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Murielle Nagy

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L'influence de Marcel Mauss

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The past three years have seen the welcome arrival of new books that present an Inuit perspective on their history. With a few exceptions, the data collected for these publications is mainly through oral history. I have chosen to review together the books listed above since being about the Inuit of Alaska and Canada, many of their stories and characters are intertwined. These publications can be divided into two main genres: history books with a major emphasis on oral traditions (Alunik *et al.* 2003; Bennett and Rowley 2004; Paneak 2004), and autobiographies (Brower 2004; Okpik 2005; Pinson 2004). This review will start with the books that present the history and culture of a specific people, followed by the autobiographies of individuals who share their life stories and give their own perspective on the societies in which they lived.

*Uqalurait. An Oral History of Nunavut* is the result of a project initiated in 1993 by David Webster and an Inuit steering committee formed to guide researchers John Bennett and Susan Rowley in documenting and producing a history of Nunavut from an Inuit perspective. We are told in the introduction that “unlike other Arctic histories, this one should concentrate on the time before extensive contact with Europeans” and that “the time setting was thus largely immaterial [...] instead it adheres to the Inuit view of life, not as a linear progression but as a cycle” (p. xxvii). The book is essentially made up of quotations from elders from the 1920s to the present. It is divided into two parts: one on Inuit identity, and a shorter one on regional identity. The part on Inuit identity has sub-sections on: naming; the family; animals; hunting; gathering; food sharing; leadership; justice; music and dance; astronomy; navigation; the land; external relations; the Tuniit; unusual beings; cosmology; shamanism; pregnancy and labour; medicine; death and burial; architecture; material culture; skin preparation and clothing. The part on regional identity has sub-sections on Inuit seasonal rounds of specific groups (Ahiarmiut; Arviligjuarmiut; Amitturmiut; and Inuinait). A very short conclusion completes the publication.

The book is fascinating because of the wide range of subjects and vast territory covered, and is quite an accomplishment given all the sources that were consulted. Short paragraphs contextualize and link different quotations, yet some of the latter are difficult to understand. For example, the stories about taboos linked to the women menstruating (p. 372), and the long and repeated description of the *Tivajut* ceremony (pp. 403-408), which includes spouse exchange, lack minimal explanations or references. Furthermore, some of the quotations included in the sections on seasonal rounds of Part Two seem out of place. Hence, the stories on amulets and shamanistic *séances* to heal people (p. 381) would have been better integrated in the sections on medicine or shamanism in the first part of the book. Likewise, the quotation on social order (p. 394) would have better fitted in the section on leadership or justice in Part One. Well illustrated with archival photos, figures, and maps, the book unfortunately has a few typos, misspellings, and missing words. The bibliography also includes errors. However, despite these minor flaws, *Uqalurait* should be on the shelves of everyone studying the Inuit.

*Across Time and Tundra. The Inuvialuit of the Western Arctic* contains chapters by David Morrison (Director of Archaeology and History at the Canadian Museum of Civilization); Ishmael Alunik (an Inuvialuk elder raised on the land, who worked as a CBC announcer in Inuvialuktun for 17 years); Eddie D. Kolausok (an Inuvialuk land-claim negociator, writer and publisher); and Maria von Finckenstein (Curator of Contemporary Inuit Art at the Canadian Museum of Civilization), although not credited in the front pages.

In his three chapters, Morrison introduces the reader to the distinctive environment of the Inuvialuit, their original regional groups, the first contacts with explorers in the late 18th century, and the whaling period (1890-1910) during which American whalers decimated the bowhead whales and introduced new material goods to the local population. This period of first contacts also brought diseases that cut the Inuvialuit population to less than a tenth of its original size (down to 150 people in 1910) (p. 88). If it had not been for the incoming Inupiat from Alaska, especially the Nunataarmiut, the population might have never recovered (p. 91). This said, Siglitun, the original language of the Inuvialuit did survive<sup>1</sup>, which raises interesting questions about the number of speakers necessary to preserve languages.

