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Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Eight Conference

Country Report - Canada

Submitted by Canada **

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COUNTRY REPORT - CANADA

I. Goals and national programmes

1. The national names authority

1.1 The national names authority

The national names authority of Canada is called the Geographical Names Board of Canada. At its 2004 annual meeting, the Board discussed reorganization. The results included a reduction in the number of Advisory Committees and the meeting length was shortened to two days. See paper under agenda item 9d for more detail.

As of 2004, the GNBC has two advisory committees – the Advisory Committee on Nomenclature, Policy, and Research and the Advisory Committee on Automation and Delineation. More details will be found in the paper presented under agenda item 9d.

Working groups are created when there are specific needs or purposes. Previous working groups looked at: amending the list of pan-Canadian names; guidelines for names of features within and partially on Indian reserves; updating the GNBC's strategic plan; Antarctic naming guidelines; Aboriginal communications; etc. The Delineation Guidelines Working Group was established at the 2005 annual meeting to provide guidelines for delineating (identifying the extent of) geographical features on maps.

1.2 GNBC meetings

The GNBC has met five times since the Eighth Conference – in British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, Alberta, and Ottawa. The 2007 annual meeting is scheduled for August 8 and 9 in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

1.3 GNBC Chair and members

The Minister of Natural Resources Canada is mandated to appoint the Chair of the GNBC, in consultation with the members of the GNBC. Ms. Gisèle Jacob served as GNBC Chair from 1 April 1999 until 31 March 2007. She will chair the 2007 annual meeting.

Since the last Conference in 2002, the GNBC welcomed Elections Canada as a member during 2006.

1.4 Strategic plan

The GNBC's strategic plan, first developed in 1989 in response to increased pressure on government resources, was updated for a fourth time in 2006. Previous revisions were done in 1993, 1997, and 2001. This plan for GNBC members includes a brief history of the GNBC, the GNBC mandate, strategic objectives, the current Order in Council, and the mandates of the two advisory committees. More details will be found in the paper presented under agenda item 9d.

1.5 Decision making

Decisions on geographical names in Canada are made at the provincial and territorial level. However, there are some areas - on federal lands (national parks, military establishments) - where decisions must be made by both the provincial/territorial authority and the appropriate federal authority in order to become official.

2. Changes in the administrative/political structure of Canada

Since the last Conference, the name of the Yukon Territory, through *The Yukon Act*, became Yukon in 2003. Territory is no longer part of the name of this division of Canada, although it still remains a territory.

II. Problems, solutions, and achievements since the last Conference

1. Publications

Two flip format publications entitled *Geographical Names and the Geographical Names Board of Canada / Les toponymes et la Commission de toponymie du Canada* and *Naming Canada's Geographical Features / La dénomination des entités géographiques du Canada* were published by the Geographical Names Section in March 2004. These publications emphasize the importance of geographical names, how to propose geographical feature names in Canada, how names are approved, the work of the Geographical Names Board of Canada Secretariat, and various ways of disseminating Canadian geographical names information. The *Guide to the field collection of Native Geographical Names* and *Aboriginal Canadian Geographical Names: an annotated bibliography*, and *Principles and procedures for geographical naming 2001* continue to be available on the GeoNames web site under Publications at (http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/prod/pubs_e.php).

Published in 2006, *Concise Place Names of Alberta* includes, in one volume, the origin information on approximately one quarter of all of the official names in Alberta. Introduced, and edited with new text added by Merrily Aubrey of the Alberta Geographical Names Program, this was a co-operative venture between the Geographical Names Program and the Friends of Geographical Names of Alberta Society.

Manitoba published *A Place of Honour* in separate English and French versions in 2003. In the same year, *Noms géographiques du Manitoba*, the French version of the 2002 publication *Geographical Names of Manitoba* was released. The second edition of *A Place of Honour* was published in 2005.

The Commission de toponymie du Québec (CTQ) revised and published the second edition of its *Dictionnaire illustré - Noms et lieux du Québec* in 2006. This new edition features content enriched with 700 new articles and 130 new illustrations. The volume which originally comprised 1,2000 pages now totals nearly 8,400, including 674 illustrations, and a general index of 7,250 names. *La toponymie des Cris*, the sixth publication in the series on Aboriginal

toponymy in Quebec, was published in 2003. In order to help municipalities and businesses that make street signs display thoroughfare names in accordance with the *Charter of the French Language*, the CTQ has prepared a guide called *Guide de l'affichage odonymique*. It is available at (<http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/ct/pdf/guideaffichageodonymique.pdf>).

