

Fall Convocation, Grenfell Campus
Dr. Gary Kachanoski, President and Vice-Chancellor:
Thursday, October 6, 2016

Good morning everyone!

Welcome to our 2016 fall convocation for Grenfell Campus, Memorial University. We are so pleased that you have joined us for what is always a special time in the life of a university, a time when we celebrate the success of our students.

So, of course, a special welcome and congratulations to every one of you, our graduating students.

I know that your parents, families, friends and professors all played supporting roles in your success, but make no mistake – ultimately it was your dedication, hard work and talent that brought you here today, so congratulations on your accomplishments.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in congratulating all of our graduating students.

Every degree conferred this morning is the result of a personal journey requiring significant commitment and work, and by itself is worthy of considerable accolades as an important milestone in each student's life.

And every year our students amaze us with leadership and achievements above and beyond their required programs or responsibilities that distinguishes them at a national and international level.

This past spring our Enactus Memorial student team won their eighth national championship in 11 years (they were world champions in 2008 in Singapore), in a competition focused on improving lives through entrepreneurial action and the development of socially responsible enterprises that inspire hope and create opportunity where little existed.

In September, competing as Team Canada against 35 other national teams at the World Cup international competition in Toronto, they were once again crowned world champions. To put this in perspective, there were 1,700 university campuses competing for 36 national teams and one world champion – Memorial University. We couldn't be more proud.

We had hoped to be joined today by a special guest, Dr. Frank Hayden, who was scheduled to receive an honorary doctor of laws this morning. Unfortunately, Dr. Hayden is unable to be here today and will be conferred with an honorary degree at our spring convocation in 2017 here in Corner Brook.

I would like to acknowledge and welcome Ms. Iris Petten, chair of Memorial University's Board of Regents who joins us on stage this morning. Ms. Petten is a dedicated and passionate supporter of our university. All of our regents – a number of them are here today – volunteer their time and contribute significantly to our university. Would you please join me welcoming and thanking our regents.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge a very sad event, the sudden passing of a true gentleman and champion for Memorial University. I am speaking of Dr. Richard Marceau who came to Memorial in 2013 as our

vice-president (research), after a distinguished career as an academic and professional engineer.

During his short time with us he worked tirelessly to not only enhance Memorial's research capacity but all aspects of Memorial so that this university and its people can continue to positively impact the world around us. Daily his personal approach was the same — bringing a kind and positive outlook to the challenges and opportunities of academia, as well as the challenges that life brings us all. He was a great friend to many in the university community and beyond, and he will certainly be missed.

Ladies and gentlemen, as president of Memorial University for the past six years, it has been an honour to personally connect with this campus and this community and experience the positive impact of important and strategic initiatives and investments at Grenfell, and share each of these successes with our extended community here on the west coast.

There is so much to be proud of as we look back at more than four decades of university education here on the west coast of Newfoundland.

Grenfell's success and upward trajectory is due in no small part to the great work being done by our Vice-President (Grenfell Campus), Dr. Mary Bluechardt and her senior academic leadership team.

Dr. Bluechardt was re-appointed this past year for a second five-year term, and based on her record to date, we are sure that she will continue to provide visible, innovative and visionary leadership to Grenfell Campus, specifically, and to the entire university.

One important and recent development at Grenfell, with leadership from Dr. Bluehardt, is the change to a decanal academic structure of deans and schools. This academic structure better reflects Grenfell's rightful place among peer university campuses across Canada. It acknowledges the multi-campus structure of Memorial itself, and empowers Grenfell's academic aspirations and leadership.

So today I'm pleased to formally welcome a number of new people to our senior leadership team at Grenfell.

Prof. Todd Hennessey is our new dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts (Grenfell). He is, of course, not a new face at Grenfell. Before being named dean, Prof. Hennessey was head of the Division of Fine Arts and has been a professional director for 17 years.

