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TOPONYMIC WEB SITES

Web sites of the Geographical names section

(Submitted by Canada)**

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WEB SITES OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SECTION

Paper submitted by Canada

The two web sites hosted by the Geographical Names Section are excellent sources of toponymic information. The contents of these web sites are described briefly. Some future activities will include upgrading the web sites to new federal government standards and the anticipated addition of *Canoma*. Addresses for the web sites in the provinces and territories are also provided.

Background

On 31 August 1994, Mr. Tony Price, the Chair of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names,¹ cut the red ribbon to launch Canadian Geographical Names on the Internet. Since then, the Geographical Names Section's web site has grown, expanded, and become more user-friendly as time passes. The Home Page has been redesigned a few times as well.

Just over a year later, on 22 September 1995, the Geographical Names Section launched its SchoolNet web site. The linking element for both web sites is the query page for the Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB). It is a copy of part of the working database and so does not contain everything that is in the working database.

When these two web sites were launched, the Geographical Names Section was part of the National Atlas Information Service (NAIS). For the last several years, the Section has been part of the Centre for Topographic Information (CTI) in Ottawa. Both the e-mail address for contacting the Section and the URLs for the two web sites reflect the change.

The GeoNames web site

The following information can be found on the GeoNames web site at <http://GeoNames.nrcan.gc.ca/english/Home.html>. All of the pages on this web site have an English and a French version. Links are provided on each page so the user can switch from one of Canada's official languages to the other.

- **About Us**

¹ The Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names changed its name to Geographical Names Board of Canada in March 2000. Ms. Gisèle Jacob has succeeded Mr. Price as Chair.

This section of the web site provides information about the Geographical Names Board of Canada, its members, the principles and procedures for geographical naming, etc. It also provides information about the Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB).

- **GeoNames Query**

Here one can do queries on Canadian Geographical Names, either by name, by coordinates, or by CGNDB Unique Identifier. Various fields, aside from the name being queried, may be filled out. If not, default settings have been established. The types of names one may query are: current, formerly official, and undersea features.

To query by coordinates, the latitude and longitude coordinates (degrees and minutes) fields must be entered. One can choose to search for places, features, or places and features within five, ten, or twenty kilometres of the coordinates entered.

To query by CGNDB Unique Identifier, enter the five letters of the CGNDB Unique Identifier. Then select the type of name to query - current, formerly official, or undersea features. If no choice is made, then the default setting will be used.

- **Products and services**

In this section, various products and services are offered. One can find out how to purchase digital data, and various gazetteers and publications. Some publications are also available without charge. Each year, the list of Canadian toponymic research projects is updated and posted here. Information on this list includes the name of the researcher, their location in Canada (some researchers may be based elsewhere), the topic of their research, and the timeframe involved.

- **SchoolNet**

The SchoolNet section is actually a direct link to the SchoolNet web site. However to save time, one may choose to go directly to "Selected Origins of Canadian Geographical Names", "Students' modules", or "Information for teachers" rather than going through the SchoolNet site's menu.

- **Info & News**

The Info & News section provides municipal name changes, information for translators, and Northern community name changes. Just recently, the fact sheet - *Aboriginal Place Names: Charting Our Heritage* (in .pdf format) was posted here.

- **FAQs**

Frequently asked questions are listed in this section of the web site. Questions on similar topics have been grouped together. As a result of all the questions the Geographical Names Section received in 2001 concerning the approval/name change process, *You were asking...* was posted.

- **Links**

Last, but not least, is the section with links to other interesting web sites. These have been grouped into several sections: Related to Geographical Names (Toponymy); Genealogy

(Canada); Names Studies; and Miscellaneous Web Sites. The first section on Geographical Names is subdivided into three sections: Canada, United States, and around the world.

This last section has a part called *United Nations and Geographical Names Standardization Around the World*. Articles about geographical names and the United Nations and about UNGEGN are here, along with various UN reports and the UN resolutions from 1967 to 1998. Information relating to the Seventh and Eighth conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names is also provided. UNGEGN information on its sessions, divisions,² working groups, and newsletters is there. A section about toponymic guidelines for map and other editors is provided along with links to several countries. And finally, there are links to United Nations web sites in New York and Canada.

Should anyone have any additions that we might add to this list of links, the Geographical Names Section (GeoNames@nrcan.gc.ca) would be pleased to hear from them.

The SchoolNet web site

Information of an educational nature is posted on this web site at <<http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/english/schoolnet/Home.html>>.

The Home Page gives you two choices. You can click on the icon above the words “GeoNames” search to get to the CGNDB to perform names inquiries. See “GeoNames query” above for more information on how you can perform queries. Or you can click on the icon above the words *Why is it called that?* This will lead you to the “Origins” page with the following information. Most of the information here is in both of Canada’s two official languages. However, some of the modules in the “Students’ Work” section are only in one language.