A few sample GNBC publications were brought to the UNGEGN 2006 training course in Austria. Sample GNBC publications were also sent to Indonesia for a training course held there in 2005.

In addition to UNGEGN material, the GNBC publications *Principles and procedures for geographical naming* and the *Guide to the field collection of native geographical names* have been translated into Portuguese for use in Brazil and other countries. They will be used as part of a Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) project dealing with geodetic and environmental issues in Brazil. One of the CIDA project team members is a former member of the GNBC.

2. Databases

2.1 Canadian Geographical Names Data Base and the Canadian Geographical Names Service

The Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB) was created in 1978. It was re-engineered in 1988 and again in 1998 to incorporate newer technology and adapt to the changing needs of its users. In 2003, in support of the United Nations naming initiative and to participate in the Global Geospatial Data Infrastructure, Canada launched the Canadian Geographical Names Service (CGNS). The CGNS was developed as part of the Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure (CGDI) a national Canadian initiative to make Canada's geographical information available on the Internet. The CGNS is designed to provide the toponymic data layer as one of the framework data layers available to users of geospatial data. The standards established by GeoBase, the national geospatial data portal for Canada, have been used in the development of the CGNS.

2.2 Provincial databases

Jurisdictions with automated databases are in the process of upgrading and reconciling their records with those in the Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB). This is in preparation for making the switch to the Canadian Geographical Names Service (CGNS) and using its web-based editing and updating tool, the GNApp.

3. Web sites

3.1 National

The GNBC Secretariat now has one Internet Web site – the *Geographical Names of Canada* site at (http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/index_e.php). The information on a second Web site – SchoolNet - had to be taken down due to the necessity for compliance with the Government of Canada's Common Look and Feel requirements. All federal government web sites now contain

common elements. It is hoped that at some point in the future time can be spent to post all information that was taken down when other priorities allow and after the information has been properly adapted to the new requirements.

3.2 Provincial and territorial

Several jurisdictions have their own Web sites. Improvements are being made continuously. British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island have searchable databases on their web sites. Manitoba, Alberta, and Yukon have Web sites, and emphasize policy and procedures rather than a name search. Links to the various provincial and territorial web sites can be found on the *Geographical Names of Canada Web* site at (http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/info/sites_e.php).

4. Policies

Antarctic naming guidelines, Guidelines for naming geographical features on or partially on Indian Reserves, and commemorative naming guidelines were developed and in some cases updated between 2002 and 2007.

With the retirement and departure of toponymists in many Canadian jurisdictions, the people who take over are not always trained in toponymic practices. To that end, guidelines in English and French for delineating the extents of geographical features on maps are in the process of being developed for use by Canadian toponymists and non-toponymists involved in delineation activities. These guidelines will provide a basis for those delineating geographical features in traditional analogue fashion as well as digitally.

During 2004 – 2005, the Nunavut Geographic Names Policy was approved. The lengthy period taken in drafting the policy resulted from the Government of Nunavut's need to ensure, through consultations with the Inuit Heritage Trust, that the provisions of the policy met government's obligations under Article 33 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*. The Nunavut Geographic Names Committee (NGNC) was created in January 2005. It sits as a subcommittee of the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Katimajit (a Ministerial committee established to advance Inuit societal values within governance). The Nunavut Geographic Names Committee consists of six members with a Chairperson and Co-Chairperson selected from within. The Committee held its inaugural (orientation) meeting in January 2005.

5. Derogatory names

Investigation into derogatory names, for the most part, is done on a case-by-case basis by the provincial or territorial names authority concerned. Occasionally, such decisions require joint approval with the appropriate federal naming authority. In 2002, Ontario rescinded nearly 60 names containing the word "squaw". Some required joint approval with Parks Canada and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. Another was on the International Boundary between the state of Minnesota, U.S.A., and the province of Ontario, Canada.

