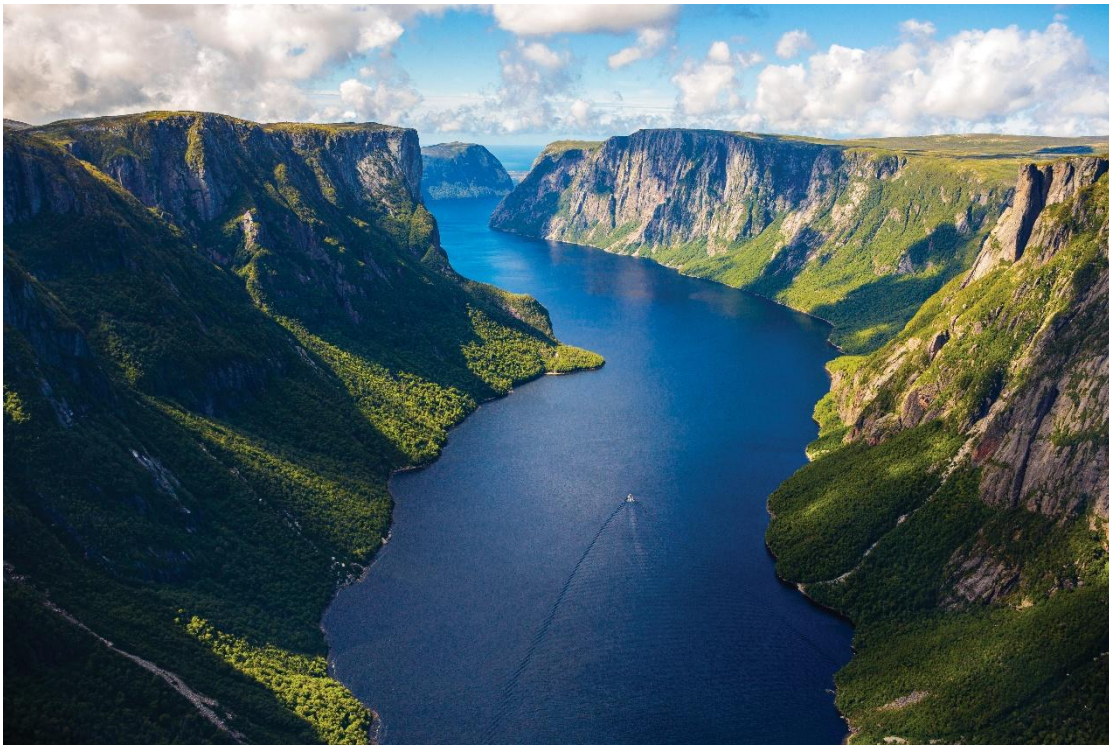


Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board

Annual Performance Report 2025-2026



Chairperson's Message

Honourable Pleaman Forsey
Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands
Confederation Building
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Dear Minister Forsey:

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, 2025, to March 31, 2026. The NLGNB has prepared this report to outline its activities during the 2025-2026 fiscal year in fulfillment of the objective established under the 2023-2026 Activity Plan.

During 2025-2026, the NLGNB has increased its partnerships with organizations with an interest in geographical names, including The Rooms' Provincial Archives Division, Memorial University's Map Room and Department of Linguistics.

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 geographical names in the province. I also commend the work of Nicole King, Secretary to the NLGNB, who fulfills her duties with a high degree of professionalism and dedication. We are also pleased to welcome Stephanie Hughes who has been assisting Nicole with some of her duties. 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,



Chairperson
Cheryl Brown-McLean

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Cover photo: Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism / Barrett & MacKay Photo - Western Brook Pond Gorge

1.0 Overview

The Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board (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 1980s and early 1990s, Memorial University geography students conducted field studies to collect geographical 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 (GMD), Department of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands (FAL). In that it has no statutory authority to collect revenue and does not operate with a standalone budget, 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 in recent years.

