

17 January 2025

English

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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names  
2025 session**

New York, 28 April – 2 May 2025

Item 4(b) of the provisional agenda \*

**Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made  
in the standardization of geographical names****Report of Canada****Summary \*\***

Since the 2023 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC), as Canada's national coordinating body for geographical naming, has made progress toward achieving the goals set out in its 2020-2025 strategic plan. Recognizing that 2025 represents the end of the plan, efforts are now focused on planning for the future. The 127<sup>th</sup> annual general meeting of the GNBC was held in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, in the third quarter of 2024, and strategic planning was one of its aims.

The GNBC's domestic activities during the intersessional period focussed primarily on supporting and promoting Indigenous geographical names, addressing derogatory place names, and continuing to manage and improve Canada's national geographical names database.

The GNBC works to celebrate and raise awareness of Indigenous history and culture related to geographical names wherever possible. In 2023, Natural Resources Canada worked with the Gwich'in Tribal Council to develop *An Indigenous Place Names Handbook*<sup>1</sup> documenting practices to research and officially recognize hundreds of traditional Indigenous names for geographical features. The handbook aims to help other Indigenous communities repatriate their own geographical names and, if they so wish, have them submitted for official adoption by Canada's naming authorities.

The GNBC launched an exhibit showcasing a sample of geographical names rooted in Indigenous languages. The exhibit, *In the Languages of these Lands*, was on display in Ottawa from July to November 2023. A digital exhibit<sup>2</sup> is still available online.

In addition, the GNBC worked with a linguist with expertise in Indigenous languages to consult with Elders, knowledge keepers and other experts, and prepare amendments and updates to the ISO 639-3 standard to better represent the diversity of Indigenous languages in Canada.

The GNBC is undertaking a variety of other activities to improve geographical names management in Canada. An interactive map showcasing changes to geographical names over time is in development. In addition, the GNBC continues to work to remove derogatory names from its databases. Certain offensive terms have been removed and/or changed through the actions of Canada's naming authorities, and the display of some previously official derogatory names has been masked.

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\* GEGN.2/2025/1.

\*\* The full report was prepared by Steve Westley, Nicole Halseth, Canada, Natural Resources Canada. The report will be available under document symbol GEGN.2/2025/97/CRP.97, in the language of submission only, at [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/4th\\_session\\_2025/](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/4th_session_2025/)

<sup>1</sup> [An Indigenous Place Names Handbook: Sharing the Gwich'in Experience in Canada](#)

<sup>2</sup> [In the Languages of These Lands](#)

Internationally, Canada actively participated in UNGEGN and related activities.

Canada's Co-chair attended regular meetings of the United States of America-Canada Division of UNGEGN. Canada also leads an UNGEGN Focus Group on Indigenous Geographical Names and looks forward to working with members on activities planned for 2025.

Canada actively participates in the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management and attended the sessions held in 2023 and 2024.

With the support of the Government of Canada, the International Cartographic Association is organizing the 32<sup>nd</sup> International Cartographic Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia from 16 to 22 August 2025, with the theme "Mapping the Future: Innovation, Inclusion and Sustainability". Canada invites all interested Member States to consider attending.