

## *Plenary Session / Conférence plénière*

### *A Mari usque ad Mare: Reflections on Canadian Toponymy* *Réflexions sur la toponymie du Canada*

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#### **Abstract**

This paper, alternating in both official languages, will feature a synoptic view of the geographical nomenclature of Canada. Topics to be covered include a historical overview of the original Aboriginal stratum, the contribution of the various European languages involved in the establishment of geographical nomenclature, naming practices and strategies, as well as current issues in the management and conservation of Canada's toponymic heritage.

A quantitative appraisal of the distribution of official geographical names in provinces and territories and according to feature type will be provided, allowing for a measure of toponymic density and variation throughout the country. The contribution of provincial, territorial and federal name boards and of onomastic research groups in the development and dissemination of name research and scholarship in Canada will also be addressed.

The paper will conclude with considerations on future challenges, ranging from the place of toponymy in the school curriculum to the addition of digital sound files in toponymic data bases.

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#### **Résumé**

En alternance dans les deux langues officielles, cette communication présente un aperçu synoptique de la nomenclature géographique du Canada. Parmi les sujets abordés figurent un survol historique de la couche autochtone d'origine, la contribution des langues européennes à l'établissement de la nomenclature géographique, les pratiques et stratégies de dénomination ainsi que les questions courantes entourant la gestion et la conservation du patrimoine toponymique du Canada.

Une évaluation quantitative de la distribution de la toponymie officielle dans les provinces et territoires et selon le type d'entité géographique sera présentée, ouvrant une perspective sur la densité toponymique et la variation à travers le pays. De même, la contribution des organismes provinciaux, territoriaux et fédéraux de gestion toponymique et des groupes de recherche onomastique au développement et à la dissémination de la recherche et de l'érudition sera étudiée.

Seront examinées en conclusion quelques considérations sur les défis futurs, allant de la place de l'onomastique à l'école à l'addition de fichiers sonores dans les bases de données toponymiques.

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#### **1. Introduction**

There is so much to be said about geographical names in Canada that to attempt to summarize the toponymy of such a vast and diverse country in a single presentation is a daunting if not impossible task for any onomastician. So, rather than imitating the imprudent Icarus and lose my wings, I will more modestly try to illustrate some of the salient features of the place-name nomenclature of Canada, the country which is now proudly hosting the congress of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences for the second time. The occasion was in the city of

Québec in 1987 at Université Laval and now the Council is meeting in the most populated and ethnically diverse city of the country, Toronto, on the campus of York University.

I will touch upon the origins and development of geographical naming, the main linguistic sources that feed geographical nomenclature, as well as the activities of name authorities and onomastic research groups. We shall examine some of the dimensions of place-name distribution as well as directions for further research and activities.

Canada covers nearly 10 million square kilometers. The country's motto, *A mari usque ad mare: From sea to sea*, underscores the vastness of the land. To appreciate these dimensions, consider that many of you have flown across the Atlantic from your homes in Europe to Toronto in just about the same time it would take to fly from St. John's, Newfoundland to Victoria, British Columbia. In terms of land mass, Canada is the second largest country in the world after Russia. A country like Germany fits 28 times within its boundaries, Italy 33 times, and Austria 119 times. This magnitude has to be tempered however by an important consideration. If we look at France, for instance, we note that the country is 18 times smaller than Canada, but Canada's population, at about 33 million, is less than half than that of the French Republic. The population of the state of California alone is greater than that of all of Canada! This considerable disproportion between population and land mass is one of the salient features of the country and is reflected in its toponymy where a concentration of populated place names in the southern portion of the country contrasts with a much larger number of geographical feature names in the north. A careful look at a map shows that the three major cities, Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver, are located less than an hour's drive from the American border and that most inhabited feature names stretch like a fine strip, some 200 to 300 kilometers deep, along the southern border with the United States, leaving huge tracts of land further to the north where population, and hence name, density is much less extensive. Even in Canada's most populous province, Ontario, 87% of the land mass is still Crown Land under the stewardship of the provincial Ministry of Natural Resources.

This leads us to a second distinctive feature of the nomenclature, namely its relatively young age. When compared to other toponymic strata throughout the world, in Europe in particular, the roots of Canadian place names seem so recent you could almost see them, figuratively speaking. In one of the early overviews of Canadian toponymy, linguist Pierre Daviault touches upon this particular aspect: "Le chapitre des noms de lieux revêt au Canada un aspect qu'il n'a plus en France où la toponymie est fixée depuis si longtemps que, sauf les spécialistes et les curieux, personne n'en peut débrouiller l'origine ni la signification. Chez nous, la création onomastique en ce domaine, loin d'être chose du passé, est toujours vivante et en perpétuelle évolution" (1948: 46-47).

Canada is still a young country; there are thousands of geographical features that have yet to be officially named and one can expect toponymic innovation to continue for many years to come. These distinctive features give credence to the popular saying that for what it lacks in history, Canada largely makes up in geography.

## **2. The first names on the land**

We know little if anything of the beginning on the naming process in Canada. The only certainty we have is that our First Nations and the Inuit, the original occupants of the land, gave names to geographical features, much in the same way this process seems to have taken place throughout the history of civilization. In fact, one could argue that geographical naming is a cultural and linguistic universal, so pervasive has this activity taken place around the world. To name is to appropriate, to take control of the landscape, to possess it, and inhabit it through language, the means by which geographical names come to life in a speech community, and eventually become part of identity and culture.

Early accounts of Aboriginal naming in Canada and elsewhere in America provide evidence that the major water and land features of the country were already named when the first explorers and missionaries arrived from Europe. Leif Ericson is believed to be the first European to have set foot on what is now Canadian soil at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, as the remnants of a Norse settlement discovered on the island of Newfoundland in 1960 indicate. But we do not have any written documentation of encounters with the Aboriginal population which could provide clues as to the state of naming at that period in time. With the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the New World in 1492 however, more extensive expeditions across the Atlantic took place and soon, the great colonial powers of Europe began to document the state of Aboriginal toponymy. Jacques Cartier's voyages in the early 1530s provide some of the first evidence of geographical naming in the Gulf of the St Lawrence River. *Hochelaga*, *Saguenay*, *Stadaconé*, and *Canada*, the name of our country, count among the very first documented names that appear in early 16<sup>th</sup> century maps and writings.