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 NLGNB is responsible for administering the **Geographical Names Board Act** and advising the Minister on the naming, renaming and standardization of place names and geographical features. To fulfill this mandate, the NLGNB:

- Collects and maintains information respecting names of places and geographical features in the province;
- Consults and provides advice to government departments and agencies, municipalities, organizations, and individuals on the selection, suitability, and spelling of place names;

- Reviews and makes recommendations on proposed changes to existing place names, particularly for those names that may be considered inappropriate or not representative of the place or geographical feature;
- Collaborates with the Geographical Names Board of Canada (formerly the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names) on 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;
- Holds public meetings or invites submissions to NLGNB meetings when disputes arise or may arise regarding the naming or renaming of places or geographical features; and
- Recommends place names and geographical feature names to the Minister for approval.

1.3 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 FAL, who provides support to the NLGNB. Members of the NLGNB 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, 2026, Board members were:

Name	Title	Term Expiry	Residence
Cheryl Brown-McLean	Chairperson	2027-12-31	St. John's
Gary N. Smith	Vice-Chairperson	2027-12-31	Bishop's Cove
Nicole King	Secretary	N/A	Corner Brook
Randy Letto	Member	2027-12-31	Happy Valley-Goose Bay
Jillian Drover	Member	2026-12-31	St. John's
Nicholas Draco Dunphy	Member	2026-12-31	Harbour Main

1.4 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, FAL. The following is a summary of the NLGNB's expenditures during 2025-26.

Operating Expenditures

Expenditure Item	Expenditure Amount
Honoraria (excludes travel)	\$5,475
Member Travel (excludes Secretary)	\$3,000
Secretary Travel	\$5,700
Meeting Expenses	\$ 0
Total	\$13,700

2025 GNBC AGM Expenditures

Expenditure Item	Expenditure Amount
Venue Contract	\$11,126
Bus Tour	\$ 450
Presenter Gifts	\$ 353
Gift Bags	\$ 112
Report Covers	\$ 79
Honoraria	\$ 1,500
Total	\$13,620

2025-2026 Overall Expenditures

Expenditure Item	Expenditure Amount
Overall Total	\$27,320

1.5 Contact Information

For more information about the NLGNB and its work or to request a copy of this report in an alternate format, please contact us at:

Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board
 Department of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands
 GIS and Mapping Division
 192 Wheelers Road, P.O. Box 2006
 Corner Brook, NL A2H 6J8
 Phone: 709-637-2331
 Email: GMD@gov.nl.ca
 Web: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/fal/lands/maps/geographical/>

2.0 Highlights and Partnerships

2.1 Highlights

During 2025-2026, the NLGNB managed a high volume of geographical naming activity characterized by large community-based submissions, strengthened Indigenous engagement practices, and increased coordination with provincial and federal partners.

At the national level, the NLGNB hosted the 2025 GNBC Annual General Meeting (AGM) in St. John's, October 21-23, 2025. The AGM brought together naming authorities from across Canada to exchange knowledge and best practices related to Indigenous place names, respectful terminology, public engagement approaches, emergency response considerations, and evolving database and technology tools. Hosting the AGM strengthened interjurisdictional collaboration and supported alignment between provincial and federal naming practices.

The 2025 GNBC AGM also provided an important opportunity to highlight Newfoundland and Labrador's contributions to geographical naming at the national level. Several of the NLGNB's Regional Experts, including anthropologist Peter Armitage, Dr. Nicholas Welch, Department of Linguistics, Memorial University, and Dr. W. Gordon Handcock Professor Emeritus of Geography, Memorial University, contributed their expertise through presentations and discussions focused on Indigenous place naming, linguistic considerations and toponymic best practices. In addition, the NLGNB delivered a presentation highlighting its work and initiatives, raising awareness among national partners of Newfoundland and Labrador's depth of place-name expertise. Presentations also highlighted the role of the NLGNB in advancing respectful and informed Indigenous naming practices, including dual-naming to recognize Indigenous language names as official names.

Finally, the NLGNB completed the 2026-2029 Activity Plan during the reporting year, ensuring continued compliance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and providing a clear framework to guide future program delivery and priorities.

