



# Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board 2023-2024 Annual Activity Report





## Chairperson's Message

The Honourable Gerry Byrne  
Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture  
Petten Building  
30 Strawberry Marsh Road  
P.O. Box 8700  
St. John's, NL  
A1B 4J6

Dear Minister Byrne:

I am pleased to submit the Annual Performance Report for the Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board (NLGNB), a category three public body under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. This report covers the period April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024. The NLGNB has prepared this report to outline its activities during the 2023-24 fiscal year in fulfillment of the objective established under the 2023-26 Activity Plan.

The NLGNB was pleased to welcome two additional members in December 2023. They bring valuable new skill sets and the NLGNB complement is now complete.

As Chairperson, I sincerely thank the NLGNB colleagues for their steadfast active engagement in the NLGNB initiatives and their enthusiasm for promoting the value of geographic names in the province. I also commend the work of Nicole King, Secretary to the NLGNB. Although new to her position, she has approached her duties with a high degree of professionalism and dedication. I also thank Todd Strickland, Director, GIS and Mapping Division, for his support of the NLGNB and interest in its work.

As Chairperson, my signature on behalf of the NLGNB signifies its accountability for the preparation of this report and the results reported herein.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cheryl Brown-McLean".

Chairperson  
Cheryl Brown-McLean

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## 1.0 Overview

The Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board (NLGNB) had its beginnings in the Newfoundland Nomenclature Board founded in 1904 under the former **Post and Telegraph Act**. This body concerned itself mainly with requests to change names of communities as proposed by postal authorities, members of the House of Assembly on behalf of their constituents and very frequently, members of the clergy. The post office attempted to avoid having communities with the same name, but many petitions for renaming or name changes were made because the existing place names were considered derogatory or offensive in some way.

The current NLGNB operates under the **Geographical Names Board Act**, which was proclaimed in 1975 and amended in 1991. In 1975, the NLGNB became more involved in the naming of all cultural and natural features in the province, not just settled places. During the 1980's and early 1990's, Memorial University geography students conducted field studies to collect geographic names. These directed field surveys added over 15,000 previously unrecorded, but locally used, names to the provincial database. In recent years, Indigenous governments and organizations have made valuable contributions to the official database, adding names that reflect their own traditional use of land and water.

Administration of the NLGNB falls under the GIS and Mapping Division. In that it has no statutory authority to collect revenue, the NLGNB is not required to submit financial statements.

As in previous years, the NLGNB worked closely with the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC) on feature naming standards, various conventions and the maintenance of the national database in which geographical names in Canada are stored and made accessible to the public. The GNBC has placed a special focus on issues related to Indigenous place naming over the past year.

### 1.1 Vision

The effective management of geographical names for cultural/heritage purposes, as well as supporting search and rescue functions.

### 1.2 Mandate

The main responsibility of the NLGNB is to administer the **Geographical Names Board Act** and make recommendations to the Minister regarding the names of places or geographical features. For more information on the NLGNB's mandate, please refer to the Act: <https://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/g03.htm>.

### 1.3 Lines of Business

- Gather, collate and record information respecting names of places and geographical features in the province;
- Consult with and advise government departments and agencies, municipalities and other bodies or persons concerned with the selection of place names or the renaming of places and features regarding the suitability and spelling of the names;
- Consider and make recommendations respecting a proposed change in the name of a place or geographical feature already in use that may be considered to be inappropriate or not representative of the place or geographical feature to which it is applied;
- Collaborate with the Geographical Names Board of Canada (formerly the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names) respecting the selection of new geographical names, the elimination of alternative or duplicated names, the correct or preferred spelling of established names and other matters that may be of concern to the NLGNB or the Geographical Names Board of Canada;
- Hold public meetings or invite submissions to NLGNB meetings where disputes arise or may arise with respect to the naming or renaming of a place or geographical feature; and
- Recommend to the Minister for approval the names of places or geographical features.

