

UELAC Honorary Vice-President Dr. Ian E. Wilson
Stratford, Ontario

*Elected 1987, Dr. Wilson was the keynote speaker at the UELAC Conference in Waterloo, 8 June 2002 ****

Born in Montreal, Quebec, in April 1943, Ian Wilson attended the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean and obtained his Master's in History from Queen's University in 1974.

He began his career at Queen's University Archives, later becoming Saskatchewan's Provincial Archivist (1976-86) and Chairman of the Saskatchewan Heritage Advisory Board. He was Archivist of Ontario from 1986 to 1999 and for four years was also responsible for the provincial public library system.

Dr. Wilson served as National Archivist of Canada, 1999 to 2004, and then as head of the newly amalgamated Library and Archives Canada. He retired in 2009 and received the unusual honour of being named Librarian and Archivist of Canada Emeritus. He is currently working with the University of Waterloo in establishing the Stratford Institute for Digital Media and has just completed a two year term as President of the International Council on Archives.



Dr. Wilson chaired the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives on behalf of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The Group's report, Canadian Archives, generally known as the Wilson Report, was published in 1980 and has been described as a milestone in the history of archival development in Canada. As National Archivist, Dr. Wilson served on the Information Management Sub-Committee of Treasury Board Public Advisory Committee, and was a member of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. In September 2000, he was elected Vice-President of the International Council on Archives.

Dr. Wilson's career spans many areas, including archival and information management, university teaching and government service. He has worked diligently to make archives accessible and interesting to a wide range of audiences. While helping to safeguard the integrity of archival records and library services, he has encouraged public involvement and outreach. He has published extensively on history, archives, heritage and information management and has lectured nationally and internationally. He holds three honorary doctorates (York, Queen's, Saskatchewan), is a Member of the Order of Canada, and was appointed Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the Government of France. In May 2002, he was appointed to the Order of Canada. He is a fellow of the Association of Canadian Archivists, the Society of American Archivists and the International Council on Archives.

For the Ian Wilson Tribute, watch: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lhe7J8YNYKw>

1. http://www3.fis.utoronto.ca/faculty/duff/khsymposium/bio_wilson.htm
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian_E._Wilson
3. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/publications/archivist-magazine/015002-2160-e.html>
4. <http://newsrelease.uwaterloo.ca/news.php?id=5072>

***** Excerpts from *United Empire Loyalists, Archives and the Accessible Past*
by Dr. Ian E. Wilson, National Archivist at UELAC Conference 2002**

In his address to the conference on Saturday evening, June 8, 2002, Dr. Wilson made the following comments:

...(re the Archives and UELAC) We are both involved in preserving memory. We are both dedicated to seeking out authentic records of the past because we are both interested in documenting the stories of those who have preceded us. We are both interested in preserving the past because it means something to us, as individuals, as communities, and as Canadians.

... necessary to have a sense of history in order to have a sense of identity, indeed, a sense of nationality.

... For United Empire Loyalists and their descendents, Canadian history is very much like family history. It is important to establish a link with those who generations before risked their all to maintain allegiance to the Crown. More than this, it connects people of today with one of the most significant events in all of history, events that created the United States, events that created Canada, events that have defined us as Canadians, that have made us fundamentally different from our neighbours to the south. It has also given UELs a unique perspective on archives and the value of evidence, the need to preserve documents, the ability to access the stories of the past, to keep alive in a very real way the trials and tribulations of those who chose the Empire over the republic.

... Over the course of many years the Haldimand collection was copied by hand, bound and shipped to Canada for preservation in our archives. If one was to understand Canada's story, these key records needed to be here, accessible to all who wished to use them.

... the Archives was and remains the principal site of documented memory for the Canadian experience, a memory that stretches back over 400 years. The collections have been carefully drawn together over the past 130 years to record that experience, in whatever medium: letters, diaries, files, maps and plans, documentary art, film and video, and floppy discs. One of my predecessors, Sir Arthur Doughty, once observed that "Of all national assets, archives are the most precious; they are the gift of one generation to another and the extent of our care of them marks the extent of our civilization." In terms both cultural and monetary, archives are easily the most valuable asset owned by the federal government, indeed by the Canadian people at large.

...With the arrival of the World Wide Web technology, the holdings of archives are now available to a broader public than at any other time in history and the change is both dramatic and far-reaching. It is nothing less than a fundamental transformation of the way in which archives serve their clients. - digitization of archival records is revolutionary, and is quickly becoming the simplest and most effective means of connecting people to the sources of their past.

... And with the digitization of documents, the best is yet to come. Just two weeks ago, the entire 1901 census of Canada was added to our website – tens of thousands of researchers have already accessed the images - and later this year, the diary of Mackenzie King, all of it, will be accessible on the Net as well as the records of Cabinet Conclusions from 1944 to the 1970s.

...Canada's national archives belong to all Canadians and have been entrusted to the National Archivist to be protected and preserved for us and for those who follow us.

... (Archives) are a permanent record of our common historical experience as individuals and as a nation. Archives also document our rights and freedoms as individuals and as a sovereign nation. Our constitutional evolution since the 17th century, our relations with First Nations, and our place among the nations of the world are documented with the archival record. Archives document the Loyalist experience.

... The Archives is a living memory- it is a reminder that we not only have a history, we have a history that is increasingly accessible, a history to be cherished in this generation and in generations to come. . . .

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