

Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board

Department of Environment and Conservation
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

2011-14 NLGNB Activity Plan



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1.0 Message from the Chair

The Newfoundland and Labrador Geographical Names Board [NLGNB] is appointed by the Minister of the Department of Environment and Conservation. The operation of the NLGNB is administered by the Director of Surveys and Mapping and the NLGNB's work is supported by an Administrative Officer I within the Surveys and Mapping Division, who also serves as provincial NLGNB secretary.

The NLGNB is a successor of the Nomenclature Board established in 1904 under the *Post and Telegraph Act*. The first Nomenclature Board was composed of leading clerics and educators of the day and concerned itself mostly with managing place name changes requested by postal officials, members of the House of Assembly on behalf of constituents, but very frequently clergymen. Canada Post proposed changes to avoid having settlements with the same name, but often changes were made simply because someone didn't like the names in use or deemed them offensive or inappropriate. Following Confederation in 1949, an amendment to the Act in 1951 named the Curator of the Museum and Deputy Minister of Public Works as ex-officio members, with the Curator as chair. At this stage membership of the Board included the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and other members of the provincial Cabinet. In 1959, the administration of the *Nomenclature Board Act* was placed under the Minister of Provincial Affairs with the Deputy Minister of Provincial Affairs as chair. In 1961, the Nomenclature Board members included The Honourable the Premier, J.R. Smallwood, the Attorney General, the Minister of Highways and the Minister of Health. Other prominent Board members of the 1960s included Professor E.R. Seary, A.B. Perlin, Michael Harrington, Dr. G.M. Story, Dr. Leslie Harris, E.B. Foran and F.M. O'Leary.

The present NLGNB operates under the *Geographical Names Board Act*, an Act originally proclaimed in 1975 to replace the *Nomenclature Act*, however, it was amended in 1991, ten years in advance of the adoption of *Newfoundland and Labrador* as the official name of the Province. Thus, in 1975 the operative title of the Board became *Geographical Names*. After 1975 the Board became mainly involved in the collection and approval of names of all cultural and natural features in the province and not just settled places. Comprehensive field surveys interviewing older local residents covering the eastern half of Newfoundland and the Sandwich Bay area of Labrador were conducted by Memorial University students under the Board's direction during the 1980s and early 1990s. In recent years, field surveys using volunteer, local residents have been extended to the South Coast, West Coast and Great Northern Peninsula regions of Newfoundland and into southern Labrador. These surveys added over 15,000 previously unrecorded geographical names, most of them established for generations in local oral usage but in great danger of being lost due to social, economic and demographic changes in rural areas of the Province. The NLGNB will continue to promote field research in hitherto unsurveyed areas over the next five years. The provincial geographical names database now contains about 30,000 official entries. These names are currently managed and made available for public use by the Administrative Officer I on behalf of the Board.

The NLGNB is a category 3 government entity and as such must plan at an activity level. This plan was prepared with consideration of the strategic directions of the Minister of Environment and Conservation. It includes the NLGNB's goals for the fiscal year included in the plan. As Chairman of the NLGNB, my signature below is indicative of the NLGNB's accountability for the preparation of the plan and the achievement of the objectives outlined herein.



W.G. Handcock
Professor Emeritus in Geography
Chair

2.0 Overview

The NLGNB is the main authority for recommending to government, through the Minister of Environment and Conservation, the proper status of, and all changes related to the names of places and geographical features in the Province.

The NLGNB consists of the provincial secretary, a permanent staff member with the title Administrative Officer I assigned by the Department, and five (5) other members appointed by the Minister. Members are appointed for a term of three (3) years. NLGNB members are primarily voluntary.

The NLGNB operates under the departmental budget.

2a. Mandate and Lines of Business

The main responsibility of the NLGNB is to administer the *Geographical Names Board Act* (CHAPTER G-3; 1991 c29 s2). This involves recording locally used names of places and natural features; consulting with government and other agencies in the selection of new names, or the renaming of places and features; collaborating with the Geographical Names Board of Canada (formerly the Canada Permanent Committee on Geographical Names) on naming standards, practices and principles; holding public meetings or inviting submissions where disputes arise over names and naming practices; and recommending to the Minister of Environment and Conservation for approval the official names of places and geographical features. The Act also empowers the NLGNB through the Minister of Environment and Conservation to be the final authority on the spelling and pronunciation of geographical names in the Province.

In carrying out its mandate the NLGNB must consult with a variety of sources prior to making any recommendations. The input of local residents and various other government agencies is deemed essential to this process. Section 9 of this Act stipulates that where a provision is inconsistent or conflicts with a provision, term or condition of the *Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act*, that provision, term or condition of the *Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act* shall have precedence over the provision of this Act.

2b. Representation

With the exception of the Chair, there are no remuneration provisions for the NLGNB. All meetings are held in St. John's.

Name	Role	Residence
Dr. Gordon Handcock	Chair	Salvage
Gary N. Smith	Vice-Chair	St. John's
Randy Hawkins	Secretary	St. John's
Margarita Andersen (Rita)	Member	Nain
Franca Smith	Member	Happy Valley-Goose Bay
Cheryl Brown-McLean	Member	St. John's

3.0 Primary Clients

The NLGNB's primary clients are members of the general public, government departments and agencies, municipalities and other bodies or persons concerned with the selection of place names or the renaming of places and features. Another key partner is the Geographical Names Board of Canada, which maintains the Canadian Geographical Names Service. This database contains all official geographical names in Canada. Newfoundland and Labrador has contributed approximately 30,000 official names to this database.

