

Geographical names

their origins and how to change them

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The month of September is all about heritage. One of the issues that is a constant point of discussion is geographical names. The following very informative article will be of great use to readers with an interest in the topic.

A rose is a rose by any name – or is it not?

Geographical names punctuate democratic South Africa's national landscape and reflects on inclusiveness, diversity, national identity and social cohesion.

The symbolism inherent in our heritage contests dual or multi-heritage, and reveals rich and unexplored names: *Huigais; Cabo de Boa Esperance; Cabo de Bonne Esperance; Cabo De Goede Hoop; De Caab; De Kaap; Cape Town; Kaap van Goeie Hoop; Kaapstad; iKapa; iXami-sa.*

The cultural and linguistic diversity of a country is reflected in the symbols that human beings use to give meaning to the real world and make sense of their

experiences. Names form part of symbols through which tangible and intangible objects within any society are identified. Their significance is that they are revered for their contribution towards the creation of a national identity and social cohesion through the provision and communication of frameworks for familiarity, affiliation and association.

The Western Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee (WCPGNC) was established in terms of the South African Geographical Names Act of 1998, and its members are appointed by the provincial minister for Cultural Affairs, Sport and Recreation. The committee makes recommendations to the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) and through SAGNC, to the national minister for Arts and Culture on matters pertaining to geographical names in the Western Cape.

The committee is established in terms of section 2(2)(a) of the South African Geographical Names Act of 1998, and consists of residents of the Western Cape nominated to serve on the committee and appointed by the provincial MEC for a period of three years, as well as ex-officio representatives of the South African Post Office, the national Department of Water Affairs, the provincial Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the provincial Department of Transport and Public Works, the provincial Department of Local Government, South African Local Government Association (SALGA) Western Cape, the provincial Depart-

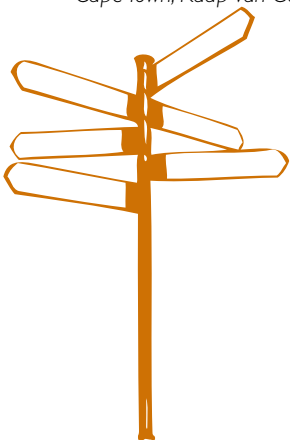
ment of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, the national Department of Rural Development and Land Reform and the Names Society of Southern Africa (NSA). The chairperson of WCPGNC also serves as the Western Cape representative on SAGNC.

The provincial committee may co-opt members to the committee based on their area of expertise and the application being considered at the time.

Functions of the WCPGNC

- ✦ To advise and engage with the local authorities in ensuring the principles of SAGNC are applied to names under their jurisdiction
- ✦ To make recommendations to SAGNC on the names of a geographical feature that falls within its provincial boundaries
- ✦ To do preparatory work for the submissions of names to be sent to SAGNC
- ✦ To ensure that local communities and other stakeholders are adequately consulted
- ✦ To liaise with SAGNC on promoting research and ensuring that unrecorded names are recorded.

The current appointed members of WCPGNC are: Mr Elsworth McPherson (Chairperson); Prof Izak van der Merwe (Member of SAGNC); Prof Bertie Neethling (Member of NSA); Prof Aubrey



Redlinghuis; Dr Mawande Dlali; and Dr Francois Verster.

The following geographical names fall outside the jurisdiction of SAGNC and applications for name changes in these cases can therefore not be submitted to WCPGNC for attention and recommendation to SAGNC:

- ✦ juristic names, that is, the name of the country, the names of provinces and the names of local authorities
- ✦ features under the control of local authorities, for example, streets, municipal buildings, squares, parks and cemeteries. (Please see Schedule 5(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa for a complete list of local government competencies for further clarity)
- ✦ privately owned buildings and farms
- ✦ cadastral names (names of geographical areas used for the registration of land ownership).

The process of standardising a geographical place name is based on the following criteria:

- ✦ the current orthographic rule of the language from which the name derives
- ✦ the wishes of the local population provided they are not in conflict with the principles of SAGNC
- ✦ the historical use of the name
- ✦ redress, where a name is changed on the basis of historical considerations
- ✦ United Nations resolutions on the standardisation of geographical names
- ✦ any other relevant factors which SAGNC may apply.

