



The politics of toponymy: Naming settlements, municipalities and school districts in Canada's Prairie provinces

John C. Lehr

Department of Geography, University of Winnipeg

Brian McGregor

Department of Geography, University of Winnipeg

Place names reflect the political, military, economic, and social power of a group. When what are now the Canadian Prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta were settled by Europeans, the names they bestowed on places revealed the newcomers' power and the institutions that constituted the political fabric of the new society. Railway corporations, the churches, and the imperial government were the principal contributors to toponyms of settled places. At the local level, hundreds of rural municipalities were named by politicians and thousands of school districts were named by elected school trustees. Investigation of the naming process reveals how these newcomers negotiated their place in Canadian society and how they transferred their world views, history, and geography into western Canada.

Keywords: toponyms, school districts, rural municipalities, Canadian prairies

Introduction

Places are social constructs created by human societies who imbue them with meaning and values. Assigning a new name to a place is a powerful statement of political authority that may subsume religious beliefs, patterns of use, social values, a society's views of the past, and its expectations of the future. The old axiom that the victors write the history should carry a corollary that they also get to name—or rename—places. Place names carry emotional and cultural baggage and are socially and politically important as products of often conflicting ethnic, national, and community values.

The process of de-colonializing Canada's North testifies to the deep emotional bond of communities to place and the role of

place names as a form of symbolic capital for both elite and marginalized groups. The acts of renaming Frobisher Bay to Iqaluit in 1987 and Eskimo Point to Arviat in 1989, for example, highlighted the semiotic relationship between toponyms, power, and identity. To the Inuit population, restoring the original names was a symbolic assertion of their presence and an affirmation of their political primacy in the newly created administrative territory that would eventually become Nunavut. The process continues. In Manitoba, the news media has begun to note the Cree community of Cross Lake is also known as Pimicikamak, which is Cree for where the lake crosses the river, though the band's website insists that the name describes the tribal territory rather than the community of Cross Lake itself (Cross Lake

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Correspondence to: John C. Lehr, Department of Geography, University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg MB, R3B 2E9 Email: j.lehr@uwinnipeg.ca

Band 2016; Robinson 2016). Such nuances are important, for the semiotics of renaming speak to the perpetuation of deeply entrenched power relationships between settler and Aboriginal societies.

Geographers and historians have long recognized the study of place names as a valuable aid in interpreting past landscapes. In Britain, the course of settlement by various invading groups can be determined through the distribution of Norse and Saxon place names, while surviving Celtic place names, often highly descriptive, when translated offer valuable insights into environmental conditions thousands of years ago (Readers Digest Association 1965, 124–5.) A series of publications by the British Place Name Society has examined the origins and meanings of place names in ever more detail, extending to the level of farms and individual fields offering new insights into the landscapes of bygone eras. Place name evidence was also used by Sousa and García-Murillo (2001) to reconstruct changes in past environments. Elsewhere, Cohen and Kliot (1992) and Katz (1995) studied place names as part of political processes aimed at legitimizing territorial claims; Guyot and Seethal (2007) argued they were expressions of social power; while Lester (1979) viewed place names as integral parts of the colonization and decolonization process. This final point is echoed by Yeoh (1996) and Tucker and Rose-Redwood (2015), who maintain toponyms are indicators of social attitudes and political thinking. Place names are also important to national governments. Radding and Weston (2010, 394) argue some nations are prepared to go to war over the naming of a place, believing recognition of a place name legitimizes a territorial claim.

In Canada, there has been increasing interest in the study of place names, sparked in part by Alan Rayburn's popular book, *Naming Canada*, which explored the history of Canadian place naming. In the Prairie provinces a series of publications have listed and, less often, given the etymology of prairie place names. In Manitoba, Rudnyc'kyj, (1970), Hamm (1980), and Buchner (2000) maintained a gazetteer-like approach that provided sophisticated and etymological analyses of provincial place names. Saskatchewan place names were inventoried and explained by Russell (1980) and Barry (1997). Marden (1973), Karamitsanis (1990), Harrison (1994), and Aubrey (1996) have listed and given the etymology of many Alberta place names. More recently however, Berg and Vuolteenaho (2009) and Rose-Redwood et al. (2010) have argued for a critical reformulation of the study of toponymy, urging a move beyond the traditional focus on etymology and taxonomy and re-examination of the politics of naming places.

