



BC Geographical Names Web App

A step-by-step guide to search and learn more about
place names in B.C.

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Launching the BC Geographical Names Web App

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BC Geographical Names Office

✦ Last updated on March 13, 2026

Content advisory: Some place names and name records on the BC Geographical Names Web App contain historical terminology that is considered racist, offensive and derogatory. Work to address offensive place names is ongoing.

Place Names

Place names are essential for wayfinding and communication, helping people navigate and recognize their surroundings. They also represent much more than just geographic markers - they reflect the values of communities and decision-makers at the time they were created and shape how locations are interpreted, remembered, and understood. Learning about British Columbia's place names offers valuable insight into the province's rich history and diverse cultural heritage.

Click on the headings below to expand each section one at a time or choose 'Expand All' to see all content.

Expand all Collapse all

- About the BC Geographical Names Office
- Using the BC Geographical Names Web App
- First Nations Place Names
- Indigenous Tag
- Official Naming and Recorded Names
- Using the Data and Web Service
- Launch App: BC Geographical Names**
- Link to Naming Policy & Procedures

The **BC Geographical Names Web App (the web app)** is a map-based application that allows users to search past and present official place names, as well as other recorded names in the **BC Geographical Names Information System (BCGNIS)**. Both the web app and BCGNIS are managed by the **BC Geographical Names Office (BCGNO)**.

This guide provides detailed instruction for searching names of the web app from a computer.

To find the place name and its name record, follow steps:

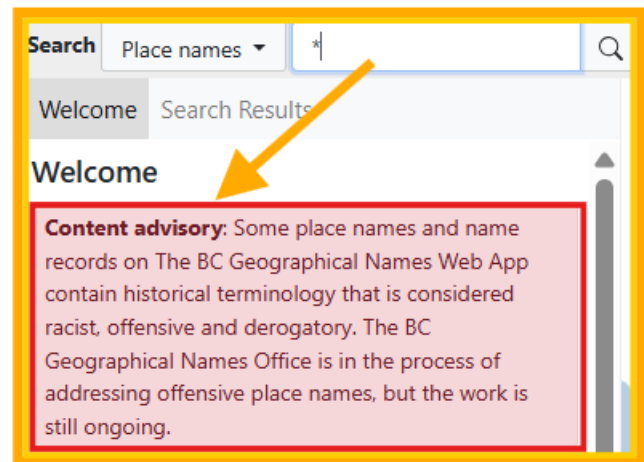
1. Click "[Launch App: BC Geographical Names](#)" button on the bottom of the BCGNO homepage.
2. The next screen will display a search page with an interactive map.

Content Advisory

Previous official names are valuable historical resources that offer insight into the societal values and decision-making processes of their time, illustrating how those perspectives have evolved. All previously official names are retained and made publicly accessible through the BC Geographical Names Web App, ensuring their availability for research, reference, and historical understanding.

A few place names and name records, however, contain historical terminology that may be considered racist, offensive, or derogatory. To warn users, the BCGNO has added a Content advisory.

In addition to the content advisory, the BCGNO has added a masking feature to the web app for place names that contain racist language. This feature allows all previously official names to remain searchable while visually masking harmful terminology. The masking feature can be enabled or disabled.

