

Minutes for the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the  
Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names  
June 10-11, 2024  
Rapid City, South Dakota  
(Certified as accurate by the Chair on 10/8/2024)

The **Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names** (Committee) convened for a meeting at 11:00am (Mountain Time) on Monday, June 10, 2024, and 9:00am (Mountain Time) on Tuesday, June 11, 2024. In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463 (5 U.S.C. Ch. 10) the meeting was open to the public throughout its duration. Designated Federal Officer Alma Ripps conducted the meeting from The Outdoor Campus-West in Rapid City, South Dakota. This was a hybrid meeting with Committee members, staff, and members of the public participating in person and on Microsoft Teams.

**Committee Members Participating:**

Derek Alderman, Angelo Baca, Kiana Carlson, Julie Dye, Michael Catches Enemy, Donald Fixico, Meryl Harrell (ex officio member, U.S. Department of Agriculture, on Teams), Christine Johnson, Niniau Kawaihae, Jason MacCannell, Kamana’o Mills, Fred Mosqueda, Rachel Pereira (Vice Chair), Kimberly Probolus-Cedroni (on Teams), Lynn Trujillo (ex officio member, Department of the Interior, on Teams, participated on 6/10/24 only), Howard D. Valandra (Chair), Aimee Villarreal.

**Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the Committee:**

Alma Ripps, Chief, Office of Policy, National Park Service (NPS).

**Other Participants:**

Katherine Belzowski, NNDOJ; Marnie Cook, Native Sun News Today (attended on 6/11/24 only); Katybeth Davis, Founder, Good Trouble Monroe, Michigan; Andrea DeKoter, NPS; Jeshua Estes, Lakota Language Speaker, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe; Dorothy FireCloud, Native American Affairs Liaison, NPS; Megan Flier, Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs, CA Natural Resources Agency; Whisper Catches Enemy; Jhon Goes In Center, Oglala Lakota Metalsmith and Cultural Artist; Cal Goodin, Senior Policy Analyst, National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA); Stephen Hodge, Director, Florida Resources and Environmental Analysis Center; Betsy Kanalley, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); Meghana Karumuri, MSU; Jessica Lambert, The Wilderness Society; Deb Liggett, former superintendent, Devils Tower National Monument; Cori Lopez, USDA; Amy Loseth, Maine; Matt O’Donnell, U.S. Geological Survey, Department of the Interior (DOI); Emily Pettit, Maine.gov; Erika Pietrzak, The Wilderness Society; Angela Pittman, USDA; Olivia Porter, Southern Appalachian Landscape Project Director, NPCA; Donald Ragona, Director of Development and House Counsel, Native American Rights Fund; Emma Ragona, Conservation Colorado; Jenny Runyon, U.S. Geological Survey, DOI; Hadeel Shadid, Special Assistant to the Senior Counselor, DOI; Michael Shelton, Office of Policy, NPS; Kimberly Smith, Southern Appalachian Community Conservation Specialist, The Wilderness Society, and Eastern Band

of Cherokee Indians; Janee Smith, Junior NAIWA; Jasmine Smith, Junior NAIWA; Monique Vanlandingham, Committee Coordinator, Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names; Dennis Yellow Thunder, Teacher and Historic Preservationist, Oglala Sioux Tribe

Note: Meeting agenda, slide presentations, written public comment, and documents shared at the meeting are posted to the Committee's website:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1892/advisorycommittee-on-reconciliation-in-place-names.htm>

## **CONVENING THE MEETING (Day 1) – Monday, June 10, 2024**

The meeting was called to order by Designated Federal Officer (DFO) Ripps at 11:00am (Mountain Time) on June 10, 2024.

### **Welcome and Introduction to Agenda**

- DFO Ripps opened up the meeting by extending a welcome to the members of the Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names (Committee), staff, and the public. DFO Ripps provided instructions and meeting logistics to Committee members and the public (both in the room and online).
- DFO Ripps took roll and confirmed members present (see “Committee Members Participating” list, above), and noted the Committee had a quorum.
- DFO Ripps handed the meeting over to Committee Chair Howard D. Valandra.

### **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

- Chair Valandra welcomed everyone to the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Committee. He mentioned that over the past few meetings the Committee has synthesized and better understands its duties and responsibilities.
- He thanked everyone for the public comments submitted and highlighted the ones from young people. He then turned the meeting over to the Vice Chair Rachel Pereira.
- Vice Chair Pereira thanked everyone for being here and also highlighted the importance of the Committee's work to young people who she hoped would be inspired to recreate a world that is worthy of them.
- Vice Chair Pereira turned it back over to Chair Valandra who introduced Lynn Trujillo, Senior Counselor to the Secretary, DOI.
- Ms. Trujillo apologized for not being there in person since she is attending her annual feast day with her community. She expressed the Secretary of the Interior's gratitude for the work of the Committee, and her own gratitude then turned the meeting back to the Chair.
- Chair Valandra went around the room and had all the members of the public introduce themselves.

## Presentation by Guest Speaker Donald Ragona

- Chair Valandra introduced Donald Ragona, Director of Development and House Counsel, Native American Rights Fund, and citizen of the Matinecock Tribal Nation of New York.
- Mr. Ragona acknowledged his family lineage and homeland and thanked the Committee for inviting him to speak. He stated that he was speaking as an individual and not as part of his official role at the Native American Rights Fund.
- He offered that his remarks reflect his experiences and perspectives on the important issue of racist and derogatory names on public lands and to add his support to rename them.
- He spoke about how derogatory place names are a harmful legacy of this country's colonialist and racist past that create an unwelcoming environment for many people to America's public lands. Names reflect a greater problem of eradicating Native American history, people, culture, and traditions, and make it seem like native people are a thing of the past.
- Mr. Ragona explained about the American legal system playing a key role in the subjugation and eradication of indigenous populations, with the Supreme Court appropriating legal title of lands of Indian nations and trying to erase native populations. The U.S. Government assisted the legal system in this regard.
- The result was that indigenous people were considered subhuman species or reclassified to the same level as wildlife. He cited the names of several sports teams as examples. Native names on the landscape were removed and replaced with derogatory names. The impact of this erasure caused devastating harm to the psyche of generations of native people and established ill-informed perceptions of native culture.
- Mr. Ragona spoke about the importance of names given to specific places in Turtle Island (North America) and that names have significant meaning and tell a story of a place, person, or event. Place names connect to our past and are a common thread that runs through our bloodlines.
- He offered two examples of the importance of traditional place names: the creation story from the Algonquin and Haudenosaunee People and a sacred and historic place (Old Woman Hill) located in the Pine Ridge Reservation, just south of Red Shirt Table.
- Derogatory names affect native women even more who face high rates of violence which has led to the missing and murdered indigenous women crisis in the U.S.
- He went on to cite one of the more egregious examples of a derogatory name at Mato Tipila, Bear Lodge, in Wyoming that was desecrated by colonizers by being called Devils Tower, based on a misinterpretation of its original Lakota name. The name was later set in stone by President Theodore Roosevelt who designated it as the country's first national monument. The name is insulting and suggests that Indian spiritual practices are forms of devil worship and evil.
- Mr. Ragona spoke about "dysconscious racism" which is racism that the people themselves who exhibit it are unaware of such as those names associated with mascots.

It can also apply to derogatory place names. Renaming places with original place names allow for a more honest telling of American history and healing for native peoples.

- He supports also looking at commemorative names and names that valorize and monumentalize historical events and figures associated with violence and oppression and offered several examples.
- He ended with thanking the Committee for its work.
- Chair Valandra thanked Mr. Ragona and turned it over to Committee member Mike Catches Enemy.

### **Presentation by Guest Speaker Jhon Goes In Center**

- Mr. Catches Enemy thanked Mr. Ragona as well then introduced Mr. Jhon Goes In Center, Oglala Lakota Metalsmith and Cultural Artist, and an entrepreneurial professional.
- Mr. Goes In Center explained the origins of his family name and that he was raised mostly by women. He described that he thinks globally and intergenerationally, that the U.S. is a young country but his culture is 10,000 years old. He spoke about leadership, helping people to connect the dots.
- He stated that geographic information systems (GIS) is a technology that relates to native perspective and offered a PowerPoint that illustrated the concept of an aboriginal worldview. That cultures and spiritual beliefs are based on the resources that are there. He offered some examples, such as the Great Plains and the buffalo people, and the Northwest that are a salmon and cedar culture. But then you have an application of jurisdictional boundaries that make the underlayer fade away that was based on ecoregions.
- He cited back in the 1990s when native people provided a perspective on climate change since we were ground truthers and could see how animals were behaving and other observations. He showed maps of native lands that were eradicated since there were no treaties in the East. Even in the West where there were treaties, lands were absconded. He explained that reservation boundaries were arbitrary lines that did not include cultural sites of Tribes. Seen internationally as well.
- Mr. Goes In Center talked about his time working for IBM, the early stages of GIS, and legal battles over defining boundaries. He showed maps he produced that showed aboriginal territories for Tribes in the U.S. and Canada and explained the power of information technology. He stated that we are all spatial reasoners since we know our environment.
- He explained that for Lakota people, our spirituality comes from our resources that is part of our creation story and provided some info on the Lakota worldview and its connection to the Black Hills. He also spoke about the name change at Bear Lodge.

