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# Geographical Names Manual

Including the Principles of Geographical Names



Geographical Names Manual: Understanding the Principles of Geographical Naming in Alberta

Published by Alberta Culture and Status of Women

Date of publication: June 2021

ISBN 978-1-4601-5109-9

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Note: Originally published June 2021. Re-issued February 2022 with minor update: dual naming now multiple naming.

Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>General Information .....</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| Introduction.....   | 5         |
| A History of Geographical Naming .....  | 7         |
| Legislative Authority.....  | 9         |
| <b>Principles of Geographical Names .....</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| Jurisdiction of the Ministry.....   | 10        |
| Principles to Approve Names .....   | 11        |
| Standardization and Duplication.....  | 13        |
| Multiple Naming.....  | 14        |
| Orthography .....   | 14        |
| Indigenous Naming.....  | 15        |
| Format and Character of Names .....   | 15        |
| <b>Standards of Research .....</b>  | <b>16</b> |
| Preliminary Research Procedures.....  | 16        |
| Field Research Procedures.....  | 17        |
| Library and Archival Research .....   | 19        |
| STEP 4 – Library and Archival Research.....   | 19        |
| Special Research Considerations .....   | 20        |
| <b>Naming Procedures .....</b>  | <b>21</b> |
| Geographical Naming Proposals.....  | 21        |
| Process .....   | 21        |
| Alberta Geographical Names Database and Preparation of the Data Report.....                         | 21        |
| Submission to the Minister and Notification of Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta ..... | 22        |
| Notification of Approval .....  | 23        |
| Names in Areas of Provincial Jurisdiction .....   | 23        |
| Names in Areas of Federal Jurisdiction (excluding First Nation Reserves) .....                      | 24        |
| Features Within First Nation Reserves .....   | 25        |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Features Partially Within First Nation Reserves..... | 25 |
| A Note on Métis Settlements.....                     | 25 |
| Features That Cross the Provincial Boundary.....     | 26 |

# General Information

The application of names to geographical features is a public trust, carried out for the benefit of present and future generations.

## Introduction

### How are geographical features named?

To give a geographical feature an official name or to rescind or alter an existing official name requires a decision by the Minister. Proposals to adopt new official names or to change existing official names are received and evaluated by the Alberta Geographical Names Program. This program may conduct additional research on the proposed name and the feature. All naming proposals are also evaluated for compliance with the Principles of Geographical Names (see pages 10 to 15) and are referred to municipalities and Indigenous communities for comments. Some form of wider public consultation may also be carried out to ensure the acceptance of the proposed name by local populations and the general public. Once the evaluation phase is complete, the naming proposal is referred to the Minister for a decision.

### Why are place names important?

Geographical names (or toponyms) play an important role in our society. They serve a practical purpose of labeling our surroundings and aiding navigation; and they allow us to orient ourselves in the landscape by providing recognizable points of reference. Toponyms also play an important cultural role by identifying our societal values and by serving as a medium to commemorate people and events.

### Does every place or feature already have a name?

Not all geographical features have names, nor is it necessary for every feature to be named. In Canada, official names are those that are adopted by a regulatory government body. These official names appear on maps and in most publications produced by government agencies and departments.

Many features have unofficial, local or historical names. Local names are those names used by the local population or by people associated with the feature to identify it. Historic names are known to have been used in the past, but appear to be no longer in use. Local and historic names

do not typically appear on official government maps; if they are used on these maps they are usually enclosed in quotation marks to indicate their unofficial status.

Many geographical features may also have Indigenous names that have not been documented and may not be used or known outside of Indigenous communities. As more work is done to engage with Indigenous communities on place names, more of their traditional names may become known to the wider public and enter everyday use.

## **Does every geographical feature or place need a name?**

It is not essential for all features in the landscape to have official names. The naming of geographical features has been an important cultural expression since time immemorial. Our ancestors have named their surroundings and we continue to do so. It is important to recognize that future generations deserve the opportunity to name the landscape as well.

## **Why are naming standards necessary?**

Imagine trying to find your way through an unfamiliar area; an area in which everyone has their own name for landmarks and features. Navigation through such a place would be difficult, time-consuming and confusing. Naming standards, recognized toponyms (or place names) and the use of official names on maps and other navigational aids is essential to prevent this kind of confusion. The accuracy of maps depends on consistent naming, spelling and locational practises. Each name must be researched and recorded as precisely as possible and the information used must be of the highest degree of clarity in order to ensure exact recording of names.

