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STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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Item 12g and 5 of the provisional agenda

Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names

"Naming Canada's Geographical Features"

Brochure for public information -
also available in French)

Document presented by Canada

Prepared by the CPCGN Advisory Committee on Nomenclature and Delineation, and submitted by the Secretariat, Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.



APPENDIX A

Newfoundland Geographical
Names Board
Department of Environment
and Lands
Howley Building, Higgins Line
P.O. Box 4750
St. John's, Newfoundland
A1C 5T7

Director of Surveys
Department of Lands &
Forests
780 Windmill Road,
Torrington Place
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3B 1T3

Office of the Clerk
Legislative Assembly
P.O. Box 2000
Charlottetown, P.E.I.
C1A 7N8

New Brunswick Geographic
Information Corporation
P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton, New Brunswick
E3B 5H1

Président, Commission de
toponymie
220, Grande Allée Est
Québec, Quebec
G1R 2J1

Ontario Geographic Names
Board
Ministry of Natural Resources
4th Floor
90 Sheppard Avenue East
North York, Ontario
M2N 3A1

Director of Surveys
Department of Natural
Resources
1007 Century Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3H 0W4

Saskatchewan Geographic
Names Board
2045 Broad Street
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 3V7

Geographical Names
Programme
Historic Sites Service
Alberta Culture &
Multiculturalism
8820-112th Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2P8

Director, Surveys &
Resource Mapping Branch
Ministry of Crown Lands
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
V8V 1X5

N.W.T. Toponymic Program
Government of the N.W.T.
Dept. of Culture &
Communications
Yellowknife, N.W.T.
X1A 2L9

Director, Heritage Branch
Department of Tourism
P.O. Box 2703
Whitehorse, Y.T.
Y1A 2C6

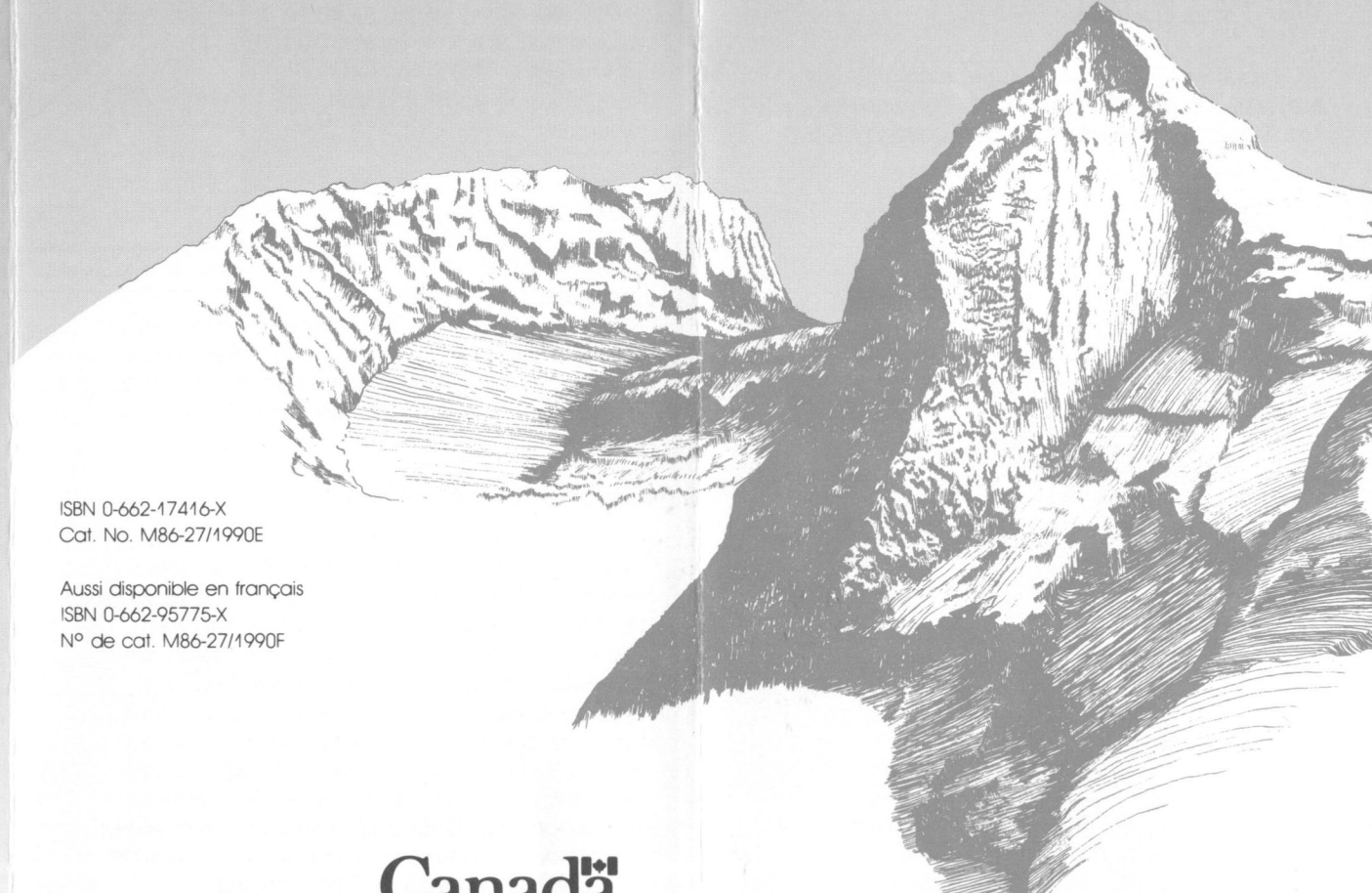
Director, Historical Research
Canadian Parks Service
Environment Canada
3rd Floor, Room 303
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1G2

Director, Lands Directorate
Lands and Environment
Branch
Department of Indian and
Northern Affairs
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0H4

Director of Cartography
National Defence
Headquarters
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0K2

APPENDIX B

Secretariat, Geographical Names
Room 650
615 Booth Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0E9



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Canada

knowledgeable local residents; and enquiries to government agencies, local historical societies, and Native 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

CPCGN. Copies of this booklet are available without charge from the Secretariat (see Appendix B). 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 handbooks.