### 1.4 Board Members and Support Staff

In accordance with the Act, the NLGNB is comprised of a Secretary and five other members appointed by the Minister. Currently, the Secretary is an employee of the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture (FFA), who provides support to the NLGNB. NLGNB members are appointed for a term of three years and may be reappointed. Appointments are made using a merit-based process; however, gender balance is considered during the appointment process and efforts are made to ensure the NLGNB is representative of the population it serves.

As of March 31, 2024, Board members were:

Name	Title	Term	Residence
Cheryl Brown McLean	Chairperson	2021-04-29 - 2024-12-31	St. John's
Gary N. Smith	Vice-Chairperson	2021-04-29 - 2024-12-31	Bishop's Cove
Nicole King	Secretary	2023-12-12 - No end date	Corner Brook
Randy Letto	Member	2021-04-29 - 2024-12-31	Happy Valley-Goose Bay
Jillian Drover	Member	2023-12-12 - 2026-12-31	St. John's
Nicolas Draco Dunphy	Member	2023-12-12 - 2026-12-31	Harbour Main

### 1.5 Financial Information

Subsection 3(6) of the **Geographical Names Board Act** allows for remuneration and expenses according to the Guidelines for Rates of Remuneration for Boards, Commissions and Agencies. Funds to support the NLGNB members and other expenses were provided by the GIS and Mapping Division, FFA. The following is a summary of the NLGNB’s expenditures during 2023-24.

<b>Expenditure Item</b>	<b>Expenditure Amount</b>
Honoraria (excludes travel)	\$5,000
Member Travel (excludes Secretary)	\$3,000
Secretary Travel	\$ 900
Meeting Expenses	\$ 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,900</b>

**1.6 Contact Information**

For more information about the NLGNB and its work, please contact us at:

Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board  
 Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture  
 GIS and Mapping Division  
 192 Wheelers Road, P.O. Box 2006  
 Corner Brook, NL A2H 6J8  
 Telephone: 709-637-8067  
 E-mail: [GMD@gov.nl.ca](mailto:GMD@gov.nl.ca)  
 Website: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/ffa/lands/maps/geographical/>

**2.0 Highlights and Partnerships**

**2.1 Highlights**

In 2023-24, there were several notable achievements related to place names in Newfoundland and Labrador. First, 48 new place names were approved and officially adopted, enriching the country’s geographical database. Additionally, one specific place name received approval from the Minister and was added to Canada’s Commemorative Map, which pays tribute to World War I veterans.

**2.2 Partnerships**

The success of the NLGNB program in 2023-24 was largely attributed to cooperative working partnerships. Key partners engaged with the NLGNB during this period included:

- **Strategic Policy and Innovation Sector of Natural Resources Canada and the Geographical Names Board of Canada Secretariat:** They provided direct access to the national database and organized various working groups related to Indigenous Names and Disrespectful Names.
- **NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC):** Their Director of Research, Education, and Culture actively participated in an NLGNB meeting, and their Heritage Advisor had follow-up discussions with the Secretary to the NLGNB.
- **Department of Fisheries and Oceans:** Their Manager of Indigenous Relations attended an NLGNB meeting to discuss place naming in marine regions.
- **The Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation:** They attended NLGNB meetings and continuously supported Indigenous consultation and engagement processes.
- **Dr. W. Gordon Handcock:** As a Professor Emeritus in Geography at Memorial University of Newfoundland and former Chairperson of the NLGNB, Dr. Handcock attended board meetings and provided advice on geographical naming inquiries throughout the year. His expertise remains an invaluable resource for Newfoundland and Labrador.
- **Forestry District Offices, Provincial Archaeology Office, Municipalities, and Local Groups:** They contributed to local name usage.
- **Members of the General Public:** Active citizen participation through place name applications and comments on applications submitted by other parties significantly contributed to the NLGNB's success in 2023-24.

