



MAPLE LEAVES  
FOREVER

## **In Memory of MLF Founder Ken Jewett**

**Ken Jewett, Founder,  
Maple Leaves Forever**

*September 23, 1930 - November 26, 2025*

*“Hey, I am out of here. Do not fret, I have had a wonderful life!”*

- Ken Jewett

With heavy hearts, the team at Maple Leaves Forever mourns the passing of our Founder, **Ken Jewett**, who died on November 26, 2025, at the age of 95. Ken leaves an extraordinary legacy of maple-lined roadsides across Ontario. He will be deeply missed by his loving family and by all of us at Maple Leaves Forever.

**Ken Jewett and Maple Leaves Forever: A Legacy Rooted in  
Canada’s Landscape**

For the final quarter century of his life, Ken was the driving force behind Maple Leaves Forever (MLF), the charitable foundation he founded and funded. Its mission is both simple and profound: ensuring that native Canadian maple trees - symbols of our natural and cultural heritage - would continue to grace rural roads, farm laneways, and community landscapes for generations to come.

“I saw native maple trees disappearing,” Ken once said. “They were being replaced by cultivars and invasive species. I made a pledge to try to stop that.” It was a personal vow that changed the landscape of Canada in lasting ways.

Ken soon realized the issue ran deeper than he had imagined. Many maples sold in Ontario nurseries were grown from Oregon seed—genetically native, but poorly adapted to local climate conditions. For long-term resilience, Ken knew the trees needed to originate from Ontario seed and be grown in Ontario soil.

So he set out to change the nursery industry. Through years of advocacy and relationship-building, he persuaded growers to collect and cultivate native maple seed sourced in Ontario. Today, 23 nursery partners grow truly native Canadian maples because Ken convinced them it mattered.

## **Restoring a Canadian Tradition**

Many of the century-old maples that once lined rural Ontario roadsides were planted by farmers in the late 1800s, who were paid to transplant young maples from their woodlots. Those iconic trees shaped a landscape familiar to Ken from his youth. When he realized they were dying without replacement, he committed to action.



Ken with one of his faithful friends, Amy - He called this photo "The Old Man and the Tree"



MLF's signature **Thank You Rebate Program** helps rural landowners, municipalities, conservation authorities, and stewardship groups plant hardy, seed-zone-identified native maple trees. Under Ken's leadership, Maple Leaves Forever has supported the planting of **more than 135,000 native maples** - the equivalent of over **1,250 km** of maple-lined roads and laneways.

## **National Influence**

Ken's advocacy extended well beyond rural Ontario. When he learned that the National Capital Commission (NCC) was importing maples from Oregon for use in the nation's capital, he launched a seven-year campaign urging a switch to truly native species. His persistence paid off: in 2015, the NCC committed that every maple planted on its lands must be a native Canadian maple—a major national policy shift directly attributable to Ken's efforts.

"The maple leaf is our most recognizable symbol," Ken often said. "Ottawa should set the example for the rest of the country."

A commemorative sugar maple - grown from Ontario seed - now stands in Major's Hill Park, planted by NCC officials alongside Ken. The plaque at its base honours not only an ecological victory, but a triumph for Canada's national identity.



Ken at a commemorative tree planting, celebrating the NCC's proclamation: "When planting on NCC lands calls for a maple tree, it will be a native Canadian maple tree." -

June 2015



This achievement earned him the **2021 Lifetime Achievement Award** from the **Canadian Museum of Nature**.

## Education and Public Awareness

Ken understood that restoring native maples required more than planting trees—it required education, awareness, and cultural change. Through MLF, he supported outreach programs, partnerships with schools and municipalities, and public campaigns promoting the importance of native seed sources and the ecological risks of relying on cultivars or imported stock.

His contributions earned him the **Susan Wiecek Forestry Education Award** from Forests Ontario (now Forest Canada) and induction into the **National Conservation Foundation's Envirothon Hall of Fame**. These honours recognized his dedication to both environmental stewardship and public education.





Ken's work has been featured in publications such as *The Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *Escarpment Views*, *Watershed*, *In the Hills*, and in Mark Cullen's book *Escape into Reality*.

Even into his 90s, Ken continued to generate new ideas - such as the **Heritage Maple Scavenger Hunt** and the **Community Honour Roll** - designed to celebrate exceptional native maples and the people who plant them.

## **A Living Legacy**

Ken often said that planting native maples was about more than restoring roadside beauty. It was about preserving a piece of Canadian identity—our arboreal emblem, our landscape history, our connection to the land.

Today, as native maple saplings take root across Ontario and Canada each one represents Ken's dedication, generosity, and vision. His legacy lives in every tree planted through Maple Leaves Forever and in every person inspired by his belief that one individual's commitment can reshape the land.

Maple Leaves Forever remains the only organization dedicated solely to restoring native Canadian maples. And thanks to Ken Jewett's vision and determination, the native maples that define our landscape—and our Canadian identity—are taking root once again.

[You can read Ken's full obituary here](#), and his self-curated legacy website at [theoldmanandthetree.com](http://theoldmanandthetree.com). A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date. Donations in Ken's honour at [mapleleavesforever.ca/donate/](http://mapleleavesforever.ca/donate/) will continue a legacy that truly lasts a lifetime.

*Click below to view complete slideshow and captions on the Maple Leaves Forever website.*



## Why did I get this email?

We've put together this email news list to inform, update and remind our subsidy applicants, nursery partners, and anyone else who might be interested in our activities and encourage the planting and ongoing care of more native maples in rural Ontario!

We only send 4 emails a year, in Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. You can [unsubscribe](#) from these mailings at any time. No hard feelings.



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