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

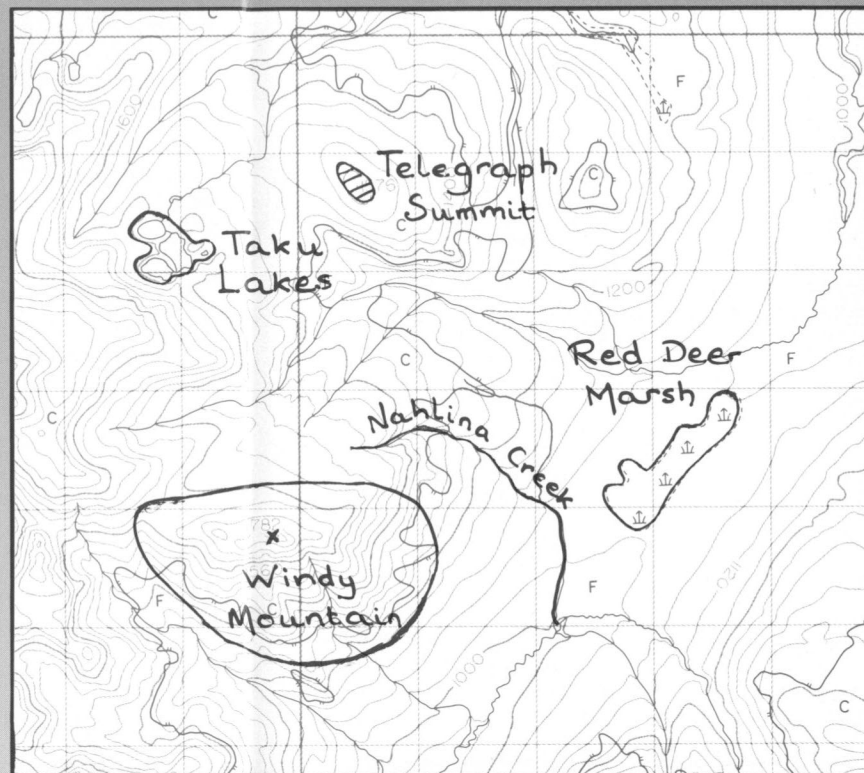
Names in general use

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.

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-embranchement 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.



Example of geographical names submitted on a large scale map

Dictionaries and lexicons of local native languages of the area might provide ideas for appropriate names (e.g. *Annuhi River*, a Kwakiutl 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 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.



appropriate gazetteer, and on 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.

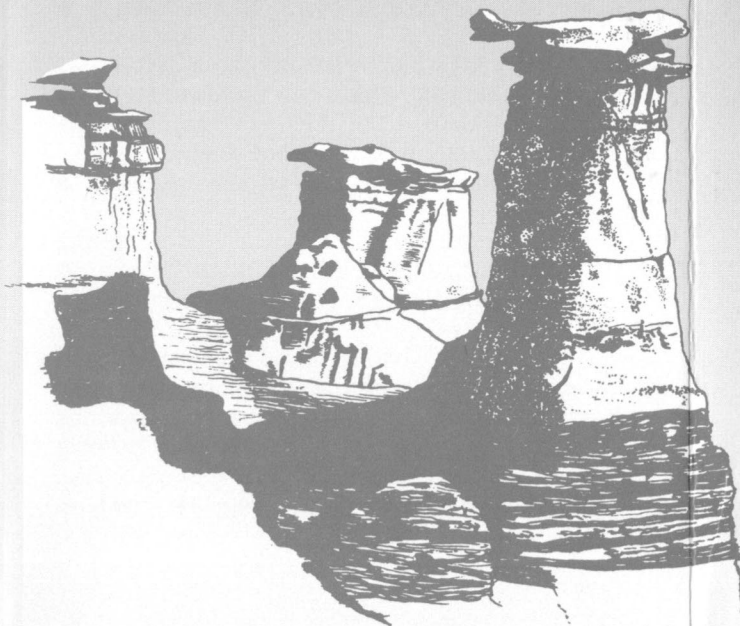
Geographical coordinates (latitude and longitude) or UTM (Universal Transverse Mercator) coordinates should be provided. The coor-

dinates 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 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 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 recently been re-assigned 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

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 Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names?

This pamphlet 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 publish them in a series of gazetteers, including the **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. They may be starting points for anyone interested in place names.

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

- Native peoples 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 Mèlèzes* 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 and Indian reserves. The Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (CPCGN) is a federal-provincial-territorial committee administered by a secretariat in Ottawa. The CPCGN acts in part as a clearing-house and central registry for all approved names in Canada, but the Committee as a whole has no power to accept or reject a particular name. The Secretariat enters all official, and some unofficial, names into the National Toponymic Data Base, a computer file from which the official names are drawn for gazetteers and topographical maps, and from which information is retrieved to respond to enquiries. 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. (Alberta is one jurisdiction that does not adhere to this policy.) 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 CPCGN Secretariat for entry into the National Toponymic Data Base. The name will then be included in the next edition of the