Dr. Michelle Piercey-Normore, is our new dean of science and the environment (Grenfell). Dr. Piercey-Normore was associate head (Department of Biological Sciences) at the University of Manitoba prior to coming to Grenfell.

Dr. Laura Robinson is our new dean of arts and social science (Grenfell). Prior to her appointment she was dean of arts (interim) at the Royal Military College of Canada.

Finally, I am also pleased to welcome Mr. Scott Porter to his first convocation. Scott is our new associate vice-president (finance and administration) (Grenfell Campus). He came to us from Fanshawe College of Applied Arts and Technology, one of Ontario's largest colleges, where he was vice-president, finance and administration. Would you please join me in welcoming all of our new senior leadership team.

In addition to welcoming our new senior leaders, I want to thank two individuals who agreed to take on additional senior roles here at Grenfell over the past year. I am speaking of Dr. Jim Duffy, acting associate vice-president (academic) and Dr. Ivan Emke, acting associate vice-president (research). Jim and Ivan, I thank you both for contributing your knowledge and skills to the advancement of Grenfell Campus.

With this tremendous talented leadership team, I know we can expect great things in the future and the achievement of Grenfell's Vision 20/20, the five-year strategic plan to attract and retain a diverse and growing community of enthusiastic students, faculty and staff who choose the unique environment of Grenfell Campus for their education and employment.

Through all of this, Grenfell's impact and reach will only continue to grow. And, of course, its future success will continue to build on the strength and integral connections that exist between this university campus, this city and this region.

So I would like to take this opportunity to thank our community and municipal leaders and other western Newfoundland partners for your unwavering support of Grenfell Campus again this year, and through it, your support for all of Memorial University.

And make no mistake, in these uncertain fiscal times, and perhaps unsettling times, support from all of our partners is more important than ever. Only by working together can we ensure investments and initiatives help us achieve our important mandate – fostering student success, and the social, cultural and economic development of our great province.

And of course, I would be remiss in not thanking a vitally important partner in this endeavour -- the provincial government. I want to acknowledge the Honourable Gerry Byrne, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour who joins us today on stage. Minister, on behalf of Memorial University I extend my sincere thanks to you and your government for your continued support of our university. Please join me in thanking them.

Ladies and gentlemen, our universities unique origin, our vision, mission and core values, paint a picture of who we were, who we are and what we aspire to become.

Memorial is focused on meeting the needs of our students, developing innovative living and learning spaces, building and renewing appropriate infrastructure for 21st century teaching, research and public engagement, and making a difference in our communities by contributing to the social, cultural and economic development of our great province.

The university embodies the aspirations of those who founded Memorial University College – to be a living legacy to those who paid the ultimate price for our freedom in the First World War and in subsequent conflicts. A living legacy dedicated to the advancement of our society through education.

This year, we continue to mark the 100th anniversary of the First World War period and in particular this past July, the 100th anniversary of the conflict at Beaumont Hamel. The Danger Tree sculpture and new memorial site located on our Grenfell Campus that was officially unveiled by Her Royal Highness, the Princess Royal, is certainly a powerful symbol of our university`s unique origin.

But, it is also a reminder that in past dark times of adversity and unsettling events, it was important then as it is now to have a vision and a focus on the future, a reminder that through teaching, research and public engagement, our university, the Memorial University, works towards a better future.

Graduands, you are part of this legacy and this aspiration. You walked into this hall today as students who have completed the requirements for your degrees. You will leave as alumni of Memorial University, joining a family almost 90,000 strong.

You have earned the rights and privileges associated with your degree. And in today's global, increasingly connected, competitive, and complicated world, the value, benefits and importance of your learning, your experiences and know-how have never been greater – never greater for you personally, but also for your community, your country and the world.

This is your time, time to take to heart the responsibilities that also come with your degree and make your mark in Newfoundland and Labrador, across the country and around the globe.

Best wishes to each of you as you leave here today to begin the next adventure in your lives.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me once again in congratulating our graduates. Thank you.