



UELAC Advocacy for the Hamilton Loyalist Monument

**A Memorandum from the Past President of the United Empire Loyalists'
Association of Canada**

Addressed to Hamilton City Staff:

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Grace Mater and Kate Laforme ,

Following our collaborative online meeting 03 June and as the Past President of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada (UELAC), representing our national body and the UELAC Hamilton Branch, we are here not to divide, but to celebrate a shared heritage and to ensure that every voice is heard in shaping the City of Hamilton's commemorative landscape.

The Loyalist Monument on Main Street East bears the simple yet profound inscription, "***They forsook every possession excepting their honour.***" It commemorates the sacrifices of those early settlers who stayed true to Crown and Constitution during the American Revolution. For generations, it has served as a focal point for Ontario Loyalist Day ceremonies and as a tangible reminder of the challenges our ancestors faced^[^1].

Equally important are the Indigenous allies—particularly members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy—who fought alongside Loyalists and whose wartime contributions were repaid by Crown land grants (1784) in Ontario ^[^2]. Their story is inseparable from our own and must be held up alongside the Loyalist narrative in any interpretive framework.

When the City initiated its Landmarks & Monuments Review, we mobilized our UELAC members to participate in the public surveys and consultations, emphasizing respectful dialogue and the need for meaningful engagement with First Nations. Thanks to sustained advocacy—led locally by the late Ruth Nicholson and Paul Nicholson of the Hamilton Branch; their efforts laid the groundwork for a collaborative process^[^3].

Looking ahead, we respectfully request that UELAC be formally included in all further consultations regarding Hamilton's Loyalist heritage sites. We pledge to work hand-in-hand with Indigenous partners and municipal authorities to develop interpretive materials that reflect a balanced and truthful account of our shared history.

The Loyalist Monument is not simply a relic of the past; it is a living testament to values of loyalty, community, and the complex friendships forged at council fires more than two centuries ago. Together, let us honour both Loyalist and Indigenous contributions as integral chapters in the story of this city—and this nation.

Historical Context and Background

The Loyalist Legacy in Hamilton

The Hamilton Loyalist Monument stands as a physical embodiment of Canada's foundational history—a testament to the thousands, Loyalists and Indigenous who chose loyalty to the Crown over personal security during the American Revolution. These settlers, many of whom were forced to abandon homes, lands, and livelihoods, played a pivotal role in shaping Upper Canada's political and cultural identity. Their commitment to British governance and legal traditions directly influenced the development of Canadian institutions, from parliamentary democracy to property rights.

The monument's location at **50 Main Street East** is itself historically significant, situated near key early Loyalist settlements along the Niagara Escarpment. Its 1929 unveiling and 1958 refurbishment reflect successive generations' commitment to preserving this legacy. The UELAC has long emphasized that the monument does not merely commemorate the past but serves as an enduring symbol of the values that united diverse Loyalist communities—loyalty, perseverance, and the rule of law.

Indigenous Contributions to the Loyalist Cause

The Loyalist narrative is incomplete without acknowledging the indispensable role of Indigenous allies, particularly the **Haudenosaunee (Six Nations) Confederacy**. During the American Revolution, nations such as the Mohawk, Cayuga, and Onondaga provided military support, intelligence, and safe passage to Loyalist refugees. Their motivations were rooted in longstanding treaties with the British Crown, including the **1764 Treaty of Niagara**, which promised mutual protection and shared stewardship of land.

Post-war, the Crown granted reserves such as **Tyendinaga (Mohawk)** and the **Grand River Tract** to allied nations, fulfilling treaty obligations. These lands became centres of

Indigenous-Loyalist collaboration, where shared experiences of displacement fostered unique cultural exchanges. For example:

- **Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea)**, a Mohawk leader, negotiated the Grand River settlement while advocating for Indigenous rights within British governance.
- **Delaware (Lenape) communities** integrated with Loyalist settlers in areas like the Thames Valley, blending agricultural practices and diplomatic traditions.

The UELAC recognizes that these intertwined histories demand **balanced commemoration**. As scholar and UELAC Honorary Fellow (Emeritus) Nathan Tidridge notes, *“The Covenant Chain between the Crown and Indigenous nations was—and remains—a living relationship, one that Loyalists both witnessed and benefited from”*.

Modern Advocacy and Reconciliation

The UELAC’s defense of the Hamilton monument is part of a broader effort to promote **inclusive heritage preservation**. During the 2024 Landmarks Review, the Association:

- Collaborated with **Six Nations representatives** to ensure Indigenous perspectives were included.
- Proposed **interpretive plaques** contextualizing the monument’s symbolism for modern audiences, including references to Indigenous allies.
- Endorsed **educational initiatives**, such as school programs linking Loyalist history to contemporary discussions on Truth and Reconciliation.

This approach aligns with Tidridge’s call for the Crown to re-engage as a treaty partner, fostering dialogue that honours *both* Loyalist and Indigenous contributions. The UELAC’s advocacy—exemplified by Paul Nicholson’s award-winning efforts—

demonstrates that preserving history need not be divisive but can instead bridge communities through shared acknowledgment of the past.

Looking Forward

As Hamilton continues to refine its commemorative landscape, the UELAC urges:

1. **Formal inclusion in planning processes**, ensuring Loyalist descendants have a voice alongside Indigenous partners.
2. **Investment in augmented interpretation**, such as QR codes linking to digital resources about Loyalist-Indigenous alliances.
3. **Annual joint ceremonies** at the monument, uniting Loyalist, Haudenosaunee and local First Nations and Indigenous communities in remembrance.

By embracing these steps, Hamilton can model how cities reconcile complex histories—not by erasure, (as we know History cannot be erased) but by layered storytelling that respects all facets of our shared heritage.

On behalf of UELAC President William (Bill) Russell, the Board of Directors, the UELAC Hamilton Branch, and our members coast to coast, I thank you for your time and your willingness to engage in this vital conversation.

Thank you.

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Past President UELAC (2023 – 2025)

Footnotes: ^

^1 United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada (UELAC),

^2 Hamilton UEL Monument, 2021.

^3 UELAC, *Loyalist Trails Newsletter*, 2024.

Sources:

1. UELAC Hamilton Branch, *Monthly Meeting Reports*, 2024.
2. UELAC, *Hamilton UEL Monument*, 2021.
3. UELAC Hamilton Branch, *Loyalist Day Ceremonies*, 2025.
4. UELAC, *Loyalist Trails Newsletter*, 2024.
5. UELAC Hamilton Branch, *Advocacy Efforts*, 2024.
6. UELAC, *National President's Memo*, 2024.
7. Government of Canada, *Loyalist Migration Records*, 2023.
8. American Revolutionary Geographies Online, *Indigenous Alliances*, 2023.
9. Nathan Tidridge, *The Crown and Indigenous Treaties*, 2020.
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