2.2 Partnerships

The success of the NLGNB program in 2025-2026 continued to rely on strong partnerships with a wide range of organizations, stakeholders and individuals. A key partner in the NLGNB's work is the GNBC. Through the Strategic Policy and Results Sector of Natural Resources Canada, which provides Secretariat support to the GNBC, the NLGNB has direct access to the national database of official Canadian geographical

names and participates in national working groups focused on Indigenous geographical names and respectful terminology. The GNBC Board itself is comprised of representatives from federal departments, provincial and territorial naming authorities, Indigenous advisors and other appointed members, providing a national forum for coordinated decision-making, standards development and inter-jurisdictional collaboration on geographical naming matters. These collaborative relationships supported the research, documentation and responsible management of geographical names throughout the province.

- **Indigenous Governments, Organizations and Communities:** Consultation and engagement with Indigenous partners, including the Nunatsiavut Government, Innu Nation, NunatuKavut Community Council, Qalipu First Nation, and Miawpukek First Nation, on geographical naming applications, processes, and related matters. In addition, the NLGNB collaborated with the St. John's Mi'kmaw Women's Circle to support culturally appropriate participation and traditional elements during the 2025 GNBC AGM.
- **Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO):** Collaboration on river naming initiatives associated with the Salmon River Names - Anglers' Guide project, including coordination on data standards and legislative and municipal considerations.
- **Advisory Committee on Undersea Feature Names (ACUFN):** Collaboration with ACUFN, which is chaired and hosted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, on standards and considerations related to the naming of undersea and marine features of interest to Newfoundland and Labrador.
- **Department of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands (FAL):** Collaboration with divisional partners, including Crown Lands and Forestry, as well as consultation with the Department's solicitor, on geographical naming applications and inquiries involving land status, legislative interpretation, private land considerations and other legal or policy-related matters.
- **Office of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (IRR):** IRR provided guidance and support on consultation and engagement requirements for applications with potential Indigenous interests.
- **Municipalities and Local Service Districts:** Engagement with municipalities and local service districts to support contributor submissions, clarify locally used names, verify locations and histories, and encourage participation in the geographical naming process.
- **Memorial University of Newfoundland:** Ongoing collaboration with the QEII Library Map Room and academic experts to support historical research, map

resources for contributor submissions and improve interpretation of place name origins.

- **The Rooms Provincial Archives Division and Heritage NL:** Support for archival research, historical documentation and records management related to legacy naming files and scanned materials.
- **Search and Rescue:** Coordination with the Newfoundland and Labrador Search and Rescue Association, the Department of National Defence (5 Wing Goose Bay), the Canadian Hydrographic Service and the Canadian Coast Guard. These organizations rely on accurate and consistent geographical names for marine and terrestrial search and rescue operations and contribute to the promotion and day-to-day use of official feature names in emergency response, navigation and safety-related activities.
- **Dr. W. Gordon Handcock:** As a Professor Emeritus of Geography at Memorial University of Newfoundland and former Chairperson of the NLGNB, Dr. Handcock provided guidance during 2025-2026 on geographical naming inquiries, place-name origins and toponymic practices, drawing on his extensive experience and expertise.
- **Public Contributors and Subject Matter Experts:** Contributors, historians and knowledge holders provided evidence packages, historical context and place name narratives, while public and inter-jurisdictional inquiries were addressed throughout the year.

3.0 Report on Performance

Given its mandate, the primary role of the NLGNB is to make recommendations to the Minister of FAL on the names of geographical features within the province. As the NLGNB's focus remained the same for the duration of the 2023-2026 Activity Plan, the NLGNB is reporting on the same objective and indicators for 2025-2026.

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, 2026, 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:

- Throughout 2025-2026, the NLGNB supported several large community-based contributor submissions, demonstrating increased public awareness and engagement in the geographical naming process. Notably, a significant submission of place names for the Ramea area was received as a direct result of the NLGNB's prior municipal outreach initiatives. Following distribution of outreach letters, the Town shared the information with a local resident possessing extensive long-standing knowledge of community place names, resulting in a comprehensive contributor submission. The NLGNB worked with the contributor and municipality to review, verify and clarify local usage, locations and feature types to inform the decision-making process.
- Additional large contributor submissions, including those from the Dildo area, similarly required detailed follow up, spatial delineation and verification to support informed decision making by the NLGNB.
- As part of its engagement with federal partners, the NLGNB welcomed invited guest speakers from DFO at its November 2025 meeting. Suzanne FitzGerald, Senior Compliance Program Officer (Conservation and Protection), and Barry Peters, Regional Manager (Resource Management), presented DFO's review of legislated salmon river names. The presentation outlined inconsistencies between locally used names, existing legislation, and the Canadian Geographical Names Database, as well as public safety considerations related to search and rescue, enforcement, and emergency response. This session informed the NLGNB's understanding of the scale, complexity and consultation requirements associated with the multi-year Salmon River naming initiative.
- The NLGNB provided advice and follow-up support to this project. This work involved detailed spatial review, data validation and engagement with municipalities and Indigenous partners, with a strong focus on public safety, regulatory clarity and alignment with official geographical naming standards.
- The NLGNB worked closely with municipalities throughout the year on referral and engagement activities associated with place name applications received by