But what do we actually know of this original stratum other than it existed before the arrival of the Europeans? Very little actually, and this is mainly because our knowledge of Aboriginal languages and history is still in the development stages, at best. To make matters more critical, most of these peoples and languages are endangered species, several reduced to a handful of speakers. Of the 52 known languages, only three, Inuktitut, Ojibwa and Cree, have a reasonable chance of survival in Canada. Studies of the linguistic features of aboriginal languages are still scarce, in spite of repeated efforts by the Canadian Linguistic Association to promote investigation into the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic features of these languages. What scholarship we do have is often limited to the lexicon in the form of bilingual dictionaries, many of them incomplete or outdated. The inherent complexity of some of these languages, combined with the absence of writing tradition in the Aboriginal communities over several generations, only adds to the challenge of unlocking the key to many of these languages. For toponymy scholars, this situation is particularly frustrating as the interpretation of Aboriginal names on early maps and writings relies on this type of information that is severely lacking.

The original toponymic stratum then remains much of a mystery, both in its history and interpretation. In recent years however, interest in Aboriginal languages and toponymy has increased, raising the hope that our knowledge will improve at the same time. Field work in native speech communities, for example, is revealing not only the extent of Aboriginal nomenclature but related cultural beliefs and practices as well. We are now beginning to get a better understanding of the intimate relationship between the naming practices and the cosmology of the Inuit and First Nations.

### **3. Names of the Colonial Period**

Our understanding of the development of colonial nomenclature is much better documented. For this overview, I will rely mainly on two seminal works: First, Alan Rayburn's impressive and authoritative *Dictionary of Canadian Place Names* (1997) and second, the Commission de toponymie du Québec's exceptionally informative *Noms et Lieux du Québec: Dictionnaire illustré* (2007). This second edition of the *Dictionnaire* I have just reviewed for *Onomastica Canadiana* (Lapierre 2007b).

The arrival of explorers and missionaries from the Old World towards the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century introduced a new vision of the landscape as well as a new layer of place name nomenclature. Upon arriving on the new continent, the emissaries from the kingdoms of Spain, Portugal, France and England had several options with regard to the existing Aboriginal nomenclature. They could adopt and adapt to their language the Native toponyms; they could translate them or they could substitute their own names. There is strong evidence that all three processes took place but the new occupants of the land often gave their own names to the

landscape regardless of whether or not they had been previously named by the Aboriginal population.

### 3.1 Portuguese Legacy

Portuguese names are among the earliest colonial names in Canada and are due to either Portuguese navigators who had joined English expeditions or Portuguese explorers, such as the brothers Gaspar and Miguel Corte-Real, who in 1501–1502, explored the east and south coast of the island of Newfoundland under the instructions of King Manuel I of Portugal. *Cabo de boa vista*, *Cabo do frey Luis* and *Cabo raso* are but some examples of this early coastal naming. The name *Labrador*, from the Portuguese word ‘lavrador’ (small landowner), also dates back to this early period of Portuguese exploration and is now part of the name of the province.

### 3.2 Basque Legacy

At the same time, Basque fishermen who had been familiar with this area for many years also contributed names. They had heard of the rich cod fishing banks off Newfoundland for many years before the arrival of navigators and explorers from the colonial powers of Europe. Rayburn (2001: 106) claims that more than 300 names can be traced to Basque sources or activities. On the west coast of Newfoundland, the specific *Port-au-Port* in names such as *Port-au-Port Bay* and *Port-au-Port Peninsula* can be traced to the Basque form *Ophortportu*, meaning ‘port of relaxation’. The Basque expression *Aingura Charra* ‘bad anchorage’ yielded the name *Ingornachoix*, and the name *Port-au-choix* can be traced to *Portuchoa* ‘little port’. For many years, scholars thought these names were of French origin because of their orthography and later settlements from Acadia and the Islands of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon. The French etymology of the generic *barachois*, found in many place names in Atlantic Canada, has never been convincingly demonstrated. According to Weyers (2008), there can be no doubt as to the Basque origin of this generic term. As scholarship develops, the Basque etymology of many other toponyms such as *Gaspé*, thought to be of native origin, is being explored.

### 3.3 The Spanish Legacy

With few exceptions such as *Placentia* in eastern Canada, most of the Spanish names go back to the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and are found on the West Coast. Beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there were several voyages from the viceroyalty of Mexico up the Pacific coast by Spanish explorers and soldiers. It is said that in 1594, Juan de Fuca made a voyage in search of a passage between Europe and the Far East. There is some doubt as to whether he actually made the voyage, but George Vancouver, the British explorer who navigated along the British Columbia coast in the early 1790s gave the strait between the mainland and Vancouver Island the name of *Juan de Fuca Strait*. In 1789, the Spanish were the first Europeans to build a settlement on the west coast, a small *presidio* with fortifications on Vancouver Island at Nootka. The commander, Francisco Bodega y Quadra, befriended George Vancouver who had been sent to settle a land ownership dispute between Spain and England in the area. *Quadra Island*, *Bodega Island* and several other Spanish names in British Columbia trace their roots to this period of colonial confrontation and friendship.