### 3.0 Report on Performance

Given its mandate, the NLGNB's primary focus is to make recommendations to the Minister of FFA on the names of geographical features. As the focus of the NLGNB will remain the same for the duration of the 2023-26 Activity Plan, the NLGNB will report on the same objective and indicators in each of the three years.

#### Issue: Engagement with the Public on Geographical Names

The preservation and management of geographical names are given a very high priority by the NLGNB. Cultural differences are considered through the geographical naming process, which is particularly vital in recognizing Indigenous place names. The NLGNB aims to continually improve its processes to enhance engagement with the public and to effectively manage official geographic names.

**Objective:** By March 31, 2024, the NLGNB will have undertaken measures to enhance engagement with the public on geographical place names.

**Indicator:** Communicated with municipalities, Indigenous groups, and other stakeholders to explain the mandate of the NLGNB and encourage participation in the geographical naming process.

## Results:

- In 2023-24, the NLGNB communicated with 270 municipalities across the province by sending information letters to each in January 2024. The letters explained the mandate of the NLGNB and invited place name additions or changes. Several inquiries and naming applications resulted from this communication.
- As part of the NLGNB's outreach initiatives to promote Indigenous place names, information letters were also sent in 2023-24 to the English and French school boards in the province, as well as Indigenous school boards. The letters inform about a collaborative project between Natural Resources Canada and the Innu Nation in Labrador. The Innu Nation provided audio recordings of 448 officially recognized Innu place names, which are now integrated into the Canadian Geographical Names Database (CGNDB). Users can access these records and listen to corresponding audio recordings.
- Engaged with the GNBC who were seeking inputs, comments and feedback from Indigenous governments and organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador regarding a new national Best Practices for Indigenous Place Names Guide. <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/earth-sciences/geography/indigenous-place-names/19739>. To support this, NLGNB contacted the Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation (IAR) and all Indigenous groups in the province asking for input.
- Invited guest Kim Penney, Manager of Indigenous Relations and Partnerships from Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) met with the NLGNB at the May 2023 meeting to discuss her role within DFO and approaches to place naming in marine areas under federal jurisdiction, including Indigenous place naming.
- Invited guest, Dr. W. Gordon Handcock, Professor Emeritus in Geography, and former Chairperson of the NLGNB, met with the NLGNB at the May 2023 meeting to discuss naming processes, the history of the NLGNB and the importance of geographical naming in the province.
- Updated the NLGNB website to include additional links of achievement and was added to the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Page on the FFA's website under GIS and Mapping: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/ffa/lands/maps/geographical/>.
- The NLGNB actively collaborated with municipalities, Indigenous groups and other interested parties throughout 2023-24 to promote its mandate and encourage participation in the geographical naming process. By fostering these connections, the NLGNB aimed to enhance the recognition and preservation of meaningful place names across the province.

**Indicator:** Consulted with Indigenous groups about geographical naming issues.

## Results:

- Bryn Wood, Director of Research, Education and Culture, NunatuKavut Community Council, was invited to be a guest speaker at the NLGNB's October 2023 board meetings. During this engagement, he presented the NunatuKavut Community Council approach to place naming. As a result, the NLGNB and the

NunatuKavut Community Council will now collaborate on future naming projects. The NunatuKavut Community Council Heritage Advisor followed up March 12, 2024, to discuss specific initiatives.