- **Canada and Provinces and Territories**

This section provides brief excerpts from *The Macmillan book of Canadian place names* by William B. Hamilton. The Nunavut excerpt is from the *Dictionary of Canadian Place Names* by Alan Rayburn. Wherever possible, links to related web sites are provided at the end of each excerpt.

- **Canadian Capital Cities**

Information about the origins of the names of Canada’s capital cities was taken from *The Macmillan book of Canadian place names* and the *Dictionary of Canadian Place Names*. Wherever possible, links to related web sites are provided at the end of each excerpt.

² A link to the French-speaking Division is included here, but it is hosted on the Commission de toponymie du Québec’s web site at <<http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/divfranco/accueil.htm>>. The text is entirely in French.

- **More Canadian Cities**

This section is slightly different as it contains four choices: Al H's Picks - Origins of Canadian City Names; "Island of Montréal"; Origins of Major Centres; and "The real story of how Toronto got its name". Al H's Picks - Origins of Canadian City Names is a selection of place across Canada. (Al H. was a student who prepared the section and made the selection of names.) "Island of Montréal" and "The real story of how Toronto got its name" originally appeared in *Canoma* and *Canadian Geographic*. Origins of Major Centres is a listing of the largest populated places and census metropolitan areas for each province and territory of Canada. In addition to the population figure, one can click on the name of the place to get a brief origin. Sources of information for this section range from the 1910 Report of the Geographic Board of Canada to recent popular publications. Again, wherever possible, links to related web sites are provided at the end of each excerpt.

- **Did you know!?!**

Did you know!?! is a series of 32 questions relating to Canadian toponymy. The questions may be selected by clicking on a question number or by scrolling down through the page. Answers to the questions can be found in articles on various pages throughout the SchoolNet web site.

- **Explorers**

This section contains an article about Jacques Cartier and links to articles from other web sites about other explorers.

- **Geographical Names Teachers' Aid**

This section contains a number of articles concerning geographical names – their sources, using oral history in researching toponymic history, and information about the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names and the cultural aspects of geographical names. A list of reference materials used by the Geographical Names Section is included. The "Teachers' Kit" identifies goals and objectives in teaching children about Geographical Names. Teaching professionals developed the kit. This section also includes a few name puzzles.

- **National Parks**

The section on Canada's National Parks and National Park Reserves contains a list of these entities across the country and is arranged by province and territory. Only the highlighted names have information provided about them. The majority of the information came from an article by Alan Rayburn in the *Canoma* issue celebrating the centennial of Canada's national parks.

- **People, places and things**

This section has four subsections: Arts and Literature; Canadiana; Influences of War; and International. The articles in this section have been contributed by Geographical Names staff, members of the Geographical Names Board of Canada (past and present), or from the Department of the Interior. The articles show the interesting diversity of names in Canada.

- **Aboriginal Communities**

This section has a few items specifically related to Aboriginal communities. There are links to related web sites.

- **Students' Work**

The items in the students' work section were created or compiled by university students; some worked in the Geographical Names Section, others across the country. The pages themselves also reflect the diversity of geographical names across the country. The text is written in the language used by the students, although anything done in Ottawa is in both official languages.

- **What is a pingo?**

This section describes the makeup of a geographical name – specific and generic. It also includes definitions of 12 generic terms used across Canada in official geographical names. Illustrations are provided.

Future of the GeoNames web sites

The federal government has decided that all federal web sites will have a “Common Look and Feel”. This will affect navigation buttons, federal identity, language used, and so on. As a result, both the GeoNames web site and the SchoolNet web site will be undergoing changes over the next several months. At times, parts of the two web sites may be taken down. Parts of the two web sites may be amalgamated with other parts. And other parts may not be reposted.

One addition to the GeoNames web site will be *Canoma*, the newsletter of the Geographical Names Board of Canada. A recent survey indicates that most respondents were happy with the idea of getting *Canoma* on the Internet. Some copies of the publication will be available in paper copy format to respond to the needs of those readers who do not use or have access to the Internet.

Provincial and territorial web sites

Below is a list of the provinces and territories that have toponymic web sites. Some are just information sites, while others have only searchable features. The rest have a combination of these features.

- Alberta (Friends of Geographical Names Society of Alberta) <<http://www.telusplanet.net/public/geogname/>>
- British Columbia <<http://www.gdbc.gov.bc.ca/bcnames/>>
- Manitoba <http://www.gov.mb.ca/natres/lid/geo_names/index.html>
- Northwest Territories <<http://pwnhc.learnnet.nt.ca/databases/geodb.htm>>
- Nova Scotia <<http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmt/land/programs/geographic.stm>>

- Quebec <<http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/>>Note: The French-speaking Division web site <<http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/divfrco/accueil.htm>> can be reached from here and is entirely in French.