- Chair Valandra thanked Mr. Goes In Center and mentioned that native people have names for places that need to be brought back. He then opened the floor up to discussions on what was presented.
- Committee member Aimee Villarreal asked if having multiple names for a place is a solution. Mr. Ragona stated that it depends, and mentioned that there is no room for a derogatory name along with the native name since that still perpetuates harm. These places already have names and these cultures still exist.
- Ms. Villarreal asked about the different names for Mato Tipili. Mr. Ragona talked about Mount Blue Sky in Colorado where Tribes got together to come to agreement on what the name should be and worked by consensus. Mr. Goes In Center offered an example of Settlers Park in Boulder, Colorado that Tribes came to consensus on Peoples' Crossing. We need to decolonize ourselves from the mindset of dominance of resources.
- Ms. Villarreal final question was about Mr. Goes In Center's use of the word "ground truther" and what that meant.
- Mr. Goes In Center explained that satellites provide overall pictures and measurements, but ground truthing is what is happening on-the-ground at the microscale level.
- Committee member Don Fixico commented that changing names is doing the right thing but there is a right way of doing it. He cited the importance of ceremonies associated with name changes done by Tribes at the actual site to restore the spirituality of that place.
- Committee member Jason MacCannell talked about how as a geographer in California, he is very familiar with that landscape and the 170 associated Tribes, but here in South Dakota, it is all new. He complimented Mr. Goes In Center for his explanation of the difference of the spatial sense between different people.
- Committee member Derek Alderman spoke about the legitimacy of native place names as a form of geographic knowledge that transcends western scientific basis of geographic knowledge and the importance of that different worldview that pushes us to think about problems, scale, and connections in fundamentally different ways.
- Committee member Angelo Baca acknowledged the statement that the U.S. is young and makes mistakes, but we can correct them. He talked about indigenous philosophy and its importance to understand the world, and then cited his work on Bears Ears [National Monument]. Mr. Baca mentioned that indigenous place names exist because they are alive and are relatives. That we call them things in English, but that is really not their names. They already have names and have for thousands of years. He also spoke about the importance for the current generation of young people to understand these connections and the indigenous history.
- Vice Chair Pereira cited the importance of the Education and Outreach Subcommittee and the work that needs to be done. She mentioned the importance of history and the impact of names on people.

- Committee member Julie Dye talked about the Missing or Murdered Indigenous People violence that occurs today because of these place names.
- Mr. Jhon Goes In Center mentioned about the summer solstice and cyclical patterns of nature, of the earth being renewed and the role of the sun dances. He talked about the interconnectedness, that you can't single out one thing without being connected to something else.

### **Presentation by Guest Speaker Dennis Yellow Thunder**

- Mr. Catches Enemy introduced Mr. Dennis Yellow Thunder, Teacher and Historic Preservationist from the Oglala Sioux Tribe and shared how his family took him in when his mother passed away.
- Mr. Yellow Thunder talked about how caravans of settlers, gold miners, panhandlers, and land grabbers rushed across the Black Hills and left behind destruction, ruined the Tribe's hunting grounds and buffalo ranges, and left behind derogatory place names on the land they settled. This was part of the New World agenda based on conquer, destroy, and belittle, disregarding treaties, all in the name of progress. American Indians were an obstacle to that growth. Settlers took our land, called it homesteading, and gave names to places they knew nothing about and that already had sacred names. He cited Mato Tipila where Tribes from all over came to pray together even if they were at war. Settlers assigned certain locations derogatory names that thought were appropriate for them but not for us, including many called SQ\_\_\_ [squaw] that disparaged native women. He talked about how women are the backbone of our families and key to the structure of Tribal lives since many are matrilineal people.
- Mr. Yellow Thunder talked about how to change SQ\_\_\_ names on private lands, how they have stronger representation in Congress and that the tide of racism is receding but Native Americans still face subtle racist words or actions. Many are desensitized to it, but we can't let that happen. He praised the Order that created the Committee that will return honor, respect, and dignity that was taken from women and return the sanctity, spirituality, and essence of the land that was scarred by these titles. He mentioned the connection to the land, that when the land or sky speaks to you, you have to listen.
- He reminded Committee members that the land is alive, that they hear these derogatory place names and feel the hurt. He talked about when you hear thunder or see lightning, that is the power for the Committee to give it strength, to return the land back to what it should be. He offered a prayer to the Committee for strength and unity to help guide its work and keep it strong. He cited the Battle of Little Bighorn when Tribes came together to show their force. He ended with a statement that the Committee will be successful through its unity and because its heart is in it.
- Chair Valandra also mentioned the power of women and that Mother Earth put these names on the landscape for a purpose, for guidance from destruction.

## Presentation by Guest Speaker Kimberly Smith

- Chair Valandra introduced Ms. Kimberly Smith, Southern Appalachian Community Conservation Specialist with The Wilderness Society, member of Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and proud owner of Tali Elohi, an indigenous business. He also pointed out her two daughters who were in the room.
- Ms. Smith talked about her work associated with renaming place names starting with her background growing up in a family of resilient indigenous women who moved the family through intergenerational trauma healing. She spoke about struggling with impostor syndrome as a child growing up in Asheville, North Carolina in the heart of the Bible Belt as a BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and People of Color] child. She was involved in sports, and had to cheer on the defeat of a rival school that had Lady SQ in the title.
- Ms. Smith spoke about one parent's efforts to change the name of the mascot that was supported by 90 of the 95 teachers, but the school board deferred to the students to vote if they wanted it changed instead of acting as the people in charge saying this name is wrong. Eventually it was changed because of a lawsuit. This issue of changing the mascot motivated Ms. Smith into this work. She spoke about opportunities to educate people about these names, from halftime shows at football games to a Native American interpretive garden during college.
- She talked about her work at The Wilderness Society (TWS), of the organization trying to heal past harms and affect name changes at the local level through partnership. She highlighted TWS's Coalition for Outdoor Renaming and Education to bring people to the table on the conversation of renaming and making outdoor spaces more welcoming by eliminating place name that are racist and derogatory or acknowledge individuals with skewed moral center. The group operates out of regional hubs to amplify local voices to the national level. She offered the example of reorientating maps to the East since that is how indigenous people show up in relation to the land. She spoke about TWS work on telling honest and inclusive history and efforts to rename birds with problematic names.
- She highlighted that a creek in Buncombe County is named after a Civil Rights activist but to drive there you have to cross three different roads named after some unappealing people with traumatizing names. She emphasized it is not just about the name but the journey for people to get to that place and making sure they are not getting triggered on their way. She also mentioned the renaming efforts to restore the name Keowee to the highest peak in a park that straddles North Carolina and Tennessee and efforts to remove the name of the individual who gave Native Americans smallpox blankets from places all around Southern Appalachia that causes her trauma whenever she sees that name.
- Ms. Smith talked about the problem of renaming without intentional inclusion of the local community can result in more harm than good. She shared stats that prior to 1776, there were 66,000 indigenous place names around Southern Appalachia and

now, all but 56 have been removed. And many are misspelled which changes the meaning.

- Education has been a focus for her, offering educational training opportunities for youth to get involved. She emphasized that place name work is really place specific so need to listen to the needs of these areas and not come in like we have all the knowledge. She is helping to build out the network of renaming ambassadors and advocates. She mentioned her Tribe is working on a map to identify place names in her language, but they do not want to share it at this time.
- She shared a success story her Tribe had in renaming when they purchased Kituwa that was previously known as Ferguson Fields. She takes her kids there and they speak their language which has always been spoken there and it helps heal. How this helps her children be a more whole Cherokee, to re-indigenize their brains to see their relationship to the land.
- She complimented the NPS who has been a fabulous partner during the Tribe's efforts to rename Clingmans Dome to Kuwohi in Great Smoky National Park [currently before the U.S. Board on Geographic Names] and closing off the road to Kuwohi a few times a year so indigenous people in the area can connect with the place without sharing it with tourists.
- Ms. Smith talked about efforts to make Pack Square in Ashville more inclusive by removing an obelisk that was erected in honor of a problematic person. The Daughters of the Confederacy sued the city but lost and the obelisk was quickly removed. The city received a Mellon Foundation grant for \$3 million to redesign downtown to be more inclusive and provide identity and space for everyone, they have done a lot of community engagement. She ended with saying having dual names in Ashville works since it is a marriage between multiple communities in the same space.
- Vice Chair Pereira thanked the speakers and mentioned that all the meetings are tying together. She highlighted the idea of rematriation and the role of women as the backbone of culture. She sees that there has been a huge gap in this space.
- Mr. Alderman added that place name reforms is about larger environmental stewardship, the connections to the land, and the ethics of place.
- Committee member Kamana'o Mills mentioned the *Guide to Changing Racism and Offensive Place Names* and asked Ms. Smith if her group uses this guide.
- Ms. Smith praised the guide and said it was one of the resources she uses to be able to speak to communities about why this work matters.

