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Chief, you sly dog!

by [Daryl Hofmann](#) on [OCTOBER 5, 2011](#) in [NEWS](#)

A Toronto man has been granted access to a trove of artifacts that once belonged to former prime minister John Diefenbaker in order to retrieve DNA and prove he is Diefenbaker's illegitimate son.

The collection is housed at the Diefenbaker Centre Canada at the University of Saskatchewan, where Diefenbaker has been laid to rest next to his wife for 32 years.

The paternity claim comes from George Dryden, who after finding out last year that his mother and father signed a false birth certificate when he was born, is convinced John Diefenbaker is his biological father.

Dryden told the National Post he believes the identify of his father was kept a secret "due to the social stigma and political sensitivities prevalent in Canadian society in 1968."

He says his appearance and his name, John George, match Diefenbaker's. Also at the time of his birth, his mother Mary Lou Dryden, was a well-known Conservative socialite and close friend to Diefenbaker.

If the alleged affair did take place, Mary Lou Dryden would have been in her 30s, while Diefenbaker would have been in his 70s.

Dryden and his lawyer Stephen Edell sent their first of a series of letters to the executive director of the Diefenbaker Centre, Michael Atkinson, in late July.

"We're under no legal obligation to assist Mr. Dryden, but we determined under the circumstances we would take a look at the holdings that we have and determine if any of it might contain traces of DNA," said Atkinson, while posted at his desk at the Diefenbaker Centre.

"I wrote to Mr. Dryden's lawyer and indicated to him that in our judgement there was unlikely to be anything but negligible traces of DNA."

In a second, more heated letter written to Atkinson, Dryden and Edell urged the Diefenbaker Centre to reconsider, promising no legal action against the Diefenbaker estate, ensuring artifacts would not be damaged and calling on the university's dedication to advancing knowledge and accurately reflecting history.

"DNA is microscopic. What your staff has determined may only be negligible DNA may, to a trained DNA testing expert, actually be a treasure trove of DNA when scientifically retrieved by a specialist in the field," the letter stated.

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Atkinson insists at no time did he refuse access to Dryden.

“We clarified that is not that case, we are not refusing. In our judgement there is not much here but if they want to bring an expert, so long as that company is going to respect our preservation requirements, then that’s fine. That’s what we’re here for — preservation,” said Atkinson.

Atkinson said he is currently in correspondence with Easy DNA, a DNA testing company out of Ontario that Dryden used last year to prove Gordon Dryden was not his father. He said he expects to “find a way to ensure they get to do whatever tests that they need to.”

“If it were to be shown that Mr. Dryden is the natural son of Mr. Diefenbaker, then that would require a little bit of rethinking about the Diefenbaker legacy and a certain amount of rethinking of all the presumptions and assumptions of John Diefenbaker,” said Atkinson.

However, Atkinson feels the chances of Dryden being the son of Diefenbaker are “remote,” and said although he is not a Diefenbaker scholar, he has never heard talk of him having a “roving eye” while practicing politics. He also mentioned this is not this first time someone has written him claiming to be the son of Diefenbaker.

As of now, the history books say Diefenbaker was happily married at the time of Dryden’s birth to his second wife, Olive Diefenbaker, with no children. Now, there is a chance that could be rewritten.

“They are quite anxious to come,” said Atkinson, speaking about Easy DNA and noting that he sees no reason for Dryden to come unless it is just to look around.

He said there is a hair brush, a clothes brush and some hats that he believes would be the most practical source of DNA.

“I’m 99.9 per cent certain I’m Diefenbaker’s son,” said the 42-year-old Dryden to the National Post on Aug. 26. “I just want to prove that so I can start living my life as John Diefenbaker II.”

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