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ALIA, Valerie, 2007 *Names and Nunavut. Culture and Identity in Arctic Canada,* New York, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 172 pages.

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2007   *Names and Nunavut. Culture and Identity in Arctic Canada,* New York,
        Oxford, Berghahn Books, 172 pages.

In her latest book on names and naming Valerie Alia, professor in Ethics and Identity at Leeds Metropolitan University in England, takes the reader on a journey that touches upon the essence of human identity, the giving and carrying of proper names. This journey's way stations and reflections fall within the field of inquiry that Alia calls succinctly "political onomastics," in fact, the politics of external and central powers to manipulate and change the original names of people who have experienced colonial rule, suppression and emigration under circumstances not of their doing. Alia has concerned herself with the study of onomastics for several decades, conducted extensive research into the "politics of naming" and published widely on these topics (*e.g.,* Alia 1989, 1994). In her research and writings she has also always raised the issue of ethics, conduct and attitudes that researchers are to consider working in the public realm by influencing cross-cultural reflections and, one would hope, shaping recommendations for policies (*cf.* Alia 1999).

Alia's book *Names and Nunavut* can be seen as the culmination of her work with the Inuit of northern Canada whose intricate and sophisticated original personal naming system was changed to an alien system by Euro-Canadian colonial expansion that has had a profound effect on social and kin relations and personal identity among the Inuit. Alia's position trying to understand such processes is courageously expressed by the moving poem she composed right after her mother's death beginning with "They took away your name at the border. Forsaking borders, You gave away your names." highlighting her mother's traumatic experience to have her names changed by officials when entering the U.S.A. as a Jew from Hungary (pp. 1-2). Alia explains that her mother's ordeal had a profound influence on her own thinking about naming which she takes as a starting point to develop a theory of political onomastics discussed in the Introduction (pp. 1-16). She clearly puts the discussion within the triangular relationship between language, names and power that, she feels, shapes humankind's essence of being, *i.e.* having names for people and things means knowing and identifying them, but also asserting power and control. Alia follows this train of thought by delving into the evolution of naming and renaming among the Inuit in contemporary Nunavut that, as a name for a territory and political and cultural concept, is, in itself, a new powerful and symbolic creation of identity.

In the five chapters that make up the book, Alia deals with "the importance of names in Inuit culture" (pp. 17-38) explaining the complex dimensions of the Inuit naming system that allow dynamic adaptations to changing social conditions and

spiritual circumstances. In Chapter 2 she explores the "colonial style" that was employed by the emergent Canadian state and bureaucracy, and the various proselytising and competing churches till the 1960s and their impact on the representation of Inuit multiple naming (pp. 39-64). Here Alia pinpoints the obsession of this "cultural intervention" to record, document and count everybody and everything, be it through certificates, fingerprints, and the infamous disc numbers in order to satisfy the newly introduced system of "human management" with which we have become so familiar in its subtle and ever increasing technological refinements. The centre piece of her book is Chapter 3 in which she revisits her earlier work (Alia 1994), but expands her analysis considerably by going deep into the origin of the conception and implementation of Project Surname between 1969 and 1972 by which the Inuit in the Northwest Territories received Western style family names that reshaped Inuit kinship patterns and the concept of family, *i.e.* Western household (pp. 65-90). Quoting directly from a large number of interviews as well as available documents, Alia puts together a most puzzling sequence of events and activities under the guise of the quite controversial Project Surname of which Inuit have become more and more critical in retrospect. This criticism and the ensuing revisions in the public approach as well as the continuing existence of Inuit naming as a parallel naming system are the subject of the last two chapters. In Chapter 4 Alia looks at the contemporary perspectives of naming among Inuit (pp. 91-120). Many Inuit have made efforts to reclaim their proper names legally within the superposed public system as such a movement was empowered, among other matters, by the creation of Nunavut as a territory and a public, but predominantly Inuit-run government since 1999. In Chapter 6, Alia returns in her conclusion to the politics of naming and the related condition of who has power and control over names and naming. She puts the case of the Inuit of Nunavut also into the circumpolar contexts by pointing out that similar histories have occurred in other regions at different times such as among the Sámi in northernmost Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries.

In her final assessment Alia puts forward an appeal to give broader attention to political onomastics as it raises the importance of names and naming for the development and maintenance of cultural and personal identities. Furthermore, political onomastics is an approach that focuses on the study of cross-cultural interference that changes people's names by various intrusive means. Alia's most recent book is a welcome addition to onomastics generally and also to the field of Arctic social sciences.

References

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1989   *Towards a Politics of Naming*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, York
              University, Toronto.

1994   *Names, Numbers and Northern Policy. Inuit, Project Surname, and the
              Politics of Identity*, Halifax, Fernwood Publishing.

1999   *Un/Covering the North: News, Media, and Aboriginal People*, Vancouver, UBC Press.

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DYSON, Laurel Evelyn, Max HENDRIKS et Stephen GRANT (dir.)
2007   *Information Technology and Indigenous People*, Hershey, PA, Information Science Publishing, 346 pages.

Cet ouvrage australien – publié à Hershey, Pennsylvanie, la capitale du chocolat (l'éditeur a ses bureaux sur Chocolate Avenue) – regroupe 43 courts textes sur le rôle des nouvelles technologies de l'information chez les populations autochtones. Les responsables de l'ouvrage se vantent de couvrir l'ensemble du monde indigène, quoique on ne trouve malheureusement aucun texte portant sur les Inuit ou autres peuples arctiques (mais trois chapitres portent sur les Dènè du nord-ouest). Le texte sans doute le plus intéressant pour les lecteurs francophones est la courte étude de Linda Sioui sur la façon dont les Hurons-Wendat du Québec et leurs cousins Wyandotte du Michigan, du Kansas et d'Oklahoma ont commencé à utiliser l'Internet, suite à un rassemblement tenu en 1999 dans l'ancienne Huronie, pour tisser des liens transnationaux et reconstituer de façon virtuelle la nation huronne, dispersée depuis plus de 300 ans à travers le nord-est et le centre de l'Amérique du Nord.

Le livre offre un intérêt certain aux personnes intéressées aux études autochtones. Les chapitres consistent soit en analyses de la façon dont on peut développer les technologies de l'information pour les adapter aux pratiques culturelles et sociales indigènes, soit en courtes études de cas concrets d'adaptation et d'utilisation de ces technologies. Plusieurs des auteurs (20 sur 67) sont eux-mêmes autochtones. L'ouvrage se divise en cinq grandes sections : 1) problèmes et perspectives sur les autochtones et les technologie de l'information ; 2) technologies de l'information et éducation ; 3) préservation et revitalisation de la culture ; 4) usage des nouvelles technologies et transformations communautaires ; 5) réseautage communautaire et accès amélioré aux technologies de l'information. Le livre s'ouvre sur une préface détaillée qui présente l'ensemble du contenu, et il se clôt par un très court épilogue, suivi d'un glossaire de termes techniques et de notes biographiques sur les 67 auteurs.

L'ouvrage peut être utile à ceux qui mènent des recherches ou qui interviennent dans le domaine des communications, de l'éducation, de la culture ou du développement communautaire en milieu autochtone. On ne peut cependant que déplorer son coût prohibitif. À 74,95 dollars américains l'exemplaire pour un ouvrage à couverture souple de moins de 350 pages, ce livre risque de ne se retrouver que dans quelques bibliothèques universitaires et institutionnelles bien nanties, plutôt que chez