- In May and June of 2024, the NLGNB consulted with a GIS Specialist with the Nunatsiavut Government and subsequently sent information on Indigenous Datasets and the NLGNB.
- Invited guest, Owen Savage, Senior Analyst with the province's Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, joined the NLGNB in October 2023 to discuss the process behind Indigenous consultation and Indigenous engagement. NLGNB provided an overview of the board and naming processes and procedures.
- Held discussions with the Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation on Indigenous consultation and engagement processes in April, May and October of 2023 and January and March of 2024.
- The Secretary and chairperson of the NLGNB actively engaged in two pivotal working groups in 2023-24, as part of the GNBC: the Indigenous Geographical Names Working Group and the Respectful Geographical Naming Working Group. These working groups facilitate cross-jurisdictional interchange which supports the NLGNB's mission of promoting accurate, respectful, and culturally meaningful place names.
- The Secretary of the NLGNB attended the GNBC Annual General Meeting (AGM) that was hosted in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories in November of 2023. The AGM of the GNBC serves as an opportunity for all Federal, provincial, territorial, and appointed members of the NLGNB to exchange knowledge and best practices related to toponymy. The AGM focused on various aspects of Indigenous place names and their significance within Canada. The presentations underscored the importance of recognizing and respecting Indigenous knowledge and culture in place naming practices across Canada.

**Indicator:** Reviewed requests for geographical names submitted by the public and made recommendations to the Minister.

### **Results:**

- NLGNB meeting sessions were held May 10-11 and October 19-20, 2023, to review requests for geographical names submitted by the public.
- In 2023-24, the NLGNB received 98 submissions for geographical place names. Most of the feature names were submitted through an independent study completed by a retired outfitting company owner, Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation member, or other private citizens in the Central Newfoundland and Labrador region. In a few cases, the names were supplied by historical societies or from municipalities.
- Also in 2023-24, a total of 48 place names were recommended for approval and adopted by the Minister on April 17, 2023, December 4, 2023, and January 31,

2024. Subsequently, these names were published as official in the Newfoundland and Labrador Gazette on April 25, 2023, December 22, 2023, and February 9, 2024. Finally, these 48 names were added to the national database.

- One commemorative name honoring a World War I Able Seaman was provided by the Southwest Arm Historical Society. The name had been recommended for approval in October 2022. Critch's Pond was adopted by the Minister on April 17, 2023, and posted in the Gazette on April 21, 2023. The name was added to the CGNDB as official and will be added to Canada's Commemorative Map: <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/c3c75c12-5acc-4a6a-959f-ef6f621147b9>
- In 2023-24, nine applications that may require Indigenous consultation or engagement were referred to the Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation for direction.
- Also in 2023-24, a total of 40 applications were deferred and require further investigation.
- During 2023-24, the NLGNB responded to 25 inquiries for information regarding place names from the public, other jurisdictions, municipalities, and other Government Departments.

## Discussion of Results:

During 2023-24, the NLGNB actively pursued its objective of enhancing public engagement with geographical place names. Key achievements include consultation with Indigenous groups, collaboration with stakeholders, and active participation in national working groups. The NLGNB invited representatives from the Innu Nation and the NunatuKavut Community Council to discuss Labrador place names, fostering cross-jurisdictional insights and cultural sensitivity. Additionally, the NLGNB maintained open communication with municipalities and other stakeholders, ensuring that local geographic names are officially recognized, and that current mapping information remains accurate. By fostering inclusivity and promoting accurate, respectful, and culturally meaningful place names, the NLGNB achieved its objective and continues to contribute significantly to Newfoundland and Labrador's geographical heritage.

## 4.0 Opportunities and Challenges

The NLGNB has been actively fostering partnerships to promote the significance of geographical names. These collaborations have been instrumental in identifying locally used names for official recognition and rectifying inaccuracies in current usage. This ongoing effort to cultivate relationships is a crucial aspect of the geographical names program and the NLGNB's mandate. The NLGNB is continually seeking new partnerships with communities, organizations, and the public to further this cause.

However, fostering these partnerships presents both opportunities and challenges. The opportunity lies in the potential to enrich our understanding of geographical names and

their impact on our daily lives. The NLGNB is committed to public education, providing resources such as articles, maps, and historical information in response to inquiries. They also encourage the study of geographical names in school curricula, like the use of the Innu language feature in the CGNDB.

