

## Patrick Watson



Patrick Watson was one of Canada's most prominent broadcasters of the 20th century and has played a vital role in democratizing Canadian media, shaping investigative reporting and Canadians' conception of our history.

Born in Toronto in 1929, Watson started acting at 14 in *The Kootenay Kid*, a CBC Radio children's series. After obtaining bachelor and masters degrees from the University of Toronto, in 1955 he decided to opt-out of his doctoral studies in linguistics at the University of Michigan to pursue a career in the media, beginning with the CBC.

Most notably, Watson produced and co-hosted the ground-breaking and very popular *This Hour Has Seven Days* for the CBC starting in 1964. The politically sharp features of the program offended politicians enough to lead to its cancellation in 1966. Still, over the years, he produced and hosted several shows with the CBC, including *Heritage Minutes*, a TV series that made Canadian history more accessible through 60-second episodes.

His content-rich career encompassing public affairs and the arts continued unabated through several networks. It included *The Struggle for Democracy* (1989), which was proclaimed a ground-breaking and engaging success with its work-intensive global scope.

That same year, Watson was named Chair of the CBC for a five-year term when the national broadcaster faced a massive budget deficit. In the face of government-required restructuring and layoffs, he strove to save key components of public broadcasting, such as Canadian creative content. His appointment helped push back the privatization of the CBC, which to this day remains a public service for all Canadians.

At 31, Watson had his lower left leg amputated following an accident at his family cottage. Throughout the rest of his life, he was involved with the Canadian disabled community, serving as Honorary Chair of the Canadian Amputee Sports Association and Chairman Emeritus of the Canadian Abilities Foundation. His disability didn't stop him from becoming a pilot, a windsurfer, a water skier, and a scuba diver. He was also a passionate magician and co-founded *Magicana*, a Canadian not-for-profit organization dedicated to studying magic as a performing art.

Actor, poet, author, producer, host, pilot, magician, and philanthropist, Watson was the recipient of many awards and recognitions from the academic, media and art worlds. He holds four honorary doctorates, the Canada 125 Medal and the Queen's 50th Anniversary Jubilee Medal. In 1981, he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada, then promoted to Companion in 2002. He passed away at the age of 92 on July 8th, 2022.