



**Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth
Culture and Heritage Division
Geographic Names Policy**

1. Preamble:

- a) Whereas the Government of Nunavut recognizes the historical and enduring relationship between Inuit and the land;
- b) And whereas the relationship between Inuit and the land forms the foundation for a traditional system of place names;
- c) And whereas traditional names for geographic features continue to form an integral part of the language, culture and history of Nunavummiut;
- d) And whereas the Department recognizes the importance of preserving and promoting the continued use and practical application of traditional names for geographic features through official designation;
- e) And whereas the Government of Nunavut is committed to incorporating Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit in the design and delivery of Government programs;
- f) And whereas the Department requires a policy through which place names for geographic features receive official recognition.

The following policy shall apply.

2. Statement of Policy

The Government of Nunavut recognizes the importance to Inuit culture and heritage of traditional names for geographic features and supports, through official recognition, the preservation and use of these names.

3. Principles

This policy is based on the following principles:

- a) Traditional Inuit toponymy is an oral toponymy that has yet to be recorded in its entirety;
- b) The Government of Nunavut should support and promote the development and documentation of traditional Inuit oral toponymy;

- c) Special emphasis should be given to the official recognition of traditional names for geographic features to ensure cultural continuity for the people of Nunavut;
- d) The public should be allowed input and participation in the process leading to the official recognition of names for geographical features in Nunavut; and,
- e) The Inuit Heritage Trust must be consulted concerning place name decisions as stipulated in Article 33, Part 9, of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all departments, agencies and employees of the Government of Nunavut.

4. Definitions

The following definitions apply to this Policy:

- Alternate Name:** The name for a topographic feature used by members of the local population in place of a current official name. Upon approval by the Minister, an alternate name replaces an existing official name.
- Conventional Name:** The name for a physical feature that is used by members of the local population in addition to a current official name.
- Geographic Name:** A proper name, consisting of one or more words, that is used to designate a discernable physical feature (e.g., Alexander Bay), including features that may occur on a seasonal basis (e.g., floe edge).
- New Name:** A geographic or place name, not in local use, proposed for a specific geographic feature.
- Official Name:** A geographic or place name approved as an official name by the Government of Nunavut. Only official names can be shown on federally produced topographical maps, charts, publications, and legal documents.
- Significant Name:** The name for a geographic feature for which a decision may (i) conflict with another name; (ii) may have importance to individuals outside of the immediate area of

the feature; (iii) may have national or international ramifications; or, (iv) may be considered controversial in nature.

Toponym

The proper name applied to a geographical feature.

Toponymic Analysis:

Research into the origin, pronunciation, correct spelling and orthography, and history of use of a name for a geographic feature; the determination of the exact location and extent of the feature or place; and, the gathering of secondary and archival references to the name or the feature to which it applies.

5. Authorities and Accountability

(1) General

This Policy is issued under the authority of the Executive Council with the authority to make exceptions and approve revisions to this Policy.

(a) Minister

The Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth is accountable to the Executive Council for the implementation of this Policy.

(b) Deputy Minister

The Deputy Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth is accountable to the Minister and responsible to the Minister for the administration of this Policy.

(2) Review Process

(a) Minister

The Minister shall approve all significant, alternate, conventional and new place names.

(b) The Minister shall:

(i) designate the Nunavut Toponymist as the Nunavut Representative to the Geographical Names Board of Canada;

(ii) on the advice of the Nunavut Geographic Names Committee, approve official, alternate, conventional, and new names; and,

(iii) submit an information item to Executive Council notifying Council of the approval of official, alternate, conventional, and new place names.

(c) Nunavut Geographic Names Committee

The Nunavut Geographic Names Committee will review all requests for place name approvals and/or changes, and recommend to the Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth the disposition of significant, alternate, conventional and new place names.

(d) Nunavut Toponymist

The Nunavut Toponymist shall support the Nunavut Geographic Names Committee by:

(i) receiving requests and/or suggestions for name approvals and/or changes from individuals, communities, institutions, organizations, federal and territorial government departments, or from toponymic research projects;

(ii) determining the category for each name request;

(iii) consulting with and obtaining the recommendation of the appropriate local government authorities concerning the disposition of the name;

(iv) conducting toponymic analyses of proposed name decisions and prepare, depending on the name category, background information;

(v) consulting with the Inuit Heritage Trust concerning place name decisions, as required by s33.9.2 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement;

(vi) making known to the general public all name decisions, whether approvals or rejections, through a medium appropriate to the level of importance of the decision; and

(v) other secretariat functions reasonably required to support the review process.

6. Procedures

(1) Name Submissions

Requests for name decisions should be directed to the Nunavut Toponymist, and must include the reason the decision is being requested, the exact location of the

geographic feature and, if known, any relevant background information on the name. The request should also demonstrate how the proposed name supports the intent of this Policy, to promote the official recognition of traditional names.

(2) Alternate Naming

If it can be demonstrated that more than one name is used locally for a geographic feature, consideration should be given to official recognition of those names.

(3) Orthography

All Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun names shall be approved according to the orthographic standards established by the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth.

(4) Use of Generic Term

The generic portion, where applicable, of a new name is to be approved in the form in which it is used locally. The generic used in a new name must accurately describe the feature to which the name applies (e.g., Nunavut, not Nunavut Territory).

(5) Power to Reconsider

The Minister may, when he or she considers it advisable, refer a naming decision back to the Nunavut Geographic Names Committee for reconsideration, and may confirm or vary his or her decision based on the advice of the Nunavut Geographic Names Committee.

7. Prerogative of Executive Council

Nothing in this Policy shall in any way be construed to limit the prerogative of the Executive Council to make decisions or take action outside the provisions of this Policy.