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**MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON TOPONYMIC DATA
FILES AND GAZETTEERS**

**AVAILABILITY OF CANADA'S GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
THROUGH INTERNET**

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AVAILABILITY OF CANADA'S GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES THROUGH INTERNET

Access the Canadian WWW national gazetteer at:
<http://www-nais.ccm.NRCan.gc.ca/cgndb/>

"Is the correct name Sydney or Sidney? Where is Tsiigehtchic?" Use the World Wide Web gazetteer to find the answers!

The production of gazetteers to disseminate geographical names as standardized by nationally authorized bodies is fundamental to the recommendations of both UNGEGN and the six United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names. However, the actual publication costs of developing paper copy products to satisfy the need of governments and the public for accessing reliable toponymic data are rising, without the number of buyers necessarily increasing. As such, this UN goal is becoming more difficult to attain, especially for authorities that must work with limited budgets or are involved in revenue generating organizations.

Over the past five years, the Canadian national toponymic authority, the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (CPCGN), was under increasing pressure from libraries and educational bodies to make its 500 000 names records more widely accessible to the public, particularly for reference purposes. In 1994, an alternative solution to paper copy or CD-ROM distribution presented itself ... the hypermedia technology of the World Wide Web (WWW) had arrived on Internet!

Launching Canada's Geographical Names web site

On 31 August 1994, the first phase of Canada's geographical names on the web was launched. As far as we know, this marked the establishment of the world's first toponymic WWW reference site made available under the auspices of a national names standardization authority. Access to the web site by the client can be in either English or French (i.e. in both official languages of Canada), but, of course, the names are in the language of approval (e.g. French, Inuktitut, Dogrib, English, etc.).

Our challenge was to make as much data available as possible, but still to create what essentially would be a reference, rather than a data transfer, site. Although no charge is made for access to the web site, Canadian government policy does not support free distribution of data in an unlimited way. Data files accessible on the web are structured in such a way as to make downloading of large quantities of toponymic data a lengthy and tedious process. However, digital files are available for sale on a cost recovery basis, and licensing arrangements for further use of the data are encouraged.

All the data provided on the GeoNames web site are accessed from an actively updated copy of the Oracle-driven Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB). This data base is maintained by the federal Department of Natural Resources, and contains records of the national names authority, the CPCGN. Both the primary data base and the copy are updated on a daily basis, so provide the user with information that is as up to the moment as possible.

Phase I - basic names data

Phase I of the project launched the capacity to search all *Current* approved geographical name records for Canada, some 320 000 entries. For each named place or feature the following locational information is selected from the CGNDB and displayed on the screen:

- (1) approved form of the toponym
- (2) type of geographical feature or entity
- (3) province or territory
- (4) administrative or geographical region within (3) ... there is no systematic coast-to-coast sub-division of provinces and territories across Canada; officially-designated divisions vary from province to province, and the most useful (and complete) breakdown for each jurisdiction was selected for display
- (5) latitude and longitude ... all entries show degrees and minutes; some include values to seconds
- (6) National Topographic System (NTS) 1:50 000-scale map ... one map is displayed and corresponds to the coordinates provided in (5)
- (7) the five-letter unique identifier code of the record ... this is particularly useful for any follow up purposes requiring a more in-depth search by office staff

Apart from the addition of item (7), the above selection of locational information is consistent with the data fields that would be included in national or provincial paper copy gazetteer volumes.

Searching the data base and accessing locational maps

Users can only make queries by name (a limitation that would also apply to a paper copy volume), but they can organize the resultant selections in three ways:

- alphabetically by geographical name;
- by feature type; or
- by province / territory.

The first step of the search can involve the whole of Canada, or can be limited to one or more provinces / territories. A wild card can be used to help find names, for example, when the correct spelling is not known. However, a minimum of two characters must precede a "wild card" (e.g. an*), a restriction imposed on users to make downloading of large amounts of data, a task that is difficult, time consuming, and expensive in terms of network access. The first selection returned to the user will list the names that meet the stated criteria and indicate the feature type and province / territory. A second call to the Oracle data base will provide the other data fields for the particular record specified.

In addition, once the user has selected a name record, he/she can call up a small vector map to show the location of the place or feature being queried. Either a map of all Canada, or a map just of the appropriate region, may be selected. A target is superimposed on the simple map outline to indicate the position of the place or feature involved.

