Spring Convocation – Corner Brook

May 16, 2019
Dr. Gary Kachanoski, President and Vice-Chancellor

Good morning, everyone.

Welcome to our 2019 spring 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 each of you, our graduating students.

I know 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 our graduating students.

Our chancellor has already acknowledged Her Honour Judy Foote, but I want to personally acknowledge our lieutenant-governor. Your Honour, welcome to convocation. You have always been a tremendous advocate and supporter of our university, and we are so pleased you are here today. It really does make a difference.

Joining us on stage representing Memorial’s Board of Regents is Dennis Waterman. All our Board of Regents members, a number of them here today, volunteer their time and contribute significantly to our university. Would you please join me welcoming and acknowledging Mr. Waterman and our regents.

Also joining us on stage today is His Worship Jim Parsons, mayor of Corner Brook.

This morning we also welcome two special individuals who will soon join the ranks of those who have received the university’s highest honour – the honorary doctorate degree. I am speaking of Shirley Montague and Dr. Ian Simpson.

Shirley Montague is one of the most widely accomplished, recognized and respected figures of the provincial arts, music and cultural industries. Born in Labrador, Ms. Montague is a musician, storyteller, folklorist and extraordinary cultural ambassador for Newfoundland and Labrador.

For her many contributions to creating and sustaining the cultural heritage of Labrador and for leadership in the music industry in this province, Ms. Montague will receive an honorary doctor of laws degree this morning.

Dr. Ian Simpson is both a physician and an advocate for a healthier and safer environment. He has been a stalwart and consistent activist in environmental issues related to human health. For his exceptional leadership, public service and impact on community well-being, Dr. Simpson will receive an honorary doctor of laws degree this morning.

And you will hear more about, and from, both of our honorary graduands a little later.

Ladies and gentlemen, as president of Memorial University since 2010, I have been honoured to personally connect with this campus and this community – to 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.

In my first convocation speech here I said, [quote] “We are setting out to build on the success and expertise gained here from over 35 years of providing quality providing quality programming that does the people of this region and this great province proud.” [unquote]

And certainly one of the wonderful things I’ve learned as president of Memorial is that the strength of spirit of Grenfell’s students and alumni – their affinity for this place – is simply immeasurable.

The same can be said for the people of Corner Brook and the entire western region. And by working together, the campus and community are supporting advanced education, and the growth and development of the west coast of the island.

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

Grenfell’s success is due in no small part to the passion and dedication of all those who work at Grenfell, and I thank each and every one of them. In particular, I want to acknowledge Vice-President Dr. Jeff Keshen.

Since coming to Grenfell, he has worked tirelessly to build and strengthen community relationships, to improve opportunities and experiences for students, and to meet the needs of the entire Grenfell community.

And, of course, the high calibre of Grenfell’s students is a key part of its success. As then-Premier Frank Moores said at a banquet celebrating the opening of Grenfell in 1975, “Universities are judged by their students, and reputations are built by the young people who pass through its doors.” And what a great reputation Grenfell Campus has and what a wonderful group of students we have graduating here today.

As a result of 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 partners for your unwavering support of Grenfell Campus again this year, and through that, support for all of Memorial University.

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

The university embodies the aspirations of those who founded Memorial University College in 1925 – 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 and the discovery of new knowledge – a legacy that the Danger Tree sculpture on Grenfell Campus so rightly commemorates.

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 of almost 95,000 strong.

You have earned the rights and privileges associated with your degree. And now this is your time, your 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 in once again congratulating our graduates. Thank you.