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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY FEATURE NAMES:

CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

Paper submitted by Helen Kerfoot, CPCGN Secretariat, Canada

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The treatment of names for features extending beyond a single sovereignty has been addressed by resolutions of the First and Second United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names. In particular, resolutions I/8 and II/25 recommend that the names authorities of the nations concerned attempt to reach agreement on conflicting names or applications of names for geographical features common to or extending across their frontiers.

In keeping with the spirit of these resolutions, the United States Board on Geographic Names (USBGN) and the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (CPCGN) have, since 1974, held a number of joint discussions towards developing a common approach to handling names of features which cross the boundary between the two countries.

Donald Orth in his paper submitted to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1987 reported on the history of cooperation between the names boards of Canada and the United States; on the approval of names submitted by the International Boundary Commission of the two countries over seventy years ago; and on the recent cooperation of the names boards towards a more definitive agreement (E/CONF. 79/L.17). Some modifications have since been called for in the written understanding, as included in Mr. Orth's paper at that time. In 1988, the resulting modified document **The Treatment of Names of Geographical Features shared by Canada and the United States** was ratified by the geographical names boards of both countries (see Appendix 1).

The document addresses the question of standardization of geographical names, while at the same time drawing attention to the need to respect the differences in cultural heritage and historical perspective of the two countries. It includes recommendations pertaining to (1) coordination in the naming of transboundary features; (2) name changing; (3) generic and feature class terminology; (4) implementation of the recommendations; (5) International Boundary Commission mapping program; and (6) procedures for handling particular transboundary name questions between the two countries.

This cooperative process has produced some practical results from a mapping standpoint. Names information on map sheet breaks between the two countries is now being reviewed more carefully for accuracy and consistency. Such efforts will undoubtedly lead to an upgrading of geographical name records. In fact, several instances have occurred recently where initial checks of transborder feature names recorded on Canadian maps for some forty years, have failed to find local support for the spelling or form of the "established" names.

Form for Exchange of Data

As part of the implementation phase of this understanding, a draft form has been developed by the CPCGN for submission to the USBGN, for exchange of information on particular names between the two countries. Such a form could become a standard to be used when new names are proposed in one or the other country; where names are at variance on either side of the border and field investigation is recommended; or when name changes, altered applications or rescissions are in progress in one country. This form is currently only prepared in English (Appendix 2), but will also be developed for French-language users.

Tabulation of Transboundary Data

The CPCGN Secretariat is now in the process of making an inventory of all names of transboundary features between Canada and the United States. Such a listing will then be

used to identify name anomalies for future study and possible resolution of inconsistencies by the names authorities at the provincial/state level and at the national level. This inventory is also being used to flag on the automated National Toponymic Data Base (NTDB) of Canada, all features which cross the international border.

The inventory project has been undertaken by comparison of the most recent topographic maps available from Canada and the US, for the border areas. On the Canadian side, this has meant consulting 1:50 000 or 1:250 000 scale National Topographic System maps, to which have been added CPCGN name decisions made since the map was published. On the US side, we have used as far as possible, the United States Geological Survey 1:24 000 7.5 minute or 1:62 500 15 minute quadrangle sheets (although for some areas the maps were not very recent). In addition, the sheets produced by the International Boundary Commission of Canada and the United States in the early decades of this century were consulted to establish whether or not the current names with today's spelling were used at the time these boundary sheets were prepared.

Each name on the Canadian side is being recorded with its unique key as indicated on the NTDB, so that full names records can be retrieved, as required for further study. The inventory will be provided to the USBGN for a tie into their data base records, to all interested provinces/territories and states, and to the International Boundary Commission. A sample of the tabulation is included in Appendix 3.

At this stage, records that are not consistent across the international border can be distinguished. Such inconsistencies include: completely different names, variations in generics, variations in specific (spelling or qualifier), differences of application, and features officially named only on one side of the border.

