

**Spring Convocation
St. John's, May 27-30, 2014**

**This is a consolidated text of the Reports to Convocation delivered in St. John's by
Dr. Gary Kachanoski, President and Vice-chancellor**

Welcome to our 2014 spring convocation. We are so pleased that you have joined us today for what is always a special time in the life of a university, a time when we celebrate the success of our students.

Graduands, convocation is a time for your personal reflection and celebration, a time to recognize your talents, years of study and hard work.

We hope when you look back at this time in your lives you will see it as a time of transformation, a time when you discovered your own special gifts, your own ingenuity and your own passion for learning.

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 success. But make no mistake – ultimately it was your dedication, hard work and talent that brought you here today, so again, congratulations.

We are joined on stage by a special guest whom we are all pleased will soon join the ranks of those named as honorary graduates of Memorial University.

Honorary Graduates:

I am speaking of Shannie Duff, an extremely proud advocate of our province and her native city, St. John's.

As a passionate community volunteer and social activist, and with more than 40 years of service as a municipal politician in St. John's as councillor, deputy mayor and mayor, Ms. Duff has contributed significantly to the quality of life for the residents of our great province.

For her remarkable record of public service and leadership, she will be awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree.

I am speaking of Jocelyn Greene.

Ms. Greene is one of this country's leading social justice advocates. Under her direction as executive director, Stella Burry Community Services has become the leading developer of supportive housing in Newfoundland and Labrador. Creative and far-sighted strategies developed by Ms. Greene to enable individuals with mental health issues to become full participants in their communities have been widely cited across Canada.

She is a role model and mentor, motivated by the belief that a civil society supports and encourages those who are vulnerable and ensures that all citizens have access to basic necessities that contribute to quality of life.

For her exceptional contribution to community, Ms. Greene will receive an honorary doctor of laws degree.

I am speaking of Kathy LeGrow.

Ms. LeGrow has a long and impressive history in business. But she is a social worker by training and began her professional life directing work therapy at the Waterford Hospital before becoming a counselor and mediator with the Family Court.

And now it is in community service that Ms. LeGrow is perhaps best known. A long-time leader in the community and philanthropic organizations, she is the creator, chair and financier of the Pratt Foundation, which supports research, and program development and implementation, to ensure that children at risk have the opportunity to lead resilient lives.

Her legacy rests not in a history of giving away her wealth, but the lessons her actions afford us – lessons of responsibility, of giving, of being determined to make a difference.

For her long service and profound impact on her province and country, she will be awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree.

I am speaking of Dr. John Gray.

The Grenfell Mission drew many selfless people to our northern reaches, and among those was John Gray. He came from England as a young internist and served along that shore for

over 25 years, bringing high-level, contemporary care to a huge region of the province for the first time. The John M. Gray Centre and Complex, a long-term and continuing care facility in St. Anthony, is named after him.

On leaving the province for Dalhousie University, he concentrated on the care of the elderly and introduced the specialty of geriatrics to Atlantic Canada. He is a founding member of the Alzheimer Society in Nova Scotia, and served on the boards of the Gerontology Association of Nova Scotia and the Canadian Geriatric Society.

For his inspirational leadership, his far-sighted vision and his exemplary conduct as a physician, Dr. Gray is being awarded an honorary doctor of science degree.

I am speaking of Ms. Joyce Churchill.

Seen by many as the voice of autism in Newfoundland and Labrador, Ms. Churchill was one of the founding members of the Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador and served as president for a dozen years. During that time, she persuaded the provincial government to provide funding for the establishment of a provincial office, and to finance the Applied Behavioural Analysis early intervention program, the gold standard of autism treatment.

In 2005, after an extensive and time-consuming fundraising campaign led by Ms. Churchill, the Elaine Dobbin Centre for Autism opened, providing programs and services including employment programs, adult Asperger's social programs, music therapy and occupational therapy, just to name a few. Ms. Churchill takes the view that building the centre is only the first of many steps needed to treat people with autism and to make their lives more productive and filling.

For her long and effective service to the community, Ms. Churchill will receive an honorary doctor of laws degree.

I would also like to acknowledge and welcome the Board of Regents representative who joins us on stage today.

Finally, I am pleased to welcome Dr. Gary Gorman, former dean of the Faculty of Business, who will join the ranks of distinguished faculty members named as dean emeritus of Memorial University.