The reformulated critical approach to toponymic enquiry argues that power, narrowly and simplistically defined as politics, misses all the other influences on place names and the effects they have on people. A critical, far broader, and more encompassing view, acknowledges that naming places is inextricably bound up with both governmental and societal power relations. Laura Bigon's (2016) edited volume on the colonial legacies embedded in African toponyms is an example. The contributors recognize that the relationship between governed and government as manifested in place names is complex and nuanced

by the semiotics of place and agency. The critical approach to the examination of prairie toponymy, adopted here, emphasizes the nuances of naming rural municipalities and school districts by settlers. In so doing, it reveals something of the complexity surrounding place, toponymy, society, politics, and power. Thus the toponyms found on the prairies may be seen variously as statements of imperialism, settler appropriation, Aboriginal resistance, and ethnic resistance or acculturation.

Toponyms in the Prairie provinces

For millennia before the arrival of Europeans in the territory that now comprises the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, the land was occupied by Aboriginal peoples who assigned names to those features and points significant to them for religious, territorial, or economic reasons. As is common when invaders dispossess the original inhabitants and occupy a new territory, in those parts of the prairie provinces settled by European agriculturalists, the newcomers transplanted their political and social values and impressed their *weltanschauung* into the landscape by creating, naming, and renaming places. Today, relatively few original Aboriginal place names survive in their original form, though many "English" place names are simply the original Aboriginal names appropriated and translated into English. Head-Smashed-In and Swift Current are but two examples. Moose Jaw in Saskatchewan is actually a poor rendition of an Aboriginal name that had nothing to do with the animal or its jaw. For the most part those Aboriginal place names that have survived without being translated into English or French, or mangled in pronunciation, occur most frequently in areas that were settled only sparsely by Europeans, such as the northern shield areas unsuited to commercial agriculture.

Since western Canada was surveyed long before any significant settlement by Europeans, the Crown, represented by the Dominion Government, and later by provincial governments and their agencies, was a powerful institution that monitored and registered place names, thereby controlling the majority of the toponymy of the country. Government surveyors recorded names obtained from Aboriginal people or squatters who were present when the survey came through. At least in the early period of European exploration, the toponyms appearing on maps were the product of negotiation between pre-existing Aboriginal knowledge and cartographic expedience. The Canadian geologist J. B. Tyrrell explained the process of naming places in areas new to Europeans:

... many of the names in use by the local tribes were obtained from them. Where such names did not conflict with similar names in use elsewhere, they were generally adopted in my reports and on maps. When no native Indian names were obtainable, I made use of such names as seemed appropriate at the time (Tyrrell 1915, 214).

Tyrrell listed some 230 Aboriginal place names in “Manitoba and vicinity,” all of which referred to natural features: lakes, rivers, rapids, islands, portages, and so forth (Tyrrell 1915, 214–231). These names had been in use by local Aboriginal populations according to Tyrrell “from time immemorial.” Some, he thought, were “evidently contractions or corruptions” with their original meanings lost. When he considered Aboriginal names too long or difficult for Europeans to pronounce, he shortened them to “about four syllables, retaining, as far as possible, the general character and sound of the words” as pronounced by the Aboriginal population (Tyrrell 1915, 215). Most surviving Aboriginal place names are descriptive. Some examples include Patemaykwan Lake [where beaver are put in a fire to burn the fur off], Pembina [summer berry], Pukatawagen [fishing place], Pisew Falls [lynx] and Manigotagen [bad throat] (Buchner 2000). Athabasca [grass and reeds here and there], Manitou [supernatural spirit or god], Ponoka [elk], Saskatchewan [swift flowing river], Wetaskiwin [the hills where peace was made] and Winnipeg [muddy waters] are among the relatively few Aboriginal names on the prairies that survived the inrush of European settlement (Russell 1980).