As Morrison (p. 19) explains, the Mackenzie Delta provided driftwood and belugas to the village of Kitigaaryiut, which had a winter population of several hundred people, swelling to two or three times that number in summer<sup>2</sup>. After describing the sod houses that were used by the Inuvialuit, Morrison briefly mentions the dome-shaped tent-like structure called *qaluurvik* and indicates that it was apparently adopted from Alaska during the late 19th century (p. 21), but does not include references. Given that the frame was made of willows which are abundant in the Delta, their existence might predate the arrival of Alaskans.

Although Morrison's chapters are illustrated with excellent reproductions of archival photographs, the identification of people depicted in them is uneven as are the credits for a few photographers. This is rather surprising since the book was evidently a collaborative effort with the Inuvialuit, and some of the archival photos originally contained the missing information. Hence, on page 71, the "Inuvialuit couple and fur trader" at Fort McPherson are the same persons shown in page 22 under "Kax'alik and his wife, 1890s" and the fur trader is also in the photo page 75<sup>3</sup>. The photo on page 90 of Stefansson's guide during his first trip among the Inuvialuit, is entitled "Mimurana ('Roxy') and his wife, early 1900s," whose name was Sanikpiak (Stefansson 1919: 339). On page 107, Natkusiak (Billy Banksland), the other guide that Stefansson worked with during his Canadian Arctic Expedition, is easily recognized standing second from the left, but is not noted. Even if identification of specific people was not

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<sup>1</sup> See Lowe (2001) for more on the Siglit language.

<sup>2</sup> Given the theme of the present issue, I cannot avoid mentioning the sharp contrast with the model proposed by Mauss (1906) about summer dispersions and winter agglomerations.

<sup>3</sup> A quick research on the web site of the McCord Museum, the source for the photo, indicates that the trader was "Mr. Naigle" (Nagle ?) and the photo taken by C.W. Mathers in 1901.

possible, there are mistakes in overall descriptions of the photos. For instance, the photo page 43 of a “group of Inuvialuit men and boys about 1900” actually depicts three men, two women and one girl.

Chapters by Ishamel Alunik are entitled “Legends from Long Ago<sup>4</sup>,” “Nuyaviak’s Story: Life around Tuktoyaktuk Long Ago,” and “A Trapper’s Life in the 20th Century,” an autobiographic account which ends with a commentary about the ravages of alcohol. Included in Chapters 1 and 4, are Alunik’s stories “Though Times” and “Kublualuk the Shaman”<sup>5</sup>. Although it is not obvious on a first reading, stories told by Alunik are printed in a slightly different font, very likely to distinguish narratives originally told verbally, and then transcribed, from written texts.

Chapter 5 by David Morrison and Eddie D. Kolausok is about trappers, traders and herders from 1906 to the present. Chapter 6 by Eddie D. Kolausok deals with contemporary issues of the Inuvialuit since 1950: welfare allowances; building the DEW Line<sup>6</sup>; the founding of Inuvik; the 1970s oil boom; COPE<sup>7</sup>; the Inuvialuit Final Agreement; self-government; and new economic opportunities. It also includes a moving section on the challenges of alcohol. Chapter 7 is a brief overview of contemporary Inuvialuit art by Maria von Finckenstein. The last chapter of the book, also by Kolausok, is about Christian missions, residential schools, cultural loss, the Shingle Point whale hunt of 1991, and the language in jeopardy. Descriptions of the children’s lives at residential schools, and particularly the brief section on sexual abuses at Catholic Grollier Hall residential school, are disturbing yet essential to understand the roots of psychological and social problems among the Inuvialuit.

