

THE R. W. DUNNING PAPERS AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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When Professor Robert William Dunning left Toronto in 1981 for retirement in New Zealand, Canadian anthropology lost a towering presence. Though his full impact on the development of anthropology in Canada has yet to be evaluated, it is safe to say that he made profound contributions in at least three areas. Firstly, Professor Dunning infused into Canadian anthropological studies an awareness of vibrant trends in British social anthropology. Moreover, he pioneered in the field of relations between Indians and the Canadian Government, ever emphasizing the contradictions within Canadian Indian policy which promoted the continued subservience to and dependence upon the Indian Affairs bureaucracy of reserve communities. Finally, as a professor at the University of Manitoba, University of British Columbia, and University of Toronto, he exercised a creative influence on such students as Stuart Philpott, Samuel Corrigan, Sally Weaver, and Kristyna Sieciechowicz.¹

All of us in the field of native studies, whether or not personally acquainted with Professor Dunning, now have the opportunity to develop a finer appreciation of his manifold scholarly accomplishments through study of the fat collection of his papers housed since 1981 in the University of Toronto Archives. Marching across 1.5m of shelf space, the Dunning Papers range through countries as diverse as Tibet and Canada, and through topics as different as the modern Lebanese family and the formation of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.

In 1959, still early in his academic career, Professor Dunning assured himself an enduring niche in northern Algonkian studies with the publication of *Social and Economic Change among the Northern Ojibway*, a study based on fieldwork in the northwestern Ontario community of Pekangekum. The Dunning Papers sparkle with insights into the genesis of this monograph both from the viewpoint

of strictly scholarly concerns and from another viewpoint which may be defined simply as 'human interest'. In the latter category, suffice it to mention the bemused puzzlement expressed by Cambridge anthropology professor Meyer Fortes in a letter in 1955 to his Canadian graduate student about the latter's scholarship application to the Royal Society of Canada: "I am not quite certain whether it is necessary to fill in the curious form you have enclosed with your letter. We are not accustomed here to classify people in terms of a percentage scale, and I would not venture to do so in your case or in that of anybody else. I am enquiring from the Royal Society whether they want this form filled in or not."

From a more strictly scholarly perspective, there are several insights in the Fortes-Dunning Pekangekum correspondence into the shoals which the future Professor Dunning was attempting to navigate in the course of his fieldwork. In response to a letter of December, 1954, about the problems posed for fieldwork by the Indians' belief that "all 'white men' must be either a boss of some kind or slightly unhinged", Fortes remarked: "I am interested to hear that you are meeting with the first stage of resistance to detailed field enquiries. In point of fact, everybody goes through that experience, and in due course manages, with persistence, to overcome it."

Anthropological definition of the character of the group in Pekangekum society and economy is another concern of this correspondence. Fortes, long concerned with the nature of groups in African societies, was especially intrigued by this same aspect of his student's work. In January, 1955, Fortes opined: "I think that you have a very important and interesting problem in your sentence 'The band is *certainly* a domestic group and food sharing is the norm.' I have underlined 'certainly' because there is a very important theoretical problem involved in determining just what is meant by a domestic group which is not, in some shape or another, a 'family'." Some months later, the thinking of both men had changed, as this quotation from Fortes reveals:

It is certainly, as you say, not a domestic group that you are concerned with, nor does it seem to be a quasi-sovereign political group. I suppose the nearest analogy is an Australian horde, or that type of system. The kind of picture it evokes in my mind is that of a collection of closely linked cells rather than, for example, the sort of thing we mean when we speak of segments.

While working at Pekangekum, Professor Dunning also corresponded with American anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell about problems in interpreting the meaning of gift-giving in Ojibway societies. Recalling his own fieldwork at Berens River, Hallowell in October, 1955, thus informed his younger colleague:

I'm afraid I can't do much to help you out on the problem of sending and giving. There is in general a principle of reciprocity. The children used to pick wild strawberries and bring them to my camp again and again. They always expected something in return.

I have many recollections of this principle and I made some use of it in research - i.e., when I gave out tea or flour or sugar I tried to get 'information' in return My thought was - never tested - that there was no such thing as a *pure* gift. A few times I gave out cigarettes and said something to the effect that I was giving these without expectations of return. But as I recall I always got something - once a headed watch fob for two packages. My impression was that an obligation was felt even if nothing came back.

Field notes, papers, and correspondence relating to Pekangekum constitute roughly a quarter of the entire collection. I have chosen to highlight a few aspects of the extraordinary richness of the correspondence, but this emphasis should not be allowed to obscure the potential value of several thick files of research notes on aspects of Pekangekum life: genealogy, language, historical background, family and kinship, demography, names, winter camps, education, marriage, economic conditions, puberty rites, birth, and magic.

Another sheaf of files in the Dunning Papers concerns his cooperation in the mid-1970s with the newly-formed Grand Council Treaty # 9. Though in the early 1960s Professor Dunning had turned away from northern Algonkian studies to pursue other research interests, he complied cheerfully with requests from the Grand Council for assistance in designing and carrying out research programs. Correspondence dated March 31, 1974 finds his informing Treaty #9 Grand Chief Andrew Rickard:

Please rest assured that my group in social anthropology will try to cooperate with the Grand Council in anything it wishes to do. I would also say that it is fortunate that we have, at the moment, a small group of good students who are interested in furthering research on the contemporary Indian situation. As I had indicated to you earlier, there is a number of people at this university which does not believe in development of minorities or Indian development as such. Rather these people are interested in developing their careers and gathering in plenty of *per diem* payments.

The Grand Council's priority project for this research group was an investigation of problems in the delivery system of government services to the more than forty communities within this northern Ontario treaty area. For reasons which are not made clear by the evidence in this collection, however, the proposal drafted by the Dunning group appears never to have gone beyond that stage. Cooperation between Professor Dunning and the Grand Council did bear fruit, however, in the land use mapping studies undertaken by Kristyna Sieciechowicz, sample questionnaires for which are to be found in these papers. There also are worthwhile materials in this particular set of files on such critical concerns of the Grand Council in 1974-5 as the Northern Ontario Remote Areas Communication and Transport (Winter) Conference, March 21-22, 1974; and the contro-

versial memorandum of intent between the Ontario Government and Reed Paper Company on cutting rights to vast timber tracts in northwestern Ontario.

The importance of the Dunning Papers, however, is not confined to those interested in Ojibway ethnography or the history of Grand Council Treaty #9. Still another sheaf of documents, the most voluminous of any category in the collection, concerns Oo-za-we-kwun Centre, Incorporated, at Rivers, Manitoba. Future studies of Indian economic development in the 1970s will have to make liberal reference to this experiment in providing both employment training and an appropriate setting for conditioning native people to the rat race of industrial society. Professor Dunning, together with a research team consisting of Shuichi Nagata, Joseph Sawchuk, and Patricia Sawchuk, in 1977 compiled a three-volume, 1,200-page evaluation of Oo-za-we-kwun for the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. This collection consists of correspondence on Professor Dunning's role as a consultant; the final typescript copy of the valuation; and the original copies of interviews carried out by the Sawchuks with Oo-za-we-kwun trainees and ex-trainees, as well as with a few of the Centre's staff members. Nagata's appendix to Professor Dunning's Oo-za-we-kwun evaluation is an absolute 'must', not only for those interested in Roll Knight's 'Indians at work' theme but for students of Japanese management. After a two-day visit to the bicycle factory of Sekine Canada Limited (a lessee of industrial space at Oo-za-we-kwun), Nagata drew upon his intimate knowledge of Japanese culture, North American Indian societies, and human relations in industry to produce a report exceptionally rewarding in its potpourri of cross-cultural insights.

Contemporary relationships between Indians and the Canadian Government found an eager student in Professor Dunning throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This interest is reflected in several ways in his papers, but most exhaustively in a box of files on his activities as a consultant to the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood. Of particular interest in this collection is the treatise he prepared for DIAND and the Brotherhood in 1973 entitled 'Report of the Manitoba Concept Review Committee on restructuring DIAND financing for the Indians of Manitoba'. Emerging as a response to the aspirations for self-government expressed in 1971 by Manitoba Indians in their "Wahbung" statement, the Manitoba Partnership Concept was conceived as an attempt to increase the flexibility of DIAND programs and promote cooperation between Indians and DIAND staff in the development and implementation of all phases of the delivery of services to bands. Professor Dunning's analysis of the reasons for its failure is essential for those who dare venture into the bramblebush of problems yet to be resolved if Indian governments are to achieve their rightful place as participants in shaping Canada's future.

One of the more curious files in these papers documents the activities between 1962 and 1965 of the University of British Columbia's Presidential Committee on Arctic and Alpine Research, of which Professor Dunning (a UBC faculty member in the early- and mid-1960s) was a member. The most interesting document in this file is entitled 'Report of the Subcommittee on Tibetan Refugees to the Committee on Arctic and Alpine Research'. The work

of this subcommittee carried Professor Dunning to the distant reaches of Tibet, and the evidence of this adventure survives in the form of photographs in this collection. The subcommittee had been struck in response to an appeal from Cyril Belshaw and George Woodcock, UBC professors of anthropology and Canadian literature respectively, for guidance in selecting areas in Canada suitable for settlement of Tibetan refugees then residing in Nepal.

As in all such collections, there are a few miscellaneous tag-ends of superior interest. These include a transcript of the proceedings of the founding meeting of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada; a file of materials on work begun by Professor Dunning and an undergraduate student on the history of residence patterns on the Moraviantown, Oneida, and Chippewas of the Thames reserves; a few items of correspondence in 1973 between Professor Dunning and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood on the concerns of several Manitoba bands about the reluctance of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to enforce provisions in the Indian Act on possession of intoxicants on reserves (Section 97); a file on Southampton Island Inuit genealogies; and the typescript of a speech by Professor Dunning, himself once a teacher at Pekangekum, on "The Indian Child in the Public School - Victim or Victor in a Culture Conflict?" The collection also contains an assortment of reports, essays, and articles by other authors on a gamut of subjects including the sociology and economics of the family in several different cultures within and outside Canada; educational facilities for Indians in Canada in the mid-1950s; the Southern Vancouver Island Tribal Federation; and wild rice harvesting by Indians in Manitoba.

The foregoing has been a whirlwind sampling of the delights, both domestic and exotic, of the research collection constituted by the papers of one of Canada's most distinguished anthropologists. Neither Professor Dunning nor the University of Toronto Archives has imposed restrictions on access to the Dunning Papers. Researchers should address enquiries, specifying the Dunning Papers' accession no. (B82 - 0010), to Mr. Harold Averill, Assistant Archivist, University of Toronto Archives, 120 St. George St., Toronto, M5S 1A5.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Professor Kristyna Sieciechowicz for her contribution to this assessment of Professor Dunning's accomplishments. She advises, moreover, that a *festschrift* is planned for Professor Dunning.