The Canadian government had no real presence in the region prior to 1870. Before then, corporations were the de facto European claim to power for all the territory that later became the Prairie provinces. Two fur-trading enterprises, the Northwest Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), maintained posts along the rivers that fed their respective trades. In northern Manitoba, along the rivers flowing into Hudson Bay, most of the permanent settlements were founded by the HBC. Virtually all promoted a particular vision of history and conflated corporate and national identities in their names. Oxford House and York Factory incorporated transferred toponyms, Churchill and the nearby Fort Prince of Wales suggested imperial designs, while Norway House simply recalled the ethnic origin of the Norwegians brought in to construct a road there in the early 1800s (Buchner 2000, 195). The Northwest Company, headquartered in Montreal, also penetrated into the region, leaving evidence of its Quebec roots in some of the forts it established in connection with the fur trade. Dauphin, Qu’Appelle, Fond du Lac, and Souris were all products of the company’s French Canadian heritage, though its posts established by Anglophone employees were given British or Aboriginal names: Fort Chipewyan, Pembina, and Fort Gibraltar.

When the railway companies laid track across the prairies they located station halts at six to ten mile intervals. Thus, thousands of places were created along railway lines, most of which were named by railway executives and employees. Most of the former, and many of the latter, were drawn from an Anglo-Canadian elite thoroughly imbued with British imperial values. The names of major points along the lines reflected this. For example, Virden in western Manitoba was initially named Gopher Creek but was renamed Manchester after the Duke of Manchester, a Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) director. When it was found that another Manitoba community was already named Manchester the name was switched to Virden after the name of the duke’s county seat (Buchner 2000, 282.) Similarly, Cherry Creek was

re-named by the CPR in honour of Adolph Boissevain who had introduced CPR shares to the European market in the railway’s early years (Buchner 2000, 83). In later years, other large corporations also played roles. Early hydro-electric generating plants built by Winnipeg Hydro and Manitoba Hydro along the Winnipeg River mostly carried non-Aboriginal names. In the 1960s, as generating stations were built further north, and corporate attitudes towards the Aboriginal presence began to change, names of Aboriginal origin were adopted or appropriated.

In areas occupied by waves of European immigrants, Aboriginal toponyms, like the people who created them, generally were soon marginalized or eliminated. If settlers were already established, names of physical features and other landmarks were obtained from them and also became enshrined on topographic maps. Later, as embryonic settler communities grew, they were named by government-appointed postmasters who chose to celebrate their homeland places, British national heroes or honour early, mostly Anglophone, pioneer families.

The names of resource towns in the North tended to reflect the disconnection between the corporations that founded them and the Aboriginal peoples who occupied the area prior to the exploitation of the area’s mineral resources. Thompson, Uranium City, Fort McMurray, and Lynn Lake are typical examples. One hydro dam near Norway House was named Jenpeg, a name often assumed to be of Aboriginal origin but was in fact an acronym of the names of two women in the Manitoba Hydro office in Winnipeg: Jennifer and Peggy (Buchner 2000, 123). The oddly named Flin Flon, Manitoba was named after Josiah Flint-abbatey Flonatin—a fictional character in the novel, *The Sunless City*—by the prospector who discovered the deposit that fueled the town’s growth (Buchner 2000, 82).

