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**Issues of publicity for the Group of Experts and funding of Group projects (Working Group on
Publicity and Funding)**

Celebrating Geographical Names Day in Canada

Submitted by Canada**

Summary

The first annual Geographical Names Day was celebrated in Canada on 13 November 2018. The Geographical Names Board of Canada, the national coordinating body for place names, unanimously adopted a resolution declaring Geographical Names Day to aid in raising awareness among governments and the public of authoritative geographical names and official naming processes. Geographical Names Day was communicated extensively through social media channels, including through a video from the Minister of Natural Resources of Canada, and was celebrated through official events. Geographical Names Day will be celebrated annually in Canada each November during Geography Awareness Week to promote official names and to publicize the activities of the Board.

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Background

The Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC) is the national coordinating body responsible for standards and policies for geographical naming in Canada. The Board is established under a federal Order in Council, and is composed of members from federal, provincial and territorial government departments and agencies, each with specific responsibilities for their respective jurisdictions and mandates. Working together as a multi-jurisdictional national body, GNBC members ensure that geographical names are consistently managed in Canada.

A key strategic objective of the GNBC is to communicate the benefits of authoritative geographical names, the naming process, and the necessity for rigorous naming standards. The desired outcome of this effort is for Canadians to recognize and appreciate the cultural, historical and practical value of geographical names as a part of their daily lives and shared cultural heritage, along with the key role played by the GNBC to coordinate authoritative geographical naming activities in Canada.

The GNBC is supported by a Secretariat provided by Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), a department of the Government of Canada. NRCan provides infrastructure and support for the Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB), the national database of authoritative geographical names and a key component of Canada's Spatial Data Infrastructure.

Origins of Geographical Names Day

The idea and concept for a 'Geographical Names Day' was most recently proposed in 2014 at the 28th Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names by Canada through the Commission de toponymie du Québec (Working Paper No. 35/13). The goal of such a day is to raise public and government awareness on the importance of geographical names, not only as an authoritative locational reference, but also as valuable element of cultural heritage. Having a day each year dedicated to geographical names would allow communication and increased awareness of the role of Canada's geographical naming authorities in the standardization, preservation, and promotion of place names.

Developing a National Resolution

During its Annual General Meeting in the fall of 2017, the GNBC discussed various ways and techniques to raise awareness of geographical names and the role of the Board. Declaring a special day dedicated to celebrating geographical names was considered the most straightforward approach. There was consensus among the federal, provincial and territorial members of the GNBC to proceed with identifying and establishing the special day, and a sub-committee of the Board, the Awareness Working Group, took on the task of preparing a formal resolution declaring Geographical Names Day in Canada.

The day chosen by the GNBC for Geographical Names Day falls during Geography Awareness Week, a well-established annual celebration of the significance of geography in everyday life. Geography Awareness Week was originally established in 1987 in the United States to raise awareness of geography and geographic education, and is observed every year during the third week of November by students, educators, schools, businesses, non-profit organizations and

government agencies. Geographic Information System (GIS) Day is also widely celebrated during Geography Awareness Week. In Canada, Geography Awareness Week has been celebrated in schools, universities and at government institutions for many years, often with an emphasis on GIS Day and related geospatial technologies. Prior to 2018, there was no specific day in Canada that was dedicated to geographical naming.

The GNBC's Awareness Working Group developed the following Resolution:

Whereas the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC) is Canada's national coordinating body that works through the jurisdictions of its federal, provincial and territorial members to preserve, promote and develop Canada's toponymic heritage; and

Recognizing the importance of raising awareness of authoritative geographical names and official naming processes;

Be it resolved that the GNBC declares Tuesday of Geography Awareness Week, the third week of November each year, as Geographical Names Day;

On this Day, the GNBC encourages Canada's municipal, provincial, territorial and federal government departments, agencies and programs, as well as academic institutions, the broad geospatial community, and Canadian citizens, to hold activities promoting the importance of place names as landmarks and elements of heritage and culture.

The resolution was unanimously adopted by GNBC members in January 2018 through an e-mail vote.

Celebrating Geographical Names Day 2018

The inaugural Geographical Names Day in Canada was celebrated on November 13, 2018. Canada's Minister of Natural Resources announced the day through a video shared through social media, stating that Geographical Names Day will be observed annually "to educate Canadians on the importance of the names of different places and how they reflect the history, culture and language of a location."

As part of a week-long Geography Awareness Week program of activities, a special half-day event was held at Natural Resources Canada in Ottawa, hosted by Canada's national geospatial agency, the Canada Centre for Mapping and Earth Observation. The well-attended event included speeches by senior officials of the department outlining the importance of authoritative geographical names and the role of the GNBC, and a special presentation on Indigenous toponymy in Canada from the GNBC Secretariat. Federal members of the GNBC, including Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Translation Bureau and the Department of National Defence contributed demonstrations of innovative technologies related to geographical names.

Conclusion

Canada's inaugural Geographical Names Day was considered to be a success, as measured by broad communication nationally via multiple social media channels, and active participation by senior government officials. As with most new communication initiatives, timing is essential. Associating Geographical Names Day with similar well-established geospatial communication activities and events such as Geography Awareness Week helps with sharing common themes and broadens the uptake.

In future years, participation by provincial and territorial members of the GNBC at events in their offices across the country is envisioned, potentially linked through videoconferencing or webcasting, as well as greater outreach and participation by academic and educational institutions such as geography and geomatics departments at universities.