

**Fall Convocation
St. John's, Oct. 19, 2017**

The following is a consolidated text of remarks made to convocation

Welcome to our 2017 fall convocation on the St. John's Campus of 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 a supporting role in your success, and they are all here to cheer your accomplishments. But make no mistake – ultimately it was your dedication, hard work and talent that brought you here today, so congratulations.

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

Joining us on stage this morning representing the provincial government is the honourable minister. Minister, on behalf of Memorial University, thank you for joining us here today to celebrate the success of our graduating students.

Also joining us today is the member of our Board of Regents. All of our regents volunteer their time and contribute significantly to our university. Would you please join me in acknowledging the minister and our regents?

Today we are joined by a special individual who will join the ranks of those who have received the university's highest honour – the honorary doctorate degree.

I am speaking of the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, chief justice of Canada. She is the longest serving chief justice in the court's history and the first female chief justice in the history of Canada's 141-year old Supreme Court.

For her leadership, and distinguished and lasting contribution to justice in Canada, Chief Justice McLachlin will receive an honorary doctor of laws.

I am speaking of Arnold Witzig – architect, explorer and philanthropist who, together with his wife Sima, created the Arctic Inspiration Prize, also known as the Nobel Prize of the North, which supports and brings together with a passion for the North.

For his leadership, imaginative philanthropy and contribution to the development of Arctic research and communities, Mr. Witzig will receive an honorary doctor of laws degree.

We will hear more about, and from, our honorary graduates a little later.

We are also pleased to recognize Drs. Michael Collins, Rick Cooper and Larry Matthews, retired faculty members who were recently accorded the title professor *emeritus* by Memorial University's Senate and Board of Regents.

Our *professores emeriti* have given their academic, scholarly and professional lives in service to Memorial University's mission. They have inspired generations of students and helped build this fine institution.

On behalf of the entire Memorial University community, I offer sincere congratulations to each of them, and you will be hearing more about them a little later as well.

I am also pleased to acknowledge recent additions to our senior leadership team.

On Sept. 1, Dr. Isabelle Dostaler was appointed as our new dean of the Faculty of Business Administration. Dr. Dostaler is an experienced teacher, scholar academic administrator, and previously served in the roles of professor of management in the John Molson School of Business at Concordia University, and academic director of the university's Aviation Think Tank.

Dr. Jennifer Simpson began her term as dean of humanities and social sciences the first of October. She comes to Memorial University from the University of Waterloo, where she was chair of the Department of Drama and Speech Communication and has served in multiple academic leadership roles, including strategy and vision development, and has a focus on the obligations higher education has to equity and the public good.

Please join me in welcoming both of our new deans.

Finally in November we will welcome two new vice-presidents. Dr. Neil Bose currently serves as principal of the Australian Maritime College, the national institute for maritime education, training and research, will become our new vice-president (research).

And Dr. Jeff Keshen, currently dean, Faculty of Arts with Mount Royal University will assume the role of vice-president for Grenfell Campus.

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

Students like Dr. Leila Qashu, a former PhD student who worked at the research centre for Music, Material and Place in our School of Music, and who graduated this past spring from Memorial's ethnomusicology program. Dr. Qashu's PhD dissertation was named best in Canada for 2017 by the Canadian Association of Graduate Schools.

The national association singled out her thesis and research for breaking new ground in conflict resolution in indigenous communities and bringing to light a form of justice that has national and international applications.

And this year two student teams stand out.

Our Enactus Memorial team is a student-led, volunteer organization that competes nationally and globally, based on the outcome of community projects and social enterprises that they develop to address a range of economic, social and environmental issues.

They were world champions in 2008 and again in 2016. This year they are once again Canadian champions with many award-winning projects, including their most recent signature initiative, Project Sucseed, which develops and manufactures an affordable hydroponic system that addresses food insecurity in remote and isolated communities, while simultaneously creating manufacturing jobs in our province for youth at risk.

Late last month the team competed in England at the World Cup as Team Canada and defending world champions where they placed second in the world. To put this in perspective, over 1,700 universities competed for 36 national titles who then competed for the world cup – an outstanding record of accomplishment.

Another amazing group of students is the Paradigm Hyperloop team of 40 highly innovative engineering students from Memorial University, College of the North Atlantic and Northeastern University in Boston. They were one of only 24 finalists out of 1,200 teams in a global competition held last month at SpaceX headquarters in California – and the only North American team to be awarded the chance to test their pod in the SpaceX Hyperloop tube.

They came second in this global competition, an extraordinary accomplishment. And they made history as the first team ever to use an air-bearing system. The work they are doing is revolutionary and on the leading edge of technology for high-speed ground transport that could quite literally transform the way people and products move around the globe.

We couldn't be more proud of both these teams and all our students. Would you please join me in congratulating them?

We tell our stories of success and achievements throughout the year in our *Research Matters* magazine, in our alumni magazine *Luminus*, on our *Gazette* news site, and, of course, each fall in our on-line *President's Report*.

And I encourage you to learn more about the exceptional people at Memorial University, our faculty, staff, students, retirees and alumni, and how as active engaged citizens, they make the world a better place to live – safer, more prosperous, and definitely more interesting.

A key part of their success is the sustained and unwavering support from our partners. So I would like to take this opportunity to thank our community, municipal and private sector leaders, and other partners, for their unwavering commitment and support of Memorial University.

Ladies and gentlemen, our university's 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.

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.

Graduands, you are part of this legacy. You walked into this hall today as students who have successfully completed the requirements for your degrees. You will leave as graduates of Memorial University, as alumni, joining a family of more than 90,000 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, and across the country and around the globe.

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

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