In areas where settlement preceded the arrival of the railway, churches exercised a crucial role. In French and Métis communities across the West a high proportion of place names celebrate Roman Catholic saints, members of the church hierarchy, or major donors to church building funds. In Manitoba, Ste. Agathe, St. Jean Baptiste, St. Pierre, and Ste. François Xavier all commemorated Catholic saints. St. Malo was named in honour of a Mr. Malo who was a major contributor to the settlement’s church building fund and Fannystelle was named after Fanny Rives, a woman who worked among the poor of Paris (Rudnyč’kyj 1970, 67). Further west, Catholic influence and French and Métis presence was evident at such places as Gravelbourg, Batoche, St. Laurent, Prud’homme and Bonne-Madon in Saskatchewan and at St. Albert, Morinville, Girouxville, Lac la Biche and Grande Cache in Alberta (Russell 1980; Anderson 2013). Among Mennonite communities in Manitoba and Saskatchewan the pacific and bucolic values of their churches prevailed, expressed in names of settlements such as Waldheim [forest home], Hochfeld [high field], Schönfeld [good field], and Gnadenthal [grace valley] (Russell 1980; Epp 1974). Jewish settlers also named some of their settlements after religious leaders. Hirsch, Saskatchewan, celebrated Baron Maurice de Hirsch, the founder of the Jewish Colonization Association (Russell 1973, 140). The nearby railway halt of Narcisse was named after Narcisse Levin, sometime President of the same association (Buchner 2000, 23),

whereas Bender Hamlet in Manitoba's Interlake district was named after Jacob Bender who organized that colony in 1903.

Naming places on the prairies has been predominately an institutional process that continues today. In Manitoba, thousands of not yet officially-named lakes and physical features are being assigned names by the Provincial Geographical Branch that honour those men and women who gave their lives in the service of their country. For example, Kennedy Point on Crow Lake was named in 1995 after WWII casualty Flying Officer James C. Kennedy of 424 Wellington Squadron, while Lindal Lake, named in 1972, commemorates Lieutenant Harold E. Lindal of Winnipeg who was killed while serving with the Essex Scottish Regiment during the same war.

Individuals without institutional power played a less significant role in naming prairie places. Often those who did occupied an official position as a local postmaster or postmistress and were in a position to name their post office, from which the locality eventually took its name. There were exceptions, of course, when no one person named a place. The community of Ardill in Saskatchewan gained its name from a Cockney immigrant complaining that the road from the river to the settlement was a "damned 'ard 'ill" [hard hill] for his team to climb (Russell 1973, 11). Hoodoo, also in Saskatchewan, allegedly gained its name from an elderly French woman who never learned English and her rendition of "How do you do," came out as "Hoodoo." This captured the imagination of the community and everyone began using Hoodoo as a salutation. The school, post office and the church and, finally, the settlement were all named Hoodoo (Russell 1973, 143). When Indiana settlers, known as Hoosiers, settled south of Scott, Saskatchewan, their district became known colloquially as Hoosier Valley. In 1913, the Grand Trunk Pacific line arrived and proposed to name their station, around which a settlement was sure to form, "Fee" in accordance with its alphabetical naming practice. The Indiana settlers proposed Hoosier Valley but the railway settled on Hoosier (Russell 1973, 143). The district of Onefour in southern Alberta was so named by local settlers after its location, which they thought was in Township 1 Range 4, but actually lay in Township 2 Range 4. When the discrepancy was realized they elected to keep the original name (Karamitsanis 1991, 90).

Naming municipalities

Across the prairies local governance of rural areas is in the hands of rural municipalities (RMs).¹ Their names variously reveal the dominance of the Anglophone elite and the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in Métis and French communities. Less often, the presence of large numbers of settlers from specific ethnic groups is reflected in RM toponymy.

Rural municipalities were created at different times in the three Prairie provinces. The first RM was created in Manitoba in 1873 but it was not until 1909 that Saskatchewan organized its first. Alberta did not see RMs organized until it passed the Rural Municipality Act in 1912 (Hanson 1956, 24–25; Goldsborough 2008, 5). Whereas in Manitoba RMs were generally organized

before the geographically smaller school districts, in Saskatchewan and Alberta organization of school districts often preceded the organization of local government at the level of the RM. This was to have an effect on the naming process.