NLGNB. Municipal engagement included the circulation of consultation packages, review of mapped delineations and receipt of formal responses.

- The NLGNB continued its collaboration with the GNBC on the Interactive Story Map throughout 2025-2026, including follow-up outreach, content refinement and review of Newfoundland and Labrador place name narratives and imagery.

Indicator: Consulted with Indigenous groups about geographical naming issues.

Results:

- Throughout 2025-2026, the NLGNB advanced Indigenous consultation and engagement on geographical naming issues through a combination of provincial-level consultation activities and participation in national forums. The NLGNB worked closely with the IRR to support consultation planning, confirm appropriate contacts, and clarify engagement requirements for applications with potential Indigenous interests. This included work related to the Migwell name change applications, Welbourne Bay / Wilburn Bay, Anaktalak Bay and Edward's Cove, Petshishkapishkau / Petiscapiskau Hill, and elements of the Salmon River naming initiative.
- The NLGNB strengthened its Indigenous consultation and engagement practices by establishing clearer processes for identifying applications with potential Indigenous interests and coordinating consultation requirements early in the review process. Collaboration with the Office of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (IRR) and Indigenous Governments and Organizations supported more informed sequencing of applications, alignment with jurisdictional responsibilities, and consistent application of consultation guidance across complex files. This work strengthened the NLGNB's capacity to manage geographical naming decisions respectfully and in accordance with evolving provincial and national best practices.
- Indigenous perspectives were further informed at the national level through GNBC initiatives, including the AGM held in St. John's and national working groups focused on Indigenous Geographical Names and Respectful Terminology. These activities supported shared learning among naming authorities and informed the NLGNB's understanding of emerging best practices and national guidance. An important outcome of the work of the Indigenous Geographical Names working group was the development of the GNBC Best Practices for Indigenous Place Naming document, which was approved by all national naming authorities at the

AGM. The NLGNB shared this document with Indigenous Governments and Organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

Results:

- During 2025-2026, the NLGNB reviewed a substantial volume of geographical naming applications, including new submissions, large community-based contributor surveys and deferred files from previous years. Formal NLGNB review meetings were held on May 22-23, 2025, and November 12-14, 2025, to assess applications, address policy and consultation considerations, and make recommendations to the Minister.
- Over the course of the reporting year, the NLGNB received 201 name submissions, 186 submissions were eligible to be processed. These included individual applications as well as large contributor submissions generated through outreach initiatives. Submissions required varying levels of research, delineation, municipal verification and consultation prior to NLGNB review.
- One naming matter involving a bay within the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Area was addressed during 2025-2026. NLGNB received an application from a private individual proposing a name for an unnamed bay in northern Labrador. In accordance with Chapter 16 of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, NLGNB forwarded the application to the Nunatsiavut Government in recognition that the Nunatsiavut Government is the naming authority in this area. The Nunatsiavut Government informed NLGNB that the bay already had an existing Inuit name, but as it is not official, it does not appear on official maps or databases. The Nunatsiavut Government are considering submitting the name for official recognition.
- In support of informed decision-making, the NLGNB referred 25 applications to IRR during the reporting year for guidance on Indigenous consultation and engagement requirements. Five applications required Indigenous consultation.
- At its May 2025 meeting, the NLGNB reviewed naming applications and recommended one place name for approval by the Minister.
- At its November 2025 meeting, the NLGNB reviewed applications associated with the Ramea contributor submission, approving 85 applications and deferring 31

applications pending clarification related to spelling, apostrophes, feature location or additional information from contributors or the municipality.

