



# VGI in Canada's North

## Challenges and opportunities

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Natural Resources  
Canada

Ressources naturelles  
Canada

Canada 



# Introduction

- VGI and Canada's naming authorities
  - What is happening now
  
- Focus on Canada's North, in particular Nunavut
  - Special challenges of Northern toponymy



Natural Resources  
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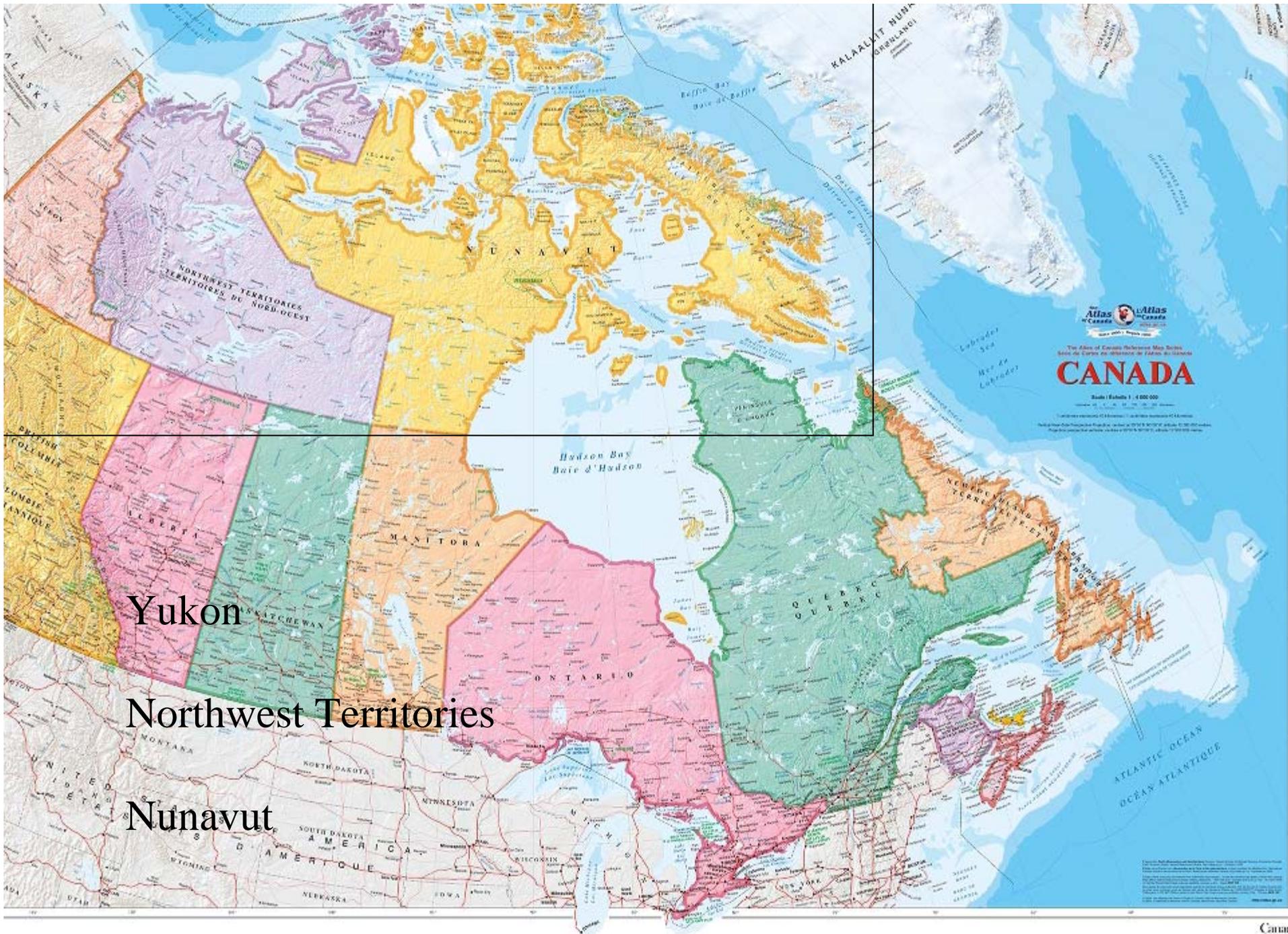
Canada 



# Current situation

- VGI is still a conundrum for Canada's naming authorities
- No naming authority is yet actively seeking input via Web or developing tools or apps
- There is recognition that new methods such as Web-based tools and social media offer great opportunities
- We need to find a way to use it appropriately





Yukon

Northwest Territories

Nunavut



# Northern naming challenges

- Northern population small, widely scattered
- Most inhabitants in small communities, many very isolated, cut off for part of year
- Travel difficult and expensive, field work very challenging
- Resources limited for naming authorities, difficulty processing current naming proposals
- May be backlogs of months or years of field work for processing





# History of Northern naming

- Names given by explorers – named for patrons, royalty, etc.
- Early settlement, trading, resource development – little recognition of local use
- Cartography-based collection/selection – often from distance for mapping needs





# More recent naming

- Field research by academics
  - Good methodology, names in local use, Aboriginal language names
- Collection of names by naming authorities
  - Cooperation with cultural groups, linguists, careful research and verification





# More recent developments

- Nunavut created in 1999 – “Our land”
- Strong mandate to preserve heritage – toponyms vital component of culture, geographical names vital to survival
- Inuit Heritage Trust and other cultural organizations work with local people to collect names
- Important to record memories, wisdom of the elders before the knowledge dies with them





# Nunavut toponymy

- Large volume of names already collected by cultural organizations
- Pressure to use names on maps, make them available
- Limited resources available to process names submissions – challenges for names committee





# Multilingual map pilot project

- Project came out of work of geologists working in North
- Concept to develop special series of topographic maps for Northern Canada
- Many prototypes created incorporating new elements – graphics, enhanced legends and extra information





## How the project linked to VGI

- As map prototypes were developed, geologists travelled to Northern communities to gather feedback
- Community members provided new names, and corrections to existing toponymy
- Information also collected via e-mail, other means by geologists through local connections





Information-gathering session in a Nunavut community – receiving feedback and names informati



# Minuses and pluses

- Non-standard collection methods
- Often little or no metadata
- Adds to burden on naming authority
- Creates expectations of names provided appearing on maps
- + Access to many people otherwise not available
- + Speeds collection, update process, ensures currency of names





# Conclusion (or beginning?)

- Crowd-sourcing has many difficulties and challenges for naming authorities
- Also provides incredible access to local knowledge
- Wiki type applications and other new media are here to stay
- We need to find a way to use it without compromising our standards