There are presently 116 RMs in Manitoba. The great majority of their names are transferred toponyms from Anglophone eastern Canada or Britain or, if not, they bear the names of the British or Anglo-Canadian elite. Nine municipalities have French or French Roman Catholic names, three have Icelandic names: Bifrost, Gimli, and Siglunes. Surprisingly, seven RMs have names of Aboriginal origin: Miniota [plenty of water], Minnitonas [home of the little god], Saskatchewan [swift flowing river], Odanah [large camp], Pembina [summer berries], while Pipestone and Brokenhead are both translations of Aboriginal place names (Rudnyc'kyj 1970; Buchner 2000). Since Aboriginal peoples in western Canada were almost entirely disenfranchised until the 1950s, these Aboriginal toponyms suggest appropriation by incoming settlers rather than any Aboriginal political influence.

There are 296 existing and 21 former RMs in Saskatchewan. As in Manitoba the vast majority of these have names of British origin. Echoes of the original peoples survive directly in municipality names such as Piapot [an Aboriginal leader], Meota [a good place to camp], Nipawin [a place where one stands or viewpoint], and indirectly in translations into English as with Cut Knife and Indian Head municipalities. The RM of Mankota, whose name is of Aboriginal origin, is actually a transferred toponym from Minnesota. American settlers decided on the name in honour of their former residence in the United States (Russell 1980, 186). There are ten RMs of French origin, including Auvergne, Rocanville, Val Marie, Monet, and Coteau, although the Anglophone name Frenchman Butte RM recalls only the presence of early French travelers. Although German and Ukrainian immigrants made up a significant proportion of Saskatchewan settlers prior to 1914, there is only one municipality with a German name, Blucher, and none with a Ukrainian name. Even after some 20 years of settlement allophone immigrants carried little influence beyond the immediate confines of their communities.

Although there are presently only 64 municipal districts or counties (both analogous to the RMs of Saskatchewan and Manitoba) in Alberta, at one time or another there have been some 252 differently named local government entities in the province. Their toponymy demonstrates the hegemonic power of Anglo-Saxon culture in local governance. Most were either descriptive (e.g. Beaver Dam, Prairie Creek), transferred toponyms from Great Britain (e.g. Argyle, Dublin), or honorific appellations of imperial heroes (e.g. Haig, Kitchener). Although large tracts of the province were settled by people from central and eastern Europe, only four municipal districts carried Ukrainian names: Sobor, Ukraina, Wasel, and Wostok. All four were later subsumed by larger municipal districts.

Naming school districts

School districts were, and in some areas still are, important elements in prairie toponymy. Over 11,500 were established in what are now the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. School districts were smaller in area and more numerous than rural municipalities, rivalling only settled places—hamlets, villages, and towns—in sheer numbers of prairie toponyms. They provide insights into the attitudes and values of the ordinary newcomers who settled the West and the often complex power relationships that prevailed at the time of their organization.

Soon after the settlement of an area by Europeans schools were established and were assigned a number and name. The school's number was assigned by the provincial or territorial government but the name was chosen by members of each school board, who were drawn from the immediate locality. School names generally reflected the world view and values of the settlers in each district. In contrast to towns, which were typically named by the social and business elite, and rural municipalities that were mainly named by regionally influential elected officials, school districts were named by boards that drew their elected members from the common people in the community. Consequently, school districts reflect the world view of ordinary settlers: board members chose names after their own national heroes, places of origin in Europe and North America, or to celebrate qualities held in high esteem in their culture. A consideration of school district names thus offers further insights into the emotions and politics behind the creation of prairie toponymy.

Most frequently school boards chose names that described their district's topography, natural history, or agricultural qualities. Many of the latter type were unashamedly boosterist, extolling the agricultural potential of the district as in Eldorado, Goodsoil, and Richland in Saskatchewan. Manitoba also had an Eldorado, a Richland, and a Utopia, while Alberta, in addition to its own Eldorado, boasted a Fertile, a Peerless, and a Cornucopia. Often names brimmed with optimism, as with Superb, Saskatchewan, Up-to-Date, Alberta, and Beautiful Valley, Manitoba, reflecting the hopes of embryonic communities who saw their own districts as the best in the West and, presumably, thought the right name would enhance their appeal to further immigrants. On occasion, a tinge of realism crept in when less than enthusiastic emotions were incorporated into school district names. Even though vastly outnumbered by the positive, school names such as Skull Creek, Vindictive, and Dismal in Alberta, Hardscrabble, Survivance, and Rock Bottom in Saskatchewan, and Badthroat and Dry River in Manitoba, obviously were not selected with a positive image in mind. Topographic descriptors varied widely but embraced both native flora and fauna, with 25 references to buffalo (e.g. Buffalo Park, Buffalo Plain and Buffalo Hill) and one, more taxonomically correct, to Bison. There were 37 referring to beaver, as in Beaver Hills, Beaver Creek, and Beaver Heights.

