Memorial
KENNETH EARL KIDD, 1906–1994


Kenneth E. Kidd, a pioneer of North American historical archaeology, died on 26 February 1994, in Peterborough, Ontario. The importance of both his methodological and intellectual contributions to the discipline of historical archaeology were formally acknowledged in 1985, when Ken was awarded the third J. C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology by the Society for Historical Archaeology ([Historical Archaeology](https://example.com) 19(2):1–4). His commitment to systematic field research and careful scholarship has had a profound influence upon a generation of archaeologists.

Ken Kidd was born in Barrie, Ontario, in 1906. He studied history and English at the University of Toronto, and received his Honors B.A. from that institution in 1931. This was followed by a year at the Ontario College of Education and a brief teaching career at the Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Ontario. His experience at the Institute prompted him to become a lifelong advocate for the education of Native American peoples and the amelioration of their social condition.

In 1935, Ken began his 30-year association with the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, Toronto, when he accepted a junior appointment in the Department of Ethnology. That same year, he returned to the University of Toronto to undertake graduate work, earning his M.A. degree in anthropology and

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Ken Kidd first engaged in archaeological fieldwork in 1937, and during his long museum career he was to direct the excavation of numerous historic and prehistoric sites. Most notable was his 1941–1942 work on the remains of the early 17th-century Jesuit Mission of Sainte-Marie-among-the-Hurons, located near Midland, Ontario. The first extensive excavation of an historic site in Canada, it was a pioneering model of field method in North American historical archaeology. When Ken’s full descriptive and interpretive report on the Ste.-Marie excavations was published in 1949, it was the premier scientific and comprehensive archaeological report of its type in North America. The monograph, which has been reprinted several times, is still considered an important reference.

Acknowledging at the time that he was working in a virtual comparative vacuum, Ken’s attention to detail led him to a lifelong study of European trade goods found on native sites in North America. Through that experience he developed a special interest in the production and dating of glass beads, and out of Ken’s basic research have sprung essential references widely used by both historical and contact-period archaeologists. Perhaps the most important product of that research was the development of a bead classification system for field archaeologists, which he and Martha Ann Kidd published in 1970 (English) and 1972 (French).

Apart from his work on historic materials and sites, Ken is also remembered for his prehistoric research. By the late 1940s, he had become the leading authority on the native past in Ontario—and, perhaps, Eastern Canada—and was invited to write the first synthesis of Ontario prehistory for James B. Griffin’s classic *Archaeology of Eastern United States*, published in 1952. Ken also introduced underwater archaeology and promoted studies of rock art in Canada. The latter undertaking, initiated in 1957, has been characterized as the first of its purview on the continent.

In recognition of his prominent career as an archaeologist and ethnohistorian at the Royal Ontario Museum, Ken Kidd was asked in 1964 to found and become Chair of the Department of Anthropology at Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario. Until his final retirement in 1973, Ken emphasized the teaching of historical archaeology, and in Canada his courses on the subject were prototypical. Today, due to Ken’s efforts, Trent has become one of the larger departments of anthropology in Canada and one of the few that offers courses in historical archaeology at the M.A. level.

Moreover, in 1968–1969, Ken developed the Indian-Eskimo Studies Program—now the Native Studies Department—at Trent. That special course of study was designed to facilitate the university education of Canada’s native peoples through a selective curriculum and an appropriate setting. A North American precedent, the program has served as a model for similar academic departments at other Canadian universities.

During his lifetime Ken was a member of, and held offices in, several professional organizations in Canada, America, and abroad. Apart from his active involvement as a founding member of the Society for Historical Archaeology, which he later served as a director (1973–1975), Ken was vice-president of the Society for American Archaeology (1957–1958) and an honorary life member of that society. A Fellow of the American Anthropological Association, he was also a member of the American Ethnological Society. Further afield, he was a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Society and a member of both the Royal Geographical Society and the International Congress of Americanists. Ken was also closely associated with a number of avocational archaeological and amateur heritage organizations.

As a pioneer in ethnohistory, visual anthropology, and material culture studies, Ken was the recipient of numerous honors. He was commended by the General of the Order of the Society of Jesus in Rome for his work at Ste.-Marie (1950) and shortly thereafter received a Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship (1951–1952) to study European trade goods found on native sites. He also was awarded the Cornplanter...
Medal (1970) for his outstanding Iroquoian scholarship. This medal, presented by the Cayuga County Historical Society of Auburn, New York, previously had been given to such luminaries as the Rev. William M. Beauchamp, Dr. Reuben Gold Thwaites, John B. Hewitt, Arthur C. Parker, Prof. Frederick Houghton, and Dr. William A. Ritchie.

In later years, Ken was awarded an Honorary Curatorship in the Department of Ethnology at the Royal Ontario Museum (1981), the Trent University Eminent Service Award (1983), the J. C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology (1985), the Society for American Archaeology’s Award for Outstanding Contributions to American Archaeology (1985), and a Doctor of Laws honoris causa from Trent University (1990). The crowning achievement of his distinguished career came in 1993, when he received the Commemorative Medal for the 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada. This final award was bestowed by the Right Honourable Ramon John Hnatyshyn, Governor General of Canada, in recognition of Ken’s significant contributions to compatriots, community, and Canada.

Ken is survived by his wife, Martha Ann Kidd, of Peterborough, Ontario, and by numerous relatives, colleagues, and students who will miss his informative verbal forays into the many facets of the past, his opinions, and his help. A self-effacing pragmatist who held that the ultimate objective of education is to create a better world, he has set for us an example that will be hard to follow.

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SUSAN M. JAMIESON

[Susan Jamieson acknowledges with gratitude that Martha Ann Kidd kindly lent considerable assistance in compiling this definitive bibliography of her late husband’s writings, including reference to his several family histories, and the Society owes Mrs. Kidd our sincere thanks. In addition to Professor Kidd’s formal works, he annotated a series of cards, Forty Indians of Canada Postcards, illustrating specimens in the ethnological collections of the Royal Ontario Museum. The ROM issued the cards at Toronto, ca. 1958.—Memorials Editor]