## **How long does it take to consider a geographical naming proposal?**

The Alberta Geographical Names Program makes every effort to complete the evaluation of naming proposals in an efficient manner. The goal is to have geographical naming application evaluated and referred to the Minister within six to nine months. However, due to the research required and the nature of Indigenous engagement and public consultation that may be required, the timeline can extend beyond that period.

# A History of Geographical Naming

## Geographical Naming in Canada

Prior to 1897, there was no regulatory body in Canada overseeing the naming of geographical features. However, names were being given to geographical features across North America by explorers, surveyors and settlers, resulting in an often confusing and inconsistent collection of names. The need for a body to regulate and standardize geographical naming practices was apparent.

In December 1897, the Geographic Board of Canada was established, bringing the naming of Canada's geographical features under the authority of the federal government.

Over the years, this national body has undergone a number of name changes:

| Time Period     | Name   |
|-----------------|--|
| 1897 to 1948    | Geographic Board of Canada                         |
| 1948 to 1967    | Canadian Board on Geographical Names               |
| 1967 to 2000    | Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names |
| 2000 to present | Geographical Names Board of Canada                 |

Initially, authority for making naming decisions lay entirely with the federal government. However, over the ensuing decades jurisdiction over geographical names began to slowly transfer to the provinces and territories.

In 1899, provisions were made to permit each of the provinces and the North West Territories to appoint a member to the federal Board. Ultimate authority continued to rest with the Board, but the role of provincial representatives gradually expanded.

By the 1970s, the authority over most naming decisions was transferred to the provinces, but responsibility for naming decisions on federally controlled lands – National Parks, reserve lands, military bases – continued to reside with the federal government.

Starting in 1979, authority over names on these federally-administered lands became a shared responsibility between the province and the appropriate federal department or agency, notably Parks Canada, Department of National Defence and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

Today, the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC) serves as a coordinating body that aids provincial and territorial programs by:

- Coordinating questions of geographical nomenclature policy affecting Canada;
- Advising on research and investigation into the origin and use of geographical names;
- Promoting the use of official names by non-governmental organizations by sharing information and publishing decisions and the results of research;
- Representing Canada's interests at the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and on other international naming councils and at conferences.

The Geographical Names Board of Canada is made up of representatives of all provinces and territories and federal government departments and agencies that have an interest in place names.

## Geographical Naming in Alberta

In 1946, the Government of Alberta created the Geographic Board of Alberta through an Order-in-Council. This body was created to enhance Alberta's position regarding the naming of geographical features within the province. The Geographic Board of Alberta was mandated to examine all questions of geographical naming in the province and to work in conjunction with the Geographic Board of Canada.

In 1949, the Geographic Board of Alberta was formalized in legislation through the enactment of the *Geographical Names Act*. The Geographic Board of Alberta was authorized to make decisions regarding geographical names in the province and was also responsible for: conducting research; consulting and advising government departments, municipalities and other interested parties; and collaborating with federal naming authorities. The decisions of the Geographic Board of Alberta were forwarded as recommendations to the Canadian Board on Geographical Names.

In 1974, the *Geographical Names Act* was repealed and the Geographic Board of Alberta was disbanded. At that time, geographical names was included under the *Historical Resources Act*, giving the authority for geographical names decisions to the provincial department of culture.

The Alberta Geographical Names Program undertakes research on Alberta's naming heritage and maintains the records related to Alberta's official and unofficial names. Program staff are also responsible for evaluating new naming proposals and for advising the Minister during decision-making deliberations.



## Legislative Authority

Section 18 of the *Historical Resources Act* (RSA 2000) deals with geographical names and is quoted below in full:

### Geographical names

18(1) The name of any place or other geographical feature in Alberta that

(a) was approved after March 31, 1949 and before January 1, 1975 by the Geographic Board of Alberta under The Geographical Names Act, RSA 1970 c159,

(b) was approved or changed after December 31, 1974 by the Historic Sites Board pursuant to this Act,

(c) was approved or changed before March 31, 2020 by the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation pursuant to this Act, or

(d) is approved or changed by the Minister pursuant to subsection (2),

is the authorized name of that place or feature for all purposes.

(2) The Minister may approve a name for, or approve a change of the name for, any place or other geographical feature in Alberta.

