

TOPONYMY AND CANADIAN ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY

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Abstract. *Toponymy and Canadian Arctic Sovereignty.* This paper explores the use of toponymy as a distinct variable that individuals and societies use to reflect their unique history, cultures, lifestyles, philosophies, heritage and languages over their political landscape. Toponymy is one argument of the sovereignty debate that has yet to be examined concerning responses to the challenges facing Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. It is an undervalued tool but it can be used as a solution or a catalyst to assert Canadian Arctic sovereignty over its lands, islands, waters, and the seabed or continental shelf. In other words it can be used to support the Harper government's frequent "use it or lose it" rhetoric. The time has come for Canada to assert control over his Arctic landscape and seascape. The paper is organized into three (3) main parts: A) Why is this an issue? B) What Aboriginal toponymy can bring as a solution to assert sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic and C) What strategy/action plan can be instituted to assist the Canadian Government in its sovereignty claims especially in the High Arctic.

Rezumat. *Toponimie și Suveranitate Canadiană Arctică.* Această lucrare examinează folosirea toponimiei ca variabilă distinctă ce reflectă istoria, cultura, modurile de viață, filozofia, moștenirea culturală și limba în acord cu peisajul politic al societății. Toponimia este un argument în dezbateră suveranității spațiale în ceea ce privește descoperirea unor răspunsuri la provocările suveranității canadiene în Regiunea Arctică. Aceasta este un instrument puțin valorificat însă poate fi utilizat cu succes în abordarea suveranității canadiene arctice asupra spațiilor sale, asupra insulelor, apelor și a zonelor de litoral pe care și le asumă. A sosit timpul pentru Canada pentru a-și afirma controlul asupra peisajelor sale arctice atât a celor terestre cât și a celor maritime. Lucrarea este structurată în trei părți



care răspund la temele care urmează. De această temă de cercetare? De ce toponimia aborigenă poate constitui o soluție în afirmarea suveranității canadiene în regiunea arctică? Ce măsuri și strategii pot fi adoptate pentru a ajuta Guvernul Canadian în promovarea revendicărilor referitoare la suveranitatea spațială din regiunea arctică?

Key words: *toponymy, Canadian, sovereignty, landscape, seascape, Arctic area.*

Cuvinte cheie: *toponimie, canadian, suveranitate, peisaj, regiunea Arctică*

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Spaces and places are part of not only a nation's culture and heritage but that of local groups and communities that can be reflected through **toponymy**. The current work of Woodman (2009) describes a “bottom →up approach” to **toponyms**, where often the local community, organizations, or even individuals of the community are the originators of a name within its area and thus fit the concept that names “arise from within and are incontrovertibly known as **endonyms**”. Thus, it can be said that place names and geographical names play an important role in the overall context of culture, settlement history and linguistics. They are not only “an essential linguistic tool” (Proceedings of UNGEGN Information Bulletin, 2006) but “they tell a lot about the character and the essence of a place” (UNGEEN, 2008) exposing its uniqueness and the emotional attachment to the space and place being named. They represent human cultural heritage handed down orally from generation to generation for thousands of years depicting human experience and insight (Helleland, 2006). In other words, geographical and place names are landmarks for oral maps especially across Canada's North. In today's rapidly changing and more complicated societies, it is even more important to preserve spaces and places being named and therefore protect a nation's historical and cultural heritage.

2. NOTE ON DEFINITIONS

Toponymy “has as its object the scientific study of **toponyms** in general and **geographical names** in particular” (UNGEEN, 2002) based on etymological, historical, and geographical information. “It is itself a branch of onomastics, the study of proper names of all kinds” (Wikipedia and Britannica Encyclopedia, 2009). **Toponyms** are generally proper nouns applied to geographical names or place names, “in both spoken and written languages, that represent an important reference system used by individuals and societies throughout the world” (UNGEEN Training Course in Toponymy, 2005). They are not only an important element of culture and heritage (GNBC, 2004), they provide an important factor not only of the landscape and seascape, but, illustrate ethnic settlement patterns of a particular region within an administrative boundary, be it provincial, territorial, or national (UNGEEN Training Course on Toponymy, 2005). According to the United Nations *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names* (UNGTSGN, 2002), the name of a geographical feature in an official or well established language “occurring in that area where the feature is located” is called an **endonym**. “*Examples:* Vārānasī (not Benares); Aechen (not Aix-la-Chapelle); Krung Thep (not Bangkok); al-Uqsur (not Luxor); Teverya (not Tiberias)”; and Québec (not Quebec City). **Standardized name** is, according to the UNGTSGN (2002), “a name sanctioned by a naming authority as the preferred name from among a number of allonyms for a given feature. However, a single feature may have more

than one standardized name. *Example*: Kaapstad and Cape Town (but not Capetown)". In general, Canada's North is an area mostly home to Inuit and other Aboriginal peoples who together will be referred to as "**Northerners**" in this paper. **High Arctic** in Canada is an area north of Parry Channel and includes all of the Arctic islands and internal waters.

2. 1. Issue: Sovereignty over the Arctic

In 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced that Arctic sovereignty is a key national issue. He said: "The federal government is responsible for many things. But its highest responsibility is the defence of our nation's sovereignty. Canada has a choice when it comes to defending our sovereignty over the Arctic. We either use it or lose it. And make no mistake this Government intends to use it" (Lennie, 2008). The question to ask is sovereignty over what? To help answer the question we need to define Canada's Arctic. For the purposes of this paper, a fixed definition of Canada's Arctic has been conveniently adopted by the author: Canada's Arctic consists of lands north of 60° in Western Canada and north of 55° in Quebec and Labrador and includes all of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago islands, the Arctic waters, and the Arctic seabed or continental shelf as far out as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Article 76, will allow.

It also includes the Northwest Passage routes (up to seven routes) through the Canadian Arctic Archipelago connecting Davis Strait and Baffin Bay on Canada's east coast to the Bering Strait on Alaska's west coast (Dufresne, 2007). The area is home to more than 100,000 Canadians, many of them Inuit and First Nations, whose ancestors inhabited the region for millennia (Strahl, 2009). However, the most important area at stake is mostly north of 66°33' and includes more than 36,563 islands (Ferland, 2008).

Figure 1 and 2 shows a line around Canada, including the Canadian Arctic, depicting the straight geographical baselines (straight lines joining geographical coordinates of points set out in Schedules I, II and III of Territorial Sea Geographical Coordinates Order, 2010) as well as the 12 nautical miles from the baselines which defines the limit of Territorial sea in Canada. By combining them together, according to Colonel Leblanc in his 1999 presentation to General Baril, Chief of Defence Staff, and Mr. Jim Judd, Deputy Minister of National Defence, they define the general area under Canada's northern sovereignty. However, this may be impractical as Canada's coast is heavily indented with fiords and islands, cross bay openings and channels lying between the islands and the mainland (Macnab, 2006). McRae (2007), Ferland (2008), Roussel (2008) Granatstein (2009), Pharand (2009) and Irwin (2009) emphasize that there is no threat to Canada's ownership over its Arctic land mass and islands except for the following discrete disputes:

- a) with Greenland (Denmark) over Hans Island in the Lincoln Sea, Figure 2.0;
- b) with the USA over the delimitation of the boundary between Alaska and Canada in the Beaufort Sea; USA does not recognize the Anglo-Russian Treaty delimiting the Alaska border in 1825 as 141°W; and
- c) with the USA and other maritime states over Canada's exclusive right to the management and control of the Northwest Passage.

