

TO: Unicode Technical Committee
FROM : Deborah Anderson
DATE: 7 June 2004
RE: Further Information on SENCOTEN

-----Original Message-----

From: Peter Brand [mailto:peter@fpcf.ca]
Sent: Friday, June 04, 2004 12:15 AM
To: Deborah W. Anderson
Cc: John Elliott; Chris Harvey
Subject: Re: Question on SENCOTEN Unicode proposal

The FirstVoices project entails a fair amount of pioneering work in the development of Unicode orthographies for Indigenous languages. FPCF has lately contracted the services of Chris Harvey, who brings his considerable Unicode experience to the FirstVoices project. As further Unicode issues such as those with the SENCOTEN language arise among other languages using FirstVoices, it is likely that we will need to approach the Unicode Consortium again, with similar requests. We would greatly appreciate having contact with someone who understands some of the unique issues we are encountering in our efforts to make the best possible use of Unicode, computers and the Web for Indigenous language revitalization.

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- > 1. Are there alternative ways to type in the letters?
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- > I ask this because I found a report on the Web
- > <http://www.martlet.ca/archives/040212/news5.html> that says: "Using a
- > Sencoten keyboard, children are learning how to type the language.
- > Members of the community can even send instant messages via MSN in
- > their own language." I was wondering how the newly proposed letters
- > are handled in instant messaging.
- >
- > Chris mentioned that one could type the letters with combining long
- > solidus overlay or combining short stroke overlay (U+0338, U+0335).

Chris has given you the correct explanation to this question. Currently there are several SENCOTEN characters requiring combining diacritics. The submission from John Elliott seeks to address this.

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- > 2. I was just curious as to the impressive numbers of people exposed
- > to the Sencoten orthography (3,000 mentioned in the letter by John
- > Elliott). The Ethnologue lists only 30 native speakers out of a
- > community of 3000, so I gather the entire community has been now
- > exposed to the orthography? Or does this include other interested
- > people (linguists, other First Nations members, etc.)?

As you would expect, the Ethnograph figures are somewhat dated in 2004. The likely number of fluent SENCOTEN speakers is now probably less than twenty. That said, the 3000 people currently exposed to the SENCOTEN orthography represents the student body of the Saanich Indian School Board (approximately 200) and Saanich School District 63 (approximately 2800 students in four public elementary schools, one middle school and one secondary school). Both the Saanich Tribal School and the Saanich public school systems have adopted the Dave Elliott writing system and are giving access to the orthography to all students, not just Aboriginal students. In September 2004, the Greater Victoria Public Transit Guide (for a city of approximately 300,000) will be translated into SENCOTEN. This will be the widest distribution ever of the SENCOTEN writing system.

> 3. Lastly, I gather the orthography is now stable and no new letters
> are envisioned as being added?

The Dave Elliott SENCOTEN orthography has been stable since its inception in the 1980s, with the exception of the addition of the lower case s in the mid 1990's. No further alterations to the orthography are contemplated.

Regards, Peter Brand

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