Draft tabulation of the data collected from the topographic base maps indicates that along the 5525 miles of the international border, between Canada and the United States, just under 900 features are named. Of these, only about 50% exactly match in name and

application; 3% posed problems to the investigator in determining whether or not the features cross the border. Of the remainder, 27% are named only on one side of the border, and 20% have some sort of mismatch (e.g. different spelling, variation of details in the specific, different generics, completely different names, different applications) - from this group, 4% will probably be eliminated from further investigation, as the "mismatch" is purely in the use of a French generic in Quebec, and an equivalent English term across the border in the US. In Canada, the mismatching of names is most apparent in the mountainous areas of the west, in particular along the British Columbia border with Washington, Idaho and Montana. When the names are checked on the US Geographic Names Information System (GNIS), it is more than likely that official names not shown on the older US maps will be identified and hence change the percentage of features that are apparently named only on one side of the border.

Also interesting to note is the breakdown in types of named features recorded: hydrographic 73%, topographic 22% and glacial 5%. Of the 900 transborder feature names in the inventory, some 53% were shown on the International Boundary Commission map series produced in the early years of the century.

International Boundary Commission (IBC) Pilot Project Map

A third and important element of active cooperation on transboundary feature names between Canada and the United States has been in connection with a pilot project undertaken by IBC.

A digital mapping project was completed between the national mapping agencies of the two countries to produce a new boundary sheet for an area on the St. Lawrence River, east of Cornwall, Ontario. Colour proofs were prepared by Energy, Mines and Resources Canada at 1:25 000 and 1:50 000 scales, and geographical names shown were verified jointly by CPCGN and USBGN staff members. A new series of international boundary maps was encouraged by both national names boards in the document **Treatment of Names of**

Geographical Features shared by Canada and the United States, as such maps are particularly useful in disseminating information on geographical names and in establishing uniformity in their use.

Future Work

Further work on a new series of International Boundary Commission maps remains to be decided. However, staff of the CPCGN Secretariat and the BGN will draft procedures for handling names data for the production of similar map sheets in future. The CPCGN Secretariat will complete the inventory of transboundary names, upgrade the NTDB with this information, and forward a listing to the BGN and appropriate Canadian authorities for possible investigation of names which are inconsistent between jurisdictions. The name submission form when completed and accepted will be used as a basis for transfer of names data on particular features, for investigation by appropriate jurisdictions.

It is hoped that some elements of these documents may be useful to other national names authorities engaged in activities directed at the possible standardization of names for transboundary features.

August 1988

**THE TREATMENT OF NAMES OF GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES
SHARED BY
CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES**

1. COORDINATION IN THE NAMING OF TRANSBOUNDARY FEATURES

1.1 Mutual Benefit

WHEREAS: the coordination in the naming of geographical entities on or across the Canada-United States boundary is of mutual benefit to the names authorities in both countries, and to mapping and surveying agencies; and

**1.2 Different Names and
Different Spellings**

WHEREAS: the historical development of the United States and Canada has resulted in several different names or different spellings of the same names for geographical features along their mutual border, it is

**1.3 Preservation of Different
Cultural Heritages and
Histories**

Recommended: that, the different names, and different spellings of the same names, be respected by the appropriate names authorities in each country, in cases where such variances reflect differences in the cultural heritages and historical perspectives of the two countries.

2. If unresolved, determine the best solution in terms of the recommendations.

II. New Name and Name Change Proposals

- A. Proposals may originate from individuals, commerce, industry and public agencies.

1. Staff documents support for the name change or naming of the unnamed feature, collects background relative to associated names, and determines that the unnamed feature is truly unnamed in the official records.
2. The proposal is submitted to the appropriate names authorities in both countries.
3. Preliminary decision by the appropriate authorities.
4. Transmission of decision to appropriate federal names authority.
5. Dissemination of decision to interested parties; if acceptable decision becomes final.

- B. If conflict exists, follow steps outlined in I (D) above.

III. Processing of Name Proposals

- A. Origin of Proposal

1. If in Canada - CPCGN handles.
2. If in United States - BGN handles.

- B. Design common form(s) for transboundary name proposals for use by appropriate names authorities.

IV. Generic Terms and Feature Class Descriptions

- A. The CPCGN and the BGN will exchange information on the generic terms and feature classes in use in their respective countries.

- 3
- B. New generic terms being considered for adoption in either Canada or the United States will be referred to the names authorities in both countries in order to achieve similar descriptions of generic terms for the same kinds of feature.