The route of an application

Applications for approval of a geographical name can be lodged at SAGNC by all government departments, provincial governments, local authorities, the South African Post Office, property developers and any other body or person. Applications will only be considered if they are submitted to SAGNC through WCPGNC.

SAGNC will then make recommendations to the minister regarding the proposed approval of a name. Once the name has been approved and standardised it is published in the Government Gazette.

Standardisation of geographical names is

important to affirm the country's history and national identity and to avoid confusion in the delivery of essential services to its citizens. The need for standardising geographical names arises from the following factors:

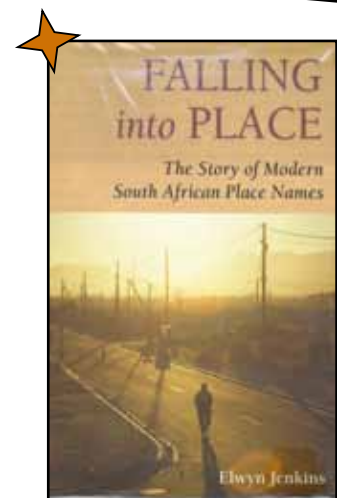
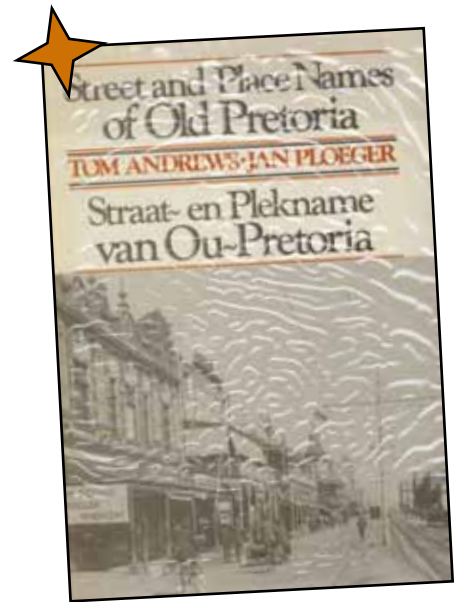
- ✦ people tend to give the same name to different places
- ✦ names may sound the same or the spelling of one place name may be very close to that of another
- ✦ names can be spelled in different ways
- ✦ places often have more than one name in a multilingual country.

Submitting an application for approval of a geographical name:

- ✦ application forms for the approval of a geographical name can be obtained from SAGNC or downloaded from its web site www.dac.gov (Department of Arts and Culture)
- ✦ follow the quick links to 'Approved Geographical Names'
- ✦ the provincial information can be found on www.intrawp.pgwc.gov.za or www.capegateway.gov.za
- ✦ follow the links: 'Your government's departments: Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport'
- ✦ Provincial Government
- ✦ Heritage Resources quick links
- ✦ Heritage Resource Management Services
- ✦ National Geographical Names.

A detailed explanation on how to submit an application can be found in the **Handbook on Geographical Names**, but a brief summary is provided here:

- ✦ use only the prescribed application form. (Do not retype – the appropriate form is also attached)
- ✦ supporting documentation giving information about the name is welcome
- ✦ submit the application form to the tribal authority and/or local authority for signing or affixing of an official stamp and then send the application to WCPGNC for consideration
- ✦ faxed or e-mailed applications must be supported with the original documents by registered mail
- ✦ application forms are available in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa.



Titles in stock

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S.A. Departement van Nasionale Opvoeding. Pleknamekomitee. **Amptelike plekname in die Republiek van Suid-Afrika en in Suidwes-Afrika = Official place names in the Republic of South Africa and in South-West Africa.**- Staatsdrukker, 1978.

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Zimu, ST. **Izibongo zamaZulu nobuciko bomlomo.**- Shuter, 2007.

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Note: An informative manual is included with your magazine. Libraries are encouraged to spread the above information amongst their library users.

