



The Leighton Archives

A CASE FOR SUPPORT

**PRESERVING THE PAST.
SERVING THE PRESENT.
HONOURING THE FUTURE.**

WHO WE ARE

The Reverend Canon Dr. J. Douglas Leighton Archives has been the institutional memory of the Diocese of Huron for more than half a century, nurtured through a valued partnership with Huron University College. **Safeguarding the permanent records of over 150 years of Anglican life in this region** — including collections dating back to the diocese's founding in 1857: letters, minute books, photographs, registers, maps, and documents that cannot be recreated once lost.

The Archives are a ministry of the Incorporated Synod of the Diocese of Huron, **servicing clergy, parishes, students, researchers, genealogists, indigenous communities, and the broader public across Southwestern Ontario and beyond.** In 2025 the Archives responded to 122 research requests — up from 91 in 2022 — with demand continuing to grow into 2026. From the earliest parish registers recording baptisms and marriages in pioneer communities to the records of residential school survivor testimonies, the Archives preserves what we have been — and shapes how we understand who we are today.

The Archives, sustained by Doug Leighton's conviction that this history, belong not to any single institution, but to everyone whose story is held within them. Every parish that comes seeking answers, every family that comes seeking documentation of life's most sacred moments, every scholar who comes seeking evidence, every indigenous community that comes seeking records that speak to their history and rights. **They are, in the truest sense, a shared inheritance — and must be kept.**

***“These records
carry the power
to witness to
truth”***

— The Rt. Revd' Todd
Townshend,
Bishop of Huron

A LEGACY WORTH PRESERVING THE STORY OF THE LEIGHTON ARCHIVES

The Diocese of Huron has had a Committee on Historical Records since 1927. But until The Archives found a home at Huron University, **the important artifacts and papers of the Diocese** remained the responsibility of individual parishes — **scattered** across Southwestern Ontario, vulnerable, and without a permanent home.

In 1976, the Reverend Dr. Douglas Leighton — respected clergyman, scholar, and professor of history at Huron College — set about collecting Diocesan archival material from far and wide, and brought it together at the College. At Synod the following year, **the Archives was formally established.** By 1994, the Cronyn Memorial Archives officially opened in a new purpose-built space at Huron College. Two years later, the Archives Association of Ontario recognized it with their first-ever Institutional Award.

The Archives exists because Douglas Leighton saw the history that was being lost and refused to let it disappear.

His scholarly life was spent at the intersection of Canadian history and Indigenous-settler relations — **writing on the figures and communities that history had pushed to the margins**, conducting research for Walpole Island First Nation, providing expert testimony on land use and treaty rights. He **founded the Bridge Builders**, dedicated to reconciliation between Indigenous and settler communities. He **taught at Huron** for nearly four decades, and many students remembered him long after they left.

He died in 2022. The Archives that now bears his name holds exactly the kind of material he spent his career bringing to light — records of people and places between worlds, whose stories still have work to do. It is, in that sense, less a memorial than a continuation.



“Dr. Leighton has had a unique life and ministry, one foot in education and the other in parish and diocesan ministry. Interwoven throughout all of that has been your ongoing love of First Nations people and your work towards understanding and reconciliation.”
— A clergy colleague

WHY THIS MOMENT MATTERS

The Diocesan Archives called Huron University home for nearly fifty years — a generous arrangement born of shared mission. **Huron University has grown rapidly in recent years, with its student body doubling**, and in 2024 the Diocese was informed that the Archives needed to find a new home. The relationship with Huron University remains valued, and the Diocese is grateful for **the partnership that allowed the Archives to grow into what they are today.**

Those closest to the Archives recognized it was an opportunity. **A chance to right-size the Archives for the future, to consolidate a collection that had outgrown its current home, and to plant the Archives in the heart of the Diocese**, at St. Paul's Cathedral, where it is accessible.

Approximately **300 archival boxes are currently held in off-site storage** — difficult and costly to access. And in a world that is constantly evolving, the Archives has no dedicated digitization space — despite a **growing need to ensure that authentic records are preserved** and available to the students, researchers, and communities who will need them to answer the important questions of the future.

"The Archives are 'the reservoir of our corporate memory.' They preserve the record of our collective past. They serve the present information and research requirements of parishes, individuals, scholars and researchers from across Southwestern Ontario and beyond. Perhaps most importantly, they safe-hold material for future generations."

— Tom Adam, Chair of the Archives Relocation Working Group



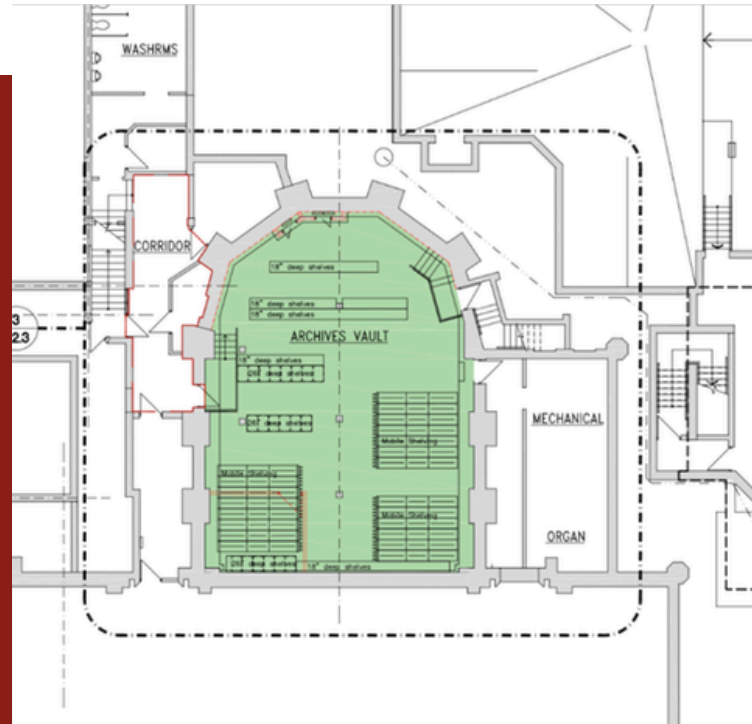
THE PLAN: A NEW HOME AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

After an extensive search for a permanent solution, the Archives Working Group identified **St. Paul's Cathedral as the ideal new home for the Leighton Archives** — situated at the heart of Huron, adjacent to Church House, and at the centre of the community life this Archives exists to serve.

