

# Policy for Naming Geographic Features in Saskatchewan

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Geographic Naming is the legislated process by which a name for a geographic feature is approved for use on government maps and within government publications. However, these names are more than labels on a map or the words on a road sign; they reflect the culture and heritage of the province and its people. Daily, these names convey the traditions of the Indigenous people who originally occupied this land, the stories of those who have come since, and the connections between us and the land. Some names serve to honour the ultimate sacrifice made by those in the service of the province and nation.

Saskatchewan assumed responsibility for geographic naming from the federal government in the early 1960s. This document incorporates and updates the existing policies, guidelines and practices used to guide the naming of geographic features in the province.

## 1. RESPONSIBILITY FOR GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

- a. Pursuant to *The Heritage Property Act*, the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport is responsible for geographic naming. This work is focused on the approval of names for official use when referring to geographic features (e.g. lakes, rivers, hills) or places (e.g. locations that people use for some purpose and have named). Day to day administration of the Saskatchewan Geographic Names Program is provided by the Heritage Conservation Branch of the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport.
- b. The Minister's authority to name geographic features and places does not extend to the naming of:
  - I. Motor vehicle transportation routes, including: streets, roads, highways, freeways and bridges;
  - II. Municipalities, municipal subdivisions, and provincial, regional and municipal parks\*;
  - III. Names for geographic features and places located entirely upon land owned or administered by the federal government (e.g. National Parks, military reserves) and First Nations Reserves\*.

\* it is the responsibility of those who oversee these names to file the approved names and any updates with the Saskatchewan Geographic Names Program so that they can be entered into the provincial and national databases of approved names.

- c. For geographic features located partially on First Nations Reserves or lands owned or administered by the federal government, the Minister will share responsibility for naming of these with the appropriate First Nations Band Council (as delegated by *The Indian Act*) or federal department or agency.
- d. Geographic features that are congruous with, or cross, inter-provincial or international boundaries require the joint approval of the Minister and the appropriate province, territory or state.

## **2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS FOR GEOGRAPHIC NAMING IN SASKATCHEWAN**

- a. The principles of openness and administrative fairness are followed in the geographic naming process.
- b. Proposals for new geographic names or changes to existing names may be submitted by any interested individual or group of persons.
- c. Saskatchewan will encourage and support the nomination and approval of names which represent the cultural diversity of the province.
- d. A geographic name, or the right to name a geographic feature, cannot be bought or sold, raffled, or otherwise conferred through contest, auction, gift, or agreement.
- e. The Heritage Conservation Branch will, upon request, advise any group concerned with the selection of geographic names regarding the suitability and spelling of such names. Government ministries, First Nations Band Councils, and other agencies with statutory authority to establish names are encouraged to consult the Heritage Conservation Branch regarding the existence of local or historic names and the suitability and spelling of potential official names.
- f. Official adoption of submitted geographic names is based on conformity with the Policy for Naming Geographic Features in Saskatchewan and is not subject to the wish of a dominant interest group or individuals.
- g. Ownership of land does not confer the right or entitlement to name a geographic feature. Approval of a name does not advance or prejudice legitimate claims to the land.
- h. Company or commercial product names are not acceptable as geographic names unless there is long-standing local usage of the name by the public. Proposals for new names or changes to existing names that are intended to promote or enhance a commercial venture will not be considered.
- i. Saskatchewan will only recognize one official name or name phrase for a particular geographic feature or place.
- j. Geographic names should be in good taste and discriminatory or derogatory names will not be considered.
- k. There will be no discrimination as to ethnic origin, political beliefs, sex, creed, or colour in the determination of a name.

## **3. NAMES IN GENERAL PUBLIC USE**

- a. Priority for new names will be given to names with long-standing local usage by the public. Unless there are good reasons to the contrary, this policy should prevail unless it is believed that confusion might occur, derogatory or pejorative forms might result, or for some other reason the local name does not serve the public interest.
- b. In situations where a proposed name is the same or similar in sound or spelling to an existing approved name or an unofficial name in use in the area, and it is felt that confusion may result from approving the new name, local assistance will be sought to identify a way in which the names may be distinguished.

## **4. APPROVING NAMES FOR UNNAMED FEATURES**

- a. There is no urgent need to name all geographic features in the province.

- b. While nominations for naming will normally be generated by the public, the Minister or Ministry may initiate a nomination process where it is felt to be in the public interest to do so.
- c. Geographic names can be established where there is a demonstrated need for the name. Where no established unofficial name is found to exist, the following sources of names are considered:
  - i. Local Indigenous language names for the geographic feature or place;
  - ii. Names associated with an historical event which occurred in the area;
  - iii. Names which uniquely describe the geographic feature;
  - iv. Names of prominent residents associated with the area;
  - v. Names of persons who died during war or other public service to the province or nation;
  - vi. Names of prominent individuals or events in Saskatchewan's history that might be recognized pursuant to the policies for Commemorative Names outlined in section 7 below.

## 5. LANGUAGE FORMS

- a. Geographic names may use any characters available in UTF-8 character encoding but will generally be comprised of letters, punctuation and diacritics that are available in, or compatible with, Windows Glyph List 4 (WGL4).
- b. When a name is derived from a language other than English, the name will be approved in a linguistic form acceptable to both the language community concerned and the Minister.