Since the cession of title from Great Britain in 1880 combined with state activities thereafter and Canada's claim in 1908 over all the Arctic islands (Ferland, 2008), Canada's sovereignty has been questioned twice: in 1920 by Denmark and once again by Denmark in 1928. Both cases were resolved and there have not been any significant challenges to Canada's complete sovereignty over any of the islands of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago

(Pharand, 2009). However, there have been, according to Ferland (2008), acts of defiance over Arctic waters, for example, US nuclear submarines, US super tanker Manhattan, Soviet-USA Bering Sea Agreement (1990) as meridian 169°W, etc. According to Bjornson (2009), these disputes will be resolved through existing mechanisms such as bilateral negotiations, arbitration or existing legal frameworks. There are other issues in the North that are common to other circumpolar nations such as the ownership of the Lomonosov Ridge with Russia, the competition for strategic resources by Canada, USA, Russia and Denmark, environmental concerns put forward through the European Union, sustainable development, emergency responses, conservation of Arctic flora and fauna, acoustic noise by human activities, monitoring of the Arctic environment and even growing global interests towards the North by China, Japan and South Korea, just to name a few. Thus, all of these issues together show how complex the sovereignty picture over land, water, economic zones, etc. is and that Canada will be facing challenges to its Arctic sovereignty sooner than later.

Sovereignty over the Arctic continental shelf is a bit more complex due to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982, Article 76. A coastal state, according to Article 77, only has sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting its natural resources. At this time it is worth noting that Canada is in the process of determining the extent of its continental shelf and must submit evidence in support of its case in December, 2013.

2. 2. Use of Toponymy in Asserting Canadian Arctic Sovereignty

Putting aside all of the political and economical debates, what other solutions can be used to help assert sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic? The use of toponymy and more particularly Aboriginal toponymy can be used as a tool to assert sovereignty in the High Arctic. The institutions dealing with toponymy in general in Canada are further described herein. Geographical and place name decisions today are typically dealt with through a nomenclature authority normally established by an Act of Parliament or presidential or royal decree. In all cases, consultation with relevant stakeholders and the broader community is a must because the attachment of individuals and communities to geographical naming and place names cannot be underestimated (Hodges, 2006). This portion of the paper will identify Canada's national names authority and that of the three territories to provide insight on existing administrative bodies, their role, their policies and guidelines in approving place names in Canada's Arctic and as well as the state of their current field work. The point to stress is that the institutions dealing with toponymy in Canada are in place with similar policies and guidelines that recognize and protect traditional names and that Canada's sovereignty over the North is further enhanced by them as well as by land claims, which are proof of occupancy and use, has a component dealing with names. Therefore, what better way to assert sovereignty over Canada's Arctic? Proof of historic and current Inuit use and occupancy and to continue this use and occupancy is better reflected through toponyms and the supporting stories, legends and spiritual traditions behind the names than political rhetoric.

2. 2. 1. The Geographical Names Board of Canada

In Canada, the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC) was established by Order in Council and its predecessors have been guiding the naming of the Canadian landscape since late 1897 "when resource mapping beyond the frontiers of settlement and

extensive immigration made it an urgent matter to manage the country's geographical names, to standardize their spelling and their application to particular features" (GNBC, 2004).

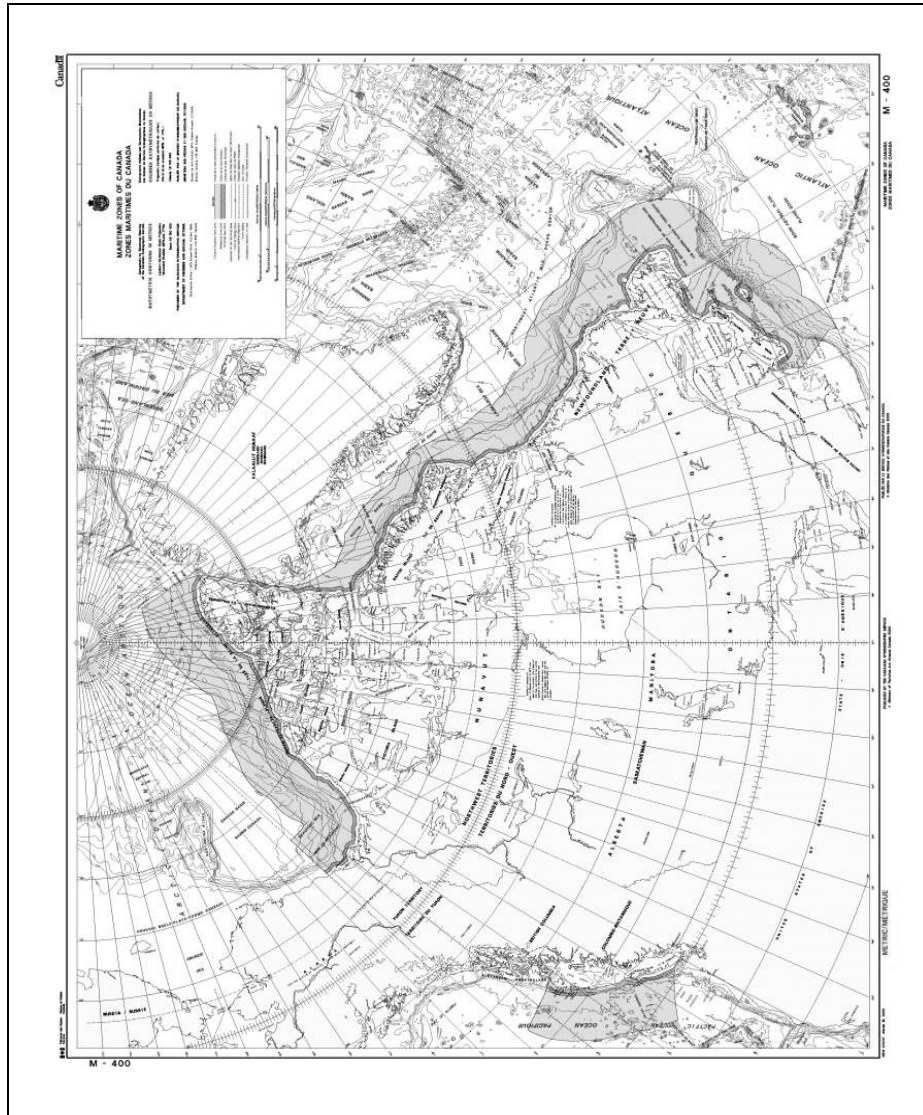


Figure 1: Baselines of Canada and 12 Nautical Miles
(source: Maritime Zones of Canada, 2000, Chart M-400 by the Canadian Hydrographic Service, Fisheries & Oceans Canada)

