

Missing link discovered in cattleman's shed

March 30 2010

(PhysOrg.com) -- The long-lost works of one of Australia's leading early anthropologists have been discovered in the shed of a northern New South Wales cattleman.

The groundbreaking works of Caroline Tennant-Kelly, close friend of the famed American [anthropologist](#) Margaret Mead, were believed destroyed until uncovered by the detective work of a dogged team of two University of Queensland researchers — Mr Kim de Rijke and Mr Tony Jefferies.

The discovery has been described as a “quantum leap” for indigenous studies in Australia.

Cattleman Grahame Gooding said he kept the collection of materials for 20 years “because it looked like the works of an exceptional person.”

“I thought that if I took care of it, someday someone would appear looking for it,” Mr. Gooding said.

That person was Mr Kim de Rijke, a University of Queensland PhD student in Anthropology supervised by Professor David Trigger in the School of Social Science.

“It was a joyful and exciting day, for the Goodings and us,” Mr de Rijke said.

“We've worked in native title in Central Queensland and are acutely

aware of the lack of historical Australian Aboriginal ethnographic material for the region. We could hardly contain our excitement at the quantum leap this material represents,” Mr de Rijke said.

Mrs Tennant-Kelly's work as an anthropologist spans from 1932 to 1970.

The collection details daily Aboriginal life at Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement in Queensland in 1934. In the late 1930s she also worked at Aboriginal settlements in New South Wales. She recorded kinship practices, traditional ceremonies, language, territorial knowledge and genealogies. Her research fills large holes for today's anthropological study.

The collection will be valuable for indigenous communities in Queensland and New South Wales as Tennant-Kelly makes numerous references to families and individuals and their links to land.

The discovery also includes private letters and photographs from her famous friend, the American anthropologist Margaret Mead, correspondence likely to add to the knowledge of Mead's groundbreaking work.

Researchers say Caroline Tennant-Kelly was a fascinating character who should be better known. She started her career in 1920s Sydney as a playwright, researched Aboriginal culture in the 1930s, became involved in post-war immigration issues and researched the social aspects of Sydney's early urban planning in the 1950s and 1960s.

This unique historical collection of Australian culture is being donated to the Fryer Library at The University of Queensland.

More information: Further background:
[www.socialscience.uq.edu.au/do ... kelly_collection.pdf](http://www.socialscience.uq.edu.au/do...kelly_collection.pdf)

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: Missing link discovered in cattleman's shed (2010, March 30) retrieved 28 April 2024
from <https://phys.org/news/2010-03-link-cattleman.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.