## 6. STATUS OF NAMES

### a. **Approved Name**

Approved names are those for which the Minister has issued an order to proclaim them as the legal name for a specific geographic feature or place. Approved names are to be used in provincial government maps and publications and will be shared with the Geographic Names Board of Canada for inclusion in the national database of geographic names.

### b. **Approved Name Phrase**

An Approved Name Phrase is composed of two to four individual names which the Minister feels should be used together as the legal name for a particular geographic feature or place. Like an Approved Name, an Approved Name Phrase must be used for government maps and publications and will also be shared with the Geographic Names Board of Canada for inclusion in the national database of geographic names.

### c. **Unofficial Name**

Unofficial Names are names that are used to refer to a geographic feature or place but have not been proclaimed by the Minister as the Approved Name. Reasons why such names have not been approved include:

- i. The name has never been nominated for approval;
- ii. There is insufficient evidence of well-established usage of the name;

- iii. There is significant concern amongst stakeholders that approval and publication of the name would be culturally inappropriate;
- iv. Approval and publication of the name would convey an economic or political advantage for an individual, group or organization;
- v. The name was previously repealed for use as an Approved Name.

Information regarding unofficial names may be collected and retained by the Heritage Conservation Branch, but these names will not appear on government-issued maps or in other government publications.

## **7. COMMEMORATIVE NAMES**

Commemorative Names are a special type of geographic name that are approved to honour individuals and local, provincial, or national events of significance. Nominations for Commemorative Names are approved through the same review process as other geographic names and will be considered in one of the following categories:

### **1. Significance to the Country:**

Individuals and events that are significant for their contribution to the history and development of the nation in the fields of politics, agriculture, arts, education, industry, law, medicine, religion, science, leadership, or sport. This category includes members of the royal family and their representatives in Canada.

### **2. Significance to the Province:**

Individuals and events that are significant for their contribution to the history and development of Saskatchewan in the fields of politics, agriculture, arts, education, industry, law, medicine, religion, science, leadership, or sport.

### **3. Significance to the Area:**

Individuals and events that are significant for their contribution to the history and development of the area where the geographic feature or place is located.

### **4. Lives Lost in Service to the Province or Nation:**

Individuals who have been killed while on active duty and were born, raised or spent a significant portion of their life in Saskatchewan. Those considered in this category will usually be members of the Canadian Armed Forces, law enforcement officers, conservation officers, professional firefighters, and emergency medical responders. Featured names pursuant to this category are considered to be a GeoMemorial name.

GeoMemorial names are intended to be a lasting tribute and will typically only be approved for geographic features which do not already have an approved name. Replacing or changing such names will generally only be considered for environmental or administrative reasons (e.g. a named lake dries up; a typographical error in the name). The Minister may also approve a change pursuant to the policies for creating an Approved Name Phrase.

Other considerations for Commemorative Names include:

- a. In accordance with national and international naming guidelines, nominations will generally not be considered for individuals who are living.
- b. In accordance with national and international naming guidelines, a person should be deceased for at least five (5) years before a nomination will be considered. Exceptions will be considered where the individual was killed while in the service of the province or nation and are being nominated pursuant to category 7.4 above.
- c. Individuals nominated for a geographic feature or place to be named in their honour must be found to be of good character, possess a solid reputation throughout their life, not been involved in activities which are generally considered to have caused significant harm to others, and have no criminal offences on their record for which a pardon has not been received. Testimonials to these facts should be submitted with a nomination.
- d. The names of individuals who are victims of accidents or tragedies will not be considered for geographic naming unless they are eligible under one of the established Commemorative Names categories.
- e. A commemorative name for an individual or event will not be considered for approval if:
  - i. A well-established and acceptable name already exists for the geographic feature or place (except where the approval of an Approved Name Phrase is considered appropriate by the Minister);
  - ii. A geographic feature or place has already been named after the individual or event in Saskatchewan;
  - iii. In the case of members of the Canadian armed forces, a feature or place has been named after the individual elsewhere in Canada as a result of their service to the nation.

## **8. APPROVED NAME PHRASES**

An Approved Name Phrase enables more than one name to be used for a specific geographic feature or place. Through this form of a name, the Government of Saskatchewan can acknowledge the importance that geographic features and places have for different peoples of the province, particularly Indigenous people, and to recognize names in different languages.

- a. The Minister may approve an Approved Name Phrase to serve as the legal name for the geographic feature or place. The name phrase will include two to four individual names for the feature or place separated by a forward slash “/”. An example is Daniel Green/Russell Creek Reservoir.
- b. An Approved Name Phrase may be used to name a geographic feature or place where:
  - i. More than one name is found to be well-known and more or less equally used in the community or area;
  - ii. It is learned that there exists a well-established local name for a geographic feature that was previously approved for a Commemorative Name;
  - iii. A traditional Indigenous name is identified for a geographic feature or place that already has an official name;

- iv. There is a nomination to name a geographic feature or place that does not have an approved name, but research determines there is an accepted traditional Indigenous name or a well-established unofficial name for the feature or place.
- c. When creating an Approved Name Phrase, the individual names to be included in the name phrase will be placed in the following order:
  - i. Traditional Indigenous name(s) for the geographic feature or place;
  - ii. Existing approved name for the geographic feature or place;
  - iii. Other local or Commemorative name for the geographic feature or place.

