

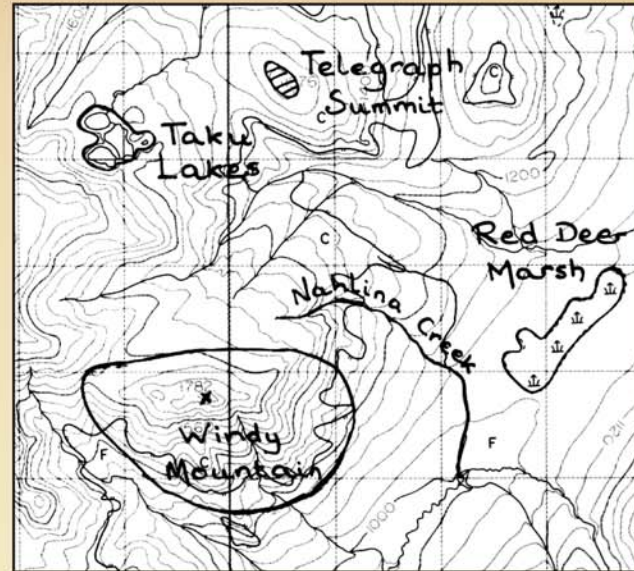
Creation of new names

For features with no locally-used name, the proposed name should have some logical connection with the feature. A name might describe the feature itself, e.g., *The Red Pillar*, *Cats Ears Peak*, *Plain of the Six Glaciers*, *lac Rond*, *rapides des Sept Soeurs*. Names of early settlers, trappers, explorers, may be suitable if the individual or family had a direct connection with the area (e.g., *Nelson Flat*, *sous-embouchement Gagné*). Features might be named for historical events in the region (e.g., *Battle Bluff*, *pont de la Chute Minée*). Repetition of commonly-used names or names of nearby features should be avoided.

Dictionaries and lexicons of local Aboriginal languages of the area might provide ideas for appropriate names (e.g., *Annuhi River*, a Kwakwaka'wakw word meaning "where humpback salmon go up").

Commemorative names

Except in unusual circumstances, most jurisdictions will not approve personal names for features, unless the person has been dead for at least one year (or more, in some jurisdictions) and had a strong connection with the feature or area. The once-common practice of naming features for members of the royal family, international or national figures, and personal family members is now strongly discouraged, unless the names are established in local use.



Example of geographical names submitted on a large scale map

APPENDIX A

Director
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Geographical Names Office
Base Mapping and Geomatic Services Branch
Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management
PO Box 9355 STN Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9M2

Provincial Toponymist
Manitoba Geographical Names Program
Manitoba Conservation
1007 Century Street
Winnipeg MB R3H 0W4

Provincial Toponymist
Dept. of Environment and Local Government
P.O. Box 6000, Marysville Place
20 McGloin Street
Fredericton NB E3B 5H1

Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board
Department of Environment and Conservation
Howley Building, Higgins Line
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's NL A1B 4J6

Cultural Places Officer
NWT Cultural Places Program
Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre
Government of the N.W.T.
P.O. Box 1320
Yellowknife NT X1A 2L9

Provincial Coordinator, Geographical Names
Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations
Registry and Information Management Services
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Halifax NS B3J 2Y3

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Culture, Languages, Elders and Youth
Nunavut Government
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Igloolik NU X0A 0L0

Ontario Geographic Names Board
Provincial Georeferencing
Ministry of Natural Resources
300 Water Street, 2nd Floor, North Tower
P.O. Box 7000
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Provincial Tax Commissioner
Provincial Treasury
95 Rochford Street
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President
Commission de toponymie
Édifice Marie-Guyart, Aile René-Lévesque,
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Chairman
Saskatchewan Geographical Names Board
Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan
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Director, Historical Services Branch
National Historic Sites Directorate
Parks Canada
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Director
Directorate of Aboriginal Claims and
Property Information
National Defence Headquarters
Major-General George R. Pearkes Building
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ACNUMF
Canadian Hydrographic Service
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APPENDIX B

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Naming Canada's Geographical Features



Natural Resources
Canada

Ressources naturelles
Canada

Canada

NAMING CANADA'S GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

The naming of geographical features is probably as old as humanity's sense of place. We need to feel familiar with our surroundings and continually to relate to the world around us. Features do not move, but people do, and geographical names enable us to express this sense of place in spoken and written language.