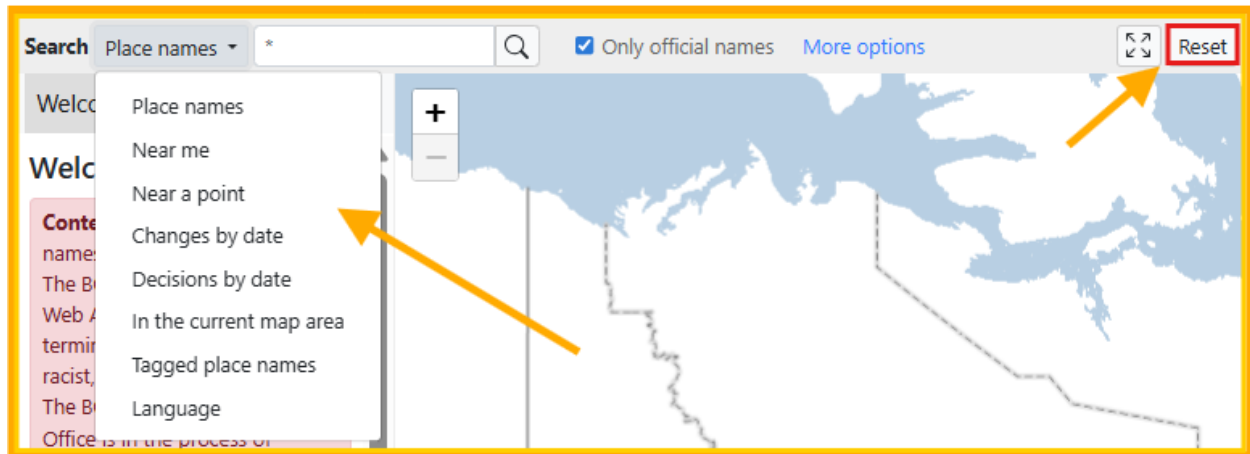


Quick Tip

If you click the "view" icon  it will remove the masking and reveal the name.

Ways to Search

You can see the multiple ways to search for geographical names within the web app in the search dropdown.



1. By Place Name

- Find specific place names using text input. An asterisk (*) can be used as a wildcard in your searches.

2. By Language

- Find place names rooted in various languages, language families, or dialects.

3. By Location

- Near a Point** – Find place names within 5 or 10 km of a selected location by clicking a point on the map or entering latitude and longitude.
- In the Current Map Area** – Find place names within the map view.
- Near Me** – Find place names within 5 or 10 km of your device's location (requires location services to be enabled).

4. By tag - Find place names grouped by theme. Tags showcase trends in name origins

5. Other Search Methods

- Decisions by Date** – Find place names that were officially changed within a specific date range.
- Changes by Date** – Find place names that had their name record updated within a specific date range.

Refining searches - You can also filter results by Feature Type, Name Authority, Language, Tags, Official Names, and by map area. See the [Filtering Search Results](#) section for more details.



Quick Tip

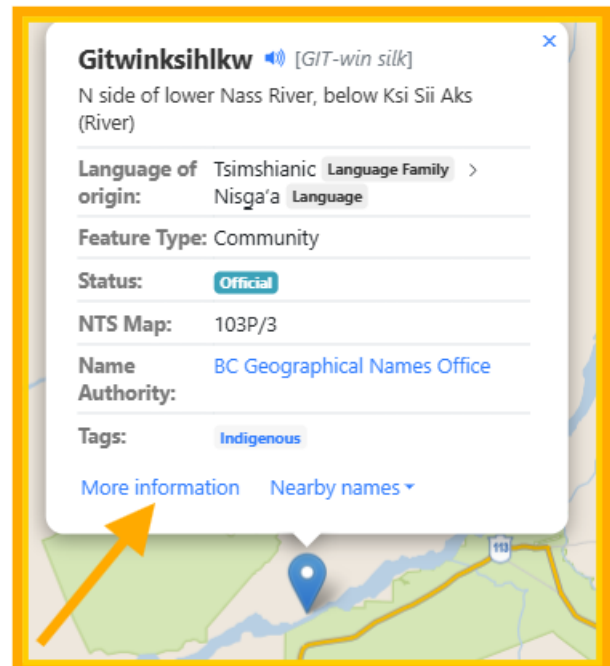
Click the "Reset Button"  on the upper right corner to reset the search tool.

Accessing Name Records

Name records provide a rich overview of the place, including its location and feature characteristics, its official names history, and information about the name's origin and language. They may also offer notes on the cultural or historical significance of the place, pronunciation tools for Indigenous names (audio and/or phonetic spelling), other known names for the feature, and images when available. Together, these details can provide a deeper understanding of the place and its history.

To access name records, select More Information, on the popup that appears after selecting a search result. Name Records may include the following information:

- Language of origin – Identifies the language and/or language family the name originates from.
- Pronunciation tools for Indigenous names (audio and/or text-based)
- Feature Type – the geographical feature type
- Status – Official or Unofficial within the provincial government record
- Other Names – Recorded names that are unofficial
- Relative Location – to identify the geographical feature in relation to surrounding geographical features
- Tags – indicate the naming themes associated with the name
- Datum – used for maintaining GPS accuracy
- NTS Maps / Related Maps – identifies relevant National Topographic System maps for the geographical feature
- Origin Notes and History – Official naming history of the feature; origin or significance of the name; history or cultural significance of the place
- Images – where available



Quick Tip

If you see a speaker icon , you can select to hear the name being pronounced.