6. Commemorative names

The Interdepartmental Committee on Commemoration was created after 2000 in response to the backlash resulting from a statement that Mount Logan would be renamed after a recently deceased politician. Departments and agencies at the federal level of government that have commemorative aspects within their mandates met on a regular basis to discuss commemoration initiatives involving stamps, coins, statues on Parliament Hill, geographical names, memorials, etc. It is intended mainly as a forum for the exchange of information and a place where proposals that do not fall within the mandates of the participating organizations may be put forward. The Secretariat of the GNBC participates on behalf of both the GNBC and Natural Resources Canada. Other federal departments who have membership on the GNBC (National Defence, Parks Canada, Canada Post, etc.) also participate in the committee.

Commemoration guidelines for Canada were drafted in 2005 and approved in 2006. Some modifications have been proposed and will be discussed at the 2007 annual meeting of the GNBC.

7. Other types of names

Standardization of the nomenclature of Quebec water storage reservoir names (dams, dykes, booms, etc.) is the next area for which standardization seems to be a high priority. Because of the abundance of lakes and rivers in Quebec, these types of features are very numerous in the province. Processing of the several thousand names involved is expected to continue until the 9th Conference.

8. Toponymy and heritage

Alberta continues to make its top 300 names available on the Friends of Geographical Names Society of Alberta's web site at (<http://www.placenamesofalberta.ca/300names.html>).

The British Columbia web site at (http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/bcnames/g2_nl.htm) continues to host *Nisga'a Names, Nisga'a Lands*. Here one can choose to view the names on part of a map and by clicking on a name, one can hear the name pronounced three times.

Since 1998, the heritage aspect of toponymy has been, and still continues to be, a significant part of toponymic activity in Quebec.

The jurisdictions that have web sites acknowledge the relationship of toponymy and heritage and its importance. Publications produced by GNBC members also reflect this relationship.

9. Activities related to GNBC members and their work

Secretariat staff and the GNBC Chair, Ms. Gisèle Jacob, met with Mr. Paul-Émile Thériault of New Brunswick in July 2004 about the requirements for a New Brunswick GNBC member and various aspects of geographical names activities. Mr. Thériault and Mr. G. Bourque, who represented a department that could take on New Brunswick naming activities, took part in the 2004 GNBC annual meeting.

A meeting with the Nunavut GNBC member, Mr. Ammie Kipsigak, and other Nunavut officials was held with various NRCan staff in Ottawa in October 2004 looking for ways to assist Nunavut with establishment of its names authority, implementing and upgrading its database, and related toponymic matters. Follow up on action items took place throughout the year. This also included the signing of the final Agreement for Dissemination of Geographical Names Information between NRCan and Nunavut in April 2005.

The Inuit Heritage Trust (IHT) held a three-day workshop in Ottawa in February 2005. Information was presented on the GNBC and UNGEGN activities with respect to geographical names. At the end of the session, participants provided guidance to IHT on information that would be useful when submitting geographical names collected in the field for approval by the Nunavut names authority.

Staff from the Secretariat and other federal departments met with Treasury Board and Federal Identity Program (FIP) staff about a complaint that had been received by the Commissioner of Official Languages concerning official street names on federal maps in March 2005. Essentially, the participants felt that official street names, as approved by the appropriate authority in each province and territory, should appear on federal maps on which street names appear.

10. International relations

Participants from Canada attended the last two UNGEGN meetings in New York (2004) and in Vienna (2006). Mr. Yaïves Ferland was a participant at the 2007 Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers Working Group meeting in Madrid, and Mr. Henri Dorion instructed at the 2007 training course in Tunisia.

Two opportunities to talk about the GNBC and geographical name treatment in Canada occurred in 2004 and 2006. Available Ottawa-area GNBC members or representatives including the GNBC Chair and the UNGEGN Chair, met with delegates from the Republic of Korea on 13 December 2004 for an exchange of information. GNBC Secretariat staff and Mapping Services Branch staff also participated. During the meeting, the subject of the Sea of Japan/East Sea was raised. On advisement from Foreign Affairs, Canadian participants directed questions on this matter to Foreign Affairs. The GNBC Chair and GNBC Secretariat staff met delegates from the Regional Toponymy Bureau, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Peoples' Republic of China on 27 February 2006. A half-day training session on the GNBC and how geographical names are handled in Canada was provided.