Other current government partners and agencies include:

- Parks Canada with respect to geographical names in Terra Nova and Gros Morne National Parks.
- The Department of Fisheries and Oceans with regard to names of coastal and underwater features and fishing grounds around Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The provincial Department of Natural Resources in providing assistance in the collection and verification of geographical names in the southern Labrador area.
- The provincial Department of Transportation and Works in respect to names of geographical features along the route of the Labrador Highway.
- The provincial Department of Municipal Affairs in respect to names of incorporated towns and local service districts.
- The provincial Department of Tourism, Cultural and Recreation in respect to names of geographical features on tourist maps.
- The provincial Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs in respect to names of geographical features in the Land Claim areas.
- The Innu Nation in respect to names of geographical features in the Innu Land Claims area.

4.0 Vision

The vision of the Department of Environment and Conservation is a clean, sustainable environment and healthy, resilient ecosystems in perpetuity for the social, physical, cultural, biological and economic well-being of the Province. The *Geographical Names Board Act* promotes the cultural aspect of this vision.

The vision of the NLGNB is to record and preserve the oral and written geographical names for functional use and as an important part of our cultural heritage. These names are made official for use in all government correspondence and documents, published literature, research reports, newspapers and magazines, road signs, public buildings, and maps and charts throughout the Province.

5.0 Mission

By March 31, 2017, the NLGNB will have made recommendations to Government in relation to any new geographical features and place names.

Performance Measure: Made recommendations to Government

Indicators:

- Processed naming recommendations from the general public and other stakeholders.

6.0 Values

The core values explain the character of the organization we promote. The strategic values ensure our core values are visible throughout the organization.

Value	Strategic Value Action Statements
Collaboration	Each individual will strive towards open collaboration with public and government agencies to achieve our desired goals.
Professionalism	Each individual will demonstrate excellence and high quality performance in carrying out duties of the NLGNB.
Innovation	Each individual will promote innovative strategies for presentation and maintenance of data related to place names of the Province.
Communication	Each individual will strive to share information about the NLGNB and its purpose and functions with stakeholders.

7.0 Objectives

The following objectives identify the priorities of the NLGNB for fiscal years 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14. The objectives include performance measures and indicators to facilitate the evaluation of the NLGNB's success. While the NLGNB will carry out the same objectives for each year of the plan, the indicators may be adjusted each year, as necessary.

Issue 1: Data Integrity and Management

With the advent of better mapping and computer technologies, standards for data management are continually changing. The NLGNB strives to ensure that the provincial dataset is up to date with current standards.

Objective 1: By March 31, 2012 the NLGNB will have focused on the improvement of our provincial geographical names dataset to ensure that it meets with existing Canadian national standards.

Performance Measure: Improvement of the provincial geographical names dataset.

Indicators:

- Geographical names collected and entered in dataset.
- Revisions made to current names in dataset.
- Revisions made to feature coordinates to improve accuracy.

Issue 2: Digital Delineation

Digital delineation is a new and precise method of mapping the geometry of a given geographical feature or place name. These standards are developed on a national level and will require several years to complete.

Objective 2: By March 31, 2012 the NLGNB will have implemented a digital delineation process in accordance with nationally recognized guidelines.

Performance Measure: Implementation of digital delineation process.

Indicator:

- Features delineated digitally and entered into a geometry database.

Issue 3: Commemorative Naming Program

Government currently does not have a commemorative naming program for place names. However, the development of a commemorative naming program is timely because the NLGNB has been approached by other agencies to assist with the commemoration of certain historical events.

Objective 3: By March 31, 2012 the NLGNB will have worked towards a strategy for a provincial Commemorative Naming Program.

Performance Measure: Work progressed on strategy.

Indicators:

- Research conducted on existing programs in Canada.
- Names proposed to provincial and/or federal jurisdictions.

Issue 4: Communications

Communications has become an issue since the work of the NLGNB has gained a higher profile due to increased use of the internet and an increased number of inquiries from the public about the Province's place names thus emphasizing the need to enhance its communications with stakeholders.

Objective 4: By March 31, 2012 the NLGNB will have engaged in activities to increase the visibility and profile of the NLGNB.

Performance Measure: Engaged in activities to increase visibility and profile.

Indicators:

- Add new links to the existing departmental website which highlight the geographical naming process.
- Contact volunteer, local residents who are knowledgeable about the toponymy of the Province.
- Number of speaking engagements by the NLGNB.
- Articles published.

Issue 5: Involve Schools in the Geographical Naming Process

Our school system is an excellent venue to exhibit the importance and relevance of our rich cultural history. School children can play an active role in the collection of the geographical feature names that have become part of their family's history. By encouraging such active participation in the name collection process these children can play an active role in the preservation of their own cultural history.

Objective 5: By March 31, 2012 the NLGNB will have worked on a strategy for the introduction of the geographical features into selected schools within the Province.

Performance Measure: Work commenced on strategy.

Indicators:

- Contact the Department of Education to determine the best curriculum choice to introduce geographical names.
- Engage in consultation and involvement with the Department of Education with respect to the implementation of this process in selected schools within the Province.
- Draft a proposal to implement the geographical names process in the school system.
- Contact the necessary school boards to get permission to introduce the geographical naming process.
- Choose a school to implement the program as a pilot project.