part of the Government of Greenland's Basic Data Programme. The original plan was for the placename register to be moved to the basic data register around 2019-2020, but this has been delayed several times.

The move to the basic data register is tentatively planned to take place in the spring of 2023. Here, the placename register will change its appearance and there will be limitations on which data can be viewed publicly. This is done to make the appearance of the register must be usable by everyone.

At present, the contents of the place name register are publicly available on Oqaasileriffik's website, including misspellings in the feature class, sometimes multiple place names in one place, informants' names, and more.

#### **The Greenland Place Names Committee: Updating Authorization Guidelines**

The Greenland Place Names Committee has updated its approval basis in relation to proposals for place names, which are often sent by tourists and researchers who would like to name certain places based on personal preferences. Greenland's inland ice melts forming "new" islands, small straits and bays, reefs, and nunataks. In the authorization guidelines, it is emphasized that the local population itself must name the "new" spaces when it begins to use these places and begin to name them according to the Greenlandic cultural naming method.

The Greenlandic cultural naming methods have a basis in a communicative function without personal preferences, where the naming of places takes place according to, among other things, how the landscape looks like, where the place is located in relation to other places, what the wind conditions are like in the area, which animals available in the area and more.

**Telework during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) lockdowns**

The COVID-19 lockdown periods have been real eye-openers to the need to focus on the digitization process again. Before the pandemic, the digitization of the place name archive happened randomly and was unsystematic.

At present, Oqaasileriffik has taken the first steps towards a digital archive, and place name lists derived from the 1930s and 1950s have already been digitized for internal use. Maps containing references to the lists are in the process of being examined and tagged to give an overview of their different characteristics, for example, which maps are too large for the scanner, which ones are copies of the originals, and which ones are fragile. Once an overview along these lines has been established, the next step will be to plan for future digitization.

In the long term, these will become part of the digital place name register on the Government of Greenland's Basic Data register, where the digitized archive will be part of the register.