### 3.4 L’héritage français

Nous venons de célébrer, le mois dernier, le 400<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de la fondation de la ville de Québec par le saintongeais Samuel de Champlain. C’est avec lui que commence, à proprement parler, l’aventure coloniale de la France en terre d’Amérique après les tentatives manquées au Brésil et en Floride (Lapierre 2007). Dès 1535 cependant, le malouin Jacques Cartier avait exploré le golfe du Saint-Laurent et attribué 89 toponymes aux entités géographiques

(Morissonneau 1978: 37), dont le nom du pays *Canada*, celui-ci remontant à son deuxième voyage en 1535. Avec lui commence une spectaculaire activité toponymique au fur et à mesure que la France étend son empire colonial non seulement au Canada mais dans toute l'Amérique septentrionale. D'abord appliquées à la vallée du Saint-Laurent, les désignations françaises progressent vers l'ouest le long du célèbre Route des Voyageurs et rejoignent bientôt les Grands Lacs (*Lac Supérieur, Lac des Hurons, Lac des Ériés*) et, à partir du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle, embrassent toute la vallée du Mississippi jusqu'en Louisiane (*Saint-Louis, Sainte-Geneviève, Bâton Rouge, La Nouvelle-Orléans*). Il serait fastidieux d'énumérer ici ces centaines de désignations qui enrichissent petit à petit le territoire. Qu'il suffise d'en rappeler la typologie: ces toponymes sont soit descriptifs et s'inspirent de la faune et de la flore (*Les Trois-Rivières, le Bic, le Détroit, Île-aux-Grues, Rivière Rouge, etc.*) soit commémoratifs et s'alimentent aux sources culturelles, historiques ou spirituelles des nouveaux arrivants (*Lac de Saint-Louis, Lac Saint-François, Rivière des Français, etc.*). Au moment où la Nouvelle-France passe aux mains de la Grande-Bretagne en 1763, l'Amérique septentrionale est parsemée de désignations françaises depuis le golfe du Mexique jusqu'à la Baie d'Hudson, et depuis la côte Atlantique jusqu'aux Rocheuses.

Rappelons aussi que ce sont les Français ont été les premiers à donner une forme écrite à la toponymie autochtone qui, jusqu'alors, était tributaire de la tradition orale. Dans son admirable ouvrage sur le contact anglo-français, Henriette Walter (2001: 202–203) fait remarquer que c'est à force d'avoir été écrits à la française que la première syllabe de toponymes autochtones comme *Chicago* et *Cheyenne* se prononce aujourd'hui avec un *ch* et non un *tch* comme dans la majorité des toponymes anglais.

The French not only provided place names to Canada and the North American continent, they introduced several innovations into toponymic terminology that are still in use today. Until the advent of New France, the French adjective *rapide* related to something that moved very fast. On Bréhant de Galinée's 1670 map of the Upper Ottawa Valley, it appears for the first time, no longer as an adjective, but as a noun in the plural form. The new generic refers to a place in a stream where the water flows rapidly over obstructions. *Rapides* was subsequently introduced into the English lexicon as *rapids* with the same meaning, as in *Whitehorse Rapids* (Yukon), *Pelican Rapids* (Alberta), or, more simply, *The Rapids* (Newfoundland). Much in the same way, the word *portage* originally meant the action of carrying something, with no specific context added. It was during the exploration of the western part of New France that the word began to refer more precisely to the action of carrying supplies and canoes over land to avoid rapids. The word then became a generic, indicating the place where such an action took place and was later introduced into the English lexicon as a loanword as in *Eye Lake Portage* (Ontario) or *Wachask Portage* (Manitoba). We note a similar evolution with the word *chenal*, the vernacular pronunciation of which produced *snye* in Canadian English, a generic referring to a side channel bypassing another body of water and which can be found in a dual name in Ontario, *The Snye – Chenal Écarté*. In Western Canada, the generic *coulee*, a flowing water or valley feature from the French verb 'couler' (to flow) is present in names such as *Telegraph Coulee* (Saskatchewan), *Kenneth Coulee* (Saskatchewan), and *Rogers Coulee* (Alberta). The generic *butte*, as in *River Butte* (Saskatchewan) or *Frenchman Butte* (Saskatchewan), and meaning a small elevation, was also introduced by French explorers and voyageurs. Finally, in Atlantic Canada, the word *gully*, from the French 'goulet', is commonly used to designate small salt-water channels as in *Tracadie Gully* (New Brunswick) and *Tom Howes Gully* (Newfoundland). The widespread distribution of these generics all over the North American continent bears witness to the extent of French exploration in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### 3.5 The British Legacy

With the British Conquest of 1763, New France became part of the British Empire as the *Province of Quebec* along with other colonies of British North America such as Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Province of New York. In fact, it nearly became the 14<sup>th</sup> American Colony in 1775 (Monette 2007). At the beginning of the new regime, the newcomers used the names the French had been using for decades. But after the American War of Independence, thousands of British Loyalists fled the newly-born republic and made their way north to British soil. The new influx of English-speaking immigrants brought about changes in the administration of the Province of Quebec and had a profound effect on the French stratum. For instance, a royal proclamation in 1791 (Doughty and McArthur 1914: 79) specifically required that French place names in new administrative areas be replaced by English designations. John Graves Simcoe, the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, changed the name of a large body of water north of Toronto from *Lac aux Claiés* to *Lake Simcoe* in honour of his father in 1792 and *Rivière la Tranche* to *River Thames*, in the city of London, Ontario which Simcoe had proposed as the capital of Upper Canada (now Ontario).

Names associated with Great Britain and the British royalty began to spread even more during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as thousands of immigrants from England, Scotland and Ireland began to arrive and spread in all directions. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was also marked by further exploration of the land, as rivalry between the two major trading companies, the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company, pushed the boundaries of the country even further to the west. At the same time, surveying and division of the land into counties and townships became an opportunity for the transfer of even more names from Britain, even in French-speaking Quebec, where the names of some communities still incorporate that of the township, such as in *Saint-Gabriel-de-Brandon*, *Saint-Émile-de-Suffolk* or *Saint-Rémi-d'Amherst*. The influence of the British Crown went beyond the names of geographical features. A case in point is the popularity of the reigning monarch at the time, Queen Victoria. As Rayburn points out: "No individual has been more honoured than Queen Victoria in the names of Canada's public buildings, streets, populated places, and physical features. Her name appears more than 300 times on our maps" (2001: 284). He might have added that a province, *Prince Edward Island*, was named after her father, another province, *Alberta*, after one of her daughters, and a city in Saskatchewan after her husband, *Prince Albert*, in addition to three other cities named after herself, *Victoria* (British Columbia), *Regina* (Saskatchewan) and *Victoriaville* (Quebec).