Although the book was published in a very nice format with high quality photos and figures usually associated with art books, some flaws are noticeable. The first is the presence of unacceptable and mysterious “mmmmm” throughout the text (pp: 14, 56, 93) which indicate that the final proofs were not properly verified. A few missing words<sup>8</sup> and a different format for the footnote references (some with parentheses, some without) corroborate the surprising negligence of three publishers of the book<sup>9</sup>. The second problem is with the insertion of short stories (some by Alunik but others with unspecified authors) in chapters without changing much of the page layout. Although the background becomes slightly grey and the font is different, the letters have the same size as those in the main text. Hence the inserted narrative interrupts the text rather than

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<sup>4</sup> This chapter includes two stories from Alunik (1998), reprinted here with minor modifications.

<sup>5</sup> Other stories on Kublualuk can be found in Nagy (1994) and Abraham Okpik’s *We Call it Survival*.

<sup>6</sup> The DEW (Distant Early Warning) Line was a product of the Cold War. It consisted of a string of radar sites stretching from Alaska to Greenland to give early warning of a Soviet military strike (p. 166).

<sup>7</sup> COPE (Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement) was created in 1970 to represent the interests of the Inuvialuit (p. 178).

<sup>8</sup> Incongruities are also found in the repeated misspelling of *Qablunaat* into *Kabloonacht* (possibly to follow an historical reference), and the addition of an “s” to *umiaq* (‘boat’) although its proper plural form is indicated in the glossary (p. 217).

<sup>9</sup> Having not had the chance to check the final proofs of two of my own publications which were released with major editorial problems, I can sympathise with the authors’ surprise when they saw their book.

adding to it. A more contrasted overall layout format would have clarified which part is the main text. Yet, despite its editorial problems, *Across Time and Tundra* is definitely a must for those interested in the Inuvialuit.

According to John Martin Campbell, the editor of *In a Hungry Country. Essays by Simon Paneak*, young Simon Paneak (1900-1975) was a “boy antiquarian of sorts; he wanted to know about the old things” (p. xviii). He certainly was interested by the history of his people, the Nunamiut of Alaska. His vast knowledge of his culture and territory, along with his ability to speak English, made him an obvious source of information for researchers. In 1969, Campbell gave Paneak an artist’s sketchbook to draw the life of the Nunamiut. For the next two years<sup>10</sup>, Paneak recorded Nunamiut history, including his own experiences in hunting, trading, and travelling. Most of these written and oral histories, both verbatim and as annotated by Campbell, are in this book. A few original drawings with hand-written texts by Paneak are also included. Linguist Keith H. Basso suggested the book’s layout in which Paneak’s unedited accounts are accompanied on the same page by Campbell’s renditions into standard English (and standard Inupiaq when included). According to Basso, this unusual approach is of value to anthropologists and linguists who study how traditional Native Americans learn to use English (p. xxii)<sup>11</sup>.

The book starts with an excellent foreword by Grant Spearman which introduces the reader to Simon Paneak and the Nunamiut of Alaska. Spearman also gives context to the stories of Paneak with a section on the oral tradition they come from. As Spearman remarks, having told stories both orally and in manuscripts, Paneak represents a transitional figure in the process of rendering stories from oral to written history. The essays by Paneak are divided into five chapters (all with a short introduction by Campbell): “The Supernatural<sup>12</sup>,” “The Hunting Trail,” “Trade,” “War and Hunger,” and “The Last of the Old Days.” In his introduction to the first part of Chapter 4, on war, Campbell rightly points out that until the 1960s, the Inupiat of North Alaska were portrayed as pacifists compared with most other Native Americans. Paneak’s war stories support the researchers who since have demonstrated that wars were prevalent until the early historic period. The second part of Chapter 4 has detailed and compelling descriptions by Paneak about the 1906-1907 famines due to the absence of caribou. As stated earlier by Spearman, the lack of caribou in the early 20th century led most Nunamiut to migrate to the northern coast but also eastward to Canada. By 1920, most Nunamiut had abandoned their territory (p. x).