### **Report Out: Federal Land Unit Names Subcommittee**

- Subcommittee Chair Niniau Kawaihae shared that the subcommittee did not have additional Federal land unit names to recommend but did want to provide some information about how the names from the November 2023 meeting were developed. She explained the subcommittee took 23 Federal land unit names drawn from all the Federal land units under the management of DOI and USDA, including Devils Tower



National Monument. She asked Dorothy FireCloud, former superintendent at the park, and current Native American liaison to the Director and head of the NPS Office of Native American Affairs to talk about her work engaging Tribes on the renaming proposal to change it to Bear Lodge and what the word “devil” means to Tribes.

- Dorothy FireCloud, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, served as superintendent at Devils Tower National Monument from 2006-2012. She talked about consulting with 25 Tribes, but these conversations dated back to at least the 1980s about the name change. The Tribes had signed a resolution in 1986 to change the name back to Bear Lodge. Members of Congress tried to block any name changes by introducing legislation, but the Secretary of Interior (Secretary) and the President could change it. She cited a map from the 1880s that showed the place as Bear Lodge. The U.S. Forest Service has a unit called Bear Lodge Ranger District. There is a logging company called Bear Lodge Logging Company, and many other sites.
- The park developed a long-range interpretive plan that talks about the different stories that we tell at a Park Service unit. Did consultation as part of the development of the plan. There are three groups who are interested in how the NPS stewards the place: the local community, Tribes, and the climbing community. She talked about bringing them together to discuss the plan, and each side shared why the place was important, and it helped with the relationships among these groups. All three groups wanted to protect the tower and make sure it was stewarded in such a way that it was being protected.
- Ms. FireCloud went on to explain that the local elementary school used the Devils Tower name and its mascot was the Red Devils with the students called the Little Red Devils which bothered Tribal people. This shows that Congress and other people who are vocal about not wanting the name changed are not representative of the entire community. She mentioned the *Naming Bear Lodge* report that talked about years of efforts in the earlier 1900s to change the name back to Bear Lodge. At least four decades of efforts to change the name since “devil” is not a word that appears in Tribal language.
- She read some relevant sections from the report into the record. That the name Devils Tower actively contributes to a misunderstanding of Native American religion and spirituality accusing Tribes of devil worship. That the name Devils Tower or Devils Mountain suggests it was a mistranslation. The name Devils Tower is lacking in historic priority, it has no ethnographic validity despite the claims of Colonel Dodge who coined the term, the name is highly offensive to American Indian people, and the name has the potential to contribute to cross-cultural misunderstandings.
- The former superintendent, Deb Liggett, tried to ban climbing at the site but the NPS was sued and told they didn’t have the authority to do that. There is a voluntary ban on climbing during June (summer solstice) and 80 percent of climbers that would normally come don’t. Many of the international climbers who come say if they had known about the June ban, they would have come at a different time.

- She ended with quoting Major General Hugh Scott who characterized the name Devils Tower as a name without taste, meaning, or historical precedent.
- Subcommittee Chair Kawaihae thanked Dorothy for her presentation and offered that she read the report and found interesting that the viewpoint that wilderness is symbolic of the devil as compared to the EuroAmerican mentality of civilization and urban dwelling, which is antithetical to Native Americans and Native Hawaiians. She also mentioned that maps were misaligned so that other competition would not find that particular location.
- Ms. Villarreal mentioned there are thousands of places that use the term devil or reference diabolic naming and travelers coming through would see the beauty of these places and wonder why they were named for the devil since the term was offensive. She asked if the spirit of the place was also offended by these names.
- Mr. Goes In Center offered that any desecration offends our Mother, Inyan, in a sense. Rocks are alive and known to heal, they come from creation itself. It changes the whole picture in people's relationship to their Mother Earth.
- Ms. FireCloud mentioned that there was a push to put a huge statue of Jesus on the top of the tower then they talked about building a little chapel up there so they could pray to get the devil taken out of the area. This shows the impact of the term and its connotation.
- Mr. Yellow Thunder stated it has been four decades since the trying to change the name, and asked if we are getting any closer.
- Mr. Catches Enemy mentioned that the Geographic Features Subcommittee that he chairs will be discussing this tomorrow during their report out. He wants to look at changing something that's derogatory and returning it to something that's sacred.
- Mr. Goes In Center gave some context about the timeframe when native people were voicing their concerns, back to his great grandfather. He also cited the Native American Religious Freedom Act from 1978.
- Mr. Catches Enemy offered that during his subcommittee discussions on the word devil, one member Don Fixicio, developed a quick paragraph on its meaning which they will be sharing tomorrow.
- Mr. Fixicio gave a quick history on wars in the 1870s, such as the Nez Perce War of 1877, the Battle of Rosebud, and Little Bighorn, both in 1876, all related to taming the frontier and annihilating native people. He spoke about Lieutenant Richard Dodge, a Civil War hero who had spent his career trying to do the right thing who was sent to the West to defeat native people. He is sent into the Black Hills to look for gold, sees Bear Lodge and through a guide he is given a translation like Bad God's Tower or Lodge which he turns into Devils Tower. That was a 150-year old mistake, he would want to do the right thing and correct it.
- Committee member Fred Mosqueda stated that they don't have a name for the devil in their native language. This place is good, it is where the ceremony started, and name needs to be changed. He told the story of Bear Lodge, of eight children (seven boys and

one girl) who were playing with a ball. A bear was trying to sneak up on them and they ran and climbed up on a small rise and when the girl held the ball up, the rise rose into the air. The bear clawed the rise, and when it got close to the children, she kicked the ball into the air, and it would rise again. She did it seven times then they rose into the sky to become the Big Dipper and she became the North Star. The bear's spirit is still in it and that is why it is called Bear Lodge. The name should be returned to it.

- Ms. Dye asked where churches or religious organizations in the area stand on the name. Would they be allies or be opposed to change? Neither Ms. FireCloud nor Mr. Catches Enemy knew what their position would be.
- Committee member Christine Johnson provided information to a previous question on why the name change hadn't happened. She explained that once a bill is introduced in Congress, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN) cannot touch it, it takes it out of their hands.

### **Public Comment Period**

- DFO Ripps explained the rules for the public comment period, that commenters were limited to three minutes but could submit written statements of any length that would be posted on the website and shared with Committee members.
- She stated that no one had pre-signed up for today, but we would open it up to anyone in the room who wanted to make a public comment then to people online.
- Mr. Goes In Center with the Oglala Sioux Tribe offered that the onus is always on indigenous people to express their worldview but when it comes to U.S. history, it has been whitewashed. He mentioned that the country was in a recession after the Civil War, and the U.S. was at its weakest moment militarily. That the efforts to create wealth, the discovery of gold, was related to the eradication of native people. He said we have stories that connect us to Mato Tipila, American needs to understand that this is our sacred site. It is also one of the most significant rock features and is a life-giver.
- DFO Ripps mentioned that all the public comments received thus far are on the website and highlighted the nine individual comments the Committee received from a fourth-grade class in Palo Alto, California. Very impressed by nine-year-olds who understand more about the naming process than most people in this country. Also mentioned a public comment received from a geographer and disability rights advocate who offered additional terms for the Committee to look at as being potentially derogatory.
- DFO Ripps stated that the Committee had received almost 20,000 individual comments in support of the work of this Committee, and one comment asking the Committee to stop pretending that the past didn't happen. This concluded the public comment period.

## Report Out: Federal Land Unit Names Subcommittee-continued

- Chair Valandra said that we will now return to the report out by the Federal Land Unit Names Subcommittee.
- Mr. MacCannell talked about Mount Diablo in California in the 1890s, an example of the Spanish calling the god of the local people a devil. That a medicine man or someone like that came out on the field and they won the battle for the native people, so they named it Mount Diablo. There were efforts to rename it Coal Hill in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century since they started mining coal on the sacred mountain and they didn't like the word devil, but it never caught on.
- Mr. Fixico talked about the period following the Civil War and after Reconstruction, many Christian religions being introduced into the West, 22 missionaries representing these groups. Efforts to Christianize the American West and to deculturize native people and assimilate them into Christianity. So would guess church people would be against the name Devils Tower because it is against their fundamental beliefs.
- He spoke about the Ghost Dance religion that is introduced in 1889 and leads to the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890. Was considered a threat to missionary work and Christian organizations. He talked about the impact of disease on native people, killing them and on top of that, efforts of assimilation policy through land allotments that detach people from their identity and attachment to the earth. By 1900, there is less than 238,000 native people left, we were considered the vanishing race which was the dream of many military commanders.
- Mr. Catches Enemy spoke of the knowledge about who we are as Lakotas, we don't ever call it a religion we call it a way of life. We practice spirituality. Religion is a man-made creation with man-made laws, but we follow spiritual laws that follow the land, earth, water and the natural process of things. It is more at peace, not as much at war and conquering.
- He talked about Tribes at war, and "counting coup" which is about shame, that the enemy got close enough to touch you with a lance or stick, but didn't kill you. Women were part of battles as well. Boundaries are fluid, Tribes would be in an area then move out of the area and another Tribe moved in. Wasn't always a solid line that was linear in time, it changed. Maps don't talk about fluidity. He highlighted that it says a lot that 20 Tribes agree on the name Bear Lodge.
- Chair Valandra asked Mr. Catches Enemy about his subcommittee's research on other places with the name devil.
- Mr. Catches Enemy said there were at least 1,436 places that have the name devil, these were on Federal lands but there are more if you count private and State lands. So there might be more names brought forward. He also talked about long-term efforts to change Devils Tower, and if successful, will impact other devil named place efforts.
- Chair Valandra talked about each generation saying "in my lifetime" for long term changes, and when a person's life ends, their children say "in my lifetime." He

referenced how Secretary Haaland in one action got rid of the SQ\_\_\_ word, and at the last meeting, they did the same with the c\*\*n [coon] word.