But not all Canadians share this enthusiasm for British names. An irate resident of Victoria, the capital city of British Columbia, wrote recently in the *Globe and Mail* in support of changing the name of the *Strait of Georgia*, the body of water between the mainland and the island of Vancouver and so named in honour of King George III, to the *Salish Sea*, in honour of the Coastal Aboriginal nation: "...authorities have named coastal features after curiosities ranging from the obscure offspring of equally remote English aristocrats, to English racetracks and even the horse that won the Epsom Derby in 1860. Let's welcome the Salish Sea. It's time to change the name of our province too. We ain't British and we ain't Columbian. Even 'BeeCee' is better than what we've got." (Hadley 2008).

### 4. Language Contact and Name Mutations

When New France passed into the hands of the British, the population of the colony numbered roughly 65,000 French-speaking inhabitants. By the time the country was politically affirmed in 1867 by the British North American Act, two important things had happened. The English-speaking population of the country had grown to over 2 million and French had become a

minority language. This shift in language balance is reflected in several toponymic mutations which affected not only French names but the original Portuguese, Basque and Spanish formations as well. The English adstratum affected their pronunciation as well as their written form in ways that are revealed through folk etymology. Some of the more classic examples include *Anse-aux-méduses* (Anse-aux-Meadows), *Cap d'Espoir* (Cape Despair), *Cabo do rey* (Cape Ray), *Cabo de la spera* (Cape Spear), and *Petite Côte* (Petticoat). At the same time, hundreds of these names were translated into English: *Lac Supérieur* (Lake Superior), *Rivière Rouge* (Red River), *Montagnes de Roches* (Rocky Mountains), etc. On the west coast, English names were substituted for many Spanish designations: *Rio Florida Blanca* (Fraser River), *Entrada de Juan Pérez* (Dixon Entrance) and *Gran Canal de Nuestra Señora del Rosario la Marinera* (Strait of Georgia).

### 5. Post-Confederation Names

As the country grew beyond the four original provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario), vast tracts of land were opened to settlement in the West and attracted thousands of new immigrants from Europe. Names of German (*Blumenthal* (Alberta), *Beiseker* (Alberta), *Griesbach* (Alberta)), Polish (*Kaszuky* (Ontario)), Ukrainian (*Lake Kuzenko* (Manitoba), *Sniatyn* (Manitoba)), Scandinavian (*Ostenfeld* (Manitoba), *Stockholm* (Saskatchewan)) and other language origins multiplied over the Prairies and contributed to an already rich and diverse mosaic of designations. New provinces were formed and territories created to reflect land management in the Northwest. This activity brought about awareness to the nomenclature of the Inuit and First Nations as well as the need for accommodation on issues of land occupation. *Port Brabant* in the Northwest Territories was changed to *Tuktoyaktuk* as early as 1950; *Fort Chimo* in Quebec became *Kuujuaq* in 1965, and the settlement of *Frobisher Bay*, then in the Northwest Territories, became *Iqaluit* in 1987 and later the capital of the new Territory of Nunavut in 1999.

Canada's coming of age through its participation in World War I was reflected in its toponymy with commemorative designations such as *Vimy*, the celebrated ridge in northern France, captured by Canadian Forces at the cost of some 60,000 lives in April 1917. The name is reflected in more than 20 geographical features throughout the country. Many names from the WW I battlegrounds of the Artois region of northern France are found in the names of school districts in the Western provinces. As population grew throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so did the names and their diversity, each contributing in its own way to the rich mosaic that we witness today.

### 6. Managing the Nomenclature: Name Authorities

Today, there are over 500,000 recorded toponyms in Canada, about 350,000 of which are official. The need to log and store toponymic data became evident in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Land surveys were more extensive and the needs for accurate cartography became more pressing. Interestingly, the final impetus for the creation of an authoritative body with the responsibility to oversee the geographical nomenclature of Canada resulted from naming activities of the United States. During an American military reconnaissance in the Yukon River basin in 1883, Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka applied new names to features which were already known and had been previously named by the miners in the area. Serious concerns were then expressed by the Dominion Land Surveyors Association who immediately saw the need for standardization. In 1892, a recommendation was made to appoint a Board on Geographical Nomenclature. But it was only five years later when it was pointed out that inaction on the recommendation was allowing the United States to rule on Canadian names, that an Order in Council established the Geographic Board of Canada on December 18, 1897.

In her instructive overview of naming authorities in Canada, Helen Kerfoot (1999) provides interesting insights into the development of these bodies as the previously mentioned Geographic Board became the Canadian Board on Geographical Names in 1948, the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names in 1961 and finally the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC) in 2000. Originally, the Federal Government was responsible for all naming decisions in Canada through the Board. In 1961 however, the authority for naming was transferred to the provinces, and devolved to the territories in 1984. Since then, the GNBC has assumed the role of coordinator of geoname activities for the country and represents the provinces, territories and the federal government on the international scene. Very briefly, let me cite a few of the major accomplishments of the GNBC and of some provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

Je citerai d'abord le Québec qui a été la première province à créer une commission pour la gestion de sa nomenclature géographique en 1912. La Commission de toponymie du Québec a aussi été la première à s'intéresser de près à la toponymie autochtone en organisant, dès 1969, un atelier sur l'écriture des toponymes des premières nations sur son territoire. Elle a animé, au fil des années, un ambitieux et impressionnant programme de publications dont l'impressionnant dictionnaire *Noms et lieux du Québec* que j'ai cité au début de ma communication. Sans exagération, on peut dire que de toutes les autorités toponymiques au pays, c'est le Québec qui a été la plus active et innovatrice, tant par ses activités que par son rayonnement.