The Leighton Archives will occupy purposefully designed spaces across two floors:

THE VAULT *Lower Level*

The heart of the Leighton Archives. The Vault will **house the full catalogued collection in a purpose-built, climate-controlled environment** beneath the Cathedral sanctuary. The room will be fully insulated and sealed, with a dedicated HVAC system maintaining precise temperature and humidity to protect the Diocese's fragile, paper-based historical records. All compact shelving, flat storage, and microfilm cabinets will be relocated here.



PUBLIC SUITE *Second Floor*

Three adjacent second-floor rooms will become the **public face of the Archives: a welcoming reception area, the archivist's office, a public reading room for researchers and visitors, and a staff and volunteer workroom.** A dedicated annex adjacent to the workroom will house **digitization equipment and serve as a quarantine area for new acquisitions** — supporting the Archives' growing digital preservation program.



STORAGE *Second Floor*

Across the hall on the second floor, a secure room will provide **essential overflow: archival supplies, materials awaiting cataloguing, and items in active use by researchers**. This space — which was once a children’s worship area — will dramatically expand the Archives’ working capacity.

Together, these spaces will more than double the Archives’ current footprint. Critically, the approximately **300 archival boxes** currently scattered across an off-site storage facility **will be consolidated into the new Vault** — reuniting the entire collection in one secure, accessible location for the first time.

The relocation also **unlocks a powerful new adjacency**: the Archives will sit directly next to Church House, the Diocese’s administrative centre. This **proximity transforms the Archives from a separate destination into an integrated part of diocesan life**.

A NEW CHAPTER FOR AN OLD STORY

The Leighton Archives will have a home worthy of what are held within.

The Vault will meet **professional archival standards for the first time** — climate-controlled, sealed, built to protect fragile paper-based records for generations to come. The **archives will be reunited in one accessible place**. A **dedicated digitization space** will allow the Archives to preserve and share its collections more widely than ever before. And a welcoming public presence in the heart of the Diocese will make the Archives **accessible**, to families, genealogists, First Nations communities, scholars, and parishes across Southwestern Ontario.

As the Leighton Archives settles into its new home, new relationships will form, between communities and their own history, between the Diocese and the wider public, between the past and the people who need it most. That has always been the nature of this work. Doug Leighton understood that better than anyone.



THE FINANCIAL PICTURE

The relocation of the Leighton Archives to St. Paul’s Cathedral is a complex undertaking, just as archival work demands precision. **Moving a fragile, paper-based collection requires specialized expertise, climate-controlled environments, and properly engineered infrastructure.** The Diocese has engaged the best available professionals to ensure this is done right.

To keep the project moving without delay, the Diocese is drawing on its Capital Development Trust — a fund that underpins the long-term financial stability of the Diocese — and is committed to replenishing those resources through this campaign so that it remains available for the needs of this diocese and the communities they serve.

The project budget, as of March 2026, is as follows:

Element	Description	Est. Cost
Construction	Renovation and retrofit of all three Archives spaces at St. Paul's Cathedral, including full environmental controls (temperature, humidity, insulation, and sealing) to meet professional archival standards.	\$450,000
Compact Shelving	Dismantling at Huron, relocation, and reinstallation in the Vault	\$70,000
Soft Costs	Fees, permits, and related expenses	\$50,000
Moving	Professional relocation of the full Archives collection, including packing, moving, and reshelving. Retrieval of archival boxes currently held in off-site storage, and relocation of office equipment, furniture, and fixtures.	\$120,000
Static Shelving	New shelving units in the Vault and second-floor storage room	\$52,000
Total Project Budget		\$742,000
Fund for Archives Operations	An endowed Fund for Archives Operations will generate annual income to sustain the ongoing costs including the lease and operational expenses in perpetuity	\$1,000,000
Total		\$1,742,000
Diocese of Huron Support		\$200,000
FUNDS NEEDED		\$1,542,000



An Invitation to Be Part of This Story

The Reverend Canon Dr. J. Douglas Leighton spent his life helping people ask the big questions — about history, about identity, about how we relate to one another across the lines that divide us. **He used these Archives to find answers.**

That is the reach of the Diocesan Archives and of the man whose name it now bears. The records held here have shaped careers, opened difficult conversations, and given communities the evidence they needed to understand themselves and each other.

We are at the beginning of securing a safe home for these records and valuable artifacts, and we need your voice. At this stage we are not asking for a gift — we are asking for something equally valuable: **your honest perspective on these plans**, your questions, and your sense of what this project means to you and to the communities you care about. **Your input will shape what the Leighton Archives becomes.**

"Dr. Leighton started from a position of informed humility... walked us through the evidence and drew the most logical and meaningful conclusions... I can say with absolute certainty that this trait is the single most important part of any judgment I write."

*— A former student,
now Judge*