On the other hand, the challenge lies in the engagement with Indigenous groups. Historically, many Indigenous place names, despite their longstanding oral usage, may not have been officially recognized. Furthermore, some officially recognized names may be considered disrespectful to Indigenous people, thereby necessitating changes. The NLGNB is dedicated to working with Indigenous peoples to address their interests in geographic names, but this is a complex and sensitive task that requires careful handling and deep understanding. Thus, while the work of the NLGNB presents significant opportunities for cultural preservation and education, it also poses challenges in ensuring respectful and accurate representation of Indigenous geographical names.

## **5.0 Financial Statements**

The NLGNB does not have a standalone budget and as a result, it does not require audited financial statements. Remuneration for NLGNB members is funded through the GIS and Mapping Division.

## **Annex A: Legislated Mandate**

### **Under the Geographical Names Board Act**

#### **Composition of board**

3. (1) The board is continued as the Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board.
- (2) The board shall be composed of a Secretary and 5 other members appointed by the minister.
- (3) The minister shall appoint 1 member of the board as chairperson and 1 as vice-chairperson.
- (4) The members of the board shall hold office during pleasure for a term of 3 years from January 1 following their appointment and may be reappointed.
- (5) When a vacancy occurs, the minister shall appoint a person to fill the vacancy for the balance of the unexpired term.
- (6) The members of the board shall receive the remuneration and expenses that the Lieutenant-Governor in Council may determine.

#### **Meetings of board**

4. (1) The board shall meet at the times and places that the chairperson appoints, and the chairperson shall appoint a time and place for a meeting on the request of 3 members.
- (2) Three members constitute a quorum at a meeting of the board.
- (3) The chairperson shall preside at meetings of the board.
- (4) In the absence of the chairperson the vice-chairperson shall preside at meetings of the board.
- (5) In the absence of the chairperson and the vice-chairperson from a meeting the members of the board present shall appoint a temporary chairperson to preside at that meeting.
- (6) The Secretary shall
  - (a) keep a record of all proceedings of the board;
  - (b) conduct the correspondence of the board;
  - (c) provide a copy of the minutes of each meeting of the board to each member and to the minister within 7 days after the adjournment of the meeting; and

(d) perform the other duties that the board may direct.

(7) In the absence of the Secretary from a meeting the members of the board present shall appoint a temporary Secretary for that meeting.

## **Powers of board**

### **5. The board shall**

(a) gather, collate and record information respecting names of places and geographical features in the province;

(b) consult with and advise government departments and agencies, municipalities and other bodies or persons concerned with the selection of place names or the renaming of places and features regarding the suitability and spelling of the names;

(c) consider and make recommendations respecting a proposed change in the name of a place or geographical feature already in use that may be considered or be represented to be inappropriate to the place or geographical feature to which it is applied;

(d) collaborate with the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names respecting the selection of new geographical names, the elimination of alternative or duplicated names, the correct or preferred spelling of established names and other matters that may be of concern to the board or the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names;

(e) hold public meetings or invite submissions to board meetings where dispute arises or may arise with respect to the naming or renaming of a place or geographical feature; and

(f) recommend to the minister for approval the names of places or geographical features.

## **Publication and use of approved name**

**6.** (1) Subject to section 5 of the Municipalities Act, 1999, the minister may approve a name recommended by the board for a place or geographical feature and shall publish notice of the approved name in the Gazette.

(2) A name approved under subsection (1) shall be used by all government departments and agencies in the preparation of maps and other publications.

## **Board is final authority**

7. The board is the final authority on the spelling and pronunciation of the names of places and geographical features in the province.

## **Final authority on names**

8. An Act, regulation, order, contract, summons, information, writ or other document affecting legal rights shall not be considered to be invalid merely because of the use of a name of a place or geographical feature that has not been approved by the minister under section 6.

## **Labrador Inuit rights**

9. Notwithstanding sections 5 to 8, this Act shall be read and applied in conjunction with the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act and, where a provision of this Act is inconsistent or conflicts with a provision, term or condition of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act, the provision, term or condition of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act shall have precedence over the provision of this Act.

Source: <https://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/g03.htm>