EXAMPLE of name record: After clicking “More information” in the name pop-up a name record will open in a new tab with the [Gitwinksihlkw](#) name record.

Gitwinksihlkw [GIT-win silk]

Language of origin	Tsimshianic Language Family > Nisga'a Language
Feature Type:	Community - An unincorporated populated place, generally with a population of 50 or more, and having a recognized central area that might contain a post office, store and/or community hall, etc, intended for the use of the general public in the region.
Status:	Official
Other Names:	Canyon City
Name Authority:	BC Geographical Names Office
Relative Location:	N side of lower Nass River, below Ksi Sii Aks (River), Cassiar Land District
Tags:	Indigenous
Latitude-Longitude:	55°11'34"N, 129°13'14"W at the approximate population centre of this feature.
Datum:	WGS84
NTS Map:	103P/3




Origin Notes and History:

Canyon City (Settlement) adopted 25 September 1974 on 103P at 55 12 - 129 09. Form of name changed to Canyon City (Community) 25 August 1980 on 103P/3, and coordinates corrected to 55 12 - 129 13. Name changed to Gitwinksihlkw



Quick Tip

Name record “Status” is indicated by an **Official** badge or **Not official** badge.

Searching by Place Name

Search for a specific name using text input. Searching by place name is helpful when you know all or part of the name you want to find.

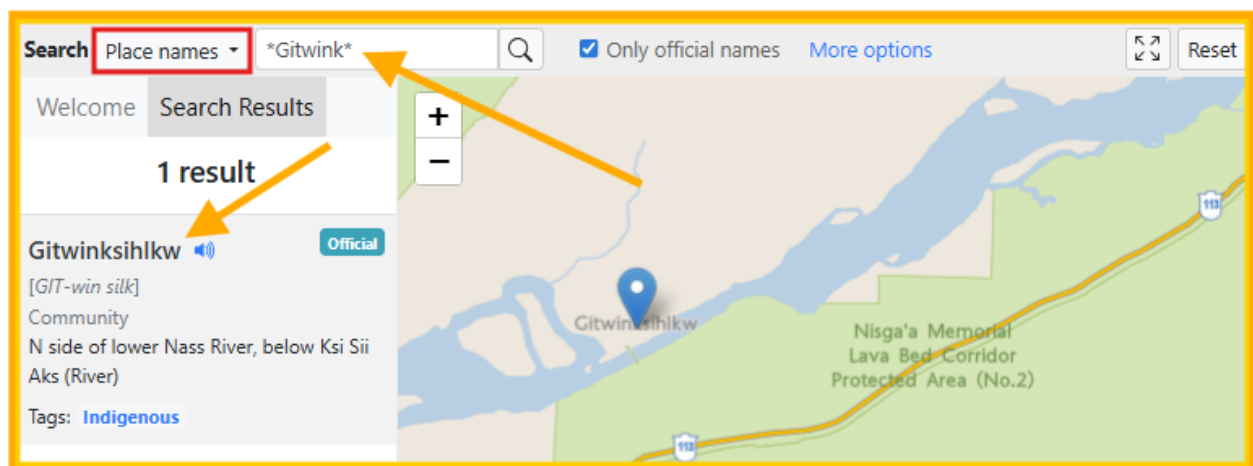
An asterisk (*) can be used as a wildcard in your searches. This can be useful to find names even when you don't know (or can't remember) the exact spelling or full name.

It is important to note that if you know the spelling, the wildcard (*) isn't necessary and may impact search results.

EXAMPLE search with wildcard: After selecting *Place names* in the search bar, search “*gitwink*”. The *Search Results* panel on the left side will show the place names containing “gitwink”.

In the “Search Results” select “Gitwinksihlkw”. Once selected the geographical location of the river will appear on the map on the right side.

Once a name is found, click “More Information” in the name pop-up to see more details. This will open a new tab with the Gitwinksihlkw name record.