(3) When the Minister approves the name or changes the name of any place or other geographical feature under this section, the Minister shall publish in The Alberta Gazette a notice setting out the name approved or the change of name and the location of the place or other geographical feature to which the name applies.

(4) Repealed 2019 c15 s23.

# Principles of Geographical Names

The Principles of Geographic Naming are standards that all proposed geographical names and name changes are evaluated. They help to ensure consistency and reliability and align Alberta with other provincial, national and international naming standards.

## Jurisdiction of the Ministry

### **PRINCIPLE 1(A) – For Geographical Features and Places**

The Minister is responsible for the naming of geographical features and some unincorporated populated places (localities). Names approved by the Minister are official for all municipal, provincial and federal maps, charts, gazetteers and related publications.

### **PRINCIPLE 1(B) – For Ensuring a Complete Inventory of Statutory Names**

The names of territorial divisions and places governed by other provincial or federal statutes, including incorporated municipalities, hamlets, Indian reserves, provincial or federal parks, etc. should be transmitted to the Alberta Geographical Names Program for entry into the Alberta Geographical Names Database. It shall be the responsibility of the Alberta Geographical Names Program to ensure that the inventory is complete and accurate and to communicate new names and name changes to other provincial and federal departments and agencies.

### **PRINCIPLE 1(C) – For Other Cultural Features**

The naming of roads, dams, reservoirs, trails and other cultural-topographical features not governed by other statutory authority may be considered for entry into the official record. The Alberta Geographical Names Program may be asked to participate in or advise on the naming of cultural features, but the decision-making authority lies outside of the Ministry.

### **PRINCIPLE 1(D) – For Ensuring Public Awareness**

The Alberta Geographical Names Program will assist the general public and will advise other governmental bodies at the municipal, provincial and federal level in all matters relating to geographical names and naming in the province.

## Principles to Approve Names

### **PRINCIPLE 2(A) – Local Usage**

When naming a geographical feature, first consideration should be given to names that are well established and in current local use.

### **PRINCIPLE 2(B) – Historical Names**

Where no current locally-used name is known to exist for a feature for which an official name is required, the known historical names should be given priority over newly proposed names.

### **PRINCIPLE 2(C) – Descriptive Naming**

In instances where a name is required for a feature for which neither a current or historical name exists, consideration should be given to the adoption of a name uniquely descriptive of the feature itself (e.g. Long Lake, The Big Rock).

### **PRINCIPLE 2(D) – Commemorative Naming**

Commemorative names may be considered for unnamed geographical features in instances where they do not contravene other Principles of Geographical Names.

- When proposing a commemorative name for a geographical feature, it is the responsibility of the applicant to identify which geographical feature the name is to be applied to and to present evidence that the proposed name satisfies the Principles of Geographical Names.
- All proposed commemorative names will be assessed by the Alberta Geographical Names Program to ensure that they comply with the Principles of Geographical Names.
- Personal names, used for commemorative purposes, are given to geographical features posthumously;
  - A minimum of five years must elapse from the date of death before a commemorative name proposal will be considered;
  - Proposals are not accepted from the family of the deceased;

- The applicant proposing to commemorate an individual through the naming of a geographical feature must demonstrate that the individual's family or next of kin is aware of the proposed commemoration and is in agreement with the proposal.
- A person whose contribution to an area was as a result of his/her employment will not normally be considered for commemoration in this fashion;
- If an event is being commemorated, it must have occurred at least five years in the past;
- The person or event being commemorated must have made an outstanding contribution to the cultural legacy of the Province of Alberta, or to the development of the area, feature or place in question. Evidence must be available to demonstrate that this contribution is recognised and acknowledged by the general public;
- Geographical features will only be named after families where the intention is to honour or commemorate deceased members of the family.
- Geographical features are not named to commemorate victims or mark the location of mishaps, accidents or tragedies, unless it can be demonstrated that the event has had a lasting impact on the cultural legacy of the province;
- Proposed commemorative names must meet with local approval; and
- The applicant must demonstrate that the proposal has been formulated objectively, and the proposed name is acceptable to the public beyond a single person or a special interest group.

**Note:** Provincial, national and international naming standards have evolved over time. Throughout history, commemorative names have been placed on geographical features in a manner that may contravene the current Principles of Geographical Names. These names may still have heritage value, but they do not constitute precedent for naming decisions today.

## **PRINCIPLE 2(E) – Naming After Living Persons**

The naming of a natural geographical feature, unincorporated place, or locality after a living person will not be done.