- Mr. Mills explained the methodology the subcommittee used when evaluating the term devil including acknowledging that devil worship is protected under the U.S. Constitution. He talked about that some words like SQ\_\_\_ are derogatory but others are problematic that really depend on the context of the word. All was taken into account when they formulized the statement on the history of the word devil.
- Ms. Villarreal cited an article [Going to the Devil] by Ernest L. Abel and Michal L. Kruger from 2008, that did an analysis on places that were named for the devil or diabolical, and also for heaven or angels. Humans tend to associate with the sacred places that are special, places of sanctuary, spiritual places. Places associated with defilement are disorderly, and out of place, like seeing a cockroach in your kitchen. It is a creature out of place. Also cited theorist Mary Douglas and her work in India, people being defiled or ritually unclean and thus, not sacred. She offered a table that had 1,699 devil-related terms but only 525 angel-related terms. If you add in hell, purgatory, and other terms it increases the numbers, same with if you add in heaven. The study also found the highest percentage of names for both the devil and angel occurred in the West. The next highest percentage is the South. In the Midwest, more terms are associated with heaven than devil. So overall, the West and South have the greatest disparity of devil than angel placements. The Midwest and Northeast had the smallest disparity.
- Committee member Kimberly Probolus-Cedroni thanked the guest speakers as well.
- Mr. Baca talked about conversations with traditional knowledge holders and cultural keepers taking place in a Federal agency space, doesn't happen often. He asked Ms. FireCloud if she knew if the climbing community would be supportive of changing Devils Tower to Bear Lodge. He has seen that in other sacred native spaces where climbers are passionate about their positionality.
- Ms. FireCloud talked about the history of several climbing guides who had businesses in the area, how climbers had put pitons through a slab of native rock art then half-heartedly apologized to the native people. She doesn't know what the climbing community position would be. But she did cite that 80 percent of climbers don't climb during the voluntary ban in June, so they might be supportive.
- Mr. Baca mentioned that as part of the Education and Outreach Subcommittee that he co-chairs, might need to do outreach to these various groups, bridge the communication gap between the outdoor rec side and native people. Build coalitions and allyships beyond just renaming, expand to restorative justice that is part of environmental justice.
- Chair Valandra thanked everyone and reminded members and the public that the meeting will start at 9:00am Mountain time on Tuesday. He then adjoined the meeting for the day.

## **CONVENING THE MEETING (Day 2) – Tuesday, June 11, 2024**

The meeting was called to order by Designated Federal Officer (DFO) Ripps at 9:00am (Mountain Time) on June 11, 2024.

### **Welcome and Introduction to Agenda**

- DFO Ripps opened up the meeting by extending a welcome to the members of the Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names (Committee), staff, and the public. DFO Ripps provided instructions and meeting logistics to Committee members and the public (both in the room and online).
- DFO Ripps took roll and confirmed members present (see “Committee Members Participating” list, above), and noted the Committee had a quorum.
- DFO Ripps handed the meeting over to Chair Howard D. Valandra.

### **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

- Chair Valandra welcomed everyone to day two of the Committee meeting. He thanked yesterday’s presenters who talked about the role of women in land names and places, that conversation broaden our perspectives and took a more global view in the work we are doing.
- Vice Chair Pereira mentioned that each meeting continued to build on one another and allow us to see the opportunities and gaps that exist for us to make this work salient and maximize impact. Vice Chair Pereira turned it back over to Chair Valandra who introduced Meryl Harrell, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Agriculture.
- Ms. Harrell apologized that she could not be there in person, but passed along her thanks on behalf of Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and herself for the work of the Committee. She highlighted that the speakers yesterday re-grounded the impact of names and their importance to place, and the opportunity for healing and addressing past harms. She then turned the meeting back over to Chair Valandra who turned it over to Processes and Principles Subcommittee Chair Christine Johnson.

### **Report Out: Processes and Principles Subcommittee**

- Subcommittee Chair Christine Johnson introduced the members of her subcommittee then discussed the working definition of derogatory that was constructed by the subcommittee and discussed at previous meetings. She asked the Committee to vote on finalizing that definition later today.
- She then outlined a series of draft process recommendations related to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (USBGN) that her subcommittee is putting forward for discussion and voting. She explained that the subcommittee considered information from a variety of sources, including interviews with USBGN staff and Board members and State Names Authorities, and conducting independent research and reviewing

published documents and websites. She then went through each recommendation. They also discussed resources required to implement the name changes.

- Recommendation #1 under General Process, would reserve or limit the ability to place a name on the landscape to the USBGN as intended by the original Congressional action of 1890. Subcommittee Chair Johnson offered an amendment to change “Congressional action” to “Executive Order” since President Benjamin Harrison established the USBGN not Congress in 1890. It was re-established by Congress in 1947 to standardize geographic name spellings through the Federal Government.
- Chair Valandra asked if she could add the exact statute number. Subcommittee Chair Johnson said it was an executive order and yes, we can get that number and add it to the recommendation.
- Ms. Villarreal asked about the difference between executive orders and public laws. Subcommittee Chair Johnson explained that executive orders are put forward by the President as a singular act and public laws come from Congressional action. She then turned it over to the next subcommittee member to present.
- Recommendation #1 under USBGN would create a transparent framework for prioritizing USBGN staff work for renaming proposals related to derogatory or offensive place names. Ms. Probolus-Cedroni explained that the Secretary has prioritized eradicating derogatory or offensive names from the landscape as a national priority. Given the large volume of applications that take up valuable staff time, this recommendation would prioritize that work with proponents for low-priority proposals given notice of a delayed response time.
- Mr. Fixico stated that he understood the importance of fast-tracking based on priorities but wanted to make sure that the proper homework and research still get done on these naming proposals.
- Subcommittee Chair Johnson explained that this recommendation related to triaging the applications that come in to allow the more problematic names to be fast-tracked in order to consider them.
- Chair Valandra offered an example in Indian country where they changed the regulations for “fee-to-trust” from a multi-year process to 120 days, but it was a mirage and it still takes years. He stressed the importance of a transparent framework.
- Recommendation #2 under USBGN requests the U.S. Geological Survey to hire additional staff for outreach and research duties and to define a reasonable timeframe as five years or less for USBGN action with its policies. Ms. Probolus-Cedroni talked about how the timeline for the USBGN to issue decisions is unacceptably long, so hiring more staff and focusing on derogatory place name elimination and mitigation might help with delays. She also offered that if USBGN doesn’t make a decision within five years on a place name, it would be forwarded to the Secretary for action. She ended with the importance of input from groups negatively impacted by derogatory names.

- Recommendation #3 under USBGN would amend policies to favor the restoration and preservation of native place names. Mr. Mills explained how most native languages are endangered and that they are more than tools of communications, they are profound cultural resources. Native languages are repositories for indigenous wisdom and spiritual significance. Once they are erased, it is not only a loss for native communities, but for all of humanity. It is an important step towards healing historical injustice.
- Recommendation #4 under USBGN would amend the definition of “derogatory” to reflect the more inclusive definition developed by the Committee. Mr. Mills spoke about the importance of adopting a more comprehensive definition that acknowledges the power of language in shaping our perceptions and interactions, and reflects a more respectful environment.
- Recommendation #5 under USBGN would support the development of an online training module on how to complete a place name proposal application and require applicants to take the training before applying. Ms. Dye explained that most people are unaware of the process and information on the USBGN website is hard to find. The training could provide applicants with a reasonable statement of the average proposal time and minimize applications that have little chance of approval. She also mentioned that training could also be offered through other means for applicants who don’t have access to the website.
- Recommendation #6 under USBGN would require a content warning on webpages associated with the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) to warn the public about seeing derogatory or offensive names. Mr. Alderman talked about the negative effect these names have on people and that other countries have done this, such as Canada.
- Recommendation #7 under USBGN would require that the list of proposals be made public before each monthly meeting and include a link to participate in the meeting and a forum for feedback on proposals. Mr. Alderman spoke about the importance of open and transparent government and how reconciliation is not only the place name, but the process by which we change the name as well.
- Recommendation #8 under USBGN would allow for temporary un-naming of places, implementing neutral markers, or using multiple names for geographic features. Mr. MacCannell explained about the process used by the task force to replace SQ\_\_\_ names under a short timeframe when there were no replacement names proposed. How the replacement names were generic and arbitrary. He offered that the USBGN should amend its policies to allow for the un-naming of features during the long renaming process. The use of a hyphenated name could be a good tool when there are two Tribes that share an area, and both want their languages represented, or could combine a more modern name with a Tribal name.
- Ms. Villarreal asked if multiple names could lead to maintaining harmful names.