The founders of new communities have long transferred the place names of their former regions to the areas they were pioneering. When selecting names for their prairie school districts, thoughts clearly turned to hometowns and homelands, and

a score of newly minted school districts were assigned names that recalled the place of origin of most boards members or the place of origin of the most influential among them. In districts settled by Anglophones there were many school districts named after homeland places, including Marlborough, Beeston, York, Devonshire, Bristol, and Stratford. Ukrainians commemorated scores of places in their home country: Buczasz, a village in Galicia; Czernowitz, the capital of Bukovyna; Bridok, a Bukovynian village that provided many immigrants to Canada; and many other towns, districts, and rivers in Ukraine. Other Europeans shared the desire to transfer toponyms. There were Venice School Districts founded by Italian settlers in both Alberta and Saskatchewan while a Reykjavik School District served an Icelandic community in Saskatchewan.

Immigrants from western Ukraine named many of their schools after their national heroes and places in the old world with nationalistic connotations. Ukraine, which was then a geographical concept and not yet a nation state, had a school district named for it in each prairie province, although the spelling varied. Manitoba and Saskatchewan had Oukraina school districts while Alberta had Ukraina. The Zaparozhe Sich, island fortress of the Cossacks, occupies a prominent place in Ukrainian history and national mythology. Not surprisingly there was a Zaparozhe school district in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, and a Sich School District in Saskatchewan. Other school district names in Ukrainian districts were simply descriptive. Alberta's Chornohora translates as black mountain, Krazne as beautiful, Kraznahora, as beautiful mountain, Myrnam as our peace, and Dickiebush as wild bush. The latter name is an interesting hybridization of the Ukrainian word for wild and the Canadian-English word "bush." Several school districts were named Zorra or Zoriya or different renditions of the Ukrainian word for star (Baergen 2005).

During the time that western Canada was being settled by Europeans, Britain was involved in two major conflicts: the Boer War in South Africa (1899–1902) and the Great War in Europe (1914–1918). As the "mother country," Great Britain, along with many Anglophone Canadians, expected communities to demonstrate support for wartime policies and celebrate military victories. Thus, Victory and Mafeking School Districts commemorated battles won against the Boers in 1901 and 1902 respectively. Years later, the outbreak of war between Great Britain and its allies and the Central Powers in August 1914 not only terminated immigration into Canada but had a significant effect on the nation's toponymy. Allophone communities, especially those whose homeland governments sided with Germany, Austria-Hungary, and other members of the Central Powers, were naturally anxious to display their patriotism and demonstrate their commitment to British-Canadian values. In Manitoba, Bukovina School District became Lord Roberts, Svoboda became Beckett, Slowo became Strand, and Wisla became Prince of Wales (Perfect 1978; Province of Manitoba, School Formation Files). New school districts were less likely to reveal the ethnic origins of their founding communities and, in their choice of name, as likely as not celebrated an allied victory, an allied general, or an allied statesman. Each prairie province had a Foch, a

Haig, and a Mons school district. Saskatchewan had Vimy and Vimy Ridge school districts, Alberta had a Vimy Hill, and Manitoba a Vimy Ridge—all created in 1917 and 1918 to celebrate a decisive victory won by the Canadian Corps over the German Sixth Army in France. Even some already-established school districts changed their names to reflect their patriotic feelings. New Berlin changed to Verdun, Prussia to Leader, and Munster was renamed Cavell, after Edith Cavell, the British nurse shot for helping British prisoners escape from German-occupied Belgium. Some schools were renamed to express patriotic sentiments or dissociate the community from sympathies for the Central Powers.