Ontario's Board is internationally known for the development of a linguistic policy for the treatment of minority names on maps, texts and road signage. The notion of *Alternate Name* was developed in the early 1990s in response to the needs of the francophone minority in the province that was using names that were different from the official names. While respecting the univocity principle of the geographical name, this policy allows for the use of French names in specific contexts. It has inspired the Italian government to develop a similar policy for the treatment of German minority names in the Alto Adige border region between Italy and Austria. The Irish Placenames Commission is considering this model as well for the treatment of official Gaelic names in Ireland.

The province of British Columbia has pioneered the use of digital sound files to illustrate some of its Aboriginal names. A selection of Nisga'a First Nation names was recorded by a native speaker and these are now featured on the province's web page (<http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/bcnames>). By clicking the appropriate buttons on a map, users can hear the name spoken while other vital information on coordinates and meaning are displayed. We feel that such initiatives are the way of the future and that more jurisdictions will be following the British Columbia model to display names whose pronunciation is either unknown or difficult for non-Native users. In fact, this initiative may well be accelerated by software firms looking at enhancing the performance of GPS devices by providing name pronunciations as the user touches a name on the screen. This market-driven idea will most probably pressure name authorities to add speech data files to their geographical name databases in the not too distant future.

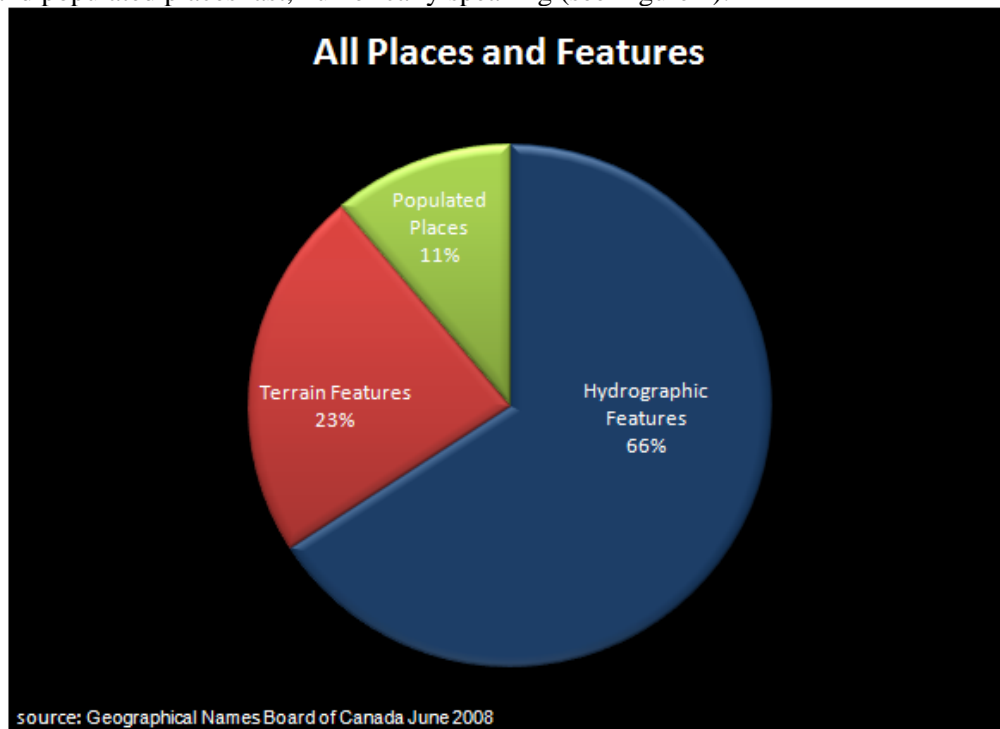
Over the years, the GNBC and its predecessors developed principles and procedures for geographical naming that govern the actions of all naming jurisdictions in the country. As well, it established a list of some 80 names of pan-Canadian significance that are approved in both official languages. These are the names of major features such as *Baffin Island – Île de Baffin*, *Hudson Bay - Baie d'Hudson*, *Niagara Falls – Chutes Niagara*, *Vancouver Island – Île de Vancouver*, and *Lake Superior – Lac Supérieur*. The GNBC has also been instrumental in helping the new territory of Nunavut in organizing its own names board, a critical move at a time when the reliance on traditional names as location identifiers by Aboriginal trappers, fisherman and hunters is threatened by the increasingly popular use of GPS devices.



The annual meetings of the GNBC provide an opportunity for exchange of information and expertise between the various provincial, territorial and federal naming authorities, and have sometimes been the occasion of heated debate. The case of *Castle Mountain*, a majestic feature in the Canadian Rockies, comes to mind. In 1946, then Prime Minister Mackenzie King instructed the Geographic Board of Canada to rename the 11km long feature as *Mount Eisenhower* to honour the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe. The government of Alberta, which did not have a names authority at the time, reacted negatively to this move and created its own Board to prevent such action in the future. After many years and concentrated efforts by interested groups, the name *Castle Mountain* was restored in 1979 while the highest peak of the feature was named *Eisenhower Peak*, in a typically Canadian spirit of compromise. More recently, a request was made by then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to rename Canada's highest mountain, *Mount Logan*, in the Yukon, in honour of Pierre Elliot Trudeau, the previous prime minister who had just passed away. This proposal was the subject of much public complaint and was turned down by the members of the GNBC with the jurisdictional responsibility.