- Who names Canada's geographical features?
- How are the names chosen?
- Can members of the public submit names for consideration? How? To whom?
- What sort of names are likely to receive approval?
- Everybody knows that this feature is called *Mount _____*; how can I get this name on topographic maps?
- Can I name this lake after my father, who died last month?
- What is the Geographical Names Board of Canada?

This brochure attempts to answer these and other questions about geographical names in Canada.

GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES: OFFICIAL VERSUS UNOFFICIAL

Official names are names that have been approved or authorized by the appropriate authorities on geographical names. These authorities keep records of all official names, and have published them in a series of gazetteers, including the **Gazetteer of Canada**, the **Concise Gazetteer of Canada**, the **Répertoire toponymique du Québec**, the **Place Names of Alberta Series**, and the **Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names**. These gazetteers list alphabetically all official names of physical features, incorporated communities, localities, etc., with their latitudes and longitudes, and map reference. In place of gazetteers, names are now published in the Internet version of the Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB) found at <http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/search/search_e.php>. Or they can be found through the Canadian Geographical Names Service (CGNS) at <<http://gnss.nrcan.gc.ca/>>.

Unofficial names, although not approved or authorized, are often widely-known and used locally.

- Aboriginal people may have names in well-established use for creeks, hills, and other features;
- mountaineers and hikers commonly name peaks in remote areas that they have visited;
- fishermen or cottagers may have familiar names for lakes, islands, and coves; and
- logging companies may have names for creeks, both large and small, that are crossed by logging roads.

Such names, while of undoubted local value, do not appear on official topographic maps.

In some cases, a feature may have different official and unofficial names. For example, a particular river in British Columbia is officially called the *Zymoetz River*, but it is far more commonly called the *Copper River* by local residents; in Quebec, the *rivière aux Mélézes* is known unofficially as *Kuuvik* or *Larch River*.

Official names: the decision-making process

The power to accept or reject geographical names lies with the province or territory where the feature is situated. Exceptions to this rule include names in federally-administered lands, such as national parks. The Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC) is a federal-provincial-territorial board, administered by a Secretariat in Ottawa. The GNBC acts in part as a clearing-house and central registry for all approved names in Canada, but the Board, as a whole, has no power to accept or reject a particular name. The Secretariat enters all official, and some unofficial, names into the Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB), a computer warehouse from which the official names are drawn for gazetteers and topographical maps, and from which information is retrieved to respond to enquiries. An Internet version of the CGNDB containing official names and formerly official names can be consulted at <http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/search/search_e.php>. Usually, the geographical names authorities do not generate new names; most are obtained from the general public.

The authorities responsible for name decisions are listed in Appendix A. In most provinces and territories, only one official name is approved for each place or geographical feature. As part of the decision-making process, a proposed name is verified to see that it is suitable; local residents and other experts are consulted to determine if the proposed name is widely known and acceptable. If the name is approved, it is entered into the official records of the jurisdiction(s) and a copy of the record is sent to the GNBC Secretariat for entry into the CGNDB. The name will then be included on future editions of topographic maps and hydrographic charts.

HOW TO PROPOSE A NAME

Proposals for names should be sent to the appropriate provincial or territorial authority. First, contact the names authority (see Appendix A) to obtain any necessary forms or additional information. Then prepare a thorough, well-documented submission, which should include the following information:

- **location** of the feature;
- **reason** for proposing the name;
- **origin, meaning** and **significance** of the name;
- **research material** you have gathered;
- **references** to previous publications.

Location of the feature

The accurate geographical location and extent of the feature are needed. This information ensures that the name (if acceptable) is applied to the feature you intend, helps cartographers position the name correctly on maps, and avoids duplication of names through ambiguous locations.

