

Commemorative Naming Guidelines

Geographical Names Board of Canada

I – Introduction / Background

In the fall of 2004, the Commemorative Naming Policy Working Group of the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC) was formed to draft national guidelines on commemorative naming.

Existing documentation on commemorative naming from federal, provincial, and territorial naming authorities was reviewed.

It was apparent that formal guidelines on commemorative naming, as well as a related set of procedures, would promote and achieve consistency across Canada.

Definition: Commemorative Naming

For the purposes of these guidelines, commemorative naming refers to the naming of natural or cultural features after persons or events, as a way to honour or memorialize the person or event in question.

II – Objective

To encourage the standardization of existing policies, principles, and procedures associated with commemorative naming throughout Canada.

III - Guiding Principles

When proposing or considering a commemorative name, the following principles will be adhered to, unless they conflict with an existing policy of the naming authority in question:

1. A proposed name will only be considered for persons posthumously; a minimum of five years must elapse from the date of death before a commemorative name proposal will be considered. For events, at least twenty-five years must have elapsed since the occurrence of the event.
2. A commemorative name will only be considered for subjects with a strong association with the area or feature, or of outstanding significance to the cultural legacy or development of the area, the province, or the nation.
3. A proposed name will be supported by the local community and reach beyond a single or special interest group.

4. A commemorative name will not be used to commemorate victims or mark the location of accidents or tragedies.

5. A commemorative name will not be considered for adoption if a well-established and acceptable name already exists for the feature.

6. Ownership of land does not confer the right or entitlement to apply a commemorative name to a geographical feature. The use of unofficial commemorative names in publications, or in landscape dedications or markers, is no assurance that they will be adopted into official geographical names records.

IV - Procedures:

Before contemplating a proposal and undertaking the necessary research, proponents should contact the appropriate names authority in the province or territory where the feature is located, in order to obtain guidelines and procedures for establishing a commemorative name in that jurisdiction (see Appendix 'A'). Some jurisdictions have application forms, and most will require some or all of the following:

- (a) Map delineating the feature to be named;
- (b) Rationale for the proposal;
- (c) Evidence that the feature is unnamed and that the proposed name is acceptable and has broad community support;
- (d) Brief biography and photograph of the person to be commemorated, including a description of his/her association with the area where the feature is located and an explanation of the unique contribution that would single him/her out for commemoration in this fashion; for events, a description of the event and its association with the feature in question;
- (e) Statement of the proponent's relationship to the person or event to be commemorated;
- (f) Proposals should be submitted directly to the appropriate names authority in the province or territory where the feature is located. The proposal should be signed and include a complete mailing address, and daytime telephone number and/or e-mail address.

V – Other Means of Commemoration

Besides the naming of natural and cultural features, other commemorative naming possibilities exist and should be considered. Please contact the provincial or territorial naming authority to determine its jurisdiction over constructed facilities. Or, contact the local municipality, school board, university or college, etc., to determine criteria and procedures for commemorative naming.