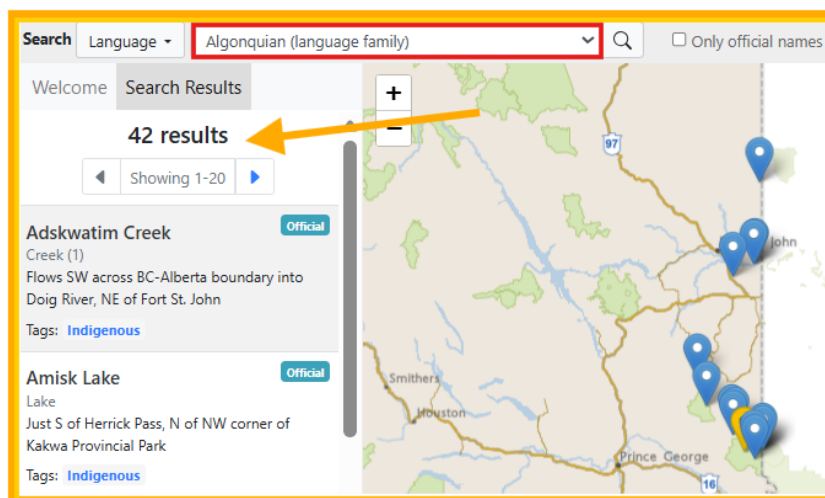
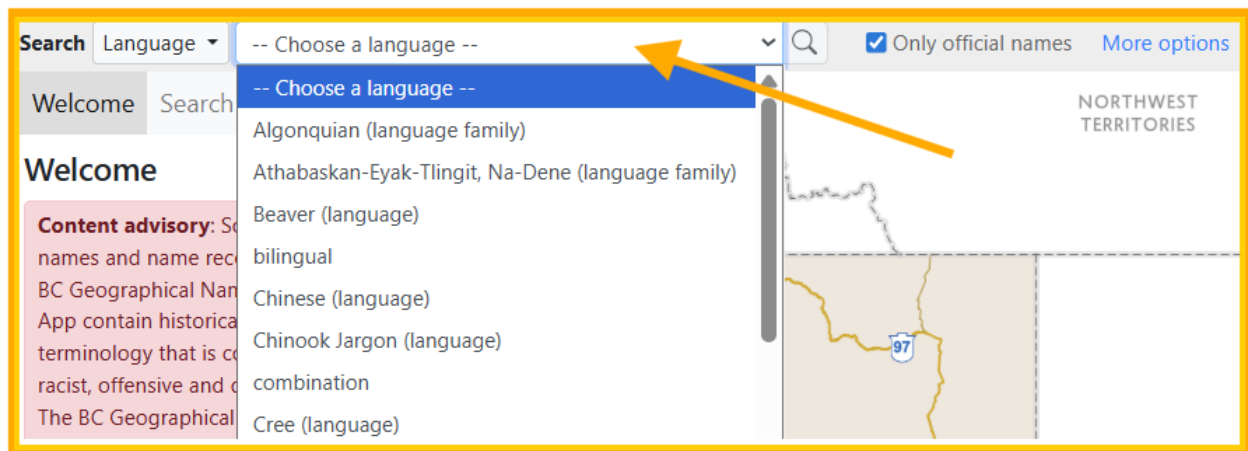


Quick Tip

The “Place names” text search can help find names even when spelled incorrectly. E.g., searching “agaykson” will find **ʔaʔgayqsən**.

Searching by Language

British Columbia is home many diverse communities who speak a wide array of languages. Find place names rooted in various languages, language families, or dialects using the language search feature. If you want to find Indigenous place names in a particular area and know a First Nations language spoken there, using the language search can help you identify related place names.



EXAMPLE: After selecting *Language* in the search dropdown, select *Algonquian (language family)*. The “Search Results” panel on the left side will show the geographical names identified with this language tag.