## **PRINCIPLE 2(F) – Ownership of Land**

Ownership of land does not, in itself, convey authority for the adoption of official geographical names to the owner of the property and does not convey any superior rights or privileges in the consideration of geographical names.

## **PRINCIPLE 2(G) – Buying and Selling of Names**

A geographical name, or the right to name a geographical feature, cannot be bought or sold, raffled or otherwise conferred through contest or auction.

## **PRINCIPLE 2(H) – Commercial Product or Company Names**

Company or commercial product names are not acceptable as geographical names unless there is long-standing usage of the name by the general public. Proposals for new names or changes to existing names that are intended to promote or enhance a commercial venture will not be considered.

## **Standardization and Duplication**

### **PRINCIPLE 3(A) – Name Uniformity**

The spelling of geographical names having a common origin applied or used in names given to features, places and localities occupying the same geographical area, should be the same.

**Note:** The name Wabasca and its derivatives (Wabaska, Wabiskah, Wabaskaw, and Wapiskow) are an example. The official spelling is Wabasca and the names of all post offices, railway stations and airports should, and in this case do, conform to the official spelling.

### **PRINCIPLE 3(B) – Use of Qualifying Terms**

Where a geographical name has become a source of confusion because it has been applied to two or more topographical features of the same sort (e.g. three lakes, two rivers, etc.) in the same geographical area; or, it is used as a single name for a topographical complex feature or place made up of separate parts (e.g. river-tributary system, or chain of interconnected lakes), the Board may recommend adoption of qualifying terms such as upper, lower, big, little, north, south, etc. This introduced term should be appropriate to the feature and should conform to local usage.

**Note:** Big Johnson Lake and Little Johnson Lake are two such names, which, at local urging, were recommended with qualifiers to identify each separate feature independently.

## Multiple Naming

### PRINCIPLE 4 – Circumstances and Acceptability

In instances where a geographical feature is known to have more than one name in relatively equal local usage, or instances where multiple names of perceived equal validity are proposed for a single feature, the Minister may recognize and adopt more than one name as official names for the geographical feature.

**Note:** One such example is **Mount Laurie (Îyâmnathka)**. This mountain was officially named in 1961 in honour of John Lee Laurie, B.A., LL.D. (1900–1959). The mountain had been locally well known, particularly by the Stoney Nakoda, by its traditional name of Îyâmnathka (popularly, but incorrectly pronounced as “Yamnuska”), which translates to, “flat-surfaced rock or mountain.” On December 5, 1984, the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism, on the recommendation of the Historic Sites Board, officially recognized the name in a dual format, with diacritics, in an attempt to capture both the official and traditional names.

## Orthography

### PRINCIPLE 5(A) – Possessive Forms

The apostrophe s (e.g. Jerry the Bird’s Bottom) indicative of the possessive form of words is not typically used in geographical names, unless the use of that form of the name is demonstrated to be in keeping with well-established and current local usage.

### PRINCIPLE 5(B) – Names in Languages Other Than English

The Board may recommend names in languages other than English even if they appear in orthographies not Latin in origin.

**Note:** In this way, the Board is able to recognise the cultural reality of the area as well as provide the best representation of the cultural landscape. A secondary consideration would be to apply the best solution that allows widespread comfortable usage of the name without compromising the cultural reality it represents.

## Indigenous Naming

### **PRINCIPLE 6(A) – Engagement of Indigenous Communities**

In an effort to incorporate and recognize Indigenous concerns, when geographical naming proposals are being evaluated, Indigenous communities (First Nations and Métis) will be contacted and given opportunity to provide comment on the proposal.

The Alberta Geographical Names Program endeavours to notify Indigenous communities that are in proximity to the feature and that are known to have cultural or historic connections to the feature. Notification may be served to band administration, council and/or chiefs.

### **PRINCIPLE 6(B) – Form and Character of Indigenous Names**

In areas of the province where Indigenous names are well established and in current local use, special consideration shall be given to their adoption as official names. The spellings of these names should conform to the linguistic rules of the concerned language group and shall conform to and be ratified by the recognised linguistic experts recognised by the particular language group.

## Format and Character of Names

### **PRINCIPLE 7(A) – Name Integrity**

The unique or local character of an established geographical name shall be respected. Any name alteration, translation, deletion or symbolisation not approved or adopted locally is discouraged and opposed in principle.