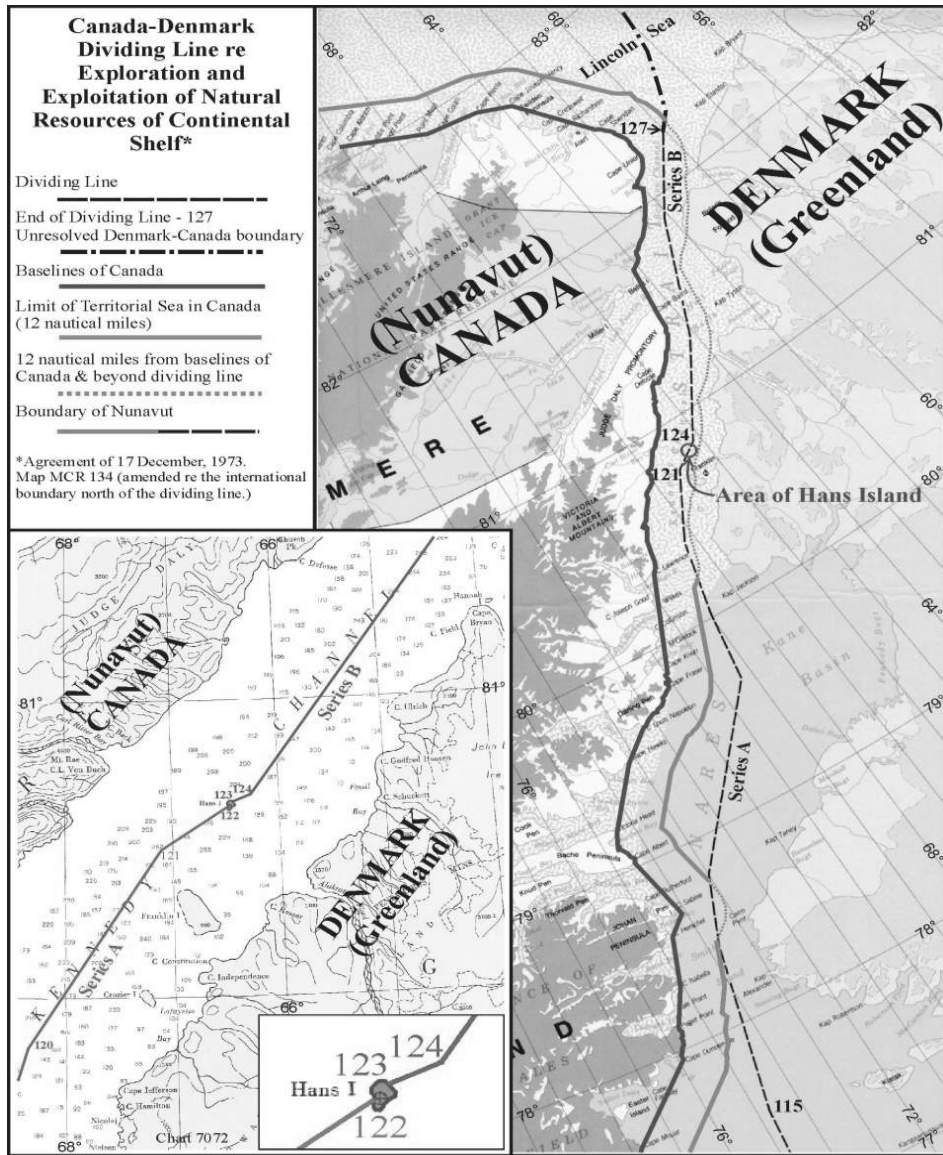


Figure 2: Hans Island Dispute

(source: Association of Canadian Land Surveyors – ACLS - Canada/Denmark, Greenland Demarcation & Hans Island, Image 7.7, ACLS web site June 1st, 2010)

As the national body responsible for all decisions affecting geographical nomenclature in Canada (GNBC Strategic Plan, 2006), the Board develops national standards and policies for geographical names and toponymic terminology, promotes the use of official names, and represents Canada in international toponymic forums through the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).

The GNBC is a national entity comprised of 23 members from federal, provincial/territorial governments, and academia that work together to ensure similar policies and guidelines are followed while dealing with surveying, mapping, translation, archives, parks, military, and Aboriginal affairs. In 1961, the names authority was reorganized and in 1979, the authority for naming on federal lands such as Indian reserves, national parks, and military reserves was made a joint responsibility between the appropriate federal department and the province concerned. It was not until 1984 that the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories assumed the responsibility for naming geographical features within their own jurisdictions. In 2004, Nunavut's Geographical Names Policy was established while the Nunavut Geographic Names Committee was formed in 2005 (Revie, 2009). Today, the GNBC is a national coordinating body working through the jurisdictions of its members who have established their own names authorities (GNBC Strategic Plan, 2006). Therefore, the nomenclature authorities are now in place in the North to process geographical and place naming decisions that will help recognize Aboriginal peoples relationship with the land and the sea.

2. 2. 2. Yukon Geographical Place Names Board

In 1984, the responsibility for naming geographical features in the Yukon was transferred from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to the Government of the Yukon. Subsequently, in 1987 the Yukon Geographical Names Board (YGNB) was established to undertake the job of researching and approving geographical names. However, it was not until 1995, under the *Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA)*, the YGNB was replaced by the Yukon Geographical Place Names Board (YGPNB) and approval of Yukon geographic place names fell under the responsibility of the Yukon Minister of Tourism and Culture (YGPNB 2007-2008 Annual Report). The Board develops place names policies that address all Yukoners and operates in cooperation with the Yukon Government Heritage Resources Unit and has close association with the Yukon Heritage Resources Board. Only after following a thorough and rigorous naming review process and a set of guidelines to determine what is and should be the official name and/or alternate of a place/feature, does a place name become official, and is entered in the YGPN Database, the Canadian Geographic Names Database for use in the National Atlas of Canada and published in the Geographic Names of Canada Gazetteer (YGPNB – Guiding Principles, 2007). During the 2007-2008 Fiscal Year review, the Board reviewed some twenty (20) submissions, assisted by elder Ms Gertie Tom. These submissions were then recommended to the Minister of Tourism and Culture for final review and approval (YGPNB 2007-2008 Annual Report).

Many of the names reflect the richness of the territory's resources, the shape, colour, and form of the land and water. Several names of places reflect diverse local cultures such as the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, their history, and the landscape they occupy and use. Names are also used to name rivers, mountains, lakes, landmarks, tell where fish and animals are located, describe artifacts, people and events (YGPNB 2007-2008 Annual Report). In other words, the names are **endonyms** because they originate from

within the local culture and established language within that region of Canada and thus help to create a type of “made in Canada” stamp.

2. 2. 3. Northwest Territories Cultural Places Program

The Government of the Northwest Territories recognized the importance of traditional names for geographic features and place names to the language, culture and history of the Aboriginals of the Northwest. Since the French traders and later, circa 1670, when Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) was granted a charter to conduct trade in ‘Rupert’s Land’, and the next few centuries saw the geopolitical map of the then Northwest Territories (NWT) evolve to what exists today. The last change occurred on 1st April, 1999, with the creation of the new territory of Nunavut. Nevertheless, during all of these geopolitical changes, the Northwest Territories recognized people’s relationship with the land and the sea and showed support to the preservation of some traditional, current and historic names for physical features and populated places. Currently the Northwest Territories Cultural Places Program (NTCPP) follows a similar process as the YGPNB that is thorough and rigorous and systematic following policies and guidelines to officially approve place names.