Quick Tip

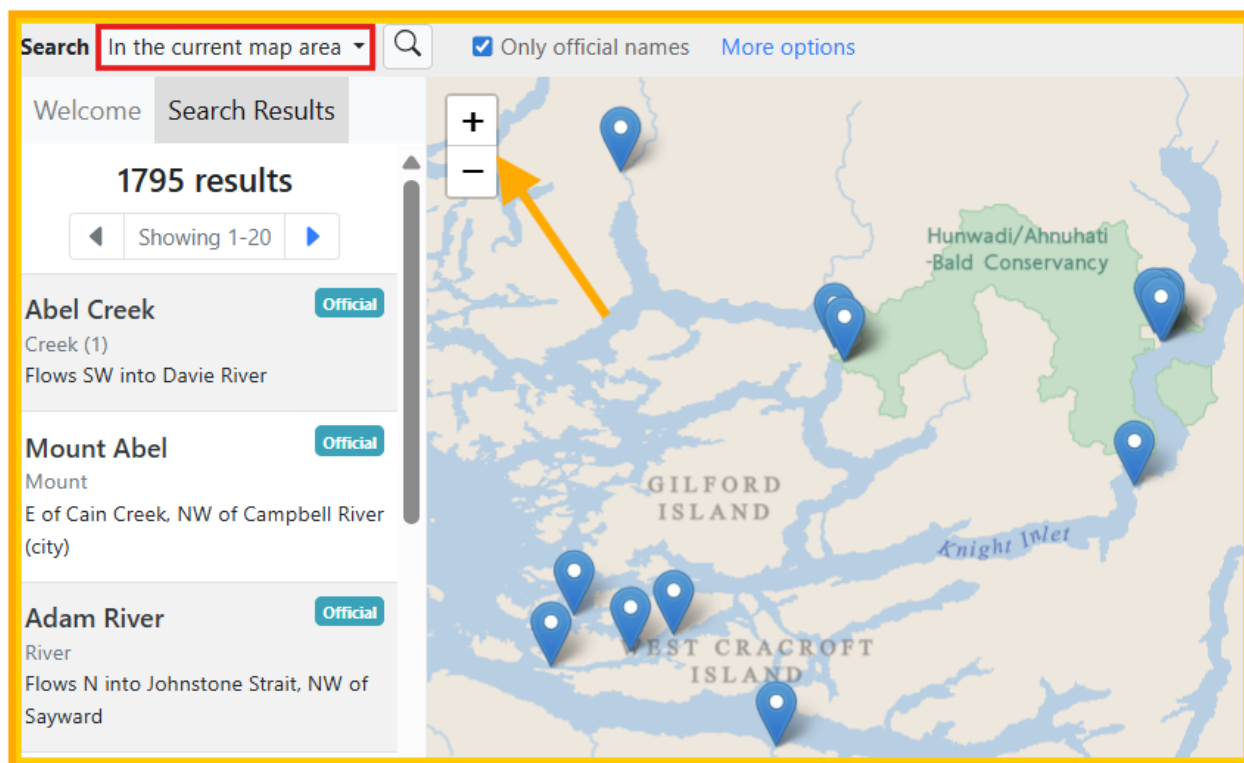
In the *Choose a language* dropdown, you can see whether each option is a language, language family, or dialect - this information appears in brackets next to the language option. In the image above, you can see that Algonquian is a language family.

Searching by Location

In the Current Map Area

Find place names within the map view.

EXAMPLE search by map area: After selecting *In the Current Map Area* from the search dropdown, the results will show place names visible within the current map view. You can zoom in, zoom out, and scroll to change the map area and display additional place names. This method offers the most flexible and detailed approach to location-based searching.



Quick Tip

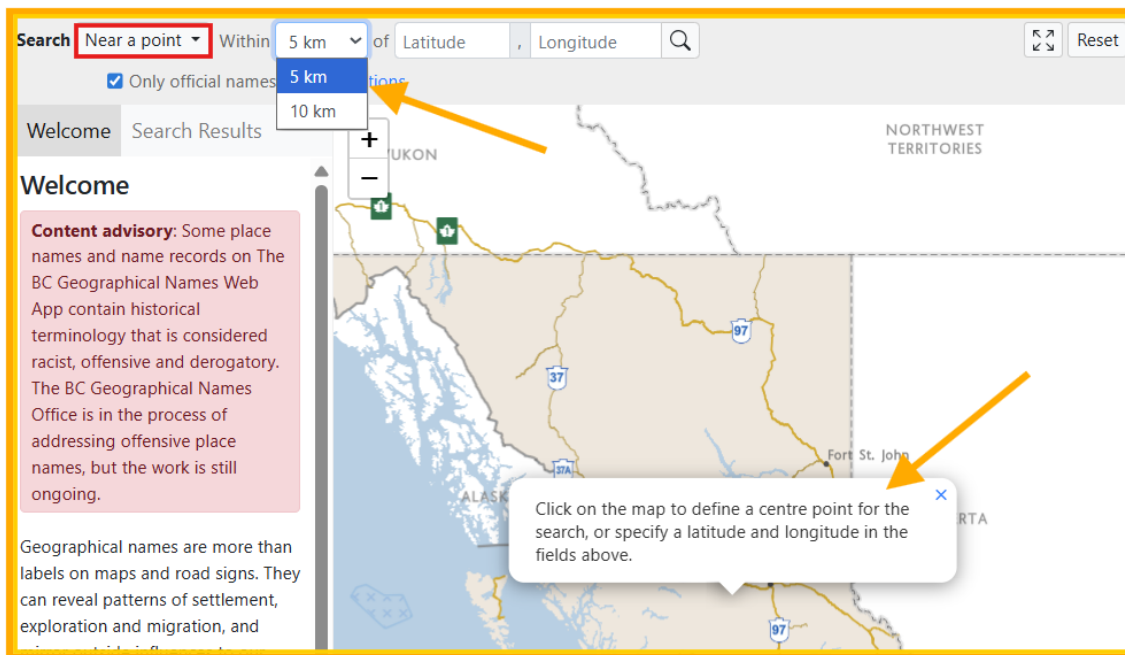
Blue pins are for official names. 