Geographical features should be outlined on a copy of a large-scale published map: a 1:50,000 map of the area, if available; otherwise the 1:250,000 map. Be specific and

precise; avoid lettering strewn loosely over the map as this makes interpretation difficult. For example, mark creeks with a coloured pencil, and if a creek has several branches, indicate to which one the name applies. If a mountain has several summits, indicate the one to which the name should be applied and the extent of the named feature. If you are naming a ridge or cluster of peaks, show which parts of the ridge or which peaks are included in your proposal.

Geographical coordinates (latitude and longitude) of UTM (Universal Transverse Mercator) coordinates should be provided. The coordinates should refer to the centre of the feature, except for rivers and streams, where they should refer to the mouth.

If the feature is not shown on the published map, either because the map is not detailed enough or is incorrect, position it as accurately as possible, and describe its location with respect to other features. Submit ground photos, copies of air photos, or sketch maps if available.

Reason for proposing the name

There is not always a pressing need to name all geographical features. Most jurisdictions insist not only on a valid name but also on a valid reason for naming a feature. Surveyors, prospectors, and geologists commonly need names for reports on areas where few official names exist. Mountaineering parties in remote areas name features to describe where they have been. (Mountaineers should propose names only for those peaks that they have climbed.) Local residents may wish to honour a pioneer of their community, or to have a locally-used name made official. These may or may not be considered valid reasons.

Ownership of a lake or an island does not in itself bring with it the authority to ascribe a name. Similarly, the first ascent of a mountain does not confer the right of naming. Does the mountain need to be named? And, if so, is the name appropriate? Is there another name used by local people? Wishing to honour a living person is almost always an invalid reason for naming a feature.

Origin, meaning, and significance of the name

The geographical names of an area are closely linked with its history. The origins and meaning of such names preserve historical information that might otherwise be lost. Information on the origin or meaning of the name is, therefore, very important.

For example, Mount Janus, in the Exploits River area of Newfoundland and Labrador, was first named by Lieut. John Cartwright and shown on his map of 1768. Owing to the great view that the hill commanded in all directions, it was called "Janus" for the double-faced Roman god who could look in opposite directions at the same time. Although lost to generations, this name has been reassigned to the feature so designated over two centuries ago.

If the proposed name is a person's, then biographical details are required, for example, a copy of an obituary or an article about the person. The connection of the individual with the feature in question should also be described.

Information on the origin and meaning of other names in the region of your proposal may be included if you wish; such information is always welcome.

Research material you have gathered

The lack of a name for a feature on a map does not necessarily mean that the feature is unnamed. It may already have an official or an unofficial name. List the sources you have consulted in verifying that the feature has no name. Research in local history books, magazines, newspapers, climbing guides, and sailing directions; talking with knowledgeable local residents; and enquiries to government agencies, local historical societies, and Aboriginal organizations may reveal relevant information.

References to previous publications

If the name is in local use, indicate how widely it is used. Some features have more than one local name; note which is in most common use. Indicate if the name appears on any map (providing copies, if possible), and give references to books or articles in which the name is used. The publication of a name in books, reports, or on maps does not guarantee official status.

WHAT IS A SUITABLE NAME?

General guidelines for geographical naming are set forth in **Principles and procedures for geographical naming**, published by the GNBC. Copies of this booklet are available without charge from the Secretariat (see Appendix B) or on the Internet at <http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/pdf/prandpro_2001e.pdf>. Although they provide a national framework, some aspects of these guidelines may have been modified by particular provincial or territorial authorities. Some have published their own guidelines.

Obscene or derogatory terms and company or commercial product names are unsuitable.

Names in general use

First consideration is given to names that are well established in local use. This principle should guide your selection of names.

Some names may be long established on maps, in government documents, and in other records, such as climbers' guides and nautical handbooks. Some features have no currently used names, but may have names that were used in the past. Reference to documents that include the names should be noted in your proposal.