Conclusion

When the western interior was being settled by Europeans, naming a place was a political and cultural act embodying the mood and aspirations of embryonic communities, revealing their ethnic composition, geographic origins, their connections to the past, and hopes for the future. For the most part, Aboriginal communities were marginalized and condemned to toponymic silence. When their toponymy survived in areas of European settlement it was frequently in an appropriated, translated or mangled form.

Corporate power was manifested in the naming of the prairies. Railway companies, and before them, the fur-trading companies created and named places. Although there were exceptions, corporations tended to honour their executives, stockholders, and the heroes and places of their Britannic culture when it came to bestowing names. Naming lower-order places such as RMs and school districts allowed for a greater degree of local input although, as the rash of school district name changes during the First World War showed, local sentiment was not immune from the greater cultural and political currents sweeping the globe. School districts in Alberta and Saskatchewan were also formed before rural municipalities or districts. As they were always geographically far smaller, a single ethnicity was far more likely to predominate and, more importantly, wield local political power, enabling small communities to inscribe their identity into the prairie landscape. The size of administrative areas also affected naming. Large areas were more likely to fall under the oversight of the Anglophone elite who manifested their influence through their naming practices. Relatively few RMs or districts were given “ethnic” or Aboriginal names, simply because minority or marginalized communities lacked an effective voice at the time when names were initially assigned. Although attitudes towards allophone peoples began to change with the advent of multiculturalism in the 1960s, the time for naming RMs had then long passed.

The toponymy of the Prairie provinces offers insights into the attitudes and origins of settler society in the Canadian west, its social and political diversity and the political currents within it. The emerging narratives of place parallel relationships between marginalized communities and the governing elite.

References

- Adamson, J. 2014. Rural municipalities of Saskatchewan name mergers and name changes. *Rootsweb, Ancestry.com*. [www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cansk/kids/RuralMunicipality/Rural Municipalities of Saskatchewan.html](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cansk/kids/RuralMunicipality/Rural_Municipalities_of_Saskatchewan.html).
- Anderson, A. B. 2013. *Settling Saskatchewan*. Regina, SK: University of Regina Press.
- Aubrey, M. *Place names of Alberta*. Volume 4. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press.
- Baergen, W. P. 2005. *Pioneering with a piece of chalk: The one-room country schools of Alberta, 1885–1982*. Stettler, AB: W. P. Baergen.
- Barry, B. 1997. *People places: Saskatchewan and its names*. Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Center.
- Berg, L. D. and J. Vuolteenaho. ed. 2009. *Critical toponymies: The contested politics of place naming*. Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Bigon, L. ed. 2016. *Place names in Africa: Colonial urban legacies, entangled histories*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Buchner, A. P. 2000. *Geographical names of Manitoba*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Conservation.
- Canada Revenue Agency. 2016. List of municipalities in Saskatchewan. <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/qlfd-dns/qd-lstngs/mncpltsk-lst-eng.html>.
- Cohen, S. B., and N. Kliot. 1992. Place-names in Israel’s ideological struggle over the Administered Territories. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82(4): 653–680.
- Cross Lake Band. 2016. <http://pimicikamak.ca>.
- Epp, F. H. 1974. *Mennonites in Canada 1786–1920: The history of a separate people*. Toronto, ON: Macmillan of Canada.
- Glenbow Museum. 2016. School Districts Catalogue. Glenbow. <http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/archivesSchoolSearch.aspx>.
- Goldsborough, G. 2008. *With one voice: A history of municipal governance in Manitoba*. Portage la Prairie, MB: Association of Manitoba Municipalities.
- Guyot, S., and C. Seethal. 2007. Identity of place, places of identities: Change of place names in post-apartheid South Africa. *South African Geographical Journal* 89(1): 55–63.
- Harrison, T. ed. 1994 *Place names of Alberta* Volume 3. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press.
- Hamm, P. 1980. *Place names of Manitoba*. Saskatoon, SK: Western Producer Prairie Books.
- Hanson, E. J. 1956. *Local government in Alberta*. Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart Limited.
- Karamitsanis, A. 1991. *Place names of Alberta* Volumes 1 and 2 (1992). Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press.
- Katz, Y. 1995. Identity, nationalism, and placenames: Zionist efforts to preserve the original local Hebrew names in official publications of the mandate government of Palestine. *Names* 43(2): 103–118.
- Lehr, J., and Y. Katz. 1995. Crown, corporation and church: The role of institutions in the stability of pioneer settlements in the Canadian west, 1870–1914. *Journal of Historical Geography* 21(4): 413–429.
- Lester, G. S. 1979. Aboriginal land rights: The significance of Inuit place-naming. *Études Inuit / Inuit Studies* 3(1): 53–75.
- Lockery, A. R. 1984. The value of place names in teaching the history