The title of dean emeritus is conferred upon a retired faculty member with a sustained and superlative record as an academic administrator. On behalf of the entire Memorial University community, I offer sincere congratulations to Dr. Gorman.

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

In particular, I would like to acknowledge our doctor of philosophy and doctor of psychology students graduating today.

The attainment of a doctoral degree is a singular accomplishment, an extraordinary commitment of time, emotional energy, financial resources, and the fulfillment of a lifelong quest.

As a small symbolic gesture of recognition, a tip-of-the-hat if you will, towards soon-to-be peers and colleagues, we have seated our doctoral students here on the stage, and we extend our congratulations to each and every one of them for their remarkable achievements.

Just as we celebrate our graduating students, convocation is also a time for us to reflect on all of the accomplishments and successes we have experienced across the university.

Every year our students, along with our faculty and staff, amaze us with leadership and achievements above and beyond their required programs or responsibilities that distinguishes them at a national and international level.

Just this month, Enactus Memorial cemented its position as the top student team in the world when they were once again named national champions at the 2014 Canadian competition in Calgary.

They defeated 48 teams from universities across Canada to mark the seventh time in nine years that our students have taken top national honours in the prestigious student business competition. They were world champions in 2008, and now once again become Team Canada and will represent our country in the Enactus World cup competition in Beijing, China, this coming fall.

Congratulations to Jon King, our student president of Enactus Memorial, our Memorial Enactus students who come from many of our schools and faculties, and our dedicated Enactus faculty advisor Lynn Morrissey, who is an assistant professor of communications in the Faculty of Business Administration.

This kind of national and international recognition and accomplishment is happening every month at Memorial. Let me assure you that to achieve this distinction places us in rarified company worldwide.

Just last week it was announced that once again, Canada placed third in a world ranking of national higher education systems based on data from 50 countries.

The review examined what makes a superior university education system, including investment by government and the private sector, research and its impact, creation of an educated workforce that meets societies' needs, and international networks and diversity.

When you live in this great province and country of ours, with this university in your own backyard, it is easy to forget that world-class also applies to the home team.

We tell our stories of success and achievements throughout the year in our *Gazette* newspaper, our *Research Matters* magazine, our alumni magazine, *Luminus*, and on our university web site.

And of course also in our annual president's report, now exclusively online, titled *Face Forward*, a thematic online periodical, which regularly shares current events and stories

representing the people and work happening at Memorial University. The current theme is student success which is appropriate given that it is convocation season.

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

A key part of their success is the sustained and unwavering support from our partners. 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.

In particular, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary support of the provincial government for university education and welcome the government minister who is on stage representing the provincial government at this convocation session.

Minister, I extend my sincere thanks to you and your government for your continued tremendous investments for Memorial.

Support from all of our partners ensures Memorial has the stability and the resources necessary to deliver on our mandate and achieve our vision to be one of the most distinguished public universities in Canada and beyond.

Together, we are positioning Memorial University, and Newfoundland and Labrador, for even greater things to come.

Just as we plan for the future, so must we remember our past. Later this year we will begin First World War centenary commemorations, a special program of initiatives for 2014-2019 which will reflect the university's unique origin and responsibility as a living memorial to those who fought and died in the Great War, and re-dedicated for all subsequent conflicts.

It is a responsibility that is embodied in the words from our university's memorial wall, "...in freedom of learning their cause and sacrifice might not be forgotten."

The pronounced interest from the university community to join in the commemorations is reflected in the more than 40 different projects that have been proposed from all levels of the university – faculty, staff and students.

Details of initiatives that reflect the three key areas of commemoration activities – academic programs; physical commemorations; and library, archive and other resources – will be provided at the launch of our commemorations program in mid-June.

I encourage everyone here to attend and see how Memorial remembers our special origins.

Graduands, 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 almost 85,000 strong.

And remember, you will not be alumni from just any university. You are graduating from Memorial University. You are the rightful heirs of the bold young people who stepped forward to preserve our freedom. And you honour their memory with your success and presence here today.

You are about to write a new chapter in your lives, and just like for your *alma mater*, I see tremendous success on the horizon for each of you.

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

As Lord Rothermere, Memorial's first chancellor, said at the opening of the then-new St. John's campus in 1961:

"The natural resources of Newfoundland are vital to her prosperity. But whatever the natural resources of a country might be – and we are blessed with many – the most important asset will always remain the ingenuity and skills of her citizens."

Graduands: your ingenuity, your talent is our collective future. I know you'll do us proud.

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