In 1961, the responsibility for naming geographic features was transferred to the provinces and territories with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs acting on behalf of the Territories” (Andrews, 2008). In 1984, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs transferred the responsibility for official geographic names to the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). On June 8th, 1984, the Northwest Territories Commissioner, Mr. John H. Parker, signed the Executive Council Record of Recommendation 84-9-15 approving the transfer, and directing the Executive Council to take the necessary action to implement the decision. In 1985, Commissioner Parker approved the NWT’s first *Geographic and Place Names Policy (Executive Order in Council 85-06-27)*. The policy was updated to its current version *Geographical and Community Names Policy 71.09* in 1990 and reformatted in 1997 (Andrews, 2008). “In 200, geographic names was subsumed under NWT Cultural Places” (Andrews, 2008). Aboriginal communities in the NWT take a special interest in geographical names and have active cultural institutes. Because of a vast complex geography, the landscape is marked with trails that link thousand of named places. Some have traditional names which allow elders “to describe precisely where they are, have been, or are heading to”. “The places are repositories of stories that contain information necessary for self-help and group identity and for living in a safe and prosperous way” (Andrews, 2009).

Most recently, some 306 Inuvialuktun names have been added to the official territorial names list and several projects to add more names are underway with the Slavey of Trout Lake, the Gwich’in of Tsiigehtchic, Inuvik, etc. Some 15 communities have had their municipal names changed to Aboriginal names such as Déline, Tulita, Tsiigehtchic, etc. All of this work helps to reinforce the understanding that names originate from within a local community within the Northwest Territories as a step in helping Canada assert sovereignty in that part of Canada’s North. In Andrews’ report (2009), he mentions that the GNWT has adopted a standardized orthography for writing Aboriginal languages using “a series of diacritics for representing the phonemes not already represented in the Roman alphabet for English and French”. However, this has created several problems for displaying on the web and computer systems or platforms. Nonetheless, the GNWT in partnership with the NWT Language Commissioner and language representatives from communities are working

towards a solution. One solution was to create ‘talking maps’ by using modern technology, the internet. In other words the internet is used to reflect the oral transmission of local knowledge.

2. 2. 4. Nunavut Geographic Names Program

In 1993, the *Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada* (NLCA) paved the way for the creation of the Nunavut Territory and the responsibility for place names under Article 33, Part 9, “that the Trust be consulted on any place name decisions” (NLCAA, 1993). The Trust is the Inuit Heritage Trust and is still today actively involved in the research behind the standardization of Inuit traditional names and Inuit maps. However, it was not until April 1, 1999, that Canada created the new territory of Nunavut. The new Territory is to reflect the “cherished values, ancient wisdom and traditions of Inuit” (Stewart, 1999).

The Nunavut Government’s business is done through several departments one of which is the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth (CLEY). Under this Department one finds the Nunavut Geographic Names Committee (NGNC). It is a subcommittee of the ministerial body Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Katimajit (IQK) (Government of Nunavut 2009 Annual Report). It was created to protect and promote Inuit culture, heritage, language and document traditional Inuit oral toponymy through a variety of community programs in eight different areas one of which is the Nunavut Toponymy Program (NTP) (Nunavut Government, 2009). Under the 2004 Nunavut Geographic Names Policy, one of NGNC’s role is to review all requests for place name approvals and/or changes, and to recommend to the Minister the disposition of significant, alternate, conventional and new place names (Nunavut Government, 2004). It recognizes traditional Inuktitut place names and provides technical support and financial assistance for research and analysis of place names to communities and assists the Nunavut Geographic Names Committee concerning official naming decisions (Nunavut Government, 2009).

The 2007-2008 period saw the Kitikmeot Heritage Society forwarded to the NGNC Inuinnaqtun place names attached to 10 map sheets. As well, the Inuit Heritage Trust submitted requests for names for 8 map sheets. Overall, in 2008, the NGNC recommended approval of 388 new names and 149 name changes while nine (9) were rejected. A combined total of 546 place names were submitted by the Inuit Heritage Trust. The NGNC has signed a data sharing-agreement with the GNBC, nearing publication of the *Manual for the Toponymy Program* of the Government of Nunavut and has awarded contributions towards community-based place name research.

One more important point to make is from a language perspective where “Inuktitut is both an ancient and a modern language” (Pirurvik, 2009) spoken by approximately 75% spoken by Inuit and is made up of numerous dialects. However, Inuit in Nunavut have used two writing systems, qaniujaaqpait (syllabics well over a century ago) and qaliujaaqpait (roman orthography since the 1960s and 1970s). Recently efforts have been undertaken to publish a phrasebook that would “include only those terms that can be used across a range of dialects” (Pirurvik, 2009). This book is titled “Inuktitut Essentials – A Phrasebook” and it has all the basic elements a person needs to learn Inuktitut except sound which can be found on the website tusaalanga.ca. Therefore, Inuit have all the necessary tools to help capture a local cultural group’s geographic or place names using syllabic or Roman orthography, follow the review process established in the geographic names policy and submit to the

NGNC for approval which in turn recommends to the Minister of CLEY significant, alternate, conventional, new and traditional names. Similarly, as found in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, these names or endonyms cover local Inuit spaces and places within Nunavut. However, the majority of names are traditional names that have not been officially approved by the Government of Nunavut. More resources are required to help Nunavut standardize more names which in turn would help assert control over the Arctic landscape and seascape because they offer not only compelling evidence of land occupation and use by the Inuit but a link to their traditional knowledge.

2. 2. 5. Inuit Historical Use and Occupation of Canada's Arctic Landscape and Seascape

From time immemorial Inuit and their ancestors have inhabited the Canadian Arctic using the lands, water and sea ice. Nomadic hunters using simple tools to extract food and build shelter travelled from Siberia along the coastline followed several animal species migrating across the Bering Strait (Andre Tautu, 2009) to Alaska some 15,000 – 26,000 years ago (Binette, 2001). According to Binette (2001), there was a vast area, called La Béringie, between the Kolyma River in Siberia to the Mackenzie



Figure 3: *La Béringie*

(source: Sylvie Binette (2001), « *La Béringie : refuge d'une époque* », p. 27)

River in Canada through Alaska and the Yukon where one could find a steppe type of vegetation which gradually changed to a tundra type over time. This area was protected from glaciation and attracted several species of animals and nomadic hunters. These hunters were probably descendants of the *Yupik* and *Chukchi of Siberia*. Some archaeologists call these hunters *Inupiaq* the first of the North American Inuit who formed coastal communities in Alaska while some remained nomadic. Currently, the most dominant Aboriginal group in Alaska is the *Alaskan Yupik* who is related to the *Siberian Yupik* (INAC, 2005). Some 5,000 years ago, according to Makarenko (2002), one group whom the Inuit call the *Tuniit* (Inuit of the Dorset culture) began spreading across the western Arctic and moved eastward

to as far as Greenland and down the coast of Labrador. They brought with them their Alaskan ancestors' ocean-based culture and built a nomadic life following the migration of animals in order to survive the harsh environment. Today, moving from west to east across the Canadian Arctic, the *Inuvialuit or Mackenzie Inuit* can be found between the Alaskan border and Holman Island in the Central Arctic. The Central Arctic Inuit were comprised of the *Inuinnat* and the *Netsilik*. Further east are the *Nunavut Inuit* where Inuit from Baffin Island go back some 4,000 years and the *Labrador Inuit* along the Labrador coast.

The Inuit lived a nomadic lifestyle moving from place to place following the natural environment of birds, fish, seals, caribou, bears, etc. which explains their strong bond to the land and the sea. Grégoire (2008) points out that Inuit have even “studied clouds, wind, ocean currents and animal behaviour for generations producing experts with the uncanny ability to predict local weather for hunters and travellers”. This connection to the land, to water, to wildlife, and to each other has helped Inuit survive for centuries (Aglukark, 1999). Oolayou (2009), from Pangnirtung area, but living in Iqaluit, explained the importance of old or traditional Inuit names used on local maps for sustainable harvesting and travelling thus reflecting the mobility of traditional life. In the case of Canada's Arctic, the protection of traditional names, existing names and the creation of new names, which demonstrate the occupancy, use and ownership of lands and waters, must be a priority due to receding Aboriginal languages, including their dialects. The erosion process is mainly due to the power of nation-wide media and trends towards cultural globalization. But there is a glimmer of hope where, in Nunavut, since the creation of the Nunavut Territory, Inuit have taken more responsibility for their lands and regained control of their lives by working to restore their culture and values and reclaim their weakened language. There has been a revival in 1986 with the Igloodik Oral History Project to recover Inuit language and culture through topics such as traditional medicine, spirituality and shamanism, hunting techniques, animal behaviour and biology, tool making, sled construction, local geography and place names, astronomy, snow drift formation, weather conditions, navigation and legends and myths (Nungak, 2009). This is not a comprehensive list but the topics are considered most important. “It's time to reverse the wholesale loss of Inuit language and culture and salvage what remains of the knowledge possessed by Inuit elders (Nungak, 2009).” Some of the end results will be Inuit traditional names on maps depicting the local dialect, occupation and use of the lands, waters and land-fast ice.

In recognition of the contributions of Aboriginals to Canada's history, identity and sovereignty in the Arctic, it is important to understand that cultural transformations occurred over time and that “Aboriginal historical tradition is an oral one, involving legends, stories and accounts handed down through generations in oral form” (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996) including spiritual traditions. The best example of “stone age to space age” transformation is that of Canada's original Northerners. They have evolved, in a very short time, from a seasonally nomadic subsistence way of life to commercial trapping (circa 1890s) and from using an oral form of communication which depicts a time, place and situation to a currently written language for modern treaties or land claim agreements negotiated between Canada, provinces/territories and Aboriginals in a very short time. More specifically, these land claim agreements, grant rights and establish self-government arrangements and include a section dealing with place names such as those for a river, lake, mountain, landmark, or other geographic features or locations within their own lands where Aboriginal government may establish its own procedures and policies for place naming and is the final authority on the orthography, phonetics, diacritics, etc. of place

names. The Aboriginal government and provincial and federal governments shall recognize the official name and when provincial and federal governments contemplate any proposal to name an entity or feature within Aboriginal government lands, the Aboriginal government will be consulted (Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act, 1993; Tlicho Agreement, 2003; Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, 2004). Therefore, all parties to these agreements have recognized and emphasized the importance of place names as part of their identity and relationship with that place, their history and their language. "Place names embody stories about the places to which they are attached". They give us valuable insights into the history of the landscape, the seascape and the land fast ice and provide clues about the cultural and social development of Canada's Arctic. "A study of place names will always reveal the astounding diversity and depth of Aboriginal peoples' contributions to contemporary Canada" (INAC, 2001). In summary, nowhere is the connection to land, to water, and to land-fast ice prevalent than across Canada's North where the landscape is dotted with "traditional and current use and occupation of the lands, waters and land fast ice therein in accordance with their own customs and usages" (NLCA, 1993).

2.3. Strategy/Action Plan to Assert Sovereignty over the Canada's Arctic Background

The Canadian "Arctic Sovereignty" issue has resurfaced once again and "will remain for a good many years to come" (McRae, 2007) unless Canada is pressured by the international community. According to Kathleen Harris (2009), National Bureau Chief, "Canada and the U.S. will partner on a strategy to develop the melting Arctic, but remain sharply at odds over transit rights through the Northwest Passage". In order to strengthen its position, maybe Canada should start moving away from its position of a quiet diplomacy approach because this is no time for complacency and prepare itself to defend appropriately its sovereignty over the whole of the Arctic Archipelago that includes land, Arctic islands, Arctic waters (internal and offshore) and the Arctic continental shelf. It includes "a huge littoral zone almost equal to its land mass" (Spears, 2008). This vast area is vital not only to Canada but the rest of the world. The region tended to be ignored and avoided by the rest of the world at one time but since the end of the Second World War and the Cold War, southerners' way of life and the import of new technological initiatives of all sorts have sprouted and allowed them to enter and live in the region (Huebert, 2008).

These spaces are at risk from global warming and climate change and human activity. Their combined effects will have not only significant repercussions on the lives of northern Canadians and the citizens of the other seven Arctic states but also the associated wildlife, vegetation, insects, marine life, etc. as occurred some 15,000-26,000 years ago. There has been a "shift from an emphasis on the concerns of southern capitals, like Washington, Ottawa, Copenhagen and Moscow, to an emphasis on issues of concern to the Arctic residents (Young, 2009). To make things worse, according to Song (2007), "Arctic sea ice is projected to shrink 40% by 2050. Summer sea ice is forecasted to disappear altogether by then as well. Sea ice shrank 2.6 million square kilometres more this summer alone than the average melt recorded over the last 25 years. That's equal to six Californias". This may change the Arctic environment for years to come.

However, amidst all of the gloom and doom, there is a silver lining when looking at a map of Canada from a toponymic perspective. When examining a map of Canada, we have a better understanding of the role and importance of toponymy as Canada's landscape and

seascape has been dotted with meaningful and colourful names from east to west and north to south that depict a rich and historical tapestry of the existence and expression of Canada's multi-cultural environment. It shows over time and in a spatial context the evolution of local knowledge of important areas, important events, and points of reference used by fishermen, herders and hunters. It also reveals kinship patterns, naming conventions, knowledge transfer, myths or legends supplemented by the diaries and biographies of the explorers, traders, missionaries, nurses, teachers, miners, construction workers, and government employees who have travelled the Arctic for adventure or job prospects (Alisa Henderson, 2007) and have left their imprint on the landscape and seascape through toponymy. It also helps us understand the importance of the existence of Aboriginal customs, practices, or traditions as well as their modern activities.

2. 4. Discussion of Strategy/Action Plan

In the face of defending its Arctic sovereignty, Canada needs to marry its national defence, security, foreign policies and sustainable resource development agenda with stronger diplomatic engagement and sustainable socio-economic development (Lackenbauer, 2008) in direct collaboration with the territorial governments and northern Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations. Thus, to help defuse the frenzied debate over Canadian sovereignty through increased spending on national defence *is not being realistic and practical* even though enhancing surveillance and security across the Canadian Arctic is a necessity because "sovereignty and security are interdependent" (Huebert, 2009). The Department of National Defence's has developed its Northern Strategy and the Arctic Integrating Concept to outline its role and the types of challenges to defence, security and sovereignty in Canada's North. The Canadian Forces Canada Command "is tasked with defending Canada" and is "it's most critical and important mission" (Spears, 2010). The organization is "robust" and uses "results-oriented" control system which will be an asset under rapidly changing climate (Spears, 2010). The Harper government must work cooperatively in an effective manner with all stakeholders in the Arctic and fill the needs of its Northerners. That is the reality of today! A military flag waving approach to Arctic sovereignty is not the preferred course to follow.

Changing weather patterns in the Arctic could "spark an increase in illegal activities with important implications for Canadian sovereignty and security and a potential requirement for additional military support" (Canada First Defence Strategy, 2007). Although Canada has used quiet diplomacy and practical multilateral and bilateral agreements to bolster sovereignty over its Arctic lands, waters and seabed or continental shelf in the 20th Century, it will not be enough in the 21st Century because the circumpolar north is "strongly divided by geopolitical discourses which strongly reflect national interests" (Nicol, 2006). That is the reality Canada faces in the coming years. For any success, Arctic Bay's Nathaniel Chouinard believes that the most important aspect of the Arctic sovereignty discussion is the people (Ryder, 2009).

The world is changing at an unprecedented pace and there is currently a need for an integrated Northern Strategy approach, as Lackenbauer (2008) pointed out, by the Canadian government that must consider an array of variables in order to implement the Strategy. Well, the Government has listened and released its Northern Strategy in July 2009. However, without the associated funding, for example to address critical infrastructure needs, it will have no teeth and Northerners will lose once again.

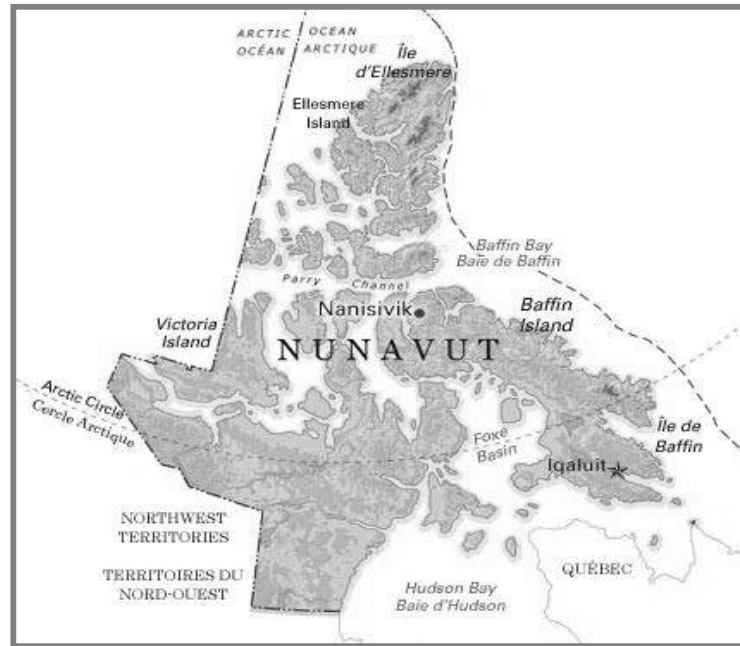


Figure 4: Nunavut Territory
(source : Ferland (2008). "The Smelting Border : Names and Limits of Contested Arctic", p. 5)

The Canadian Arctic Archipelago is mostly within the Nunavut Territory, (Figure 4, Ferland, 2008). The location of the Northwest Passage has never been delimited as a geographical entity because people were using different routes across the former North West Territories. Generally speaking, we are all aware that maritime entities, limits, borders, changing frontiers, place names, usage and occupation of land and water, conventions and other variables have, individually or in concert, lead to disputes with many neighbouring countries. Canada is not immune to this fact. As in other parts of the world, many Canadian geographical entities have come and gone and will continue to change the Canadian landscape and seascape even though delimiting and naming geographical entities and place names have "political, defence, economical, security, cultural, diplomatic, or ecological importance for Canada's Arctic inhabitants" (Ferland, 2008).

The continued melting of the polar ice-cap, (Figure 5), and iceberg derivations will undoubtedly open several Arctic waterways to commercial routes and may force Canada's claim over the Arctic be dealt with more as an important dimension of its foreign relations, especially the High Arctic because of its sparse occupation and use. However, as Ferland (2008) stated, the Northwest Passage is not a place but was originally a concept, a myth, a challenge that developed from an elusive sea passage pieced together through the efforts of

many explorers (Kenney, 2009) into a maritime route, or routes, from Europe to Asia for trading goods.

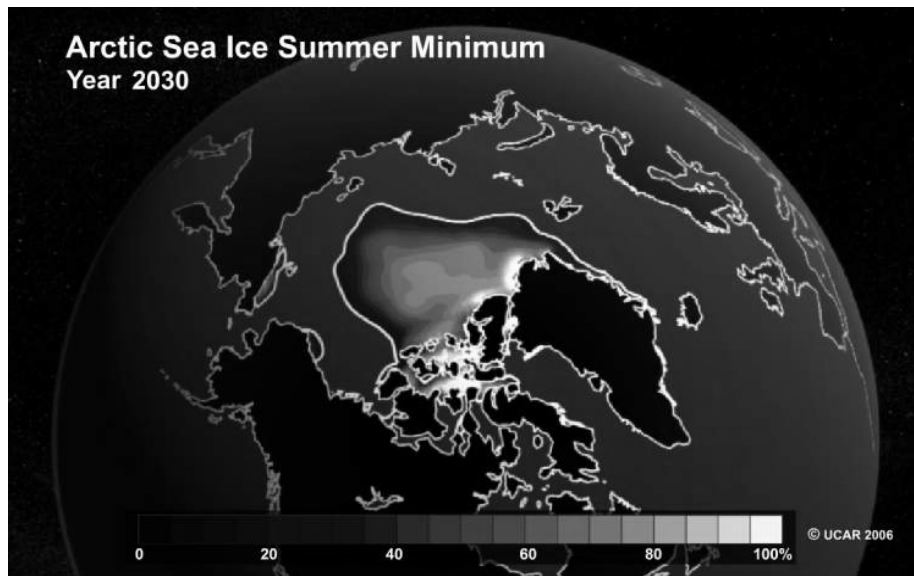


Figure 5: Melting of Polar Ice Cap
Conditions in 2007 were close to what was predicted for 2030
(source: Bancroft, D. (2009). “Commentary on: *In the Grip of Climate Change – The Circumpolar Dimension*”. Digital picture from UCAR 2006)

From the first encountered European explorers dating back to Erik the Red’s 10th century Icelandic voyages to Newfoundland and Labrador, to Italy’s John Cabot’s Newfoundland voyage in 1497, to Britain’s Martin Frobisher’s eastern Arctic trips in 1576-78, Henry Hudson in 1611, William Baffin in 1615, Foxe in 1631, Roald Amundsen in 1905, and other explorers such as Captain John Ross (1818), Captain William Parry (1819), Sir John Franklin (1819-26), Norwegian Sverdrup (1902) and Danish Mikkelsen (1909), scientists, geologists, naturalists, fur traders and prospectors, Canada’s northern landscape and seascape has been marked with a patchwork of names “as evidence of their discovery and possession of new lands” (Kerfoot, 1987). The result of their work of naming features across the North can be found on Canada’s National Toponymic System of maps. Even the Canadian Government sent expeditions in the Canadian North, i.e. mariner Bernier’s voyages (1904-1911) on behalf of the government, to show the world its strong interests in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago and assert sovereignty over newly discovered land, islands and waters by providing names to land and water features (Cloutier, 2001).

In 1920, James White tabled his report to the then Geographic Board of Canada (GBC) in which he provided a history of place names in northern Canada showing proof of who left their imprint across the North. However, in today’s world and the “UN philosophy

to precedence to local usage in standardizing toponyms” (Kerfoot, 1990), most of those names do not reflect Aboriginal surroundings or have not come from within.

Since the creation of GBC in 1897, Canadian toponymy has made tremendous strides as a national body but also has made a significant impact at the international level through the United Nations Geographical Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). Nevertheless, some historic names across Canada’s north will disappear. The Nunavut Territory already has replaced some names while others are in the process of being replaced by standardized Inuit traditional names as depicted on Inuit maps. However, the main impediment to approve more names has been slowed by the large volume of field work yet to be undertaken and the associated funding. In the long run, Canada’s Arctic region will be dotted with a mix of historical names and Inuit traditional names that, together, will play an important role in the sovereignty debate.

While political, economical and diplomatic debates continue on the subject of sovereignty in the Arctic, it is very important to emphasize that sovereignty begins at home and that Inuit geographical names and place names be standardized quickly across Canada’s Arctic as evidence of effective occupation of spaces and places that have been used and owned by local Inuit groups and communities. They represent an inherent Inuit human value and are the result of Inuit life experiences and recollections of important events in Inuit oral history. Basically, their identity is defined “in terms of the places in which they hunt, gather, live, and travel through the annual cycle” (Berkes et al., 1995). Thus, Inuit “traditional hunting and trading routes have always been described as going from one geographical name to another” (Government of Nunavut, 2009). They represent landmarks for oral maps. They were very noticeable when Sheila Oolayou, from the Inuit Heritage Trust, showed local Inuit maps of the Pangnirtung area (see cover) at a reception in Iqaluit in August 2009. These names can also be the remnants of earlier civilizations or extinct languages that partly survived. They can be the result involving myths or legends, stories and accounts handed down through generations in oral form and thus have survived in a rapidly changing and complex society. They are irreplaceable and must be preserved as they are part of “the local, regional and national heritage and identity” (Helleland, 2006). The ultimate aim is to safeguard their cultural value and extend their life for the benefit of future Inuit generations and for all Canadians. Therefore, as previously mentioned, more crucial field work is required to capture all relevant information associated with local Inuit names for spaces and places that are shown not only on local Inuit maps. By standardizing these names, they will certainly show up on Canada’s National Topographic System (NTS) maps thus supporting the Government’s “use it or lose it” rhetoric.

Over the centuries there have been environmental changes across the Canadian North which have caused local communities to cope with the new challenges and sometimes is reflected through an event or events which in turn is associated to a local place name or geographical name. They provide an insight and assessment of how local communities evolved on the land and by the sea in order to adapt to the harsh environmental changes and is reflected in their livelihoods, strong traditions and unique culture. This is paramount in understanding the stories behind the names in support of use and occupation of the landscape and seascape. Therefore, it portrays the link between people and their unique and emotional attachment to nature. According to Numminen (2008), without a great deal of familiarity with nature and mobility of movement during summer and winter in combination with the quantity and quality of natural resources, societal flexibility and well defined rules and practices, survival in a marginalized environment was precarious. Actually, according to

him, this increased the spread of knowledge about locations of prey animals and hunting techniques, but, even with that knowledge, “starvation and accidents were a part of everyday life” (Numminen, 2008). Hopefully, by examining present and past adaptation strategies, Northerners will adapt, as their forefathers did, to climate changes which will influence economic activities and the availability of natural resources. However, it is very clear, according to Pearce (2008), that the Inuit are concerned that the younger generation have lost some of the environmental knowledge and land skills required to function effectively into a changing future where ecosystems and livelihoods will change due to climatic change because environmental knowledge and land skills are disappearing. In other words, in order to survive, Northerners, who rely heavily on renewable resources, will have to adapt to these changes or new challenges in order to be part of the future development of the North. Their experiences, as were their forefathers, will surely be reflected in new place names and geographical features being assigned to the landscape and seascape and tell the story of the evolving North for future generations. In order to help them, the Federal government, as part of its Northern Strategy, “must invest more on the ground and in the water”, according to Boswell (2009), and “to build sustainable communities” (Mary Simon, 2009). What better venue than investing in Nunavut’s Geographic Names Program. The Nunavut Government needs to officialise, disseminate and compile more space and place names than it has in the past and it must concentrate on standardizing traditional names as recorded in oral form and being transferred onto local Inuit maps. This information could also be used for tourism and travel purposes. This will help the official recognition of Inuit toponymy and support not only the Principles outlined in the Nunavut Geographic Names Policy but use and ownership of Canada’s Arctic. It will strengthen Canada’s Arctic sovereignty claims.

Position papers written by Ron Macnab (2006), Geological Survey of Canada (retired) and Stéphane Roussel (2008) talk about another dimension that of maritime sovereignty and the zones adjacent to a coastal state where a state can exercise its respective rights and duties but in a diminishing fashion as one moves further away from the coastline. “At present, all Arctic coastal states are engaged in activities relating to the construction of the outer limits of their continental shelves, where they are entitled to exercise certain sovereign rights” (Macnab, 2006). In 2006, Dr. Loukacheva pointed out that Canada is now in the process of determining “the extent of its continental shelf over which it exercises exclusive sovereign rights, including potential underwater reserves of oil, gas and minerals”. In accordance with UNCLOS, which covers seabed claims, Canada has until December 7th, 2013 to submit its supporting evidence. This will help clarify the ownership of all or portions of the Lomonosov Ridge which has been claimed by Russia (Ferland, 2008). In the meantime, the Nunavut Geographic Names Committee should seize the moment and push to standardize as many existing Inuit names as possible across the landscape and seascape and, in the near future, even the continental shelf as far as UNCLOS Article 76 Limit will allow. Canada must not wait until 2013 but must compile more names data over the Canadian Arctic Archipelago in support of the Government’s concept of “use it or lose it”. The area most at risk is the High Arctic due of its remoteness and the difficulty to protect based on an increase in asymmetric threats due to the end of the Cold War, open skies, global warming, natural resources, criminal activity, etc. (Colonel Leblanc, 1999, Ferland, 2008). Denmark has recently laid claim to an area in the North Pole region and in doing so has challenged the Canadian Government’s presumed sovereignty of the High Arctic (Nicol, 2006). It therefore becomes imperative that Canada fight for the interests of the Northerners of this unique and vulnerable North unlike anything it has done in the past. This is no time for complacency! It

is clear that planning for the future will be challenging requiring significant investments and will undoubtedly include coalitions across jurisdictions and boundaries such as alliances with NATO members, as well as Russia, but it has to be collectively with all stakeholders while recognizing the importance of land claims as part of the sovereignty equation. If Canada does not deliver fairly quickly on the promises made by the Harper Government, the entire sovereignty endeavour will lose legitimacy which will “undermine the credibility of Canada’s reliance on the Inuit use and occupation” (Paperny, 2009). Northerners need a government they can trust and can actually deliver and implement its Northern Strategy promises as well as “exploring all our options” (Yaffe, 2009). One of “our options” is **Inuit toponymy**.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Canada must be prepared to seize opportunities in the 21st Century and implement its integrated Northern Arctic Strategy with Northerners to assert control over the Arctic landscape and seascape. Any discussion on Arctic sovereignty must include Inuit because of their historic activities which underpin the use and occupation of their traditional territory and water, “Inuit Nunangat known as the Inuit Arctic homeland in Canada” (Simon, 2009). The time has come for Canada to assert its claims in the High Arctic. Because challenges are more complex, Canadian decision-makers, according to Huebert (2009), need to build capabilities from the ground up, whether its education, employment, and more infrastructure, to help assert regional control. At the end of the day, the Canadian government must have a roadmap, a management plan or national action plan that must involve Northerners in decisions to build a stronger and secure Arctic. One way to gain regional control is to use toponymy as a stepping stone towards a sustainable sovereignty and security. This is relatively an “inexpensive action that could make the difference both today and tomorrow (McGoogan, 2009)”. It is hoped that this work will further the standardization of Inuit toponymy leading to better communications and understanding of the Inuit people. It may not be the most important and strongest variable but it is a distinct variable that individuals and societies use to reflect their unique history, cultures, lifestyles, philosophies, heritage and languages over their political landscape. It is the result of Inuit human experience and insight and constitutes an important element of feeling at home and part of the identity of a local Inuit population or group and its unique and emotional attachment to the land and sea. According to Okalik (2009), it does recognize continuous Inuit use and occupation of our traditional territory and is a reflection of the Inuit of Nunavut’s “knowledge of our land and the bounty of our seas” but most important of all it must embody, according to Ron Elliot, the concept of “Arctic Sovereignty Includes Me” (Ryder, 2009).

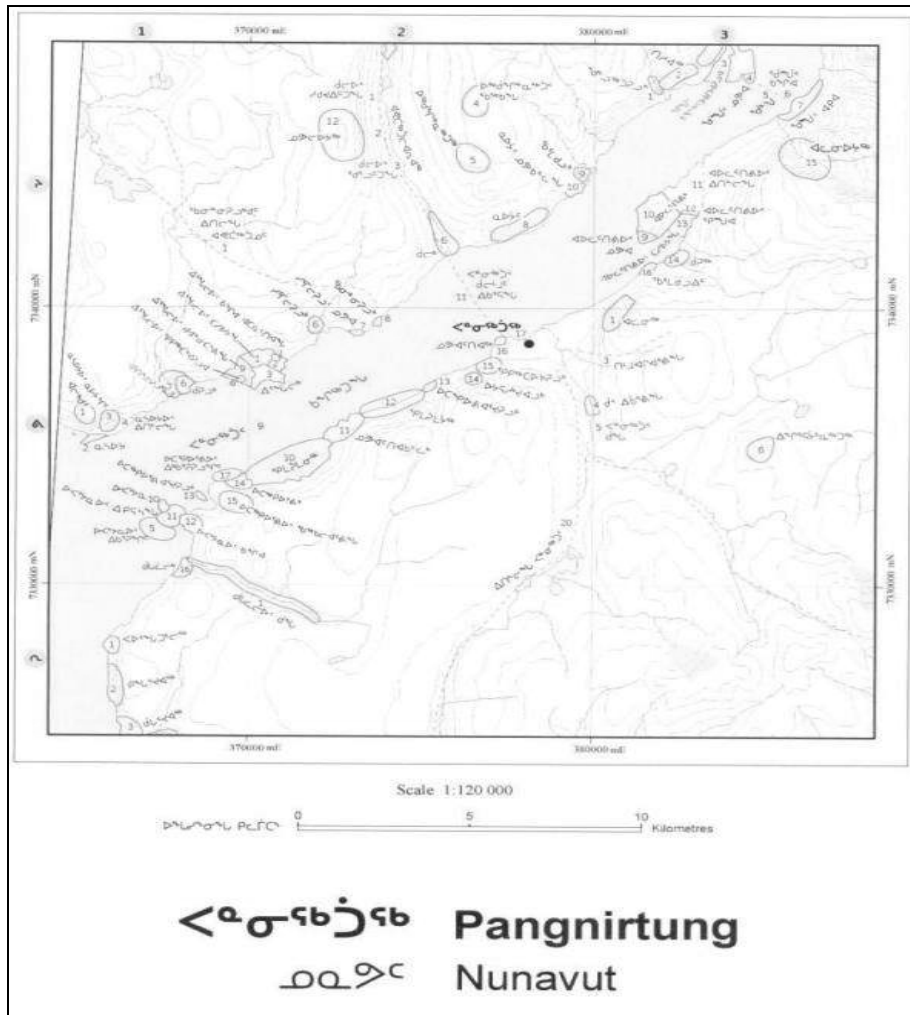
Place names, which are space-related identities that confirm the emotional relation of a person to a place, are frequently interpreted as a claim for dominance over a certain region or country while geographical names, which offer information about the character and the essence of a place, act as ingredients of space-related identity (UNGEGN Information Bulletin, 2008). Nowhere is this more obvious than across Canada’s Arctic. They are used at all spatial scales from the country down to the local level and may be shaped by linguistic, political, social and economical situations or events. But, above all, generally under **toponyms** or more specifically **endonyms**, local Inuit place names and geographical names support without a doubt the concept of “use it or lose it”, Prime Minister

Harper's "first principle of sovereignty in the Arctic" (Boswell, 2009), when used against the landscape and seascape, even though there is no significant proof of use or occupancy by Inuit in the High Arctic, and in the future the outer limits of the continental shelf where Canada may exercise a range of sovereign rights and authorities. In other words, they are the result of Inuit activities such as travelling and harvesting food (hunting, fishing, trapping), creating settlements, using shelters and cultural history (social and ritual activities) in Canada's Arctic region used by Inuit or Inuit society belonging to that particular region within Canada. It is one of the best ways to protect culture and heritage and affirm ownership of the spaces and places because as Woodman (2009) points out "**toponyms** arise *in situ* from the relationship between humans and the occupancy of their territory or "place".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper represents a couple of years of research that I had started in the hope of writing an 8-9 page article on the issue of Canadian Arctic sovereignty and how toponymy can be used as a means to help the Government assert sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic. It is therefore with sincere gratitude that I acknowledge the guidance and encouragement of Dr. André Lapierre, Professor of Linguistics and Canadian Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ottawa, and Dr. Philip Goldring, Consultant Historian, Ottawa, who both with utmost professionalism and their expertise in toponymy have helped me focus and refine my own thinking on the subject. Their editorial commentaries on some of the drafts of the manuscript were most valuable. I would also like to thank Yaïves Ferland, geographer formerly at Defence Research DC Valcartier and now a professional researcher at Université de Laval, for his review and helpful editorial comments. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Peter Jordan, Co-convenor for the Working Group on Exonyms, for allowing me and several other experts to participate in lively discussions on the delicate nuances between the concepts of endonym and exonym. Thanks to André Tautu, elder and Canadian Ranger, and Sheila Oolayou, Traditional Place Names Coordinator from the Inuit Heritage Trust, who spoke informally with me in Iqaluit and on the telephone on the history of the Inuit and traditional names used on local Inuit maps. A particular thanks to Tim Wykes, cartographer for the Inuit Heritage Trust, for providing a working draft of the Pangnirtung, NU 1:250,000 map sheet which I used for the cover of the paper. I would also like to thank Laura Mitchell for her technical expertise in preparing the first two pages of this paper. Last but not least, my most profound appreciation goes to my wife, Nicole, for her support and checking up on me and asking questions on the subject while I was reading and writing this paper at the kitchen table.

ANNEXES



Annex 1: Pangnirtung and Nunavut on the map
(source: Cover page and page 2 - Sheila Oolayou (2009), Traditional Place Names Coordinator, Inuit Heritage Trust. Inuit Heritage Trust Incorporated 2007.
Produced under license with Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada with permission of Natural Resources Canada.
National Topographic System Map # 261, Pangnirtung, Nunavut)

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Annex 3: Standardized Inuktitut

(source: Cover page and page 2 - Sheila Oolayou (2009), Traditional Place Names Coordinator, Inuit Heritage Trust. Inuit Heritage Trust Incorporated 2007. Produced under license with Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada with permission of Natural Resources Canada. National Topographic System Map # 261, Pangnirtung, Nunavut)

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