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<sup>10</sup> Funding of the American Indian Oral History Project had been made available to anthropologists and historians at the University of New Mexico, which enabled Campbell to give a tape recorder, tapes, and an honorarium to Paneak from 1970 to 1971 (p. xx).

<sup>11</sup> A case in point is when Paneak tells “In 1905 I could remember in my memory 1905 as soon as I see the light, the kerosene light, my goodness, this is right” (p. 70). In this sentence, Paneak is actually thinking in Inupiaq but translating into English the words that are used in Inuit languages to talk about the first childhood memory (see Nagy 2006).

<sup>12</sup> In this chapter, Paneak presents the elaborate story of how Raven stole the light, which is a variation of the one told by Ishmael Alunik in *Across Time and Tundra*.

Campbell introduces the last chapter by stating that by 1938 and 1939, “with the decline of the fur trade, and longing for home,” the surviving members of the Nunamiut returned to their territory (p. 83). Thirteen families moved back and for six years, until they were visited by a U.S. Geological Survey party, “they remained isolated and nearly unknown to the outside world” (*ibid.*). Paneak’s story about travelling back in 1940 shows that the isolation was not complete as people traded furs and hides for what had become essential goods (pp. 85-97). Paneak’s essays end there and are followed by Campbell’s epilogue on the modern village of Anaktuvuk. The book also contains two appendices. Robert L. Rausch contributed to “Appendix 1. Paneak’s Plants and Animals”<sup>13</sup>, with English, Latin and Inupiaq terms. Stephen C. Porter put together “Appendix 2. An Anaktuvuk Genealogy: 1959” which is somewhat limited as it does not include some of the Nunamiut mentioned in Paneak’s stories, and especially, his own parents and grand-parents.

Although conceived with a different approach, an obvious companion to Paneak’s essays is *The Whales, They Give Themselves. Conversations with Harry Brower, Sr.* which describes the Inupiat who live along the Alaskan arctic coast, north of the Nunamiut. The book presents a series of interviews with Harry Brower, Sr., an Inupiaq whaling captain, artisan, and community leader from Barrow, Alaska. The interviews were conducted and recorded by his friend and oral historian Karen Brewster, who also edited the book. Unlike the editors of other books covered in this review, Brewster takes an active voice not only in her very informative endnotes, but also in contextualizing the conversations and her specific questions. In her detailed and self-reflective introduction and appendix<sup>14</sup>, Brewster shares with the reader many personal experiences which obviously transformed her. Such an approach added refreshing insights into the too often hidden and discreet editor. As in *Across Time and Tundra*, but more efficiently, the “voice” of Brower, and that of people reflecting about him in the epilogue, are in a different font from that of Brewster in her short introductions to the different themes in each chapter.

Harry (Kupaaq) Brower, Sr. (1924-1992) was born in Barrow, Alaska, to Charlie Brower (1863-1945), originally from New York City, and his Inupiaq wife Asiaṅṅataq (1870s-1943), originally from Shishmaref. His father owned the Cape Smythe Whaling and Trading Company, as well as a reindeer herd. The youngest boy of a numerous family, Brower was raised in Inupiaq and English, and went to school in Barrow until he was 11. He learned at a young age to be a hunter and trapper from his Inupiat relatives. His father having scientific collecting permits, Brower also was taught how to prepare and preserve birds and eggs to be sent to southern museums. At 12 years old, he ran his own dog team to the reindeer herding camp, and at 15, he led one of his father’s whaling crew. After working for the U.S. Army in Nome from 1942 to 1944, he joined a geodetic survey during the summers of 1945 and 1946. In 1945, he married Annie Hopson, also from Barrow, and they raised nine children. In 1957, he was hired

<sup>13</sup> This odd title would have been more accurate as “Nunamiut’s Plants and Animals.”

<sup>14</sup> Brewster describes how she helped cook and serve whale at a “captain’s house feast” and at a *Nalukataq* (a day long feast featuring blanket toss and Inupiat dances).

as a carpenter for the new Naval Arctic Research Laboratory (NARL). Scientists quickly realized that he was very knowledgeable about the animals and environment so for the next 25 years, he joined many scientific projects, especially those concerning whales. In the 1970s, he was a central architect of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation boundaries.

