

# THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ADRIENNE CLARKSON, PC, CC, CMM, COM, CD

## A Biographical Sketch

Universally acknowledged to have transformed the post of Governor General of Canada, Madame Adrienne Clarkson was born in Hong Kong in 1939 and went to Canada as a refugee with her parents William and Ethel Poy in 1942. They settled in Ottawa, where she attended public schools until graduating from Lisgar College Institute in 1956. She obtained an honours B.A. in English Literature from the University of Toronto's Trinity College and later completed an M.A. Madame Clarkson did post-graduate work at the Sorbonne in France and is fluently bilingual.

A leading figure in Canada's cultural life, Madame Clarkson has had a rich and distinguished career in broadcasting, journalism, the arts and public service. She worked as host, writer and producer of several influential programs on CBC Television, including *Take Thirty*, *Adrienne at Large*, and *The Fifth Estate* from 1965 to 1987. An eminent writer, she has authored four books and contributed numerous articles to major newspapers and magazines across Canada. She served as the first Agent-General for Ontario in Paris from 1982 to 1987, promoting Ontario's business and cultural interests in France, Italy and Spain, and was President of McClelland and Stewart from 1987 to 1988. In 1988, she became the Executive Producer, Host and Writer for the programs *Adrienne Clarkson's Summer Festival* and *Adrienne Clarkson Presents*. Later, she directed several films, and served as Chairwoman to the Board of Trustees for the Museum of Civilization in Hull, Québec, and as President of the Executive Board of the International Music Centre based in Vienna, Austria. Her work has been recognized with dozens of awards in Canada and the United States, including 21 honorary doctorates. She was also appointed as a Senior Fellow at Massey College, University of Toronto, and as an Honourary Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, Trinity College, and the Royal Architecture Institute of Canada. Besides, she was honoured abroad with the Grand Cross of the Order of Pleiades from France (2001) and the Order of Friendship of the Russian Federation (2006).

Madame Clarkson was sworn in as Canada's 26th Governor General on 7 October 1999. Her tenure as Governor General was remarkable for the considerable attention she brought to the courage and commitment of Canada's Armed Forces. In the process, she increased Canadians' vigilance to the country's commitment to international peace and security.

On March 17, 2007 she became Colonel-in-Chief of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI), the first Canadian to be Colonel-in-Chief of a Canadian regiment. The PPCLI is garrisoned in Edmonton, Alberta and has been serving in Afghanistan.

Madame Clarkson actively promoted tolerance, acceptance, belonging and public responsibility in her work as Governor General and as a broadcaster, writer, diplomat and cultural champion. Madame Clarkson is proud to retain her new title "Grandmother of Many Nations." Her official titles include membership in the Queen's Privy Council for Canada (PC), Commander of the Order of Canada (CC), Commander of the Order of Military Merit (CMM), Commander of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces (COM) and the Canadian Forces Decoration (CD).

Since leaving the office of Governor General, Madame Clarkson has founded the Institute for Canadian citizenship (ICC) and chairs it with her husband. The Institute's purpose is to help acculturate new Canadian citizens into mainstream Canadian life through various initiatives.

Madame Clarkson is married to John Ralston Saul, the son of Colonel William John Saul, a veteran of World War II, who participated in the D-Day invasion and later served as an officer in Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Her bestselling memoir, *Heart Matters*, was received with acclaim when it was published in the fall of 2006.

### **Synopsis of the Lecture**

In this lecture, Madame Clarkson will talk about Canada as it was when she arrived there as a child of three, and as it is now, using Hong Kong as her reflective base.