Yellow pins are for unofficial names. 

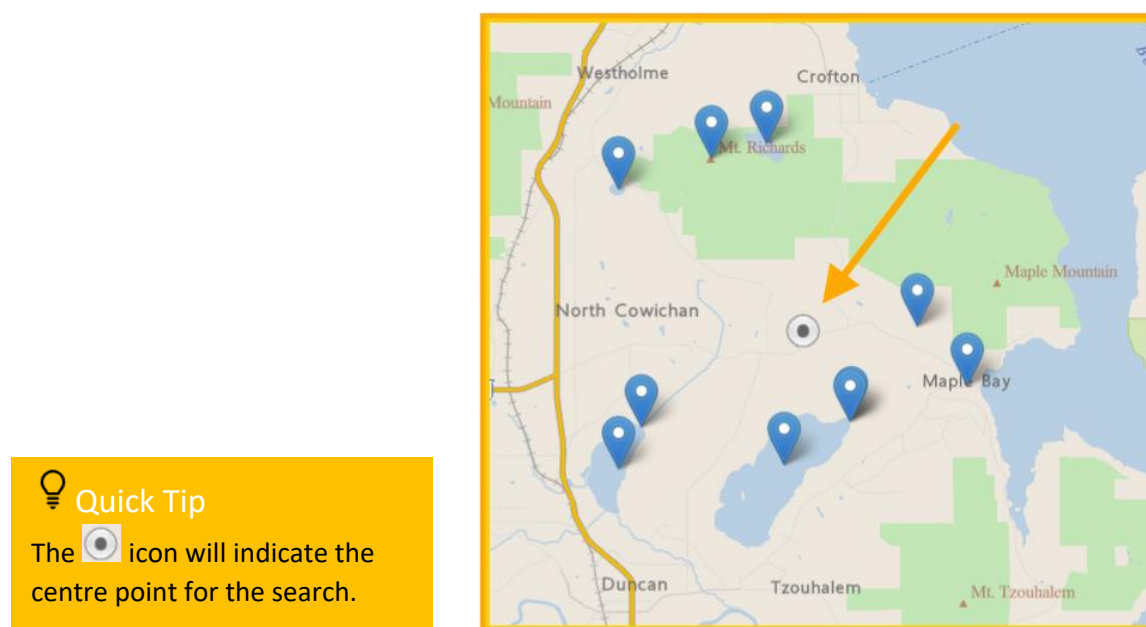
BC Geographical Names Web App

Near a Point

Find place names within 5 or 10 km of a selected location by clicking a point on the map or entering latitude and longitude.



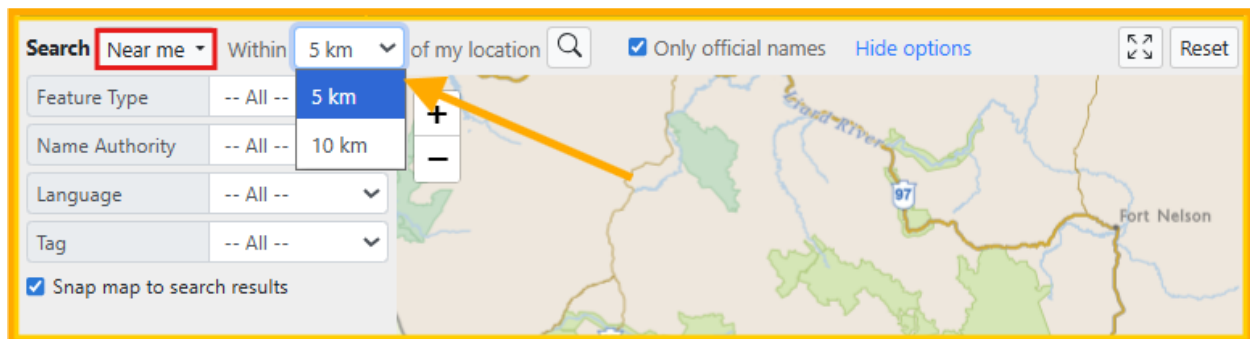
EXAMPLE search near a point: After selecting *Near a point* in the search dropdown, you can use the cursor to select a point on the map to define a centre point for your search or enter the latitude and longitude (using decimal degrees) in the fields above. You can see results within 5km or 10km of your selected point.