- Subcommittee Chair Johnson explained that the recommendation meant to capture names used by multiple communities in one place.
- Mr. Alderman suggested additional language that this recommendation is not meant to keep a derogatory name remaining on the map. He cited instances where cities and towns will hyphenate a name to please certain groups and avoid making hard decisions.
- Vice Chair Pereira suggested that language also talk about the intention behind the derogatory name.
- Language was added to the draft recommendation: Use of multiple names is not intended to perpetuate harmful or derogatory names remaining on the landscape.
- Chair Valandra talked about ceded and unceded territories used by overlapping Tribes for hunting, fishing, gathering, and praying. Multiple names support these overlapping areas.
- Mr. Alderman added that the United Nations has looked at multiple names, called dual names, for areas since one name cannot do justice to the rich history of a particular place.
- Chair Valandra said we need to be mindful that un-naming might give the Feds a sort of relaxed attitude.
- Subcommittee Chair Johnson explained that un-naming is the beginning of healing in a space, immediately removing a derogatory name while Tribes and local voices select a more appropriate name. Could also use the GNIS feature ID.
- Ms. Villarreal offered the word “temporarily” in front of un-naming so there is a limited time period. Committee members agreed.
- Recommendation #9 under USBGN would remove the word “primitive” from USBGN policies. Ms. Dye explained the word “primitive” has been deemed harmful and inappropriate for use regarding humans or human culture.
- Mr. Fixico explained that when primitive is used by scholars, it equates to zero civilization. It is a western conceptualization that there is only one kind of civilization and negates everything else.
- Chair Valandra cited the Supreme Court’s use of uncivilized or unchristian Indians in the footnotes of orders. He suggested the recommendation be stronger in its language.
- Subcommittee Chair Johnson offered to use “it is necessary” when talking about removing the word primitive. The Committee agreed to the stronger language.
- Recommendation #10 under USBGN would allow States to submit directly any derogatory or harmful terms to the USBGN that would immediately accept the suggested replacement names. Subcommittee Chair Johnson cited similar language under Policy 10 that allowed Tribes to name features on their land with no decisions or management from USBGN. She explained that States are able to solicit local opinion more directly on usage and support and it would remove politicization and weaponization of geographic features at the Federal level. Much of the info in GNIS database is from State maps. She mentioned that there are discrepancies on Federal and State maps.

- Mr. Catches Enemy mentioned that many documents group Tribes with municipalities and local groups instead of specifically listing them out.
- Subcommittee Chair Johnson said she could amend the recommendation to add Tribes along with Federal and State governments, so States could submit replacement names from Tribes directly to the BGN.
- Chair Valandra voiced his concern about mixing Tribes and States together and cited the example with casinos. Tribes had sovereign capabilities until States were given authority by Congress to regulate casinos. When you start mixing them together, Tribes always lose. He also cited an example with taxing Indians after taking their land and the use of the phrase “competent Indian” when they serve in the military or marry a white person.
- Subcommittee Chair Johnson explained that Policy 10 only related to Tribal lands, where Tribes can rename anything on their land with no discussion by the BGN. The spirit of the recommendation is to expedient the process.
- Mr. Fixico provided some context on the use of Tribal Nations and not using Tribal authorities for the almost 600 Federally recognized Nations.
- Mr. Catches Enemy cited how much Tribes have had to compromise and acquiesce to what the Federal Government asks. He mentioned that Tribes have councils and are Nations with civilized societies.
- Mr. Mosqueda mentioned that you can have two Tribal Governments who are different but the U.S. Government put them together by treaty. You have to talk to both.
- Chair Valandra stated that the recommendation is taking about States and if you give them too much authority, they will walk all over Tribes. Recommendation needs to protect Tribes.
- Mr. MacCannell offered that the recommendation related to a situation in Texas where the State government renamed several derogatory names at the State level but BGN never officially changed them on the national map even though the State thought that had occurred.
- Subcommittee Chair Johnson mentioned that in most cases, States have to communicate and consult with Tribes for input as part of the process. When asked by Chair Valandra if the State of Texas had consulted with Tribes on those names, she could not answer that.
- Chair Valandra voiced his concern that a name change in a specific state might not result in a State Government consulting with Tribes in neighboring states that had ceded their territories.
- Mr. Alderman recommended tabling this recommendation for now until language to protect Tribal authority or Tribal Nations is added. Other Subcommittee members agreed.

- Subcommittee Chair Johnson ended with a statement that the renaming of derogatory place names is a vital act of reconciliation, acknowledging past wrongs while paving the way for a more inclusive and respectful future. It is an affirmation that every individual and culture deserve to be recognized and valued. And it is a crucial part of our journey towards a just and harmonious society.

### **Report Out: Education and Outreach Subcommittee**

- Subcommittee Co-Chairs Angelo Baca and Kiana Carlson opened their session by explaining how the draft recommendations developed by the Education and Outreach Subcommittee could be prioritized based on a series of factors.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca talked about prioritizing based on timeframes, budgetary limitations, or existing efforts already in process. He emphasized that some actions related to older knowledge holders are very time sensitive since they will not always be around.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Carlson talked about other ways to prioritize such as working with groups already interested in this work, impacts to Tribes, educational components, or Federal Government vs. partnership actions. She then explained how the draft recommendations were broken into different categories—education and engagement, partnerships, resources, and general recommendations.
- Under Education and Engagement, Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca talked about the Department of the Interior developing easy-to-understand visual aids that clearly explain the naming process including the steps and key players.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Carlson spoke about how the Department could produce a series of testimonials or documentaries featuring Tribal elders or other affected communities impacted by derogatory names who have successfully renamed features on the landscape. She emphasized that would bring in the human element to these name changing efforts.
- Related to this, Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca recommended that the Department USBGN website could be updated to provide more engaging and interactive information and tutorials on the naming process to help demystify the process.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Carlson talked about sending USBGN representative to larger conferences around the country to explain the naming process and how people can submit renaming proposals. Staff could also participate on panels or information sessions.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca spoke about the importance of having the Department develop educational materials and curriculum for a variety of audiences that relate to derogatory names and how they impact communities.
- In terms of a social media strategy, Subcommittee Co-Chair Carlson talked about the Department conducting research on what type of media engagement works for different audiences. She offered an example of the TV show Molly of Denali and having them run an episode related to renaming to reach young audiences.

- Building on accessing the knowledge of local communities, Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca explained the Department should conduct a series of online town hall meetings to provide information to people interested in the naming process.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Carlson emphasized that the Department could also provide briefings to both Senate and House staff about the USBGN, the naming process, and the importance of public input to increase public knowledge on how we name things.
- Also in support of education, Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca talked about the Department creating an online newsletter related to the work of the USBGN and the naming process since not everyone is on social media. He mentioned that indigenous communities love to access these things on their own time.
- The final recommendation under this category offered by Subcommittee Co-Chair Carlson related to the Department inventorying what staff and other resources already exist and using these resources to support the recommendations.
- During the discussion, Ms. Villarreal asked what the USBGN does currently in regard to educational outreach. Ms. Johnson explained that they are working on some how-to videos, but they are not public yet. There is information on the USBGN website, but the public might not even know to access it. There is no staff member assigned to education and outreach. There are only two staff members who support the BGN and they are research staff.
- Mr. Alderman mentioned that both the Processes and Principles and Education and Outreach Subcommittees have recommendations that dovetail in terms of enhancing the BGN staff to do research and educational programming. He also talked about the importance of establishing partnerships with the National Council of Social Studies, the National Council for Geographic Education, the American Name Society, and others to develop and disseminate curriculum information on addressing naming.
- Chair Valandra recommended expanding the (b) recommendation under Education and Outreach related to producing testimonials to cover not just elders but other individuals and Tribal members, youth and elders, even adults who are impacted by derogatory names when they see them. This will allow the testimonials to reach a broader audience. He also emphasized the importance of training for applicants before they submit an application to the BGN, putting the work back on the applicant.
- Vice Chair Pereira flagged that there are other agencies the Department should partner with to include the Department of Health and Human Services to talk about the mental health impact of derogatory names. She also mentioned the Department of Justice in terms of working with local communities to preserve law and order. And finally, it should work with the Supreme Court that uses harmful terminology in their decisions and congressional committees that make judicial appointments.
- Ms. Johnson added that her subcommittee also recommended more information and visibility of the BGN. She talked about the fabulous guest speakers from the first day of the meeting, and how that could be an example of a testimonial that could be posted online. She spoke about the importance of access, transparency, and visibility in regard

to the BGN website and shared an example of her and the former Committee DFO attending a large Tribal self-governance conference in Tulsa that was well received. The BGN staff there gave out postcards with a QR code for the website and information on the renaming process. Ms. Johnson did mention the challenge of expectations for participation in these meetings when there might be future budget cuts at the Federal, State, or local government levels impacting outreach efforts. She ended with support for briefing Congress and State and local elected officials, many of whom don't know of the existence of the BGN. They don't understand the State process or the Federal role.