 - C. The CPCGN and the USBGN will document and exchange information on generic terms and feature classes utilized in automated data bases developed for the storage and processing of geographical names information.

APPENDIX A

Procedures for Handling Transboundary Names

Procedures for handling transboundary names, including matters such as different names, different spellings and other areas of mutual concern to United States and Canadian names authorities, are:

I. Established Names

- A. Action on a boundary name "question" is initiated by notice from an outside source or as a result of a name review by a names authority.
- B. Staff investigation of the name in question is made and includes:
 1. Examination of official records.
 2. Review of other maps and documents.
 3. Consultation with local authorities, officials and individuals.
 4. Solicitation of views and opinions from State/Provincial authorities.
 5. If "question" is minor, and can be resolved by the staffs of the appropriate names authorities in both countries, then this is the STOPPING POINT.
- C. If "question" is unresolved, additional procedures entail:
 1. Preparing background information on the name.
 2. Staff evaluation of input from various sources and submission to appropriate names authorities in both countries.
 3. Preliminary decision by each appropriate names authority.
 4. Dissemination of decision to interested parties; if acceptable, decision becomes final.
- D. If conflict exists, the following steps should be taken:
 1. Advise appropriate names authorities of background information and suggest that efforts be made to resolve "question" at the local level.

- 2
2. If unresolved, determine the best solution in terms of the recommendations.

II. New Name and Name Change Proposals

- A. Proposals may originate from individuals, commerce, industry and public agencies.
 1. Staff documents support for the name change or naming of the unnamed feature, collects background relative to associated names, and determines that the unnamed feature is truly unnamed in the official records.
 2. The proposal is submitted to the appropriate names authorities in both countries.
 3. Preliminary decision by the appropriate authorities.
 4. Transmission of decision to appropriate federal names authority.
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- B. If conflict exists, follow steps outlined in I (D) above.

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- B. New generic terms being considered for adoption in either Canada or the United States will be referred to the names authorities in both countries in order to achieve similar descriptions of generic terms for the same kinds of feature.

- C. The CPCGN and the USBGN will document and exchange information on generic terms and feature classes utilized in automated data bases developed for the storage and processing of geographical names information.

APPENDIX 2

**CANADIAN PERMANENT COMMITTEE ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES/
UNITED STATES BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES
NAMING OF TRANSBOUNDARY FEATURES**

CANADA	UNITED STATES
PROPOSED NAME	PROPOSED NAME
<input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Rescission <input type="checkbox"/> Name Change <input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain)	<input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Rescission <input type="checkbox"/> Name change <input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain)
FEATURE TYPE	FEATURE TYPE
DESCRIPTION OF FEATURE	DESCRIPTION OF FEATURE
LOCATION Province/Territory: NTS Map Number: NTS Map Scale: Coordinates: <input type="checkbox"/> Geographic Lat: Long: or <input type="checkbox"/> UTM Location 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Admin. or <input type="checkbox"/> Geog. Location 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Admin. (sub-unit) or <input type="checkbox"/> Geog. Location Description: Coordinates at Canada/US Border: Other Information (e.g. National Park, Indian Reserve)	LOCATION State: County: U.S. Quad Map Number: U.S. Quad Map Scale: Coordinates: <input type="checkbox"/> Geographic Lat: Long: or <input type="checkbox"/> UTM.....
ATTACHMENTS <input type="checkbox"/> 1:50 000 map (photocopy) <input type="checkbox"/> photos <input type="checkbox"/> sketch <input type="checkbox"/> other	ATTACHMENTS <input type="checkbox"/> 1:50 000 map (photocopy) <input type="checkbox"/> photos <input type="checkbox"/> sketch <input type="checkbox"/> other

CANADA	UNITED STATES
ORIGIN OF PROPOSED NAME	ORIGIN OF PROPOSED NAME
REASON(S) FOR NAMING	REASON(S) FOR NAMING
VARIANT NAMES	VARIANT NAMES
ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR PROPOSAL (ATTACH REPORTS/ OTHER DOCUMENTATION)	ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR PROPOSAL (ATTACH REPORTS/ OTHER DOCUMENTATION)
ACTION(S) TAKEN DATE:	ACTION(S) TAKEN DATE:
DECISION(S) MADE DATE:	DECISION(S) MADE DATE:

APPENDIX 3

CANADA	PROVINCE: YUKON	UNIQUE KEY	STATUS APPROVAL (D-M-Y)	BORDER MAP	BORDER COORD.	STATE: ALASKA	UNION STATES FEATURE NAME	ID NO.	STATUS	NAME/NO.	DATE	COUNTY	COMMENTS	I.B.C. MAP
3	Old Crow River	KAEVL	A6 09 10 81	117 B	068 10 33 141 00 00	Old Crow River	Table Mountain	1956	Table Mountain	1956	none	- flows east into Canada - flows into Porcupine River - name appears on I.B.C. map	Map 7 1914	
4	Bitwaidly Creek	KAAOY	A1 21 10 44	117 B	068 10 11 141 00 00	Bitwaidly Creek	Table Mountain	1956	Table Mountain	1956	none	- flows east into Canada - tributary to Old Crow River - name appears on I.B.C. map	Map 7 1914	
5	Fish Creek	KACDC	A6 09 10 81	117 B	068 00 05 141 00 00	Fish Creek	Table Mountain	1956	Table Mountain	1956	none	- tributary to Potato Creek - name appears on I.B.C.	Map 7 1914	
6	British Mountains	KAAUJ	A6 27 10 80	117 C 117 B		Davidson Mountains*	Table Mountain	1956	Table Mountain	1956	none	- extends from Habbage River in the east to Kongakut River in the west - also named on map 3 1914 - former name Davidson Mountains	Map 8 1914	
7	Davidson Range	KABOU	A4 07 09 50	117 B		Brooks Range*	Table Mountain	1956	Table Mountain	1956	none	- does not appear on I.B.C. map - flows N.E. across the border into Canada	- - -	
8	Potato Creek	KAFET	A6 14 07 80	116 O&N	067 50 15 141 00 00	Potato Creek	Coleen 1:250 000	1956 rev. 1983	Coleen	1956	none	- does not appear on I.B.C. map - flows N.E. across the border into Canada - Schaefer Creek on I.B.C. map and as X-reference in this base	Map 8 1914	
9	Surprise Creek	KAGKG	A6 14 07 80	116 O&N	067 45 34 141 00 00		Coleen	1956	Coleen	1956	none	- flows N.E. across the border - flows into Old Crow River - does not cross border on I.B.C. map	Map 8 1914	
10	Rapid River	KAPXK	A6 09 10 81	116 O&N	067 35 35 141 00 00	Rapid River	Coleen	1956	Coleen	1956	none	- flows S.W. into the U.S. - name appears on I.B.C. map	Map 9 1914	
11	Sunagluh Creek	KAGJW	A6 09 10 81	116 O&N	067 30 05 141 00 00	Sunagluh Creek*	Coleen	1956	Coleen	1956	none	- flows S.E. into Canada - tributary to Porcupine River - name appears on I.B.C. map as Sunagluh	Map 9 1914	
12	Porcupine River	KAFEG	A6 09 10 81	116 O&N	067 20 43 141 00 00	Porcupine River	Coleen	1956	Coleen	1956	none	- flows west into the U.S. - name appears on I.B.C. map	Map 10 1914	
13	Ramparts of the Porcupine	KAFEC	A6 04 06 81	116 O&N	067 20 40 141 00 00	Upper Ramparts*	Coleen	1956	Coleen	1956	none	- name changes at the border - not named on I.B.C. map	- - -	
14	Canalaska Mountain	KAVZK	A1 03 04 59	116 O&N	067 20 21 141 00 00	Canalaska Mountain	Coleen	1956	Coleen	1956	none	- mountain is situated on the border - X-reference Boundary Mountain	Map 10 1914	
15	Keele Range	KADIE	A6 27 10 80	116 K/15 116 O&N	067 00 10 141 00 00		Coleen	1956	Coleen	1956	none	- name appears on I.B.C. map - not named on U.S. site - not named on I.B.C. map		