

A Tribute to Mel Hurtig

On Wednesday August 3rd, we received the sad news that Mr. Mel Hurtig passed away peacefully at 84 years of age. Mr. Hurtig was a distinguished Edmontonian, Canadian, and friend of the University of Alberta. For many decades, he was instrumental in shaping Canadians' knowledge of their country through the publication of The Canadian Encyclopedia, many best-selling books, and his riveting story-telling. The Department of Political Science was especially privileged to develop a close friendship with Mr. Hurtig, launching the Annual Hurtig Lecture on the Future of Canada in 2005. During the past decade, many accomplished Canadians, among them, Margaret Atwood, Mary Simon, Alex Himelfarb and Mayors Don Iveson and Naheed Nenshi, have delivered outstanding public lectures on the meaning and responsibilities of citizen engagement and public service in an ever-more complex and insecure world. Invariably, these speakers would begin their lecture by expressing their great admiration and debt of gratitude for Mr. Hurtig's countless contributions to national debates and public life as well as feeling honored to contribute to his bold legacy of thoughtful contestation of the status quo. Throughout his exceptional career as a publisher, author, and activist, Mr. Hurtig exemplified the very best of engaged citizenship. Aptly named "Citizen Mel", he was widely celebrated as a passionate Canadian, who argued forcefully that in order to be good we had to do better in promoting and protecting a vibrant democracy, economic sustainability, and social wellbeing. Mr. Hurtig was delighted to attend every lecture, to interact with our students and the broader public, and to challenge our invited speakers on the finer points of their presentations. He was a kind and generous mentor, a powerful voice for social justice, and a committed optimist who believed, not only that a better world was possible, but that we have it in our collective imagination and power to make it so. The Department mourns the loss of a dear friend and offers its deep condolence to his family. Mr. Hurtig will be remembered at the 11th Annual Hurtig Lecture, featuring Dr. Samantha Nutt, on Thursday September 29, 2016. Further details about the lecture as well as links to secure free Eventbrite tickets will be posted on the Department of Political Science website later this month.

Janine Brodie, Distinguished University Professor and Organizer of Hurtig Lecture Series