- Under the Partnership category, Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca explained the recommendation about the Department partnering with existing external organizations and influencers to help amplify the Committee's work. He highlighted the importance of being creative in engaging youth in these discussions.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Carlson talked about the establishment of a formal partnership between the Departments of the Interior and Education to develop curricula on teaching about derogatory naming process. Building on what other Committee members had offered, she said these partnerships could be expanded to include other Departments.
- The final recommendation offered by Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca encouraged State and local governments to review and update the materials on their websites to be more accurate and avoid the use of demeaning language. This is part of the encouragement for States to participate to align their work with the work of the Committee and to ensure information is correct.
- Under the Resources category, Subcommittee Co-Chair Carlson recommended that the Department identify additional resources to improve outreach and education to Tribes, States, and communities, including the hiring of an outreach coordinator for the BGN. Resources could also include funding going to Tribal Preservation Offices and Tribes for their renaming work or to contractors to produce testimonials or updates to the BGN website.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca talked about the Department identifying resources to create updated interpretive signage in locations where names have been changed to provide context and history to encourage discussions.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Carlson offered the final recommendation that the Department provide materials in language other than English to reach a wider audience. She then opened it up questions from the Committee.
- Mr. Fixico asked about the recommendation about partnering with the Department of Education, mentioning that some administrations don't support public education, so could there be a danger there. He also voiced his support for working with influencers that are bringing in the youth voice, and mentioned it could be expanded to other media outlets such as doing podcasts.

- Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca said that it is better to have a formalized partnership than none at all if we are to be taken seriously. Better to utilize what already exists and how information gets out.
- Ms. Villarreal asked if it would be useful to have a specific point of addressing Tribal schools and Tribal educators as well as Tribal colleges.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca agreed that could go beyond including to boarding schools, find ways to disseminate information through different creative channels, engage youth, don't only use the usual channels. Can use other kinds of technology, virtual spaces, volumetric filmmaking or youth development for narrative storytelling in their own geographic spaces. We don't know about administrative changes or budgetary restrictions so need to be practical.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Carlson added that the committee was going to prioritize the list but then decided they were all high priority. But she did highlight recommendations like testimonials with elders since they will not be around forever. Same with specific partnerships and outreach categories, these will change over time.
- Chair Valandra said it was important to get students to ask questions about what is behind a name because someone put a name on there for a reason. He discussed how far the Committee has come since its first meeting, that we didn't know much but now we can talk competently about the process, and the need for name changes.
- Mr. Fixico offered that Native people have always understood the importance of alliances, many of which are now national organizations. He offered examples such as the Bureau of Indian Education, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and the National Indian Education Association.
- Ms. Villarreal also added museums to the list, to include arts and culture and museum education, cultural organizations. Education is very rich when it comes through the arts.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca pointed out we are doing some large annual conferences as Ms. Johnson had mentioned, but Tribes and the geographic community aren't at the same conferences and they don't know what each one is doing. Trying to find a way to bridge these audiences and explain to Tribal leaders or elders why they need to go to a BGN conference.
- Mr. Alderman chimed in that given the political climate and educational atmosphere, this is a perfect time to bring forth these recommendations.
- Vice Chair Pereira mentioned that private businesses are good partnerships as well. Molly of Denali on PBS is great, but also look at Netflix, Hulu, and others that are vying for kids' attention. Need people to engage with these groups on a regular basis.
- Subcommittee Co-Chair Baca mentioned that it might be harder to convince on a larger pop culture scale that this work is important, but if we start with social media and focusing on people who can communicate a message well, we can be more intentional.

- Mr. Fixico finished out the session talking about Vine Deloria, Jr., a Native scholar and activist, and one of the greatest Indian minds in history. Many people do not know who he was, they have historical amnesia. Should look him up.

### **Report Out: Geographic Features Subcommittee**

- Subcommittee Chair Mike Catches Enemy started the report out of the Geographic Features Subcommittee by thanking his subcommittee members, how they brought different perspectives to the table. He explained when evaluating terms that they used the derogatory definition the Committee developed to see if it applied. That was the basis for the five terms and 143 associated places they are bringing forward.
- Mr. Mills discussed the first term [nipper] that had its origins as a colloquial British term to refer to a young boy or child. However, during the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, particularly around World War II, the term took on a derogatory connotation when referencing Japanese people. It was shortened to “nip” itself a derogatory term derived from “Nippon” which is a Japanese name for Japan. This transformation of the word from a neutral or affectionate term into a racial slur, underscores how language can be weaponized to dehumanize and marginalize.
- He went on to explain how the word was used among Allied Forces and in wartime propaganda to dehumanize the enemy and foster an environment where prejudice and discrimination was normalized. It had implications for Japanese Americans who were subjected to internment, loss of property, and social ostracization. He offered that it could be argued that the original non-derogatory usage should allow it to remain in use, but that would ignore the historical weight of how it was used to dehumanize those of Japanese descent. Retaining names with derogatory connotations perpetuates the marginalization of the affected communities. Changing names is a step towards acknowledging past wrongs and fostering a more respectful and inclusive environment.
- Mr. Mills moved to the next name on the list [faggot] which originated in Old English as a term for a bundle of sticks or twigs typically used for fuel. However, in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, particularly in the U.S. it evolved into a deeply offensive slur directed at gay men rooted in the marginalization and discrimination against LGBTQ individuals. He spoke about how it is used to demean and ostracize gay men, contributing to a culture of homophobia and physical and verbal abuse. The term perpetuates the normalization of hate speech and can make affected individuals feel unwelcome and unsafe.
- The last word he presented [rape] had its roots in the Latin word meaning to seize or take by force. Over time, the term evolved to describe a violent and traumatic act of sexual assault causing profound physical and emotional harm. It is derogatory when used in reference to sexual violence and can cause significant pain and trauma for survivors and their communities when used outside a legal or educational framework. Mr. Mills explained there are more benign meanings of the word, such as talking about a division or land or administrative district in England or the seed of a plant, but using this word as a place name can cause distress and perpetuate the trauma associated with

sexual violence. The dominant connotation in modern usage makes it derogatory and creates an unsafe and unwelcoming environment.

- Mr. Fixico presented the fourth term, papoose. It is a native term that comes from the Algonquian language spoken by the Eastern Woodlands Indians meaning an infant child. But the term has been used by dominant society leading to colonized racism in the same way squaw is used against native women or buck against young native men. It is used to berate or demean native people. When native people use the term it is not demeaning, it is used in a positive way. But the dominant society many times add an adjective before the term papoose, and say in such a tone that demean native children. It took away the humanity of them as another human being of equality to another child who is not native.
- The final term, peckerwood, was presented by Mr. MacCannell who explained its origins to refer to poor white people from the backwoods in the Old South. It originated because one of the occupations for these folks was drilling into pine trees for pitch to make into turpentine, so the term became a derogatory term for poor white people in general. It is similar to another derogatory term for whites, cracker, with that term being applied to the middle class of the plantation society and peckerwood to the poorer class in society. Mr. MacCannell shared that he has been called this term on the streets of California for being a white person. He also explained that prison gangs who self-identify as White Supremacist gangs call themselves this word or shorten it to wood. There is real violence with this word, and a real threat. It is a fighting word that should not be on the map.
- Mr. Fixico explained that for people who hear these derogatory terms it causes these feelings that stay with you, called trauma neurosis. This comes from Holocaust studies and shows intergenerational harm and trauma by hearing these words. We need to change the rhetoric and pain.
- Chair Valandra asked if the subcommittee would be bringing forth more terms and Subcommittee Chair Catches Enemy said yes, we have more terms to go through and potentially bring forward.
- Chair Valandra asked about the term rape, what caused it to be derogatory. Mr. Mills explained that there are rape seeds and more benign meanings, but in today's context, it is a derogatory term that can be triggering and traumatizing. Mr. Fixico added statistics about 1 in 4 women have been violated and how the term is used so commonly, that it has to stop. Chair Valandra stated that we are going to change the landscape, that we will not make common something that is so horrific.
- Mr. Mills added that the subcommittee reached out to some State Board of Geographic Names and asked for their input on terms and the origins and if they thought the term was derogatory. Based on that input, we removed some names from the list. They have been a great resource.
- Vice Chair Pereira asked if anyone would push back on changing a papoose name saying there are native children living here and we are using this word to honor them.



Mr. Fixico said there is a dualism about the way the word is used. It is not necessarily a bad word, but the majority of the time it has been used has not been positive. He spoke about how racism is learned and when these terms are racially applied to people then you think it is okay but it needs to stop. He said he would rather the name be dropped totally because of its historical racist usage in books, articles, journals, and documentaries.