The first four chapters of the conversations are about his formative years, then about his life on the land. "A World of Possibilities" is about Inupiat cosmology. As Brewster wrote: "While a devout Christian, Kupaaq grew up hearing stories that reinforced that the world is alive with human and non-human, natural and supernatural interactions that should be paid attention to" (p. 123). The last chapter is about whaling, specifically the relationships between humans and whales, hence its title: "He Gave Himself." Brower's descriptions of whale hunting are amazingly vivid and eloquently reveal his respect for the animal. We also learn about the changes over time in whale hunting techniques. The epilogue, rightly entitled "Through Other Eyes," presents personal accounts about Harry Brower from his oldest son Eugene, his sister Saddle Neakok, and three scientists with whom he worked. Eugene Brower insists that his father understood the need for the Inupiat to work with scientists to prove to the International Whaling Commission that the whale populations were not in decline. It seems, however, that the scientists needed Harry more than he needed them. Indeed, former chief scientist for the North Slope Borough's Department of Wildlife Tom Albert admits that the experimental design to study whales "was set up more or less to determine what Harry was saying, whether it was true or not" (p. 190).

*Alaska's Daughter. An Eskimo Memoir of the Early Twentieth Century*, is the autobiography of Elizabeth Bernhardt Pinson (1912-2006). Well written and informative about the end of the 19th century up to the 1950s on the northwest coast of Alaska, it focusses mainly about her life until her first marriage in the 1930s. Born in the small village of Teller on the Seward Peninsula, the author is the daughter of Albert Joseph Bernhardt (1874-1954), originally from Germany, and Ouyaghaskiak (1889-1940), from Shishmaref. Her maternal grandparents were from Point Hope but "after an era of hunger and hardship directly related to the whalers and whiskey traders, nearly the whole village left [...] and traveled southward in search of a place where food was more plentiful" (p. 3). They first settled in Shishmaref, and a few years later in Teller, where reindeer herds from Siberia were introduced in 1892. Reindeer were also sent to Point Barrow in 1897 to feed whalers whose ships were caught in the ice. Pinson's grandfather Ootenna was among the Inupiat who brought the reindeer, and her father Albert Bernhardt was among the survivors of the shipwrecked whalers. Seven years later, after his first wife died in childbirth, Bernhardt married Ootenna's daughter. They raised 14 children together.

When she was 6 years old, Pinson's grandparents died of the 1918 influenza epidemic while she was spending the winter with them. Left alone in their sod house, she nearly died as well. She was rescued by her father and older brother Tommy who brought her by sled to the hospital in Nome. There she lost both her legs to frostbite.



Her tragic accident made the news, and the pharmacist's sister and husband in Pittsburgh sent a letter to ask if they could adopt her. Her father said he could not let her go and asked if they could pay for her High School education instead<sup>15</sup>. With prosthetics donated by a benefactor, she walked again in 1920 (pp. 48-49).