- of Manitoba. *History and Social Science Teacher* 19(4): 199–204.
- Marden, E. G. 1973. *Community names of Alberta*. Lethbridge, AB: University of Lethbridge.
- Perfect, M. B. 1978. One hundred years in the history of rural schools of Manitoba: Their formation, reorganization and dissolution (1871–1971). MA thesis, University of Manitoba, Manitoba.
- Province of Manitoba. School Formation Files. Archives of Manitoba. G-6-4-8 School Districts. GR 1688.
- Radding, L., and J. Weston. 2010. What's in a name? Linguistics, geography, and toponyms. *Geographical Review* 100(3): 394–412.
- Rayburn, A. 2001. *Naming Canada: Stories about place names*. Toronto, ON, Buffalo, NY, and London, UK: University of Toronto Press.
- Reader's Digest Association. 1965. *Complete atlas of the British Isles*. London, UK, Sydney, AU, Montreal, QC and Cape Town, SA: The Reader's Digest Association.
- Rabson, M. 2016. Cross Lake, Manitoba's 10th-largest community, to get \$40 million facility. *Winnipeg Free Press*. July 6, A5.
- Rose-Redwood, R., Alderman, D., and M. Azaryahu. 2010. Geographies of toponymic inscription: New directions in critical place-name studies. *Progress in Human Geography* 34(4): 453–470.
- Rudnyc'kyj, J. B. 1970. *Manitoba mosaic of place names*. Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Institute of Onomastic Sciences.
- Russell, E. T. P. and Henry Kelsey Public School. 1980. *What's in a name?: The story behind Saskatchewan place names*. Saskatoon, SK: Western Producer Prairie Books.
- Saskatchewan One Room School Project. 2013. *Rootsweb, Ancestry.com*. <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cansk/school/schooldistricts.html>.
- Sousa, A. and P. García-Murillo. 2001. Can place names be used as indicators of landscape changes? Application to the Doñana Natural Park (Spain). *Landscape Ecology* 16(5): 391–406.
- Tucker, B. and R. Rose-Redwood. 2015. Decolonizing the map? Toponymic politics and the rescaling of the Salish Sea. *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien* 59(2): 194–206.
- Tyrrell, J. B. 1915. Algonquian Indian names of places in northern Canada. *Transactions of the Royal Canadian Institute* 10(2): 213–231.
- Yeoh, B. S. A. 1996. Street-naming and nation-building: Toponymic inscriptions of nationhood in Singapore. *Area* 28(3): 298–307.

Notes

- ¹ This study drew on different sources for information about rural municipalities and school districts in each province. Information on Manitoba RMs was drawn from Goldsborough (2008), Hanson (1956) provided information on Albert's rural districts, and information on Saskatchewan RMs came from Adamson (2014) and the Canada Revenue Agency (2016). Information on school districts was obtained from Perfect (1978) and the Records of School Formation at the Archives of Manitoba. Saskatchewan data was gleaned principally from the Saskatchewan One Room School Project (2013), and Alberta data was taken from Baergen (2005) and the online School District Catalogue at the Glenbow Museum.