### 7. Distribution of Official Nomenclature

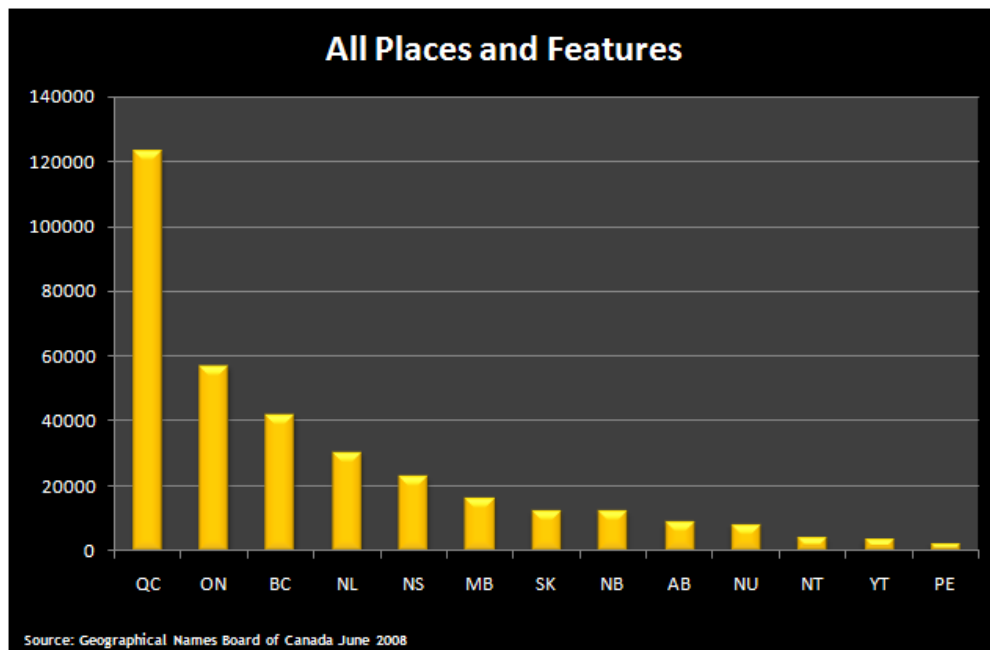
As previously mentioned, the Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB) presently counts some 350,000 officially named places and features in the country. If we examine this body of names closely, several interesting patterns emerge. First, a general grouping of the official nomenclature into three broad categories (hydrographic features such as lakes, streams, creeks etc., terrain features such as mountains, valleys, highlands, etc., and populated places) reveals that hydrographic features represent more than half the nomenclature, with terrain features coming next and populated places last, numerically speaking (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of Official Nomenclature: All Places and Features**

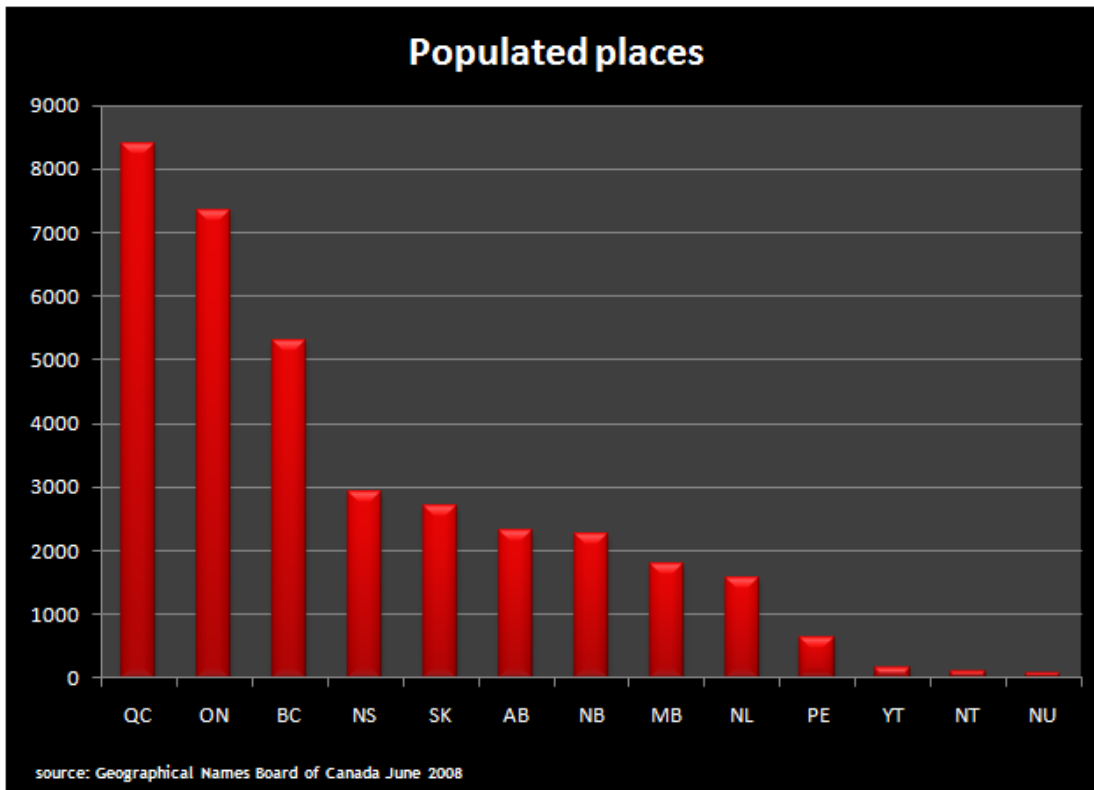
In fact, we see that populated place names represent less than 12% of the total nomenclature, so confirming our earlier observation on the disproportion between land mass and population. These

graphs also illustrate that Canada, in spite of vibrant urban development over the years, is still mainly a land of natural features and of vast wilderness.



