

## Arthur & Sandra Irving



The Irving family's commitment to Acadia is as strong and as deep as the Bay of Fundy tides. **K.C. Irving** attended the Wolfville campus as part of the Class of '21. Sons **Arthur ('52)**, **John ('54)**, and **James Irving ('50)** were all students at Acadia before returning to Saint John to work in the family business with their father. Arthur's wife, **Sandra ('74)**, is a loyal alumna and an integral part of the family's exceptional legacy of support for the school. Arthur was Acadia's Chancellor from 1996 to 2010; received a Doctor of Civil Laws from Acadia in 2003; and was granted the title of Chancellor Emeritus in 2010.

Arthur and Sandra know the importance of giving back, not just in theory, but in practice. Sandra is a powerful and articulate advocate for the value of education in our society. As a captain of industry and a champion of the environment, Arthur is the epitome of an outstanding corporate citizen. Together, they have helped to make Acadia a focal point for innovation and research in environmental sustainability.

The K.C. Irving Environmental Science Centre and the Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens honour Kenneth Colin and Harriet Lila Irving, and were built and equipped in their entirety from a significant gift from James, Arthur and John Irving. Arthur's legacy extends to the Arthur Irving Academy for the Environment. In addition, the Beaubassin Research Centre in Aulac, N.B., is a joint project of Acadia University, Irving Oil and Ducks Unlimited Canada that is dedicated to ecological research.

When Arthur Irving received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Dartmouth College in 2010, the citation read in part: "Arthur Irving, you have spent a lifetime drawing energy from the earth and giving your energy back to the earth." Arthur and Sandra Irving have also drawn deeply from Acadia and given back substantially with generosity and grace.

**Sandra:** I attended Acadia in 1974. From an academic perspective, the classes were small and the professors were excellent. I was especially interested in poetry, creative writing and the study of languages, notably French and Spanish. I still maintain that interest in creative writing and languages. I remember those great sports teams of the 1970s, too. The football and basketball teams were nationally recognized and the whole spirit of athletics was a huge part of the university and the wider community. That's a happy memory for me.

**Arthur:** I had some memorable professors at Acadia. **George Nowlan ('20)** taught commercial law at that time and his son, **Pat Nowlan ('52)**, was a classmate of mine. Mr. Nowlan was a lawyer, but he came up

and helped out at Acadia by teaching commercial law. I liked that course.

It was a lot different than it is today. The campus was comprised mostly of Nova Scotians, and Acadia has always had a lot of students from smaller towns. The student population was only 600 or 700 and everyone got along well together. We now have much greater diversity at Acadia, with a lot of Canadians coming in from every province and territory. We also have a lot of international students. It's no longer a local market: it's a global market, and having people from other countries is important.

**Connie MacNeil ('53)** was another classmate who did an awful lot for Acadia. He was a goodwill ambassador wherever he went. He deserves nothing but praise from all of his classmates and from Acadia University. His wife, **Myrt MacCready ('53)**, came from St. Stephen (N.B.) and was also a classmate – a wonderful lady. The tribute they had for Connie down in the Acadia Arena was wonderful.

**Sandra:** We like Acadia president **Ray Ivany** very much. I remember the first time we met him at our library at home. Ray is a very strong leader and he's also an excellent speaker. He's invariably positive and always thinking of ways to make Acadia better. He's widely respected across the country: a kind and sincere man, and a very good friend.

**Arthur:** Ray has certainly spruced everything up in a proper fashion. I think the main reason why Ray has been so effective is simply because he's a good guy. Number one, he's from Cape Breton. He has worked hard and he has never had anything handed to him. He has done a great job and, from the first time I met him, I haven't changed my view of how good he is. He has passion in him and that great love for Acadia. We're so fortunate to have him because he's a crackerjack, a true Maritimer. I don't know where you'd find a better President for Acadia.

**Sandra:** David Naylor, the outgoing president of the University of Toronto, is a good friend of ours as well. In fact, we just went to a dinner in Toronto to mark his retirement after eight years. Most presidents will want to sell their own universities to students, and he does, but he is also the first person to say that if you want to receive the best of an undergraduate education in Canada then you should look at Acadia, St. F.X., or Mount Allison. He refers to the smaller classrooms and the more personal attention students receive.

Acadia is preferable even when it comes to providing a letter of reference for a student in an undergraduate course who wants to go on to one of the best medical or graduate schools. A letter of recommendation from an Acadia professor is a letter of recommendation from a professor who really knows his or her students.

Acadia is so much further ahead in that regard. I know that when Acadia students earn an undergraduate degree and apply to some of the top medical or graduate schools, the rate of acceptance is very high. And I am the first one to communicate that message to high school students who want to go on to do post-graduate studies. A degree from Acadia is widely respected and admired across the country, and further afield.

**Arthur:** I never had a bad day at Acadia. It has played a very important part in my life. In terms of giving, when someone helps you along the way and plays a very important part in your lifetime, the natural inclination should be to give back and help them as a means of saying thank you. Saying thank you to Acadia is important to me.

**Sandra:** Arthur recommends Acadia University to every young person he meets in Canada and other countries. He spreads the message of Acadia with passion and has recruited many students to come to Acadia over the years. Arthur once told Ray Ivany that when he was Chancellor, every day he'd wake up and try to think of something he could do for Acadia. The truth is he has never stopped thinking about

Acadia. I think that's a wonderful tribute to his life and to Acadia.

**Arthur:** I tell people that Acadia is the best undergraduate university in the world. It's a place where students become well prepared for graduate studies and for their chosen professions. I tell them about the beautiful Annapolis Valley, and about the wonderful, safe little town of Wolfville surrounded by the dykes of the Bay of Fundy and unrivalled natural beauty.

I have many happy memories as a student at Acadia and also as Chancellor for 14 years. What I remember most about my time as Chancellor was meeting a lot of great students. I remember the graduation ceremonies well and tried to impart a meaningful message to the students. This message is always the same: the basics of life never change – the importance of expressing gratitude; saying thank you; keeping in touch with home, family and friends; loving what you do; and keeping in touch with Acadia after graduation.

I was proud to be the Chancellor of Acadia and help whenever I could. I was especially honoured to be named Chancellor Emeritus. Life is pretty short and you should do what you can. The lessons learned at Acadia were pretty important: that you've got to play the game and you've got to play it right. You can't forget those who helped you along the way, and I think Acadia has a spirit all of us should remember.

**Sandra:** Arthur's father, K.C. Irving, went to Acadia and lived in Willett House. When we visit the K.C. Irving Environmental Science Centre, named in his honour, and we look across the street at Willett House, we always think of Arthur's father and his student life at Acadia.

What we like to do most is help students. When Arthur was asked to be the Chancellor over 15 years ago, he said he would take on the role if there was something he could do for the students. The very first thought behind the K.C. Irving Environmental Science Centre was "students" and creating a very special meeting place for them. Thus, the realization of the Garden Room at the K.C. Irving – where students meet to read, study, enjoy music concerts and presentations, and a warm fireplace on a wintry day.

In the early planning stages of the K.C. Irving Centre, as important as the social meeting place of the Garden Room was, and is, to the identity of it, we also knew we needed to create a very important academic component. From an environmental research perspective, the objective is to encourage the study of the flora and fauna of the Acadia Forest Region.

Arthur is honoured by having his name associated with Acadia University and the Arthur Irving Academy for the Environment. The Academy's goals are to reflect his interest in student scholarship and research, and to establish Acadia University as a leader in the study of the environment.