

National Dialogue, Agenda item 4(b): Report of Canada

In the Languages of These Lands

Speaker Note

April 29, 2025

- Thank you, merci Mr. Chairman.
- I am very pleased to say a few words about a recent exhibition, *In the Languages of These Lands*, which showcases locations across Canada with geographical names rooted in Indigenous languages.
- In Canada, close to 30,000 official geographical names originate from over 70 Indigenous languages and dialects. These place names reflect the diversity of Indigenous cultures and languages spoken across Canada.
- Indigenous geographical names are rich in meaning. They impart traditional knowledge of the lands, its geography and natural resources, as well as communicate Indigenous worldviews, stories and teachings.
- While many geographical names in Canada have their origins in Indigenous languages, historically, many names were ignored, corrupted or replaced through the practices and policies of colonial settlers. This threatened the erasure of Indigenous Peoples, their cultures and languages.
- In 2023, Natural Resources Canada and the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC) released a public exhibit, working closely with another federal department, Canadian Heritage.
- *In the Languages of These Lands* was developed to celebrate and recognize the significance, value and diversity of Indigenous place names, and their unique role in shaping Canada's cultural landscape.
- The exhibit has both a physical and digital component. It includes photographs of geographic features across Canada, accompanied by the Indigenous place name and language of origin. The displays are translated into Canada's official languages of English and French and the Indigenous languages of the region where translations are available. Audio files, pronunciation keys, and syllabic representations of the geographic names are also included where available.
- Geographical names in Canada are coordinated across federal, provincial and territorial departments and agencies, each with specific authority and responsibility for their respective jurisdictions. The exhibit was created thanks to the contributions of each naming authority, in partnership with Indigenous communities and language experts.
- The display was released under the International Decade of Indigenous Languages to recognize how geographical names can strengthen language revitalization efforts. It also supports Canada's efforts towards implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- The physical exhibition was installed in a high-traffic location near the parliament buildings in downtown Ottawa, Canada's national capital, from July to November 2023, and was a popular attraction while it was available.
- Allowing the community and visitors to take a moment to reflect on the Indigenous language origins for names that they may see every day was a truly unique and enriching opportunity.
- The virtual exhibition is still available online. We encourage you to explore it by scanning the QR code on screen.

Links: [In the Languages of These Lands - Natural Resources Canada](#) ; [Dans les langues de ces terres - Ressources naturelles Canada](#)