**Note:** All official names approved by the Board should be used in their correct and officially recognised form. If there is contention, however, the name should be investigated and, if local usage warrants, the locally acceptable form of the name should be officially adopted.

### **PRINCIPLE 7(B) – Unacceptable Names**

#### ***Derogatory, Obscene and Blasphemous Names***

Proposed names for geographical features that are demonstrated to be of a derogatory, obscene, or blasphemous nature, will not be considered for use as official names. Similarly, names that represent or are associated with prejudicial or demeaning portrayals of communities or groups and/or promote hatred racism and divisiveness will not be considered.

Geographical names that are currently in use as official names that are shown to be of a similar, unacceptable nature will be investigated for possible alteration or rescinding.

### **Commercial Names**

Names that are construed as promoting or advertising a company, enterprise or product will not be considered as names for geographical features.

## Standards of Research

### Preliminary Research Procedures

#### **STEP 1 – Receipt of Application and Acknowledgement**

Upon receipt of a request for naming:

- The naming process begins when the Alberta Geographical Names Program receives a [completed Application for Naming a Geographical Feature](#). An acknowledgement is sent to the initiator with an explanation of the procedures leading to a decision.
- It is strongly recommended that all applicants contact the Alberta Geographical Names Program prior to completing the application form.

#### **STEP 2 – Basic Reference Check**

A basic check of the following official records is made to determine whether the proposed name is duplicated and whether it is indeed unnamed:

- **Alberta Geographical Names Database.** This is the most up-to-date cumulative source of geographical names listings in the Province. This database will also show any proposed, accepted or rejected names for the feature.
- **Canadian Geographic Names Database.** It includes all current official names and most rescinded names.
- **Maps.** All available maps of the area in which the feature is located:
  - NTS – Editions of the 1:50,000 and 1:250,000 scale map;
  - Provincial Maps – Provincial Base Map (1:50,000), Provincial Access Series, Forest Cover Series, Road Maps, etc.
  - Historical maps – e.g. early explorers (Palliser, David Thompson, Arrowsmith), homestead area maps, maps accompanying official reports (Geological Survey, Topographical Survey, Boundary Survey, etc.), sectional maps, etc.



- **Secondary Official Listing**
  - Alberta Gazette
  - Municipalities (incorporation dates, etc.)
  - Railway timetables
  - Post Office listings
  - Historical directories

## Field Research Procedures

### STEP 1 – Government Sources

Field research and interviews with local residents, members of historic and museum societies and municipal, provincial and federal government staff can help in identifying historical names for geographical features and support for any proposed names.

Examples of the government staff and offices that may have relevant information include:

| Local Governments                     | Provincial Government Departments       | Federal Government Departments          |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Planning departments                  | Environment                             | Canada Post                             |
| Naming advisory committees            | Agriculture, Food and Rural Development | Indian Affairs and Northern Development |
| District representatives              | Municipal Affairs                       | Natural Resources Canada                |
| Reeves, mayors and municipal councils | Infrastructure                          |   |
| Municipal secretaries                 |   |   |

These government representatives may also be able to indicate knowledgeable individuals representing a variety of age and occupational groups while also giving official opinion on the name.

### STEP 2 – Field Interviews

The number of people interviewed for each geographical name will vary depending on the type and extent of the feature being researched.

Interviewing a number of individuals who represent a wide spectrum of local and interest groups will give a fair indication of the extent of usage of any particular geographical name. Ideally the interview sample should include unrelated individuals from various age groups.

Occupational groups should likewise be representative and may include, for example, farmers, ranchers, outfitters, oil field and forestry workers, guides and trappers, mountaineering and hiking groups, along with others who, through their work or leisure, may be familiar with geographical features in a given area.

The best respondents are those who have lived or currently live in close proximity to the actual feature.

## **Brief Guide to Conducting Field Interviews**

Rarely are satisfactory results produced by simply approaching someone, whether they have knowledge about the area or not, and asking a general question about unofficial geographical names. It is best to point out the feature on a map; and if no map is available, you could describe the feature or actually go out to the physical location.

It is also far more productive to ask specific questions about specific features. Once the local names for features have been determined, you should ask the following questions:

- What is the origin of the name?
- Who named the feature?
- When was the feature named?
- What is the correct spelling of the name?
- What is the exact geographical extent of this feature?
- How well known locally is the name?
- Are you aware of any other names for this feature?
- Do you know of or have any maps or books that show this name?
- Are there any other local individuals who may have more information concerning this name?