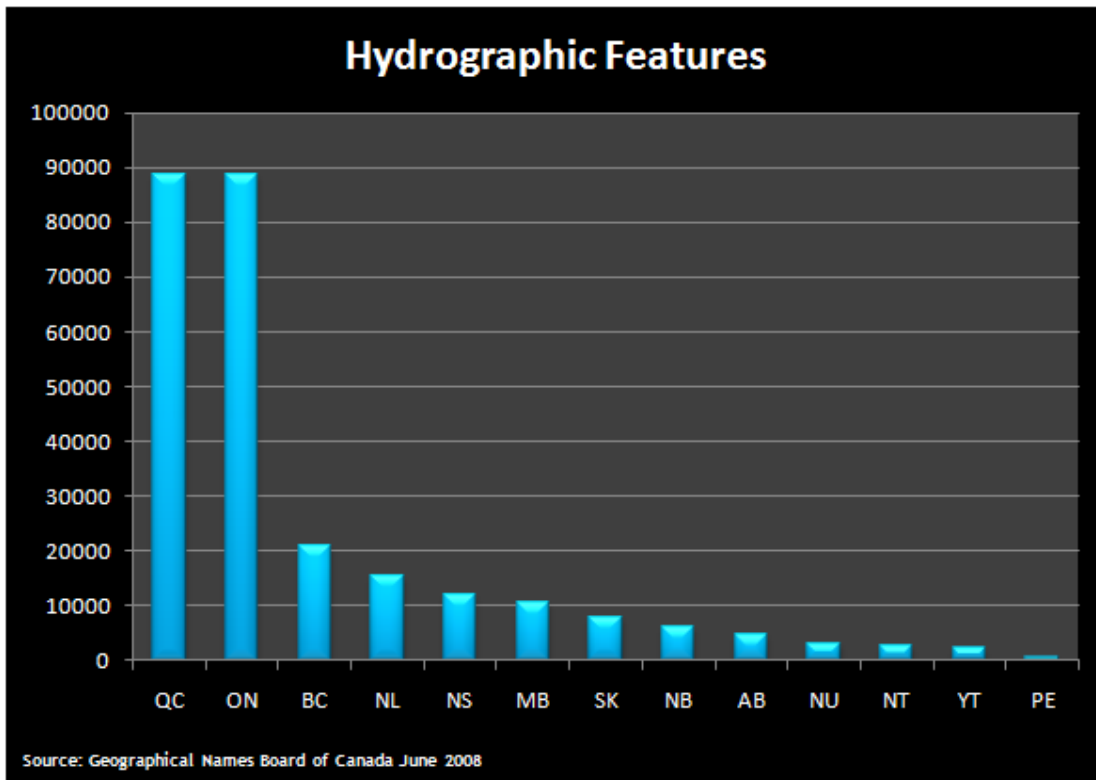
**Figure 2. Distribution of Named Places and Features by Provinces and Territories**

Breaking down this information by province and territory in Figure 2, we see that Quebec, with the largest landmass at slightly more than 1.5 million square km, also has the richest body of named places and features. This is partly due to its vast surface area and to the extensive naming activities of the Commission de toponymie. Any data comparison however should take into account the fact that not all provinces are created equal in terms of toponymic management, that some programs are relatively recent and that limited funding has not allowed some jurisdictions to process their nomenclature as extensively as others. For that reason, the trends we will observe in the figures that follow can only be of a very general and indicative nature.



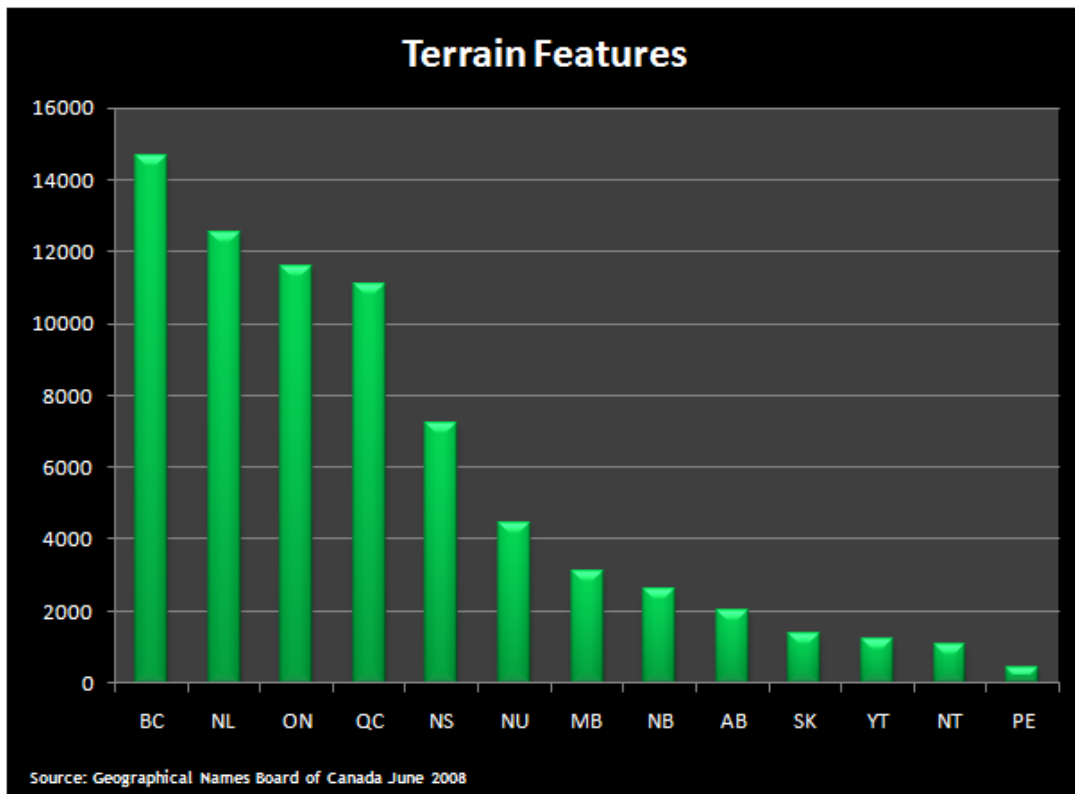
**Figure 3. Distribution of Populated Place Names by Provinces and Territories**

In terms of populated place names (Figure 3), Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia lead, with the three territories at the end of the scale showing lesser numbers, reflecting the remote location of these jurisdictions. As expected, this distribution closely patterns that of the population and identifies the major centres of economic and industrial development.



