

ABORIGINAL PLACE NAMES

CHARTING OUR HERITAGE

HONOURING OUR PAST

“Canada” is not the only familiar place name that comes from an Aboriginal word — Lake Athabasca, Saskatchewan River, Kuujjuaq and Toronto are some others. And yet, there are many more names used within Aboriginal communities that do not appear on maps or road signs.

DOCUMENTING OUR HERITAGE

A growing number of communities and geographical features across Canada are being named or renamed to reflect local usage and traditions.

For example, residents of Frobisher Bay voted to change the name of their community to Iqaluit, the Inuktitut word for “place of fish.” A lake in Northern Alberta has been named Atihk Sakahikun, which means “Elk Lake” in Cree.

People are collecting traditional names to suggest for approval by the Geographical Names Board of Canada. Names must be approved by the Board to be used on federal maps for mining, forestry, fishing, tourism, and search and rescue. Other uses are road signs, postal addresses and administrative documents.

By making traditional geographical names official, we can help value and preserve our Aboriginal heritage.

GETTING INVOLVED

If you or your organization want to suggest a name, the first step is to call or write to your provincial or territorial member of the Geographical Names Board of Canada. The names of board members and the procedures to follow are on our Web site at <http://geonames.NRCan.gc.ca/> or you can contact us at the address below.

Geographical Names Section
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