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National and international standardization of geographical names: Names collection, office treatment, national authorities, features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation

Commemorative Naming in Canada

Submitted by Canada**

Summary:

Commemorative geographical names provide a visible and enduring way to remember the stories associated with participation in wars and battles and to recognize the personal sacrifice and heroism of armed forces personnel and civilians involved in conflicts. Over several decades, the federal, provincial and territorial naming authorities of the Geographical Names Board of Canada have officially adopted thousands of commemorative names for places and features throughout the country, such as towns, lakes, rivers, mountains, islands and parks.

In November 2018, the Geographical Names Board of Canada released Canada's Commemorative Map, an interactive, online presentation of text, images and videos that highlights official geographical names of locations named to honour war casualties, significant battles, military units and ships. Clickable points on the map display details on the person, thing or event that the location is named to commemorate, along with a photo and links to other authoritative information. Additional commemorative geographical names will be added in future releases of this evergreen interactive map.

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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.

Commemorative Geographical Names

Commemorative naming refers to the practice of naming natural or cultural features after persons or events, as a way to honour the person or event in question. Names of places may commemorate the names of settlers or explorers of an area, well-known personalities, political leaders, royalty, etc. The present paper deals specifically with geographical names that honour and commemorate casualties of wars and conflicts.

At the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in 2002, Canada, through a document prepared by the Commission de toponymie du Québec, submitted a proposal for a resolution addressing commemorative names. This was passed as resolution VIII/2, *Commemorative naming practices for geographical features*.

In 2007, the GNBC adopted national Commemorative Naming Guidelines for use by the federal, provincial and territorial naming authorities in Canada, who continue the long-established practice of naming features to commemorate Canadian war casualties. These guidelines provide guiding principles and procedures to encourage the standardization of existing policies associated with commemorative naming throughout Canada.

It has long been a practice in Canada to name geographical features in honour of the men and women of the Canadian military who have died in service of their country. Official geographical names provide a visible and enduring way to remember the stories associated with participation in conflicts and battles, and as a way to recognize personal sacrifice and heroism

of armed forces personnel and civilians involved in these conflicts. These commemorative geographical names help us remember war casualties, soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen, military leaders, and civilians recognized or decorated for outstanding acts of bravery and sacrifice in battle.

As an example, the Province of Saskatchewan maintains a GeoMemorial Commemorative Naming Program to honour the sacrifice of citizens of the Province by naming natural features in their memory. Nearly 4,000 features have been named under the program, including Canadian Armed Forces personnel, police officers and emergency responders, and other persons of prominence. Similarly, the Province of Manitoba has more than 4,200 lakes, islands, bays and other geographical features named after fallen soldiers who enlisted in Manitoba, serving from the Second World War to the present day. This program is being extended to include those who served in the First World War.

Canada's Commemorative Map

In November 2018, the GNBC released an interactive online map to memorialize Canada's participation in armed conflicts and commemorate Canadians who served at home and abroad. The map displays a selection of commemorative geographical names using geospatial technologies that combine and present data and information from many different sources, and that connect younger generations with Canada's past in a new, interactive and online format that resonates with them. Using a map as an interface allows information to be depicted visually, through a simple clickable interface, and combined with a written narrative, images and videos.

The commemorative map project was initiated in 2017 as a collaborative project between Natural Resources Canada and the federal, provincial and territorial naming authorities of the GNBC to mark the 150th anniversary of Canada's confederation, and the 120th anniversary of Canada's national coordinating body for place names. The project was conceived and coordinated by the GNBC's Awareness Working Group, a sub-committee of the Board that focusses on initiatives to raise awareness of the importance of geographical names and the role of the national names board.

The working group developed the following key messages to guide development of the project:

- Many places throughout Canada are named to commemorate Canada's participation in armed conflicts;
- Commemorative place names have been used by generations of Canadians as a way to recognize Canada's participation in conflicts and to honour the sacrifice of service personnel and other people involved in these conflicts;
- Place names provide a visible and enduring way to remember the stories associated with Canada's participation in conflicts and battles, and as a way to recognize personal sacrifice and heroism of armed forces personnel and civilians involved in these conflicts;

- The GNBC is committed to commemorating, remembering, understanding, and promoting Canada's participation in armed conflicts and the sacrifice of the men and women involved through official place names.

Data Collection and Standardization

Names from all of Canada's provinces and territories, as well as from Parks Canada, the federal administrator of national parks and historic sites, were submitted for the project. In total, over 450 place names were selected by the naming authorities as a representative sample of the thousands of commemorative names in Canada. The names were selected to represent the range of conflicts that Canada has participated in over time, and to cover the breadth of Canada across the map. The names highlight a selection of geographical features and places named after Canadian war casualties, military units and naval vessels that contributed in conflicts that Canada has participated in. The selection comprises official names of geographical features such as lakes, rivers, mountains, islands, parks, towns and other locations that were named to honour and commemorate Canada's war efforts from 1867 to the present.

The GNBC Secretariat refined, standardized and amalgamated the data, and collected web links for images and videos from other authoritative sources of information, such as Veterans Affairs Canada, Library and Archives Canada, the Department of National Defence, and the Canadian War Museum.

Map Development

The interactive map was prepared by Natural Resources Canada using the Federal Geospatial Platform collaborative mapping environment. The commemorative place names data were organized, coded and layered according to the historical period and the conflict each name is associated with:

- Confederation to 1914, including the North-West Rebellion and South African War;
- First World War;
- Second World War;
- Korean War;
- Afghanistan War.

The map includes a pop-up box for each geographical name that provides details of the person or event that the place is named to commemorate, the conflict associated with the name, and the military unit in which the individual served where known. Images are provided where available, along with links to other authoritative web sites, such as the Canadian Virtual War Memorial maintained by Veterans Affairs Canada. A written narrative is included alongside the map that describes the purpose of the project, the importance of commemorative geographical names, and the role of the GNBC.

Geographical Names Board of Canada

Canada's Commemorative Map

Remembering with Geographical Names

Geographical names provide a visible and enduring way to remember the stories associated with Canada's participation in conflicts and battles, and as a way to recognize personal sacrifice and heroism of armed forces personnel and civilians involved in these conflicts.

This map is important in two broad yet connected ways. First, place names are ubiquitous, they hide in plain sight. They surround us, but we rarely take a second look at their meaning or significance. Second, most of the names on this map are war dead from the First and Second World Wars. There is no one alive from the Great War, and those who fought in World War II are in their mid-nineties. We are losing our living links to the past; the task of commemoration and remembrance is being put on the shoulders of the living: us. This project is a reminder of our role.

Combining geographical names with remembrance is a reflection of the way in which Canadians honour our war dead. Our geography, lands and waters are part of the Canadian psyche. Naming these places after heroes, battles, military units and warships honours the fallen in respectful and enduring remembrance, and links their actions to the land and country for which they fought.

Launch and Promotion

Canada's Commemorative Map was launched on Aboriginal Veterans Day, November 8, 2018, by the Minister of Natural Resources at an event at the Canadian War Museum. The official launch was followed by the release of a video and an extensive social media campaign promoting the map during Remembrance Day (November 11) and Geography Awareness Week (November 12-16), resulting in a significant number of visitors viewing the map.

The commemorative map is evergreen, and will be maintained on an on-going basis. Every year, additional names will be added to the map from historical records of the GNBC. Canadians are also invited to make proposals for new commemorative names to be adopted by naming authorities, subject to naming guidelines and procedures.

Conclusion

Canada's Commemorative Map has been viewed by thousands of Canadians since launch, and was subsequently updated in early 2019 based on public feedback. The project to develop the map is considered to be a successful and valuable endeavour; through the project, awareness of the role of the GNBC has been heightened at various levels of government, and widely recognized by members of the public who appreciate the work of the Board in commemorating Canadians.

The GNBC plans to add a follow-up selection of names and re-release *Canada's Commemorative Map* in November 2019. The approach of developing an informative,

interactive thematic map will be used again to deliver similar products that highlight official geographical names focussed on specific themes.

Many places throughout Canada are named to remember the actions of Canadians in the defence of freedom and democracy. *Canada's Commemorative Map* shows how we remember them, eternally tying them to the towns, lakes, rivers, mountains, islands and parks for which they made the ultimate sacrifice. The map may be viewed at: <https://canada.ca/commemorative-map/>