

THE REMATRIATION OF INDIGENOUS PLACE NAMES

Partial Map of Indigenous Place Names in Canada

Rematriation of Indigenous place names is about the restoration and enactment of Indigenous legal practices.

Place naming reflects Indigenous laws, governance systems, and relationships to land, water, and territory. Place name revival exposes the ways Canadian law intersects with – and often constrains or selectively recognizes - those practices.

This map highlights the work of communities, some referenced in the Yellowhead Special Report, *The Rematriation of Indigenous Place Names*, demonstrating how naming practices are an assertion of Indigenous legal authority, recognizing the historical agreements, re-establishing working relationships amongst Indigenous nations, and crafting a diplomatic language with Canadian governments.



The additional research conducted here is not an exhaustive list of Indigenous place names, but meant to serve as a starting point to demonstrate how Indigenous Nations and communities are asserting Indigenous law and jurisdiction through the rematriation of Indigenous place names.

9. Kookooko'oosagasawining

Rather than being renamed, Kookooko'oosagasawining was **officially recognized** as an Indigenous place name in 2016. Kookooko'oosagasawining translates to “Owl Smoking Island” in Anishinaabemowin, which is derived from a female Elder named Owl who conducted smoke ceremonies on the island.

10. Abinojii Mikanah, Awasisak Meskanow & Taapweenin Way*

In 2021, three streets in Winnipeg, MB were **renamed in Anishinaabemowin** (Ojibwe), Cree, and Michif. Bishop Grandin Boulevard was renamed to Abinojii Mikanah, which means “children’s way” in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe). Bishop Grandin Trail was renamed to Awasisak Mēskanōw, which means “children’s road” in Cree, and Grandin Street was renamed to Taapweenin Way, which means “Truth” in Michif.

Poplar First Nation has been learning and documenting ancestral place names by engaging with elders and **creating a map of all known Indigenous place names**, many of which have now been recognized by the federal government.

11. Kinngait

After a community vote in favour in 2019, Cape Dorset, NU was officially **changed to Kinngait** in 2020. Kinngait means “where the hills are” in Inuktitut, which is the traditional name from the people who lived in that area, according to Timoon Toonoo, the Mayor of Kinngait.

12. Iqaluit

In 1987, Frobisher Bay was **officially restored as Iqaluit**, which translates to “place of many fish” in Inuktitut. By replacing the name of a colonial explorer with one grounded in Inuit language, traditions, and perspectives (what Inuit peoples had always called the region), this act of restoration signalled recognition of Inuit sovereignty by federal and territorial governments. This example is often cited in many following cases made for renaming or restoring Indigenous place names.

13. Ookwemin Minising

In collaboration with LURA and **MinoKamik Collective** led by Elder Shelley Charles (Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation), the City of Toronto was guided by an Indigenous Advisory Council on renaming Villiers Island to Ookwemin Minising. **Officially renamed in 2024**, Ookwemin Minising translates to “place of the black cherry trees” in Anishinaabemowin/Ojibwemowin. As part of **Port Lands Indigenous Place Naming Initiative**, the Indigenous Advisory Council also chose the name Biidaasige Park for a new park in the same area. Biidaasige translates to “sunlight shining towards us” in Anishinaabemowin/Ojibwemowin.

14. Ataté:ken

In 2019, **Amherst Street was officially renamed to Ataté:ken Street** in Montreal, QC, in consultation with various Indigenous community members in Montreal and members of Mohawk and Algonquin Nations. **Ataté:ken** means “brothers and sisters” or “our relations” in Kanien’kéha (Mohawk). Kanesatake Grand Chief Serge Simon stated that this represents a change in mindset in the city and signifies acceptance of Indigenous people and communities.

15. Meto'mqwijuig Mountain

In late 2023, the Government of New Brunswick established a **new process to eliminate derogatory place names**. In 2024, the community and mountain known as Squaw Cap in Restigouche County, NB was renamed to Evergreen, while the mountain was restored to **Meto'mqwijuig Mountain** – the original Mik'maw name according to historical records, following guidance from Mik'maw and Wolastoqey leaders and local residents. Meto'mqwijuig means “to hear something that is flowing” or “a mountain stream nearby” in Miq'maw.



This resource is part of the Yellowhead Institute Special Report, *The Rematriation of Indigenous Place Names*.

To learn more, visit yellowheadinstitute.org.