Information for users

Background information and explanations, as would be found in the prefatory material of paper copy gazetteers, are also important reference material for the user of the web site gazetteer. In particular, clients accessing the Canadian GeoNames web site, can browse through the following:

- (1) Instructions and information for querying records
 - fields of data included ... explanations and examples
 - character sets ... indicating those names from Native Canadian languages that contain numerical substitutions for characters that are not yet included in international character sets
 - how to search names records that contain abbreviations, numbers, etc.
 - ways to sort names in a data base query
- (2) Some useful information for translators
 - various features in Canada that for particular reasons have officially approved names in both official languages (English and French)
- (3) Information on Canada's national names authority, the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names
 - names and addresses of CPCGN members from the various provincial, territorial and federal government departments
 - guiding principles of geographical naming in Canada
 - background on the development of a national names authority
- (4) Government publications (federal/provincial/territorial) including gazetteers, names dictionaries, etc. ... their prices and availability
- (5) Purchase of digital geographical names data files
 - what is stored in the CGNDB and the prices for various digital files that can be purchased
- (6) "What's New"
 - latest changes in community names, with special reference to amalgamation of cities, towns, etc. in southern Canada and to the change of names to Native Canadian names in northern Canada
 - special announcements on projects
 - statistics on the use of the web site
- (7) Links to other WWW sites that deal with geographical names data, or related information ... allowing users to make direct access to other web sites
- (8) Access to the Schoolnet geographical names module, developed in conjunction with the federal government department of Industry Canada ... querying geographical names locational data and names history / origin in a way that is of interest and challenge to students; and provision of classroom activity structures and suggestions for teachers
- (9) Comments, enquiries, and registration
 - allows users to contact the CPCGN Secretariat and the web site manager by e-mail or using an on-line form for comments over the network

Phase II - formerly approved names

On April 2, 1996 Phase II of our geographical names Internet gazetteer was opened to the world. Formerly official, *Historical*, names with the same attribute fields as the *Current* names, were made available for users to search. Some 31 000 records were added to Phase I entries, and where applicable were cross-referenced to *Current* names. Historical names, in this context, are understood to date back only to the start of the national names

authority in Canada ... i.e. 100 years. At the same time as these additional records were launched, some information display was improved, and listings generated by names queries were changed to a presentation in tabular form.

The inclusion of these formerly approved names is in keeping with the United Nations resolutions dealing with the content of national gazetteers, and making the presentation helpful to the user.

Phase III - undersea feature names and new features

In progress during the summer of 1996, is Phase III. After some development, a small file (4 000 records) of names of undersea features off the coasts of Canada will be searchable. These names are also part of the records of the CPCGN, and have been maintained by the Canadian Hydrographic Service and promulgated through editions of the hard copy *Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names* in 1983 and 1987.

Also coming on-line as part of Phase III, are two other features:

- calculation of point-to-point distances between two places, and
- a listing of places and/or features, lying within a specified radius (e.g. 10 km) of a particular place.

A more detailed regional map with the major features named will also be available to show the general locality of the feature whose name was selected.

Reaching the audience

During the 20 months that the Canadian Geographical Names Data Base has been available as a WWW gazetteer, the number of accesses to the web site has grown enormously. By May 1996, over 2600 accesses per day to the site were recorded, with over 2200 distinct host machines querying the web site each week. During May, the highest number of queries came from Canada and the USA, however, 57 other countries were logged as having accessed the Canadian GeoNames site. Queries of the names on the data base, as opposed to viewing other information (as noted above) about Canada's geographical names, now amount to some 1000 requests per day, and are from over 1000 distinct host machines per week.

It is true that users must have a PC, Mac, or more sophisticated work station, and also have access to a WWW browser, which must support on-line forms. However, the speed at which the WWW technology is expanding, inevitably makes this way of distributing standardized names an increasingly attractive medium, to reach a potentially very large worldwide audience. Individuals can "bookmark" the site and so can return to verify names at their own convenience. The creation of Internet web pages is also becoming simpler as the software becomes more user-friendly, more individuals have the required skills, and the development costs involved decrease.

In addition to individual searches of the Canadian geographical names data through the web, we now have a small, but increasing number of government departments and private companies that would like to use the geographical names web site to call up their own data by place name. From the name, the coordinates will be used to link into other geo-referenced data (for example, Environment Canada's National Pollutant Resource Inventory). Links of this sort, provide users the advantage of reference to a geographical names data base that is constantly being maintained and updated.