All informants should be made aware that they may be quoted in submissions to the Minister and that their name and statement will be documented in the AGND. The field researcher should at the outset identify himself/herself and his/her employer to the interviewee.

## **Field Research of Indigenous Names**

Prior to working within Indigenous communities the appropriate consultation offices must be contacted. Contacts for community consultation offices can be found on the [Indigenous Relations](#)

[website](#). The consultation staff of each community’s administration facilitate meetings with Elders and other community members. Proper protocol for meeting with Elders must be followed.

For reference, check out the Secretariat of the GNBC has compiled the [Guide to the Field Collection of Native Geographical Names](#).

## Library and Archival Research

### STEP 4 – Library and Archival Research

For information regarding origins, initial usage application and historical background, many archival sources are consulted. These include documents such as:

| Government Records                                   | Non-Government Records   |   |
|--|--|---|
| Sessional papers                                     | Documents, diaries and correspondence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early explorers, travelers and adventurers</li> <li>• Fur traders</li> <li>• Missionaries</li> <li>• Surveyors</li> <li>• Railroaders</li> <li>• Pioneers</li> <li>• Mountaineers, outfitters and guides</li> </ul> | Local histories   |
| Survey reports                                       |  | Rural directories and early gazetteers                  |
| Orders-in-Council                                    |  | Early newspapers and other community-based publications |
| Departmental records                                 |  |   |
| Homestead and Land Grant records                     |  |   |
| Royal Canadian and North West Mounted Police reports | Community records (churches, cemeteries, etc.)   |   |
| Historical land titles                               | Scientific records and reports   |   |
| Geological Survey of Canada and Alberta reports      | Biographies and early biographical dictionaries  |   |
| Dominion Land Survey reports                         | University theses  |   |
| Military records                                     | Club records (e.g. Alpine Club of Canada)  |   |

## Special Research Considerations

The following special situations require additional research in order to provide sufficient data:

- **Duplicate Names:** Having similarly named geographical features in close proximity to each other is problematic. It can result in confusion in way-marking and direction finding and could delay or confuse search and rescue operations. When it is discovered that a name under consideration for approval is duplicated, officially or unofficially, within the general area of a feature, a decision depends in part upon the degree to which the other name is known locally. Local informants, particularly search and rescue and emergency responders should be contacted to determine whether or not they are aware of the other feature of the same name, and whether they think confusion would result from the approval of the duplicate name.
- **Casualty and Commemorative Names:** When considering the adoption of a name for commemorative purposes, reasonable efforts should be made to ensure that the family or next-of-kin of the person being commemorated are notified and that they are supportive of the commemorative naming proposal. Because of the sensitive nature of this type of name change, research by the field workers should be conducted with the utmost care.
- **Railway point naming:** When any railway company proposes a name for a railway point, station or siding, local opinion about the proposal will be sought only if the facility is intended for use by the general public. If the facility is not meant for public use or identification, and does not already have a local name, the research will be limited to a check for name duplication within the province.
- **Conflicting Alternatives:** There are no established standards or procedures for handling situations where there are more than one proposed name for a feature or where local opinion is divided in favour of two or more names for the same feature. Possible ways of resolving these situation may include:
  - Extensive polling by telephone, mail or locally sponsored petition campaigns; or through the local newspaper, or other local media;
  - Polling conducted by the local or municipal government which would then provide the results to the Alberta Geographical Names Program.

According to the “Principles of Geographical Naming in Alberta,” multiple names are acceptable in certain situations.

# Naming Procedures

## Geographical Naming Proposals

Most new names are derived from the general public. It has been the practice of the Government of Alberta since the 1970s to be reactive, rather than proactive regarding geographical names. The Government of Alberta believes that as geographical names belong to all Albertans it should be left up to individual Albertans to propose new names or changes to existing names rather than to impose these names from above.

The consideration of new names may require considerable time, particularly due to the investigation and research required. There are two types of research that are conducted for every name submission. The first is documentary research to gather information from both published and archival documents. The second is field research. Determining local usage for a geographical name is most easily done through interviewing local residents, former local residents, and others expert in the immediate area of the feature being researched. In cases where a new name is required, established local names are given first consideration, followed by any known historic names.

The publication of unauthorized names in government produced reports and maps does not necessarily result in official recognition. When unofficial names are used in government documents it is recommended that they be enclosed in quotation marks to distinguish them from officially recognized place names.

