

Owen Toews
ARC Knickerbocker Award Summary
September 8, 2013

In July and August of this year I visited the Archives of Manitoba and the Manitoba Land Titles office in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. At the Archives of Manitoba I was able to review many documents of use to my research. One of the first major tasks I was able to accomplish was a review of the Dominion Lands Act (*An Act Respecting the Public Lands of the Dominion*, c.1872) as well as policy documents and correspondence relating to the Act. This work allowed me to outline the most pressing official explanations and concerns motivating the creation of the Act, as well as those that animate the finished legislation. I was able to clarify the historical precedents legislators drew upon in crafting the Act, the major historical forces prompting its creation, as well as some of the challenges - overtly described or alluded to - having to do with the political resistance of the Metis nation, First Nations leaders, and entrenched fur-trade interests in the region, including the Hudson's Bay Company.

A second major accomplishment at the Archives of Manitoba was an overview of the Federal Department of the Interior files 1870-1930 and the Land Commissioner's Office inward and outward correspondence 1870-1877. Given the breadth of information contained in this collection, my work with these files was more exploratory than the Dominion Lands Act research and consisted primarily in identifying, compiling, and annotating lists of files for future investigation. I was able to identify Department of the Interior files concerning a range of topics pertinent to my dissertation research, including the Department's geographical exploration; negotiation with and management of Indigenous peoples; and promotion of immigration and settlement. These lists, and the annotations I produced to accompany them, will be a valuable guide and resource for future research with these files at the Archives of Manitoba. Building on this work, I expect to develop a strong sense of the ways in which these three objectives of the Department - production of geographical knowledge, colonization of Indigenous peoples, and place promotion and encouragement of settlement - overlapped with and influenced one another through the planning and administrative practice of the Department of the Interior.

Finally, I was able to trace the history of the title to a particularly controversial parcel of land transferred by the city of Winnipeg's urban development authority in 2010 to an evangelical Christian organization intent on converting Indigenous youth in the neighborhood to Christianity. This controversial case study is the centerpiece of the contemporary component of my dissertation. By tracing the land title, I was able to outline the history of the ownership of the land from its nineteenth century status as determined by the Dominion Lands Act up until tax foreclosure reverted title to the City of Winnipeg, which in 1999 transferred the title to the city's urban development authority, which in turn transferred the title in 2010 to the evangelical organization. This title chain will allow me to illustrate the material connections and parallels between state land disposal practices in the nineteenth and twenty first centuries.

My time in the archives made possible by the ARC Knickerbocker Award has positioned me to complete the archival component of my dissertation research in December 2013 and January 2014, when I will follow up at the Archives of Manitoba using the annotated lists I have compiled of Federal Department of the Interior files. The conclusion of the archival component of my research will enable me to focus all my energy in the summer of 2014 on completing the ethnographic component of my project.

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The ARC Knickerbocker Award has significantly advanced my research toward completion of the dissertation in geography. Thank you for your generosity.