- Decisions taken during the reporting year contributed to a total of 86 place names approved by the Minister and published in the Newfoundland and Labrador Gazette.
- Throughout the year, the NLGNB also responded to 25 inquiries from the public, municipalities, other jurisdictions and government departments regarding official place names, historical usage, database interpretation and naming authority. These inquiries supported transparency and promoted understanding of the geographical naming process.

Discussion of Results:

During 2025-2026, the NLGNB managed a notably high volume of applications and inquiries, reflecting increased public awareness of the geographical naming process and the effectiveness of outreach initiatives undertaken in previous years. Large contributor submissions, particularly those generated through municipal outreach, demonstrated growing engagement by communities and individuals with long-standing local knowledge, while reinforcing the importance of clear guidance, verification processes and ongoing follow-up.

The reporting year was also characterized by an increase in the complexity of applications under review. Many submissions required detailed spatial delineation, historical research, municipal input and Indigenous consultation or engagement. Collaborative initiatives, such as the multi-year Salmon River naming project with DFO, highlighted the scale and coordination required for projects involving multiple jurisdictions, legislation, public safety considerations and Indigenous interests.

Indigenous consultation and engagement remained a central focus of the NLGNB's work. Coordination with IRR, participation in national forums through the GNBC, and engagement with subject-matter experts strengthened the NLGNB's understanding of best practices and supported respectful, informed review of applications. NLGNB undertook engagement and consultation with Indigenous governments and organizations in accordance with legal and policy requirements. Hosting the 2025 GNBC AGM further reinforced alignment with national standards and facilitated knowledge exchange on Indigenous place naming, respectful terminology and evolving consultation approaches.

Operationally, the year underscored the growing demands placed on the geographical names program, including database system limitations, increased administrative

workload and the resource intensity of large contributor submissions and consultation requirements. Despite these challenges, the NLGNB continued to meet its mandate by advancing applications, responding to inquiries and maintaining a transparent, culturally respectful approach to the stewardship of Newfoundland and Labrador's geographical names.

4.0 Opportunities and Challenges

The work of the NLGNB presents both significant opportunities and ongoing challenges. Increasing public interest in geographical names and positive responses to outreach initiatives offer opportunities to further enhance community participation and document locally used names that contribute to cultural heritage, historical understanding and practical land-use considerations.

Collaboration with Indigenous Governments and Organizations presents an important opportunity to support the recognition of Indigenous knowledge, language and place-name traditions within the official naming framework. Continued engagement with Indigenous partners, guided by advice from IRR and national GNBC best practices, will remain essential to ensuring respectful, transparent, and informed decision-making. National-level collaboration through the GNBC, including participation in working groups and AGM discussions, also provides valuable insight into emerging practices and evolving approaches across jurisdictions.

At the same time, the NLGNB faces challenges related to the scale and complexity of its workload. Continued success through large contributor submissions, multi-year interdepartmental initiatives and respectful consultations will underscore the need to explore longer term improvements to data management and database system capabilities related to data access and batch processing to further improve application processing time.

The NLGNB also relies on federal government systems, including the national geographical names database maintained through the GNBC, for the storage and public availability of official place names. While this ensures national consistency, it limits the province's direct control over data access, updates and functionality. As geographical naming activity continues to increase and projects become more complex, this reliance may have greater operational implications over time. Continued collaboration with federal partners will be important, as will consideration of longer-term approaches to support the NLGNB's evolving needs.

Balancing timely application review with thorough research, consultation and documentation remains an ongoing challenge. As the volume and complexity of applications continue to grow, the NLGNB will need to prioritize clear processes, sustained collaboration with partners and careful resource management to support its mandate. Despite these challenges, the NLGNB remains well positioned to build on existing partnerships and initiatives to strengthen the management, recognition and preservation of geographical names across Newfoundland and Labrador.

5.0 Financial Statements

The NLGNB does not have statutory authority to collect revenue and does not operate with a standalone budget. Board member remuneration and other operating costs are funded through the FAL. Accordingly, the NLGNB is not required to prepare separate audited financial statements.