The rest of the book describes the daily lives and seasonal activities of Pinson's family and is filled with anecdotes about events that are now part of Alaska's early 20th century history (e.g., Stefansson's Wrangler tragedy, Amundsen's airship *Norge* which collapsed in Teller in 1924, doomed aviators, etc.). Her father was a friend of Captain Christian Klengenberg, a Danish<sup>16</sup> whaler turned trader in what is now Kugluktuk (Coppermine) who claimed to have seen Inuit with light-coloured hair and blue eyes. Stefansson's 1913-1918 Canadian Arctic Expedition had among its original goals to meet these "Blond Eskimos" who he thought were the descendants of an early Viking colony. Pinson, who quotes *My Life with the Eskimo* by Stefansson as she speculates about the fair skin of people from Point Hope to Cape Prince of Wales, (p. 19), seems unaware that the Inuinnait met by Klengenberg actually had dark hair and the occasional occurrence of blue eyes was probably caused by snow blindness<sup>17</sup>. This is somewhat surprising since she corresponded regularly with her brother David who moved to the western Canadian Arctic after taking a summer job in 1929 on Captain Pedersen's ship, the *Patterson*. He first lived with Inuvialuit of Inupiat descent<sup>18</sup> on Banks Island and later with Inuinnait in Coppermine (p. 128). Pinson's book also contains interesting accounts of Chukchis from Siberia encountered during her younger years. Before the early 1920s, the Chukchis came each summer to fish at Nook, where her family had a summer camp, "and socialize with the Alaskan Eskimos, as they had done for ages" (p. 55). Pinson's description of the Chukchis also reflects how they were considered by her own family.

Pinson's memoirs end with the death of her father in 1954, and are followed by a short epilogue. The book has no annotations which could have given other perspectives on some of the ideas and themes presented, but its index is very helpful. Although Pinson did not achieve her dream to become a writer of children's stories for radio broadcast, she did write a fine autobiography which won an Alaska's Indigenous Literature Award.

*We Call It Survival. The Life Story of Abraham Okpik*, was edited by Louis McComber who documented 15 interviews with "Abe" Okpik in Iqaluit in 1997. The interviews are organized into 19 chapters touching upon a wide range of subjects such as: his childhood in the Mackenzie Delta; residential schools in Aklavik; his stay in

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<sup>15</sup> Starting at age 18, Pinson studied at the Jesse Lee boarding school in Seward, Alaska, then near Teller at the Nome High School, and also the Roosevelt High School in Seattle.

<sup>16</sup> Not German as stated by Pinson (p. 62). For more details about Klengenberg see Morrison (pp. 121-123) in *Across Time and Tundra*.

<sup>17</sup> See Morrison (p. 124) in *Across Time and Tundra*.

<sup>18</sup> In the early 1930s, David Bernhardt married Nirliq, the daughter of Natkusiak (Billy Banksland), and bought the schooner *Okpik* (Condon 1996: 101).

Edmonton hospitals; the DEW Line, his work for the federal government; Aboriginal political leadership and organizations; the Project Surname; the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry; and the co-operatives.

Abraham (Auktalik) Okpik (1929-1997) was born near Aklavik. His parents were originally from the Noatak River region in northwest Alaska and had moved among the Inuvialuit. This Alaskan origin is reflected in his story of the three brothers (“whose names are still known in Alaska,” p. 236), which is somewhat different from Simon Paneak’s version (in *In a Hungry Country*, pp. 5-7)<sup>19</sup>. From age 8 to 12, Okpik went to the Anglican All Saints Residential school in Aklavik. Okpik left school in 1941 to trap with his father. In 1945, like many Inuit at the time, Okpik contracted tuberculosis and was sent to hospitals in Edmonton. He returned home in 1948 and started trapping again. In 1954, he trapped on Banks Island with his brothers (p. 131), and later that year began working on the construction of the DEW Line, but had to go to the Aklavik hospital in 1957. That same year, he was asked to go to Ottawa to attend an Eskimo Affairs Committee meeting, which led to work for the federal government on different projects. One was to direct the Rehabilitation Center in Apex (Iqaluit) for people returning from long treatments in southern hospitals. He married in 1962, and in 1965 moved to Yellowknife where he worked on social development. During that year, he became the first Inuk appointed member of the then Northwest Territories Council (which preceded the Legislative Assembly).

