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TOPONYMIC GUIDELINES IN CANADA

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Toponymic Guidelines in Canada

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At the three UN conferences in Geneva, 1967, London, 1972 and Athens, 1977 Canada reported at length on the guidelines relating to the treatment of geographical names, both in field collecting and in office treatment. In summary, the reports emphasized that authority over the approval of geographical names was vested in the provincial and territorial naming authorities; each of them, however, has endorsed generally uniform principles and procedures for use throughout Canada, although some, especially Quebec, have extensively elaborated on those principles with special application in their own jurisdictions.

Although general principles have been in place for over 80 years there have been numerous modifications and changes in their emphasis and interpretation. An example of a change of emphasis is the shift from the casual adoption of geographical names derived from the names of living persons to an almost total proscription of the approval of such names. An example of a change in interpretation is the recent decision by the producers of the *Canada Gazetteer Atlas* (1980) to use only officially approved specifics and generics as decided by the jurisdictions concerned, resulting, as examples, in *Rocky Mountains* in the French version of the atlas and *Rivière Saint-François* in the English version.

The question of the language of geographical names has involved considerable discussion among the members of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names in the past twenty years. At one time it was permissible to translate a number of names of populated places, but all members now agree that the names of populated places in Canada should never be translated into either of the two official languages in official federal documents and on maps. Henceforth, St.

John's (Nfld.), and *Saint John* (N.B.) will be used in French text, and *Sept-Îles* and *Trois-Rivières* in English text. The matter of the language treatment of names of cultural and physical features cannot be so easily resolved. Current principles allow a publisher to use the generic terminology of the language of his text, but some names jurisdictions are insisting that only the official names (i.e., specifics plus generics) are to be allowed. One CPCGN member has suggested the translation of names in unilingual areas as an option, with lists of official alternates of approved names for bilingual areas. Another proposal would call for official names only in what producers consider to be official administrative and legal documents, but would continue the practice of translation of names for general reports, newspapers and the like; however, translation of specifics in the latter would be restricted to those already in use on small-scale federal maps and in federal documents, and would not imply that a feature newly named *Lac aux Dindes* would have to be rendered as Turkey Lake in English.

Another problem involving several years of discussion has been the handling of geographical names in federal lands in the provinces. Some provincial names jurisdictions were reluctant to acknowledge any other authorities to decide on names within their borders, while some federal departments, especially those concerned with national parks, Indian reserves and military bases did not want to have decisions on names made within their lands without consultation. It was decided in 1979 that neither the provincial or federal names authorities would unilaterally make decisions in federal lands. In practice this means that when a provincial names authority, say Alberta, wants to make a decision in a federally administered area, say Banff National Park, the staff of Alberta's nomenclature office informs the CPCGN Secretariat's staff, who then coordinate the communications between the two authorities concerned. No disputes have yet arisen, but if they do the CPCGN has approved procedures to deal with them.

An additional problem examined in the past two years was the handling of names outside Canada for official Canadian use at the federal level. The main elements of the policy adopted by the CPCGN are: 1) names of sovereign states to be rendered in English and French; 2) names of populated places to be shown as rendered by the appropriate national names authority, with the option of showing traditional forms in addition (e.g., *Canton* to accompany *Guangzhou*); 3) names of other features within sovereign states to be rendered according to decisions of those states according to the most reliable references available; 4) names of features adjacent to or common to two or more sovereign states to be rendered in both English and French. Some members of the CPCGN's special Advisory Committee on Names Outside Canada strongly recommended using the names of countries, as recognized by the sovereign states themselves, on maps and in other documents, so that *Türkiye* and *Mișr* would be used instead of the conventional forms. One problem with such a practice might be a conflict with official Canadian foreign policy on recognition of jurisdiction over territories beyond Canada's boundaries. Secondly, it might be premature to take such a step considering that the UN itself has not adopted such a practice. As far as no. 4 is con-

cerned it may not be easy to determine when features such as East Siberian Sea should be rendered in English and French and when they should be retained in the forms of the adjacent national authority. This subject will be treated more fully at the Fourth UN Conference. Meanwhile, it would be useful to have the observations of the various experts in order to amend or modify Canada's policy and procedures.

An additional problem under investigation in the last two years is the compilation of a clear and concise glossary of generic terminology in Canada. The problem evolved from the work of the Advisory Committee on Glaciological and Alpine Nomenclature. When it had been determined that certain kinds of permanent ice features were misnamed on topographical names and when it was revealed that many specialists in landscape description had different interpretations of the meanings and use of certain terms the need for precision in both application and definition became apparent. The members of the advisory committee are presently working on a glossary in English with the prospect of having it made available in French as well.

The need for a toponymic field manual in Canada has long been apparent, particularly since much of the work is now being performed for both provincial and federal names authorities by persons under contract. Such persons may or may not have experience in toponymic field work, and, secondly, the wording of contracts must be quite precise to assure that the performance of the work and the results meet specific standards.

In 1980 the Toponymy Research Advisory Committee reviewed proposals for priorities in toponymy research in Canada and submitted them to the CPCGN for endorsement. We now have fifteen broad research topics in four levels of priority.

- Priority 1: Research related to requests for information; research for principles and procedures; development of the automated data base with related outputs such as gazetteers.
- Priority 2: Improvement of names information in CPCGN records; glossary of generic terminology; bibliography of Canadian toponymy; toponymic field investigation; development of international standards.
- Priority 3: Research into Indian and Inuit toponymy; publication of toponymy studies; publication of a single-volume gazetteer of Canada; research into the cartographic representation of named physical and cultural features.
- Priority 4: Determination of precedents in geographical naming; collation of information on obsolete names; history of geographical naming in Canada.

Research for priority 1 topics is currently being undertaken. Priority 2 items will receive emphasis after the completion of the automation of the data base in 1982, with the remaining items being addressed later in the 1980s.

This paper has revealed a number of problems and projects being addressed by the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names. Not mentioned here are projects at the provincial level, especially in Quebec, where, with a staff of 35, there is a sophisticated toponymic organization investigating a large variety of toponymic matters, especially in relation to the French language.