Natural Resources Canada
Ressources naturelles Canada

Arviat Trois-Pistoles Eyebrow Mount Manzo Nagano
 Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Pangnirtung Lac la Martre
 Old Crow Lac Seul Reversing Falls Herring Head Tickle
 Port Moody Wilno Montréal Juan de Fuca Strait
 Gimli Sept-Îles Cape York Inadenthal Nootka Sound
 Yellowknife West Pass Tuktoyaktuk
 Val-d'Or Halifax Lunenburg
 Weepusnet Qu'Appelle
 Willow Birch Grand-Sault
 Papineauville Agawa Canyon Ponoka Creek
 Coquitlam Red Bay Heart Island Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes
 Thousand Islands Van Anda Gibsons Mont-Tremblant
 Barkerville Grief Point Old Chelsea Whistler Hull
 Kennebecasis Park Grand-Mère Beaconfield Maniwaki



Canada's official geographical names
Web site [English]

(NOTE: select a browser font which correctly supports a French character set)

Le site du Web
des noms géographiques officiels du Canada [Français]

(NOTE : utilisez une police de caractère d'un fureteur qui vous donne les caractères accentués appropriés)

We welcome your comments, enquiries or registration
 Nous invitons vos commentaires, vos questions ou votre inscription

HOME PAGE

NATIONAL ATLAS INFORMATION SERVICE
 SERVICE D'INFORMATION DE L'ATLAS NATIONAL

PAGE INITIALE



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Geographical Names / Les noms géographiques
 geonames@NRCan.gc.ca



Natural Resources Canada
Ressources naturelles Canada



Welcome to Canada's geographical names!

Is it Sidney or Sydney? Where is Tsiigehtchic? Which is further west ... Edmonton or Calgary? Is Chatham in New Brunswick or Ontario?

To answer these and other questions consult this interactive and authoritative source of over 500,000 geographical names in Canada, maintained by the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (CPCGN). By combining this server and the Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB), we are providing a simple reference service which includes basic locational information and maps that are easy to download. It's a popular source of information for researchers, genealogists, cartographers and students.

Just for fun, type in your family name in one of the "query" forms to search for places or features similarly named.

Querying Canadian geographical names

Instructions

Current names

Historical names - formerly approved names of historical interest

(Note: ensure your "browser" supports on-line forms before attempting queries)

More information about Canada's geographical names:

- Digital data available from the Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB)
- About the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (CPCGN)
- Some geographical names publications (including gazetteers)
- We welcome your comments, enquiries, or registration to indicate further interest
- What's New?
 - Origins of Geographical Names (Schoolnet)
- Some useful information for translators
- Other Interesting Web Sites



Natural Resources
Canada

Ressources naturelles
Canada



Bienvenue aux noms géographiques du Canada!

Est-ce Sidney ou Sydney? Où se situe Tsiigehtchic? Quel est le lieu situé le plus à l'ouest... Edmonton ou Calgary? Chatham se trouve au Nouveau-Brunswick ou en Ontario?


Les réponses à ces questions et à bien d'autres vous sont ici données dans cette source autorisée et interactive, maintenue par le Comité permanent canadien des noms géographiques (CPCNG), et contenant plus de 500 000 noms géographiques du Canada. En combinant ce serveur et la Base de données toponymiques du Canada (BDTC), nous permettons ainsi l'accès à un service de référence simplifié incluant des données de localisation de base et des cartes qui sont faciles à télécharger. C'est donc un outil populaire pour les chercheurs, les généalogistes, les cartographes et les étudiants.

Pour vous amuser, entrez votre nom de famille dans l'écran de «toponymes à jour» et cherchez s'il y a des noms de lieux ou d'entités similaires à votre nom.

Recherche de noms géographiques au Canada

● [Instructions](#)

● [Toponymes à jour](#)

● [Toponymes historiques](#)  (toponymes qui ne sont plus approuvés)

(Note : veuillez vous assurer que votre «fureteur» accepte les écrans en ligne avant toute interrogation)

Autres renseignements sur les noms géographiques du Canada :

- [Les données numériques](#) disponibles à partir de la Base de données toponymiques du Canada (BDTC)
 - Au sujet du [Comité permanent canadien des noms géographiques \(CPCNG\)](#)
 - [Quelques publications sur les noms géographiques](#) (incluant les répertoires géographiques)
 - Nous invitons [vos commentaires, vos questions ou votre inscription](#) indiquant un intérêt plus marqué.
 - [Quoi de neuf?](#)
 - [Origine des toponymes \(le Réseau scolaire\)](#)
 - [Autres sites du Web](#)
-



Querying Canadian Geographical Names
(from the records of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names)

Current Names

Beamsville

Province/Territory: **Ontario**

Feature type: **Unincorporated place**

Location: **Lincoln**

Latitude: **43 10 00 N**

Longitude: **79 29 00 W**

NTS Map: **030M03**

CGNDB Unique Identifier: **FEGRM**

[National scale map](#)

[Regional scale map](#)

[Larger scale map](#) Shows some places in the general vicinity of **Beamsville, Ontario**

(*WARNING: allow at least 30 seconds for map to generate)

[Distance](#) Choose second place name to calculate point-to-point distance from **Beamsville, Ontario**

[Radius](#) Get list of places within a given radius of **Beamsville, Ontario**

(*WARNING: some searches may take several minutes!)

- [Post another Current Names query](#)
 - [Try Historical Names instead](#)
-