- Mr. MacCannell added that 4/5 of the places called papoose are not in Algonquian territory, they are in California, Colorado, Utah where genocide was taking place at the time these names were given to places. For settlers, the context of a native child was often someone they were murdering, so it was derogatory.
- Mr. Alderman stated that names have careers. They are born, live, evolve, move, and become appropriated. Their meanings, their context changes. Names are not fixed and frozen within that time. We have to evaluate the harm they cause in their larger careers, their toxic legacies.
- Subcommittee Chair Catches Enemy moved to the next section where members summarized the subject matter experts who presented to the subcommittee. He said early on most of the terms they focused on were derogatory to Native Americans, but then they started getting into terms associated with other ethnic groups. Since members were not from these backgrounds, they brought in expert presenters and asked their opinion if terms were derogatory or if they had additional terms.
- Mr. Fixico summarized the presentation by Dr. Julian Hayter, Associate Professor of History and Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond, about the term “negro,” the evolution, meaning and damage over time. At one point it was associated with race uplift and progress, so it went from enslavement to something giving status to African Americans. Then the term “colored” came to be associated with segregation followed by “black” that represented progress and cultural renaissance. He talked about Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, a famous black scholar, and his use of the term. How the term fell out of usage since another term replaced it.
- Vice Chair Pereira asked about some of the ways the word negro is continuing to be used in the present day and what the impact of the removal might mean.
- Mr. Fixico said removal would mean correcting the past and all those negative impacts. When terms like black or African American is preferred, that is the time to use those terms. When you use something of historical context, you are perpetuating its life and the pain and trauma it carries. Vice Chair Pereira asked about its use by organizations such as the United Negro College Fund and Mr. Fixico stressed the importance of collaboration and getting input from these communities. Mr. Mills added that context is important, they could be derogatory or not, so diving into the history of each one is important.
- Mr. Fixico equated the idea that some African Americans preferring the term negro in the context of the organization is similar to some native people and the word Indian.

You fight generation after generation to turn Indian into a positive term, you have to have inner strength.

- Ms. Villarreal talked about the difference between identity or ethnic nomenclatures or labels used to identify various ethnic groups and how they have evolved over time in how people reference themselves. She offered the example of terms associated with Mexican Americans and ethnic Mexicans and warned that labeling ethnic nomenclatures derogatory can be messy since a lot of it is generational.
- Mr. MacCannell agreed and cited an example in California of a recreation site where the State had to balance preserving the history of the site with the discomfort the term “negro” brought to residents. Important to have these conversations at the local level.
- Mr. Mills summarized the presentation by Hanako Wakatsuki-Chong, Executive Director, Japanese American Museum of Oregon, who is both Korean and Japanese American. She talked about the time her family was incarcerated during World War II at Manzanar and subject to derogatory terms that left scars and made them feel invisible and voiceless. She grew up in Idaho where derogatory place names on maps reinforced institutionalized racism. Ms. Wakatsuki-Chong spoke about more than 75 sites associated with the incarceration of Japanese Americans that were originally called “concentration camps” then softened to “internment camps.” These Americans were removed from their communities, stripped of their power and dehumanized. When they returned home, many found their property vandalized with racist graffiti. Many faced discrimination in the workplace and were forced into menial jobs. She used to work for the National Park Service, helping to do research and planning for new park sites that tell these stories. She emphasized the importance of public engagement, especially engaging descendant communities. She ended with the importance of dismantling institutionalized racism and telling painful stories.
- Mr. MacCannell summarized the presentation by Dr. Chrissy Lau and Dr. Wesley Ueunten, both professors in the Asian American Studies Department at San Francisco State University. Dr. Lau spoke about the use of derogatory terms such as “Chinaman” or “Yellow Dog” that demonized Chinese Americans but were applied more broadly to all Asian people. Some of the older terms were clearly racist, but some of the newer ones might be on the map for different reasons and have different meanings in other languages. Dr. Ueunten is an Okinawan, indigenous people who were colonized by Japan then the U.S. Many people view them as Japanese Americans. Place names in Okinawa Island in Japan refer to terrible battles there. He pointed out that most Asian immigrants came to America and found out they were “Asian” when they got here which is shocking to Koreans, Japanese and Chinese people who are all very different, have their own identities, and shouldn’t be lumped together. He ended with the idea that dual naming might be appropriate in some places because you don’t want to lose the history in the community.
- Subcommittee Chair Catches Enemy thanked his members for their presentations then moved to a discussion about the word “devil.” He shared some historical background on the term, its complicated history, and that at least 1,436 places contain the name

devil including Devils Tower and Red Devil Mountain. In some cases, the term reflects misinterpretation of Indian language and spiritual practices, but often it is used to demonize Native Americans (especially Red Devils).

- He then pivoted to a discussion about the name of the sacred site, Bear Lodge. He cited several passages from the 1998 report “NAMING BEAR LODGE: Ethnotoponymy and the Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming” that was prepared for the NPS. The report talked about formal consultation with Tribes starting in 1995, caused by passages of laws such as the Archaeological Resource Protection Act and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. By 1998, Tribes involved in consultation reached formal consensus on Bear Lodge as the appropriate name of the tower. The report went on to say that this is not a recent concern. There was a letter from May 8, 1933 from Chief Luther Standing Bear to Dick Stone stating that Colonel Dodge was wrong in saying the Indians called the place bad God’s tower, and that Tribes had no word for devil. The report stated that Native American opposition to the name Devils Tower has been expressed for over a century, but its finally being heard only recently. Native people have always felt that to name a sacred site with a name which has such negative connotations attached to it, and for the local white community to continue to support and perpetuate such an insulting name discloses deep-seated prejudices and racial attitudes. He mentioned all the Tribes and organizations who were part of the consultation in 1998, all asking for the name Bear Lodge to be restored.
- Subcommittee Chair Catches Enemy shared the draft recommendation offered by the subcommittee, asking the Secretary to rename the geographic feature and the associated unincorporated populated place to Bear Lodge. In addition, the Department should engage with the local community to develop an alternate name for the populated place if Bear Lodge is not supported and to offer resources for any resulting name changes. Further, he recommended the Secretary submit a request to the President to change the name of the national monument to Bear Lodge National Monument.
- Ms. Johnson shared that Senator Loomis had introduced a bill, Senate bill 267, which would keep the national monument as Devils Tower. No further action has been taken on the bill. She pointed out that normally the introduction of a bill would stop a renaming proposal as per BGN policy, but section 4(J) of Secretary’s Order 3405 states that this policy does not apply to the work of the Committee. The bill will die when this congressional session is over in January 2025. This is an example of Congress trying to keep a permanent derogatory name on a feature that we are trying to remedy.
- Subcommittee Chair Catches Enemy pivoted to his second draft recommendation that lists five terms [nipper, rape, faggot, papoose, and peckerwood], and 143 feature names associated with these terms, as potentially derogatory and requiring additional engagement and input.
- Ms. Johnson suggested that the Committee focus on the terms, not the sites, since it is more effective and broad reaching. She also pointed out that five sites on the list [line numbers 20, 27, 85, 107 and 110] are not under the purview of the Board on Geographic Names since four are on Tribal lands and one [line 110] is a civil site.

- Ms. Villarreal had a question about line 123, Sacagawea and Papoose Rocks Summit in Washington since it had two names in the title. This led to a discussion if the term papoose could move forward but not the name Sacagawea. It was explained that if the term papoose is found derogatory by the Secretary, the whole name has to change.
- Mr. MacCannell asked if during past meetings, the list was picked through to make sure that everything was under the purview of BGN before the sites were released. Ms. Johnson said subcommittee members probably just did a search in the GNIS and some names are not under BGN's purview such as administrative features.
- Chair Valandra asked about what is a civil site and Ms. Johnson explained about civil districts which are populated places, or a mine or well on private lands. BGN will reach out to owners and say that this was deemed derogatory and you might want to think about renaming it. This is part of education and outreach.
- Chair Valandra explained that we should think of terms in buckets: One bucket are terms that are definitely derogatory. The next one are terms that are potentially derogatory, but requires engagement and input. The third bucket are terms that are not derogatory per se such as crazy or dead, but could be considered derogatory in context if put in front of a name, such as Crazy Woman Creek in Wyoming or Dead Mexican Canyon in Arizona. He closed by saying the context is important.

### **Public Comment Period**

- DFO Ripps explained how the public comment period would work for people in the room and online. Each person would be limited to three minutes for their oral comment but could submit written comments to the Committee mailbox of any length.
- Olivia Porter, National Parks Conservation Association, and steering committee member of the Coalition on Outdoor Renaming and Education, spoke in favor of a more transparent process and advocated for a community led process for renaming at the local, State, Tribal, and Federal level. She asked the Committee how the comments submitted were taken into consideration and translated into action.
- Erika Pietrzak, The Wilderness Society, stated that the Committee has the obligation to the people of the U.S. to attempt to reconcile problematic history that remains part of everyday life through the naming of geographic features. She suggested that name changes match on Braille texts to make it accessible, and we should invest in signage changes and educational programs at these sites. She said representation must go beyond symbolism and foster engaged communities of agency with active engagement, compassion, and equity. The Committee should increase communication and engagement with nonprofits and activists doing this work. She emphasized the importance of transparency and having the Committee respond to each public comment.