In 1969, Okpik became involved with the Project Surname to remove the disc numbers<sup>20</sup> given to the Inuit since the 1940s by the Canadian Government for identification purposes, and register them with their personal name and a family name<sup>21</sup>. By that time, he had learned to write the Inuit language in the emerging standardised Inuit orthography but he soon realised that people were very conservative in writing their names and often preferred the spelling used by Ministers, Priests or RCMP officers (pp. 213-214)<sup>22</sup>. He also learned the syllabic writing system. However, thinking that Roman orthography was easier, Okpik insisted that “we have to look into getting rid of syllabics now, and start looking into real language issues” (p. 279). Furthermore, although Okpik spoke many Inuit dialects, he did not define Inuit identity solely on the basis of one’s ability to speak an Inuit language: “They don’t need to speak the language and eat like an Inuk to live their traditions [...]” (p. 319).

During the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry in 1974, Okpik accompanied Judge Thomas Berger as an interpreter and broadcaster. In 1977 Okpik received the Order of

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<sup>19</sup> Simon Paneak is actually a relative of Okpik since on page 66 there is a 1986 photo showing his son Roosevelt Paneak with Abe Okpik and other relatives. The caption identifies Paneak as “an Allen family relative from Alaska.”

<sup>20</sup> These numbers were engraved on small discs made of pressed fiber that Inuit were to wear as army identification tags (Alia 1994: 32-39).

<sup>21</sup> This was contrary to Inuit traditional naming practice although as Okpik notes, in the western Arctic, the Inuit had already adopted the system of having family names (p. 209).

<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, Okpik did not change the spelling of his own family name which should have been Uqpik (as in ‘willow’) (p. 224, footnote 15).

Canada for his work on the Berger Commission and on Project Surname. Yet, Okpik was critical of the federal government as in his comments about the creation of Nunavut: “I call it the 18-82 agreement! The municipalities of Nunavut get only eighteen percent of the land; the other eighty-two percent is federal” (p. 325). As an early actor in Aboriginal politics, he shares his personal perspective on the beginning of the Indian Eskimo Association in 1966<sup>23</sup> and how it was divided into different organisations in 1969 (p. 313).

The book has a few typos, factual errors<sup>24</sup>, missing footnotes, and inconsistent formats of references. This said, the footnotes by Louis McComer are numerous, informative and at times almost over-detailed with quotations from the web<sup>25</sup>. Although some parts of the interviews are repetitive and could have been omitted<sup>26</sup>, the book gives the impression that one is actually listening to Abe Okpik. In his particular style, Okpik can easily tell an Inuit legend, speak about Inuit cosmology, and even quote anthropologist Margaret Mead or the writings of Oblate missionary Émile Petitot.

Although all set in the Arctic, the books reviewed here share more than a geographical location. They give voice to individual narratives rooted in oral traditions. In societies where oral history is valued, people are more likely to develop the ability to recollect past events with an amazing precision, learning from a young age the ways stories are told in informal and formal contexts. By reading some of the narratives by Ishmael Alunik, Simon Paneak, Elizabeth Bernhardt Pinson, Abe Okpik, or the Inuit quoted in *Uqalurait*, one is transported into the past and experiences specific events through the eyes of the narrator<sup>27</sup>. The oral history they present brings a new and different dimension to Inuit history.

The publishers of oral histories are to be praised for giving a wider audience to narratives that would otherwise be shared only within the family circle or, at best, the community of the narrator. The University of Alaska’s Oral Biography Series and the new Nunavut Arctic College’s Life Stories of Northern Leaders Series, to name but two, have an important role to play in the dissemination of oral history and its inclusion in Inuit history.

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23 The Indian Eskimo Association was funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation to conduct meetings in the North (p. 192).

24 E.g., Pannigabluk, the mother of Alex Stefansson (who married Abe’s oldest sister Mabel) was not from Coppermine as indicated in the footnote 4, p. 156, but rather from Prince of Wales, Alaska, as indicated by Okpik (p. 239).

25 Incidentally, one can find an entry for Abe Okpik on Wikipedia.

26 E.g., Chapter 12, “You Call It Supernatural; For Us It Is Survival” and Chapter 18 “A Special Way of Communicating” could have been fused together.

27 See Nagy (2006: 75).

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