Third party mapping providers, such as Google, Bing and Apple, frequently use unofficial place names on their mapping products. This use of unofficial names does not grant legitimacy to those names.

## Process

### **Alberta Geographical Names Database and Preparation of the Data Report**

The information included in the application form and learned during the research and evaluation process are added to the record for the name in the Alberta Geographical Names Database. The Alberta Geographical Names Program aims to have all of the following fields completed:

- Name of feature and feature type;
- NTS 1:50,000 map sheet number and name;
- Description of feature:
  - Headwaters, mouth, direction of flow, approximate length for watercourses

- Altitude for hills, mountains, passes, etc.
  - Area of lakes, flats, plains, meadows, wetlands, etc.
- Location of feature:
  - Latitude and longitude, Alberta Township System, UTM reference (if possible), etc.
- Written description of the location and distance of the feature in reference to nearby major features;
- Origin summary explaining the genesis of the name;
- Details of field interviews, primary source and secondary source research, with direct quotations where appropriate;
- Quotations from all written sources, including correspondence;
- Photographs of the feature (if possible).

### **Submission to the Minister and Notification of Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

Under the provisions of the *Historical Resources Act* (RSA 2000), section 18(2), decisions on geographical names are made by the Minister.

When research on a proposed name has been completed and the data report has been prepared, the information is summarized and presented to the Minister for consideration.

Before making a decision, the Minister may notify the Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the area in which the feature is located. The Geographical Names Program prepares an informational package about the feature and name that can be sent to the Member of the Legislative Assembly.

### **Decision Sheets.**

The Alberta Geographical Names Program will prepare a Decision Sheet for the Minister's signature. This document must indicate:

- The type of decision (Approval, Rejection, Change of Form, Change of Location, etc.);
- The name of the feature;
- The feature type;
- Locational coordinates (latitude/longitude, ATS, etc.);
- Textual description of the feature and its location;
- A summary of the names origin and/or an explanation for any change to or rescindment of the name;
- The Minister's signature and the date on which the Decision Sheet was signed.

Once the Decision Sheet has been signed by the Minister it becomes the official record of that naming decision. The signed Decision Sheet is returned to the Alberta Geographical Names Program for filing.

The Decision Sheets are the official record of the geographical names decision and must be correct, signed by the proper authorities and retained by the Alberta Geographical Names Program

### **Notification of Approval**

Following the signing of the Decision Sheet by the Minister, other parties must be notified of the decision. The Notification of Approval Process differs based on the region of the province the geographical feature found. There are four distinct categories of regions that affect the Notification of Approval Process. These are:

- Features in areas of the province solely under provincial jurisdiction;
- Features in areas of the province that are under federal jurisdiction (excluding Indian Reserves);
- Features that are located within an Indian Reserve;
- Features that are on or cross a provincial or national boundary.

### **Names in Areas of Provincial Jurisdiction**

Following the signing of the Decision Sheet by the Minister, notifications consisting of copies of the decision sheets and a location map are sent to:

- Other provincial government offices, including provincial mapping agencies;
- All interested parties, including:
  - The originator of the naming request or the applicant
  - All persons listed as informants or supporters on the application form
  - Any persons who had made comments on the name or submitted an opinion or information about the name or feature to staff of the Alberta Geographical Names Program
- Non-governmental mapping or information agencies;
- Secretariat, Geographical Names Board of Canada:
  - Notifying the federal authorities will ensure that the name is included in the Canadian Geographical Names Database and will be included on updated federal government maps

- Alberta Gazette:
  - Section 18(3) of the *Historical Resources Act* requires notice of all newly adopted official names, rescinded official names or alterations to existing official names be published in Alberta Gazette.
- Members of the Legislative Assembly
  - The MLAs representing the constituency in which the feature is located or crosses must be notified once a decision is made official.

### **Names in Areas of Federal Jurisdiction (excluding First Nation Reserves)**

Names and name changes for features located on, or passing through, a part of the province under federal jurisdiction require the approval of both the Province of Alberta and the relevant federal department or agency.

These cases typically involve features located within National Parks and National Historic Sites (Parks Canada) and Canadian Forces Bases and Reserves (Department of National Defence).

For those features in Alberta that are wholly or partially located on federally controlled lands, the Government of Alberta is not the final naming authority and additional steps must be taken before the naming decision is official. Each naming decision on these areas may follow a unique path to resolution and matters such as collaboration on Indigenous and public engagement or if the province or federal authority will take the lead on a name can be negotiated at the time.

When either the Government of Alberta or the federal department or agency makes a decision on a name, the Secretariat of the Geographical Names Board of Canada is informed. The Secretariat produces a Joint Jurisdiction Decision Sheet which will be co-signed by both federal and provincial authorities to make the decision official.

Joint Jurisdiction Decision Sheets, along with the standard Provincial Decision Sheets, are the official record of the geographical names decisions and are retained by the Alberta Geographical Names Program.



## Features Within First Nation Reserves

In 2010, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (now Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada), drafted a procedural document that recognizes the right of local Indigenous governments to make decisions on place names within First Nations Reserves.

The Geographical Names Board of Canada encourages First Nations communities and the provincial naming programs to work collaboratively in researching and evaluating geographical naming proposals. Decisions regarding these names must be endorsed by the provincial authority through its geographical naming procedures and by the First Nations community through a Band Council Resolution (or equivalent). A copy of this resolution should be provided to the Alberta Geographical Names Program as part of the official record of decision.

Once a naming decision has been made and endorsed by the Province and the First Nation, the notification process continues as per normal.

## Features Partially Within First Nation Reserves

Naming proposals for geographical features that cross the boundary of a First Nation Reserve require the full participation and agreement of the affected Indigenous community. The First Nation government, if it is not the originator of the proposal, must be notified of the naming proposal by the applicant. Evidence of correspondence notifying the First Nation of the proposed name must be provided by the applicant before a naming application can be accepted.

Once the government of the First Nation community has been notified and the naming application is received by the Alberta Geographical Names Program, research on the proposed name and geographical feature will be undertaken. The participation of the First Nation community is encouraged and engagement is required.

Both the provincial naming authorities and the local First Nation government must reach an agreement on the naming proposal before it can be adopted. The affected Indigenous community group may provide evidence of their decision on the naming proposal through a Band Council Resolution (or equivalent); a copy of which should be provided to the Alberta Geographical Names Program. Otherwise, the naming process proceeds as per normal.

## A Note on Métis Settlements

Alberta is unique in that there is a legislatively created and recognized land-base for the province's Métis, known as Métis Settlements. While Métis Settlements are in some ways similar to First Nations Reserves, they are created by provincial legislation and, therefore, the geographical names policies and procedures of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs

do not apply. However, Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women and the Alberta Geographical Names Program recognize the rights of the Métis Settlements to have a substantial say in determining the names of geographical features with the Settlements. The Alberta Geographical Names Program endeavours to work closely with the Métis Settlements on the naming of geographical features within and partially within their boundaries and gives considerable weight to the position of Métis Settlement governments on place naming decisions.

## Features That Cross the Provincial Boundary

Some geographical features in Alberta cross a provincial boundary, either into the provinces of Saskatchewan and British Columbia, the Northwest Territories or the State of Montana. The Minister is not the final naming authority for these features and additional steps must be taken before a naming decision is official.

Upon receipt of an application the process continues as per normal. Following the signing of the Decision Sheet by the Minister, copies of the Decision Sheet, an information package and copies of relevant maps and images are submitted to the Secretariat of the Geographical Names Board of Canada.

The Secretariat forwards the information to the appropriate naming authority for the affected jurisdiction. Namely the:

- Saskatchewan Geographic Names Program;
- GeoBC, Geographical Names Office;
- Northwest Territories Cultural Places Program;
- United States Board on Geographical Names (which may consult with the Montana Geographic Names Advisor).

The naming authority of the affected jurisdiction evaluates the proposed name based on its own naming policies and criteria. Once a decision has been rendered, a copy of the required documentation is communicated back to the Secretariat of the Geographical Names Board of Canada, which in turn forwards the decision and information back to the province.

Once the other jurisdiction's decision is received, the naming process continues as normal.

In cases where a naming proposal has been initiated by another jurisdiction which affects a geographical feature within Alberta, the Secretariat of the Geographical Names Board of Canada notifies the Alberta Geographical Names Program of the other jurisdiction's decision. The proposed name is then evaluated according to provincial naming standards and is submitted to Minister for approval. The Minister signs both the standard, provincial Decision Sheet as well as the Joint Jurisdiction Decision Sheet. Copies of both documents are submitted back to the Secretariat of the Geographical Names Board of Canada.