- Katybeth Davis, Monroe, Michigan, spoke about all the public spaces and parks named for Colonel General George Custer that they have been trying to get removed. She asked for his name to be added to any list of derogatory people since he killed Indians, violated treaties, undermined freedoms gained for African Americans, and led the massacre at Little Bighorn River.
- Jasmine Smith, citizen of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, shared a poem she wrote about the power of indigenous women.
- Jhon Goes In Center, member of the Oglala Sioux Nation, talked about generations of his family, some lived on reservations or survived boarding schools. He spoke about the importance of the Native American Religious Freedom Act and educating the next generation.
- Kimberly Smith, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, offered that the Education Subcommittee should consider strategies for outreach to the South specifically, and for BIPOC in marginalized communities. Finally, she recommended supporting Tribal renaming committees themselves, letting Tribes take ownership for their sovereignty as part of the government-to-government relationship.
- Deb Liggett [virtual commenter], former superintendent, Devils Tower National Monument from 1993-1997. She spoke that every time they spoke to the BGN, a member of Congress would introduce a bill to block action. The Committee has been given a great opportunity by the Secretary, but it will only happen in this administration. Since 20 Tribes have a cultural affiliation to the tower, not sure how you will handle the process to come up with a replacement name.
- Jessica Lambert, enrolled citizen of the Choctaw Nation and first-generation descendant of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, also a policy fellow at The Wilderness Society and serves on the Coalition for Outdoor Renaming and Education. She thanked the Committee for its work and stated her organization has reviewed all the hundreds of places with derogatory names identified by the Committee. She asked when the process to identify replacement names will begin, what will the process look like, and how can we support it. She said that beyond the Coalition for Outdoor Renaming and Education, there are 60 more organizations involved in renaming work. She also recommended that the Committee publish its meeting materials further ahead to give people more time to prepare and provided informed public comment, that the Committee should meet more often, and that the Committee post short informal update reports on a regular basis to help with engagement. She submitted a public comment letter as well.
- Ms. Dye made a general comment in support of the Committee addressing commemorative names and offered the example of a derogatory name that is on someone's drivers license, passport, school records, etc. because that is the name of their street. Federal Government needs to lead the way to change the names and trickle-down to State and local names. These names cause continuous psychological terrorism and oppression. She ended with quoting Ken Burns who said if your heroes are

murderers and military figures, and your values are grounded in White supremacy then yes, let's erase that.

### **Committee Discussion**

- Chair Valandra returned to the Committee discussion about the recommendations coming from the Geographic Features Subcommittee.
- Mr. Alderman voiced his strong support for the recommendation on Bear Lodge, and thanked the Committee for allowing him to add the sentence about economic profits not taking priority over reconciliation in terms of businesses having to change their names. He spoke about how tourist dollars and brands impact surrounding communities but can be used as an excuse where generating revenue and marketing are prioritized over reconciliation and justice.
- DFO Ripps pointed out the current recommendation does not reflect that change. The Committee asked to add the following sentence at the end of the second paragraph as follows:

“While the Secretary is encouraged to assist impacted businesses, the Committee believes the economic profits made from this harmful name as a place, or tourist brand, should not take priority over reconciliation.”

- Subcommittee Chair Catches Enemy also asked for the first sentence under Recommendation 1 to be changed, striking “nearly 10 years” and adding “26 years” based on when the 1998 consultation occurred.
- Chair Valandra mentioned that he had heard that there was a letter back in 1933 that was penned. After more discussion, members decided to insert “almost a century” so it reads: “For almost a century, Tribal leaders have sought to change the name of the sacred geological feature...”.
- Mr. MacCannell commented on an earlier point about the myth that changing place names runs off businesses. He gave an example from California where it led to increased visitors, not just from the Tribes, but from the larger public. That was also due to an MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] being signed with the Tribes which created more access to resources and opportunities for them to gather to practice their traditions. He went on to say that there needs to be a serious PR effort when changes are made to explain why it happened, and highlight Tribes who can speak to these names. He is supportive of helping businesses with practical aspects like updated signage.

### **Committee Voting**

- Chair Valandra moved the Committee to the voting part of the agenda.
- First action was to approve the draft minutes from the November 14-16, 2023 meeting. A motion was offered by Ms. Kawaihae, seconded by Mr. Mills, and approved by voice vote.

- Chair Valandra then explained how the voting would work for the rest of the recommendations. Unlike the last time when if one person opposed a name, then it was tabled, this time we are using majority rules. If a tie, then will do a roll call vote.
- Second action was to approve the working definition of “derogatory.” A motion was offered by Ms. Carlson, seconded by Mr. Alderman, and approved by voice vote.
- Third action was to approve the first draft recommendation from the Processes and Principles Subcommittee, as modified during the meeting. A motion was offered by Mr. Mills, seconded by Mr. Alderman, and approved by voice vote.
- Fourth action was to approve the remainder of the draft recommendations from the Processes and Principles Subcommittee, as modified during the meeting including tabling the last draft recommendation [#10 on original list] on States being allowed to submit directly to the USBGN any terms determined to be derogatory or harmful. A motion was offered by Ms. Johnson, seconded by Ms. Villarreal, and approved by voice vote.
- Fifth action was to approve the draft recommendations from the Education and Outreach Subcommittee. A motion was offered by Ms. Kawaihae, seconded by Mr. MacCannell, and approved by voice vote.
- Sixth action was to approve the draft recommendation from the Geographic Features Subcommittee to rename both the geographic feature and associated unincorporated populated place from “Devils Tower” to “Bear Lodge” and that the Secretary will request that the President change the name of the national monument. Given the significance of this recommendation, a roll call vote was requested by the Chair. A motion was offered by Mr. Catches Enemy, seconded by Ms. Villarreal, and approved unanimously by a roll call vote of all the members.
- Seventh action was to approve sending to the Secretary the term “nipper” as potentially derogatory and requiring additional engagement and input from appropriate Tribal, State, and local governments, affected Federal agencies and departments, and local communities to make a determination on whether a replacement name is needed. A motion was offered by Mr. Catches Enemy, seconded by Ms. Johnson, and approved by voice vote.
- Eighth action was to approve sending to the Secretary the term “rape” as potentially derogatory and requiring additional engagement and input. A motion was offered by Mr. Catches Enemy, seconded by Ms. Villarreal, and approved by voice vote.
- Ninth action was to approve sending to the Secretary the term “faggot” as potentially derogatory and requiring additional engagement and input. A motion was offered by Mr. Catches Enemy, seconded by Ms. Kawaihae, and approved by voice vote.
- Tenth action was to approve sending to the Secretary the term “papoose” as potentially derogatory and requiring additional engagement and input but with the exception of the geographic feature in Washington State called Sacagawea and Papoose Rocks. A motion was offered by Ms. Kawaihae, it was not seconded by any members, so the motion failed.

- Eleventh action was to approve sending to the Secretary the term “papoose” as potentially derogatory and requiring additional engagement and input. A motion was offered by Ms. Dye, seconded by Dr. Fixico, and approved by voice vote.
- Twelfth action was to approve sending to the Secretary the term “peckerwood” as potentially derogatory and requiring additional engagement and input. A motion was offered by Mr. MacCannell, seconded by Mr. Fixico, and approved by voice vote.
- Ms. Kawaihae asked a point of clarification about the term “Sacajawea” and if it would be removed since the site also has the word “Papoose.” DFO Ripps reminded her that the recommendation to the Secretary wasn’t to change the name of the site but for further engagement and input at this point.

### **Closing Remarks**

- Chair Valandra thanked the Committee members for all their work since the last meeting in November 2023.
- Vice Chair Pereira also thanked all the Committee members, staff, and speakers for all their work, especially calling out the young participants at the meeting. She cited the opportunities that were presented over the past two days around the Committee’s work and the urgency for action. She called out specifically the work involving impacts to indigenous and marginalized women, something that should be at the forefront of our work. She mentioned parts of the country that have obliterated any mention of the people who used to live there or marginalized people that contributed to these spaces.
- Mr. Catches Enemy expressed his deep appreciation for the Committee passing the name change recommendation for Bear Lodge on behalf of the 20 Tribes and future generations. He said it was huge for him personally and historic.
- Mr. Mosqueda spoke about one of his older brother’s work with the Medicine Wheel Coalition in Oklahoma where a county sheriff took down the picture of Custer and replaced it with a picture of an Arapaho chief at a local jail.
- Mr. Fixico talked about the three stages of history: first stage is the rumor that something might happen, ideas are introduced, sometimes nothing happens. Second stage is the signing of a treaty or proclamation, can happen very quickly. The third stage is the aftermath, the legacy, the impact from the change. Reform is a word used, means a change for the good.
- Mr. Baca talked about it being an honor and privilege to help make things happen, how the thunder beings and birds joined us at this meeting, they have a say in things. The collective restorative healing of the landscape itself, we are giving it the right name back, the name it has always had.
- Ms. Carlson added that we have had a lot of important discussions with important insights, that are both new and not new.
- Chair Valandra thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting.