

Introduction

Jim Lotz

Dr. Diamond Jenness died on November 29, 1969.

He slipped quietly away on a bright day, with the sunshine dappling the lawn, the birds cheerfully chirping, and a symphony playing on the radio.

In August of that year, I had written to Dr. Diamond from Montreal, where I was attending a Conference on Cross-Cultural Education in the North. It was a solemn conclave in which we gave the impression of wrestling with — and solving — all the complex problems of Indian, Eskimo and native education. I had not seen Dr. Diamond for a couple of years, although we had worked in the same government office for several years. He had been ill, and I hesitated to disturb him. In my note I had told him of the conference, of the twenty-four-dollars-a-day rooms, the luxurious surroundings, and the way in which the real people of the North — his people and his North — seemed so far away. He wrote back one of his short courteous notes, telling me that he was feeling well, and inviting me to visit him.

And so, on a glorious September day, as the year died in a blaze of gold and orange Pat and I, with a friend, set out to see Dr. Diamond. Our friend was studying Indians, and had never dreamed that she would ever get to meet *the* Dr. Jenness. We had some trouble finding his cottage in the Gatineau. To the people we asked for directions, his name was unfamiliar. As always, the prophet was unknown in his own country — even in his own village. Over coffee and brownies, we talked with Dr. Diamond and his wife. He showed me a typed manuscript entitled “Through Darkening Eyes”.

There was no self-pity or gloom in his manner, and he was as alert as ever. He was still Dr. Diamond Jenness, a man small

in stature and great in heart, with a quiet, dignified manner and a probing intelligence that went right to the core of a problem. I let him into a secret — that the Canadian Research Centre for Anthropology would be preparing a book of essays in his honour — and we were suitably conspiratorial about the project. He agreed to read the essays and to make comments on them. One of the aims of the project was to put him in touch with research workers who were building on his work, and extending his concern for people to the problems of Eskimos and Indians in the modern world.

Dr. Jenness' last great achievement had been the completion of the series of publications on Eskimo administration. Funds for this project had been arranged through the Northern Co-ordination and Research Centre of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, and the reports were published by the Arctic Institute of North America. For this study he had travelled extensively and talked to many people. It was all done on a small sum of money, in contrast to the enormous amounts of money spent in the Indian and Eskimo research industry these days. For Dr. Jenness *was* an Eskimo. In 1914-1916, he lived with the Eskimos east of the Mackenzie Delta and was adopted by a prominent Eskimo leader on Victoria Island. There was a certain sense of fierce pride and integrity about Dr. Diamond, in which arrogance played no part. He had lived with the Eskimos, learned from them, become one of them. His mind was always open. He would listen to the most ridiculous proposal, meditate, and then say, "I'll think about that."

In the peculiar small world of Ottawa, his presence and his greatness were seldom acknowledged, as bright young men sought to solve all the world's problems before lunch. But anyone who found his way to Dr. Diamond could draw upon a great fountain of knowledge and wisdom. He never turned anyone away. You approached Dr. Diamond as you would the Colosseum, or some other great historical monument, with a mixture of awe and reverence. But his humanity leapt out at you, and you went away refreshed and relaxed. He was a serious, joyful man. He always had a twinkle in his eye, and like many other great scientists, he took his work seriously, but never himself.

And he was concerned — about the fate of Mankind and especially about that of his beloved Eskimos. There was no paternalism in his manner, just deep concern for fellow humans and friends. Always, when he spoke of the Eskimos, he conveyed the impression of a solitary small man on a windswept tundra, waiting for a seal, seeking the caribou, or trudging laden back to the igloo — a man solitary and independent, and yet concerned and involved with his community.

He told me once that a Cypriot had written to him after reading his book *The Economics of Cyprus* (1962), and suggested that he come to that strife-torn country and solve its problems. But this was not Dr Diamond's way. He was concerned about all manner of men, but he was not worried about the "plight of the natives" in the guilt-ridden, middle-class way that has almost become a standard Canadian reaction these days. He had lived with the Indians and the Eskimos, he had respected their ways and understood their validity.

He tells, in one of his papers ("An Indian Method of Treating Hysteria," *Primitive Man* 6[1]:13-20 [1933].) about being called in by a group of Indians near Hazelton, B.C. They had been using a traditional way of curing their mentally-ill people, but had been bothered by the missionary and the police, who saw only barbarous ways there. The Indians invited Dr. Jenness to witness their ceremonies, and he described them in the paper. He concluded;

Native Explanation Mrs. Old Sam had been seized by *kyan*, a mystic unseen power that haunts the mountains. It makes the patient listless and without strength subject to constant day-dreams... At times the patient becomes hysterical... The only persons who dare approach her in this condition are those who have been cured of the same complaint, or else members of the secret Kaluhlim Society, who have suffered from a milder malady of a somewhat similar nature... The "doctor" and his assistants... govern this possessive spirit with their songs and gradually expel it from her body, when the "doctor" blows it back to the mountain where it belongs.

Rational Explanation The Indians are mentally somewhat unbalanced. Believing that the world around them is full of supernatural beings who are constantly interfering in human affairs, they readily fall victims to their hallucinations... *Kyan* is supposed to be most active in the evenings as darkness begins to close in; consequently it is at this hour that auto-

suggestion brings on the hysteria. [He then describes how the hysteria is controlled by the other Indians]. Thus the hysteria is forced to express itself in slow rhythmic movements until the patient becomes physically exhausted and her mind clears. During her periods of normality she encounters no social barriers or restraints, and incurs no feeling of inferiority, because she believes that her malady was unavoidable and firmly expects permanent cure. So in time... she outgrows to a large extent the mental and pathological conditions that induce the hysteria and becomes fully normal again.

Dr. Diamond saw that there was wisdom in the "emotional", "native" way of doing things, and that such ways were as rational as western methods of curing the mentally ill.

Dr Jenness founded no formal school of Canadian anthropological thought and headed no band of followers. He was never on the staff of a university, and so had no captive audience to enslave with his ideas to the exclusion of all others. In the final volume on his study, *Eskimo Administration, V: Analysis and Reflections*, he describes the traditional Eskimo way of leadership. Like an Eskimo leader, Dr. Diamond was a pilot, not a commander. He led because he was better at his speciality than anyone else, and because he cared for others. He retained his individualism and autonomy, and he encouraged others to do the same — even if it meant disagreeing with him. He made a distinction between what a man was and what a man did. He published his research results from the Stefansson Expedition, but he would never talk about certain personal aspects of this expedition, during which there was a conflict between the "scientists" and the "explorers". He was both, and he chose to stay in the middle, doing his work.

When he was completing his study of Canada's Eskimos, there were pressures on him to put the manuscript aside or to alter it, in case it embarrassed the government. The officials of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources suggested that they compile a series of observations on the manuscript, and that this be published as an appendix to the Canadian report. This minuting of the memoranda, rebutting or questioning each "controversial" point is, of course, a standard bureaucratic method of self-defence. Dr. Jenness would have nothing to do with it. If the Department wished to publish their own report on the administration of the Canadian Eskimos, they

were at liberty to do so. After all, they had more resources than he had. But he sought to be judged by his peers, and by the Eskimos, and not by civil servants. And there the matter was left.

Dr Diamond had the two characteristics of every great scientist — the ability to make an intuitive leap into the unknown, and to string together a few impressions and ideas and come up with a new concept; and the capacity to work hard, digging into material, travelling, listening and thinking. Without this, the intuitive leaps mean little. Dr. Jenness always kept his feet on the ground. He discovered the Dorset Culture and the Old Bering Sea Culture as new adaptations to the Arctic environment, and his monographs on Eskimo administration were built on careful, painstaking research. As a classical scholar, he had the ability to communicate his findings in clear and precise language.

Social science seems to be coming of age in Canada, and there have been statements in recent years that the “real” problems of northern development are the social and cultural ones — as if this had not always been obvious to all men who had a concern for their fellows, as distinct from an “objective, scientific” attitude towards them. There have also been loud cries for more money for social science research. The anthropologists, sociologists and other social scientists are making sounds about being socially useful; some have become more Indian than the Indians. Dr. Diamond was never this way. He knew that the essential role of the social scientist is to carry out careful research, and to communicate his findings to everyone interested. He published a great deal, but once told me: “It’s not how much you write. It’s what you say that is important”.

Dr Diamond was not concerned with being socially useful in the hyperactive way that is becoming characteristic of so many North American social scientists who feel a compulsion to save other people — especially Indians — from themselves. He was concerned with being human, and with understanding and accepting the humanity of others. While he was working at the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, junior civil servants would slip upstairs, half furtively, to seek his advice. He never saw himself as the consultant, the expert, the authority.