**Figure 4. Distribution of Hydrographic Feature Names by Provinces and Territories**

Looking at Figure 4, we see that there is a high concentration of hydrographic feature names in Quebec and Ontario. While this distribution may partly be attributed to landmass, the lesser figures for other provinces and the Territories at the end of the scale do not necessarily reflect the lack of features to be named. They may well be indicators of the need for more field work to record names in these jurisdictions



**Figure 5. Distribution of Terrain Feature Names by Provinces and Territories**

Finally, Figure 5 provides a surprisingly different distribution where the morphology of the landscape puts British Columbia in the lead at one end of the country with its numerous names for mountains, ridges, peaks, valleys, etc., followed by the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, situated at the opposite end of the *a Mari usque ad Mare* equation, with an equally impressive number of terrain feature names, largely associated with the details of the coastline.

## 8. Scholarship

Joseph Bouchette's description of the Province of Lower Canada in 1815 is perhaps the first comprehensive study of the toponymy of Canada, as it was at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As I pointed out in my paper at ICOS XVI (Lapierre 1989), the development of onomastic studies in Canada was slow to emerge. Toponymic studies begin about a century later with pioneer works on the nomenclature of Quebec by Pierre-Georges Roy (1906) and on British Columbia names by John Walbran (1909). Further momentum for onomastic studies was given in July 1966 at ICOS IX in London by Jaroslav Bohdan Rudnyckyj and a group of Canadian scholars. They founded the Canadian Institute of Onomastic Sciences, a body devoted to the promotion of name studies in Canada. The Institute is the predecessor of the *Canadian Society for the Study of Names – Société canadienne d'onomastique* that has been proudly carrying on the mission, with the publication of a journal on a continuous basis for more than 35 years and now boasts a membership of some 100 members. One of our younger scholars, Professor Carol Léonard, has just become the first university researcher to obtain two back-to-back grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to conduct a research program into the French toponymic stratum of Manitoba and Alberta after his masterful treatment of the French element in Saskatchewan place names in his doctoral thesis (Léonard 2006).

Also worthy of mention is the pioneering work by Henri Dorion and Jean Poirier (1975) who produced one of the first lexicons of toponymic terminology in the same spirit as those that would be later produced by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. The Federal Department of the Secretary of State (1987) produced a precious tool for the study of generic terminology *Generic Terms in Canada's Geographical Names* which still stands out today as a model in the world community of toponymists. Finally, there have been some partial bibliographies that summarize scholarship on Canadian toponymy, the most extensive being the Commission de toponymie du Québec's *Bibliographie toponymique du Québec* (1987), but there still lacks a comprehensive and annotated compendium of works concerning Canadian toponymy as a whole.

In addition to the previously mentioned works by Alan Rayburn (1997) and the Commission de toponymie (2007), the study of Canada's toponymy has inspired several noteworthy monographs. At the national level, Armstrong (1972), Hamilton (1996), and Rayburn (2001) are the better known reference sources. For the provinces and territories, the following titles may be of interest to researchers: British Columbia (Akrigg 1986); Alberta (Aubrey 1996, 2006; Harrison 1994; Karamitsanis 1991, 1992); Saskatchewan (Russel 1973; Barry 2000); Manitoba (Ham 1980; Rudnycky 1970; Conservation Manitoba 2000); Ontario (Carter 1984; Lapierre 1981; Mika 1977–1983; Rayburn 1997); New Brunswick (Rayburn 1975); Nova Scotia (Fergusson 1967); Prince Edward Island (Rayburn 1973); Newfoundland and Labrador (Seary 1977, 2000); Yukon (Coutts 1980).

A final note should be said about the particular thrust in Aboriginal toponymy research throughout the country. With the help of Helen Kerfoot, the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names published the first annotated bibliography on Aboriginal toponymy (1997) and Ludger Müller-Wille (1987), a geographer at McGill University, produced the first gazetteer of Inuit names, in conjunction with the Inuit Elders of Nunavik in northern Quebec. It is crucial that this impetus be pursued as the native nomenclature is threatened by a dwindling population and the modernization of traditional activities such as trapping, fishing and hunting.

## 7. A look into the future

As Canada embarks into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we can expect the activities of naming authorities to continue in the management of current nomenclature as it evolves and as exploration into the northern portions of Canada expands as well. Among the political dimensions in which toponymy may in the future be called upon to play a strategic role, one particular issue is on the horizon. As you may be aware, sovereignty over many areas of the Arctic is a disputed question. The five circumpolar countries, Denmark, Norway, Russia, the United States and Canada, have not yet come to an agreement on the parameters of sovereignty in this part of the world. As a result, Canada has a dispute with Denmark over Hans Island, a tiny unpopulated feature between Greenland and Ellesmere Island and the United States and Canada do not agree on their maritime boundary in the Beaufort Sea. It is unclear at this time if an international agreement, similar to that which governs geographical nomenclature in the Antarctic, can be achieved, especially in view of the massive oil reserves in the North and the vested interests of the circumpolar nations in their exploration, to say nothing of the delicate issue of the ownership of undersea resources.

Names for undersea features will pose a particular challenge, as the current rule of local usage, a basic tenet for features on the land, will be of little or no use to toponymists in areas where the seabed is still in the process of being mapped. In Northern Canada, it will be exciting to see how the campaign, launched on August 31, 2007 by a group of geographers to rename the Northwest Passage the *Canadian Arctic Passage* will unfold in the years to come (Canadian Geographic: 2007). As a result of global warming, the passage, which affords a shortcut between Europe and Asia, is now easier to navigate during the summer months. The makings for

environmental damage due to increased international shipping are, among other reasons, driving Canada's efforts to affirm its sovereignty over the waterway. It will be an interesting situation to monitor as it will involve competing interests and surely a heated debate over the name change.

Whatever the end results, geographical names will continue to be, through the various languages that bring them to life and sustain their evolution, a vibrant and robust reflection of Canada's geography, history and culture.

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