An exception to this guideline will be made for GeoMemorial names, which will generally be placed first in order within the name phrase.
- d. The entire name phrase should possess less than 75 characters.
- e. A nominator may request the Minister to consider an Approved Name Phrase for a geographic feature or place at the time of nomination. Consideration for such a name may also be initiated by the Ministry when reviewing any nomination for geographic naming.
- f. Each individual name to be included in a name phrase must meet the criteria for naming set out in this policy and be approved through the regular approval process.
- g. An Approved Name Phrase approved by the Minister for a geographic feature or place is an approved geographic name pursuant to section 71.03(1) of *The Heritage Property Act*.

## **9. NOMINATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS**

- a. Those wishing to propose a name for approval are asked to complete a nomination form provided by the Heritage Conservation Branch. A completed form will contain the following information:
  - i. Proposed name;
  - ii. Preferred area of the province for the proposed name;
  - iii. If a particular geographic feature or place is being proposed, the coordinates for this feature and a map showing its location;
  - iv. Reason for proposing the name;
  - v. Historical research that speaks to the appropriateness of the name and significance of the individual to be commemorated (in the case of a commemorative name);
  - vi. Letters of support for the proposed name.
- b. Nominations will be received and reviewed by the Heritage Conservation Branch. This review will include:
  - i. Research for the existence of other local or unofficial names. If a well-established local name is determined to exist for a particular feature, a new name will usually not be recommended for approval. In such circumstances, Ministry officials will engage the local community to see if they wish to submit a nomination to have the well-established local name approved for official use.
  - ii. Gathering comments on the suitability and likelihood of acceptance and usage of the proposed name from persons' familiar with the area, including some or all of: local government officials, First Nations and Métis Locals, local historians

and historical societies, park managers and staff, conservation officers, and search and rescue personnel.

- iii. In the case of a commemorative name proposal, the Heritage Conservation Branch will undertake research to determine if the proposed name is acceptable to the public.
- c. When the Heritage Conservation Branch is satisfied that the nomination conforms with the policies of the Saskatchewan Geographic Names Program, the nomination will be submitted to the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation Board to make a recommendation to the Minister on the approval of the proposed name.
- d. The Minister will consider the Board's recommendation and make a decision regarding the nomination.
- e. Notification is sent to the nominator regarding the decision of the Minister.
- f. If the name is approved, the name and location of the geographic feature or place is published in the Saskatchewan Gazette.
- g. Approved names are forwarded to the Secretariat for Geographic Names Board of Canada for inclusion in the national database of approved geographic names.

#### **10. CHANGES OR REMOVAL OF A NAME**

The Minister may change or remove a name for a geographic feature or place when:

- a. It is subsequently determined that the individual commemorated by a name has been convicted of a criminal offence for which a pardon has not been issued;
- b. It is subsequently determined that the individual commemorated by a name undertook actions during their life which are generally considered to have caused significant harm to others or have otherwise significantly impacted the reputation and perceived character of the individual;
- c. It is subsequently determined that a feature was already named for the individual commemorated by the name;
- d. The name is no longer appropriate due to changes to the landform of the feature;
- e. An Approved Name Phrase has been approved for the feature which supersedes the previous approved name;
- f. Special circumstances warrant that the name is no longer valid or appropriate.

#### **11. USE OF GEOGRAPHIC NAMES**

- a. Pursuant to section 71.03 (2)(b) of *The Heritage Property Act*, names which are officially approved by the Minister are to be used by all government ministries and agencies in the preparation of maps and other publications.
- b. Individuals and organizations are encouraged to use only official names when depicting or describing geographic features.
- c. All official names are provided to the Geographical Names Board of Canada for inclusion in the Canadian Geographical Names Database for use by all citizens as well as national and international governments and organizations.

## **12. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES BOARD OF CANADA**

- a.** The Geographical Names Board of Canada is a national committee established and supported by the Government of Canada to act as national coordinating body on the development of standard policies for the treatment of names and terminology, the promotion of the use of official names, and the encouragement of the development of international standards.
- b.** As a member of this Board, Saskatchewan contributes to the development of pan-Canadian geographical naming principles and procedures, and supports activities to increase public awareness of Canadian geographical names and the management of an authoritative national database of geographic names.
- c.** Pursuant to section 71.04 of *The Heritage Property Act*, the Geographical Names Board of Canada can act as an advisor to the Province in naming decisions and in the development of provincial naming policies.

## **13. SUPERSEDING OF PREVIOUS POLICIES**

- a.** The policies specified in this document supersede any geographic naming policies or procedures dated or in use prior to the date of approval indicated on this policy document.
- b.** All names approved pursuant to previous policies and guidelines remain in effect and do not need to be reconsidered or reapproved so as to conform to this policy.