An old Eskimo, Mr. Percy Ipalook Senior, from Kotzebue, Alaska wrote:

I am sure Eskimos in Barrow of my age and older will recall the "little man with glasses and a sketch book" getting around in Barrow... "Jenness" — as we knew him then — would mix around with us youngsters in our playgrounds and very courteously ask simple questions. Much of what he got out of us was "honest to goodness" expressions in Eskimo, or names and designations of anything in Eskimo. I have thought about this many a time afterwards and a common knowledge that if a person wishes an unadulterated information from anyone, ask a youngster. Invariably, the answer will be a straight truth or fact. The old professor of anthropology must have known this strategy long before he came to the Arctic.

And as just "Jenness" he will be remembered by all who knew him.

In general, social scientists are a gloomy lot, perhaps because they are called in only to study pathologies and problems when they seem to be beyond the control of ordinary men. But these essays, which cover Eskimos, Indian and the North should reveal a more optimistic perspective on the conditions of native peoples than most writings on this theme these days. They also reveal a great deal about the white man and his culture. The essay by a young Indian, Morris Isaac, reveals a cheerful bewilderment about the white man's world, and it is the sort of article that Dr. Diamond would have enjoyed. The article by Dr. George Rogers, a friend of Dr Jenness, points some ways forward for native and white people, based on experience in Alaska.

The range of essays in this volume is very wide. There are detailed papers on change in certain parts of the North — Peter Usher writes on the Western Arctic, Roger Pearson on the southern Mackenzie District, Edwin Hall on the impact of the snowmobile in Alaska, Milton Freeman on demographic changes in the Eastern Arctic. There are also summaries of northern research in one discipline (John Berry provides an overview of psychological research among native people in the North) and of one person (Donat Savoie summarizes the life and influence of another unknown Canadian — Father Petitot). The papers by John Honigmann, Derek Smith and Harry Hawthorn point out how new life styles are emerging in the North, and among Canada's Indians. Jean Usher and Bruce Trigger tell of the

impact of the white man on the Indians, and reveal the richness of the material for such studies in Canada. Robin Ridington tells of the depth and complexity of the inner life of a group of Indians. Julie Cruikshank raises some questions on how traditional and modern societies can work together in harmony. And Henry Collins' essay shows the universality of art.

Dr. Diamond did not live to see the great flowering of native people's movements that has occurred in Canada in the past two years. He did not live to hear Indian chants in a Parliamentary Committee Room, as Harold Cardinal, a young Cree leader from Alberta, confronted the government and explained the inadequacies of the new federal Indian policy. He did not live to read that the people of Sachs Harbour (named for one of the boats of the Stefansson expedition) had politely but firmly objected to oil companies ravaging their environment. He did not realize how all young people — Eskimo, Indian and white — were studying his books and finding authentic information on the past of the native peoples of Canada, information that they were using to build a saner society founded on knowledge. To the end of his days, he did not seem to realize that his personality and his integrity had provided a guide to many younger men, stumbling along a difficult path, and that his writings were providing a source of knowledge and ideas for everyone.

Yet, to the end of his days, he kept his heart and his mind open. He wrote, in a copy of *The Corn Goddess*, the following message to my two daughters.

You are young, and you can still hear and see things we older people can hear and see no longer, for our eyes have covers on them and our ears are stuffed with nonsense. But the Indians who told me these stories had good eyes and good ears, although some of them were old. They listened to the conversations of the trees in the forest, and heard the birds there talking to one another. They could see — can you? — the tiny fairy dancing in the dew-drop and the pixies hiding in the buttercup.

I hope that you too will hear and see these things all your life, and be happy.

Dr. Diamond told me once of going into a village in the Pacific when he was a young anthropologist. When he arrived, everyone had vanished. He sat down on a tree stump, pulled out

a piece of string, and began to play "cat's cradle". In a little while, the shy faces of children appeared to watch his fascinating fingers. Then the adults, reassured that this small white man meant no harm, came out of the forest.

And those of us who were privileged to know Dr. Diamond will remember him this way, playing his game of intellectual cat's cradle, a slight smile on his lips, a twinkle in his serious eyes, always concerned, always involved, always human, and always "Jeness".