

Panel discussion

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QUESTION 1

Although in the early days of UNGEGN emphasis was put on univocity as basic to names approval processes in a country, over the years this principle has evolved. One name for a feature may be the easiest approach for cartographic purposes, but growing recognition of toponyms as a reflection of a country's cultural heritage has increasingly led to the acceptance of bi- or multilingual naming for a single feature. This move results in large measure from increasing respect for language use and cultural identity – whether official languages, minority languages or indigenous languages. Canada has recently seen official status given to seven names (in seven languages) for the Mackenzie River in the country's northwest. At the other end of the scale, Woodman pointed out in his paper to the seminar that double names may in some cases also exist in just one language (as for example, Barnstaple Bay or Bideford Bay in southwest England).

When one moves from features within one country to features that span the borders of two or more countries, there may well be different names used in each of the jurisdictions involved. Across national borders, these may be different language forms of the same name, or may be completely different names resulting from different histories, customs, relationship to the feature, etc. These differences should be respected in the use of these names.

Transferring the use of multiple names from land-based features to sea naming does not appear to me to be an automatic step. Yes, there are examples, such as the English Channel and La Manche where both names are accepted (used singularly or together), but in this case neither the United Kingdom and France do not express negativity about the arrangement. On some maps multiple names for seas may well be used, for instance, on maps that have been produced in Canada to show North America, the endonyms used in Mexico, the USA and Canada have been used within the landmass, but the surrounding waters have been labelled in English, French and Spanish. I would suggest that for a map of Northern Canada and Kallaalit Nunaat (Greenland), if produced for people on both sides of Davis Strait and Baffin Bay, Canadian producers would be enquiring whether there are Greenlandic names to be included for these water features.

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QUESTION 2

I believe that in a number of cases we clearly do view directional names simply as labels, as discussed in the seminar. For example, the Northwestern Passages (as shown in earlier versions of IHO's S-23 and in Chi's presentation to the seminar), or as the name would be used in Canada, the Northwest Passage (even though the name refers to many channels that allow movement through the Arctic islands). The name stems from the Western European explorers in centuries past searching for a passage to the northwest to reach the Orient. For most Canadians this passage would more strictly be "North", while to those living in the most northerly communities of Canada, this would be a "South Passage". However, I think we interpret this as a label and have no particular quarrels with the terminology.

Seeing colonial names on a map can certainly be disturbing. For instance, Inuit living in northern Canada have their own names for land and water features where they have been hunting and fishing on traditional lands for centuries. They are guardians of the Earth for future generations, and for the most part assign names that are descriptive of the features or record events that took place there. The names are an integral part of their language and culture and often are the starting point for stories that pass on the oral traditions from Elders to youth. Despite the network of routes and features named by the Inuit, a look at maps showing these northern areas of Canada would show an abundance of names put on the landscape in recent centuries by European explorers – names for royalty, for benefactors, for family, for friends. The traditional indigenous names and their meanings are now being recorded before being lost as society changes, and many names have been submitted and accepted for official recognition and national use. However, change of this proportion can take time, patience and gradual assimilation into common usage.

QUESTIONS 4 AND 5

Please note that these views are personal ones, and in no way represent any position of Canada or of UNGEGN.

Over many years I have thought that a new name would be the best option for the body of water between Japan and the Korean peninsula ... "Sea of Harmony", "Sea of Peace", or something similar. This could be a fresh start in relationships and could be an example to the world of regional cooperation. As any change from the status quo is questioned by some, this option could be as acceptable as any other. However, as this route was tried at the highest level in Korea with a proposal from President Rho in 2006, and was essentially rejected by Japan (see Chi's paper at this seminar), I feel now that this approach is unlikely to meet with success. Furthermore, it probably would satisfy neither side involved in the issue.

Dual naming is already in place within countries and across national borders, so this approach could be further explored in future. However, I think it is clear that for many map producers – at least those working in a government capacity – the choice of using a dual name for the waters between Japan and the Korean Peninsula is no longer in their domain, but rather rests on decisions made at a political/diplomatic level. Perhaps in any further discussion on dual naming, the situation in Antarctica, where multiple names for

some features are recorded in the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) Gazetteer of Antarctica, might be investigated and perhaps could provide some relevant leads.

Although there are four countries abutting on the sea, I have been surprised to hear barely a mention of the opinions of the Russian Federation during this seminar. I believe it would be worthwhile to have something on record as to their formal position.

Where to go from here? Some thoughts:

- The news of informal consultations to be established by the International Hydrographic Organization with regard to S-23 Limits of oceans and seas is very welcome and hopefully may in time produce results.
- Some issues take years to resolve, but to “keep talking” seems essential, both at the diplomatic level and the operational/technical level. Retaining a regular (annual?) seminar of some kind on pertinent issues appears advisable; at this point cancellation of seminars could in itself make a statement in relation to the name question. Ongoing discussion in society, for example the naming of seas at the university level, as well as presenting various naming issues to school students, could broaden the awareness of the general public to toponymic sensitivities. However, without a way of bringing Japan into the diplomatic discussions it would appear that progress on the particular issue at hand can be but limited.
- I would agree with the comment expressed by Ambassador Yoo that there is a degree of fatigue in international gatherings (e.g. UNGEGN) about this issue. It could be noted that with the reorganization of UNGEGN and the shorter timeframe at future sessions, strict allocation of time to technical issues will be critical to ensure results from the sessions. Detours into politically-centred discussion will be viewed negatively by most delegates who will be anxious to focus on core themes to optimize the limited time available.
- In 2016, a new Korean Cultural Centre opened in Ottawa. On the web, I see that there are some 30 such centres in the world - although this figure may already have increased. The Ottawa centre, for example, is very active and located in the downtown area where visitors are welcome. It produces a regular newsletter and organizes events, including those associated with cultural heritage, and shows art exhibits, videos, displays, etc. Perhaps a tasteful video or display about the toponymy of the Republic of Korea, including reference to sea naming could be made available to the various Korean Cultural Centres to encourage general interest in Korean culture through geographical naming.
- If it were possible to find a well-known person who would promote Korean toponymy through song, poetry or other art form this would indeed give names and naming wider attention by the public in Korea and elsewhere in the world.