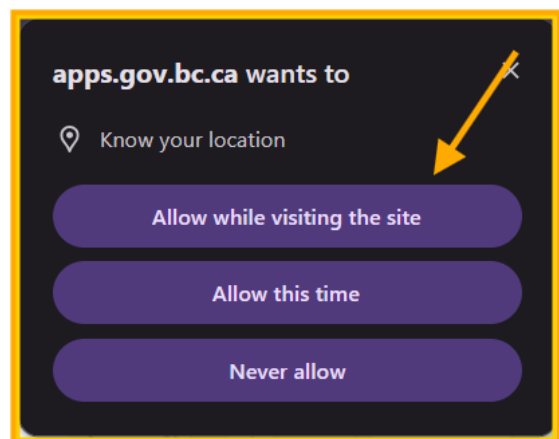
BC Geographical Names Web App

Near me

Find place names within 5 or 10 km of your device's location (requires location services to be enabled).



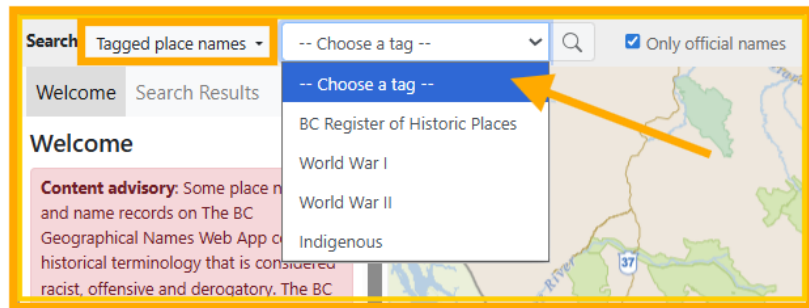
EXAMPLE search near me: You will have to Allow the web app to access your device's location. A Pop up will appear when you select the *Near me* in the search dropdown. You can see results within 5km or 10km of your selected point.



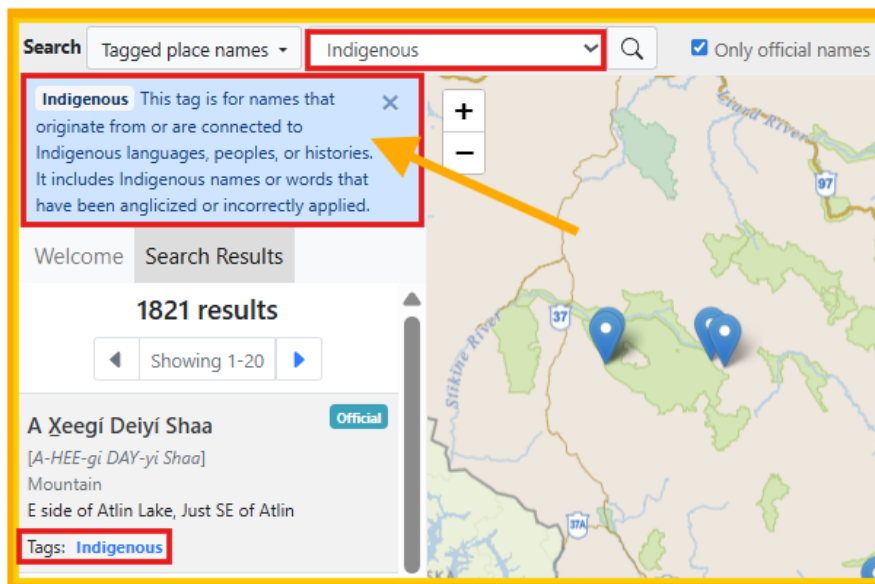
Searching by Tags

Discover place names grouped by theme. Tags showcase trends in name origins.