Since the Eighth UN Conference in 2002, Ms. Helen Kerfoot, as Chair of UNGEGN, has participated in a number of meetings of UNGEGN Working Groups (Exonyms (2003, 2007); Evaluation and Implementation (2003, 2005, 2007); Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers (2007)) and Divisions (East Central and South-East Europe (2003); Asia South-East and Pacific South-West (2003, 2005); Dutch- and German-speaking Division (2005); Norden Division (2005); Arabic Division (2007)). She has presented material relative to current UNGEGN issues and geographical names standardization at various venues, including the International Geographical Congress (Glasgow, 2004) and the International Congress on Minority Group and Indigenous Names (Netherlands, 2005). Ms. Kerfoot has been an instructor at UNGEGN training courses in Mozambique (2004, 2006), Australia (2004), Austria (2006) and Tunisia (2007). In 2004 and 2006, she chaired the 22nd and 23rd Sessions of UNGEGN.

Since the 22nd Session of UNGEGN, in 2004, the Director of the Commission de toponymie in Quebec, Canada, has been Co-Secretary of the Francophone Division. For the past several years, the Commission and the geographical names authorities in France have been working on the creation of Bougainville, a database containing the principal exonyms in the French language. They are presently thinking about the orientation to be given to this project and their results will be presented at the 9th Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. In the meantime, this information can be accessed on UNGEGN's Francophone Division web site at (http://www.divisionfrancophone.org/recherche_bd.htm).

A few sample GNBC publications were brought for the UNGEGN 2006 training course in Austria. Sample GNBC publications were also sent to Indonesia for a training course held there in 2005. In addition to UNGEGN material, the GNBC publications *Principles and procedures for geographical naming* and the *Guide to the field collection of native geographical names* will be translated into Portuguese for use in Brazil and other countries. They will be used as part of a Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) project dealing with geodetic and environmental issues in Brazil. One of the CIDA project team members is a former member of the GNBC.

For the past several years, the Commission de toponymie du Québec (CTQ) and the geographical names authorities in France have worked together to put a training course for the management of geographical names online. This project, realized through Franco-Québécois cooperation, is part of the activity programme of UNGEGN's Francophone Division. A prototype of this training course was prepared by a Quebec business specializing in digital geographical educational materials. A first module is to be presented at the 9th Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. In the meantime, the prototype *'Introduction à la toponymie'* may be accessed on the web site of the Francophone Division of the UNGEGN at (www.divisionfrancophone.org/Formation/index.htm).

For details of interactions between Canada and the United States, please see the United States/Canada Division Report.

11. Other

The Centre for Topographic Information Ottawa achieved ISO 9001 accreditation in March 2000 for activities and processes directly affecting cartographic, products, toponymic products, and aerial photographs. An upgrade to ISO 9001:2000 was achieved in February 2003. The latest ISO 9001:2000 audit took place successfully on 8 May 2007.

Concern was raised in 2002 about possible problems when toponymists retired and there was no one trained to replace them. The situation has become serious in Canada. Most toponymists are within a year or two of retirement. But few, if any, steps have been taken to avert this potential problem at any level. Training in toponymic policies and procedures is a long-term process and better efforts must be made to ensure that future toponymists are to receive the required education, and that accumulated knowledge is passed on. Even the Secretariat of the GNBC is facing an urgent need for recruitment of trained staff with the retirement of one staff member early in 2007 and another scheduled for later in the year.

III. Conclusion

It would be a useful step for each country to take a look at the state of toponymy in their country and investigate what qualifications are required, what training is needed, and how to ensure a smooth transition when replacing departing or retiring toponymists.

Since the last Conference, members of the Geographical Names Board of Canada have been involved in producing publications, updating and reconciling their databases, and modifying existing web sites or creating new ones. Policies have been created or updated at the national and provincial/territorial levels. Federal toponymic products remain subject to ISO standards. The heritage aspects of toponymy have long been recognized by Canadian toponymists. To this end, several jurisdictions have added origin information about geographical names or provided audio accompaniments to their web sites. GNBC members continue to participate in meetings in the United States and other places around the world.

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