After selecting *Tagged place names* in the search dropdown, you can choose one of the tags to see names associated with the theme. Once you choose a tag, a description of the tag appears in a blue box on the left panel. The tags on the web app are:



- **BC Register of Historic Places** – This tag indicates that the historic place has a provincial heritage designation.
- **World War I** – This tag indicates that the geographic feature was named after a person, event or place of significance to the First World War.
- **World War II** – This tag indicates that the geographic feature was named after a person, event or place of significance to the Second World War.
- **Indigenous** – This tag is for names that originate from or are connected to Indigenous languages, peoples, or histories. It includes Indigenous names or words that have been anglicized or incorrectly applied. For more information on this tag, see the *Indigenous tag* section on our [webpage](#).



EXAMPLE tag name search:

After selecting *Tagged place names* from the search dropdown, you can select one of the tags from the dropdown list. The tag description will appear in a blue box on the left panel.



Quick Tip

Select "More options" and select the "Limit to current map area" box to filter results by the extent of the map view. This can be useful to find tagged names in certain regions.

Searching by Other Methods

Decisions by Date – Search for place names that were officially changed within a specific date range.

The screenshot shows the search interface of the BC Geographical Names Web App. The 'Search' dropdown menu is set to 'Decisions by date'. The 'From' date is '2025-11-23' and the 'To' date is '2026-02-23'. A search button with a magnifying glass icon is visible. To the right of the date fields is a calendar for November 2025, with the 23rd highlighted in blue. An orange arrow points to the 23rd. Below the calendar is a map of British Columbia with a yellow line indicating a route, and a blue shield with the number 97. On the left side of the interface, there is a 'Welcome' message and a 'Content advisory' box with a red background and white text.

Search **Decisions by date** From 2025-11-23 To 2026-02-23 [More options](#)

Welcome Search Results

Welcome

Content advisory: Some place names and name records on The BC Geographical Names Web App contain historical terminology that is considered racist, offensive and derogatory.

« November 2025 »

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6

Changes by Date – Search for place names that had their name record updated within a specific date range.

This screenshot is identical to the one above, showing the search interface with 'Changes by date' selected in the dropdown menu. The date range is '2025-11-23' to '2026-02-23', and the calendar for November 2025 has the 23rd highlighted. An orange arrow points to the 23rd. The 'Content advisory' box and the map of British Columbia are also present.

Search **Changes by date** From 2025-11-23 To 2026-02-23 [More options](#)

Welcome Search Results

Welcome

Content advisory: Some place names and name records on The BC Geographical Names Web App contain historical terminology that is considered racist, offensive and derogatory.

« November 2025 »

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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6

Filtering Search Results

By selecting *More options*, you can filter results by Feature Type, Name Authority, Language, Tag, or limit results to the Current Map Area.

The top screenshot shows the search interface with a search bar containing 'Place names' and a search icon. To the right of the search bar is a checked checkbox labeled 'Only official names' and a link labeled 'More options'. An orange arrow points to the 'More options' link. Below the search bar are tabs for 'Welcome' and 'Search Results', and a '+' button.

The bottom screenshot shows the expanded filter panel on the left. It contains the following filters, each with a numbered red box: 1. Search icon, 2. Feature Type (dropdown menu), 3. Name Authority (dropdown menu), 4. Language (dropdown menu), 5. Tag (dropdown menu), 6. Limit to current map area (checkbox). Below these are checkboxes for 'Exact spelling only', 'Limit to current map area', and 'Snap map to search results'. The main map area shows a geographical map with labels like 'Fort Nelson' and '37'.

Search Filters:

1. **Official Names** – Toggle the “Only official names” checkbox to include or exclude previous official names and other recorded names.
2. **Feature Type** – Filter results by narrowing results by geographical feature (e.g., rivers, mountains, parks).
3. **Name Authority** – Filter results based on the responsible body who recognized the name official.
4. **Language** – Filter results by the language, language family or dialect
5. **Tag** – Filter the results by the tags that showcase trends in name origins.
6. **Limit to current map area** – Toggle the “Limit to current map area” checkbox to only see results viewable in the map area.



Quick Tip

Uncheck the “Only Official names” box for both unofficial and official name records to appear in the “Search Results”.