

**Fall Convocation
St. John's
October 23, 2015**

**The following is a consolidated text of remarks made to convocation by
Dr. Gary Kachanoski, President and Vice-Chancellor**

Welcome to Memorial University's fall convocation 2015. 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 our graduating 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 accomplishments, 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 congratulations.

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

I am pleased to welcome a number of individuals on stage with us today.

I would like to acknowledge and welcome the Board of Regents member who joins us on stage. All of our Board of Regent members volunteer their

time and contribute significantly to our university. Would you please join me welcoming and acknowledging them.

We are also joined by a special guest who we are all pleased will soon join the ranks of those named as honorary graduates of Memorial University. I am speaking of Robert Joy – actor, singer and musician.

Mr. Joy is a Memorial alumnus whose remarkable and distinguished career has altered both the direction of Newfoundland theatre and the way which others perceived this place. For the range, quality, and impact of his theatrical and creative works, he will receive an honorary doctor of letters degree this morning. And you will hear more about, and from, Mr. Joy a little later this morning.

I am speaking of Dr. Sylvester Gates Junior who, while living in St. John's in the 1950s, was taken to a film about space travel that ignited an interest that has governed his life, and his passion for theoretical physics.

For his outstanding contributions to physics as a scholar, a teacher, and public communicator he will receive an honorary doctor of science degree this afternoon. You will more about, and from, Dr. Gates a little later.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Christopher Sharpe, university marshal, who is officiating over his last convocation today and who will be recognized as professor *emeritus* later today.

Following many years serving on the marshaling team, Dr. Sharpe was appointed to the top job in January 2007 and has served two four-year terms as Memorial's fourth university marshal.

The success of each ceremony during convocation can be attributed in large part to the university marshal and their team. They ensure the events run smoothly, on time and with appropriate respect for protocol and tradition.

Dr. Sharpe (Chris), we hope your time as university marshal was rewarding for you. On behalf of the faculty, staff and special guests who have participated in our ceremonies and the many graduating classes of students you have advised and assisted, I thank you for bringing order, decorum and certainly even some humour to convocation day.

We are also pleased to recognize three retired members of faculty who were recently accorded the title professors emeriti by Memorial University's Senate and Board of Regents. They are Dr. Sandra LeFort, Dr. Marguerite MacKenzie and Dr. Christopher Sharpe.

Our professors *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 a little more about them a little later.

Every degree conferred on this stage 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 of our students' lives.

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

The attainment of these advanced degrees is a singular accomplishment – an extraordinary commitment of time, emotional energy and financial resources towards the fulfillment of a life-long quest.

We have invited our doctor of philosophy and doctor of psychology graduands to join the faculty on-stage as a small gesture of our regard for their remarkable achievement, and I ask that you please join me in extending our congratulations to each of them.

Just as we celebrate our graduating students, convocation is also a time for us to reflect on all of the accomplishments and successes that the people of Memorial have experienced this past year.

Memorial's students, faculty and staff amazed us yet again with their leadership and achievements. Many went beyond requirements – and even our high expectations -- to earn distinguished recognition at national and international levels.

We tell these 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, our annual president's report *FaceForward*, now exclusively online, also tells the stories of the people, plans and events that shape our great institution.

Ladies and gentlemen I encourage you to learn more about the activities of 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 sustainable, more understandable, 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 leaders, private sector leaders and our other partners for their tremendous support of Memorial University.

Only by working together can we ensure investments and initiatives help us achieve our important mandates – fostering student success and the social, cultural and economic development of our province.

So of course, I would be remiss in not thanking our key partner, the provincial government. I want to acknowledge the provincial government minister who joins us on stage today. Minister, on behalf of Memorial University, I extend my sincere thanks to you and your government for your continued support of our university.

Ladies and gentlemen, 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.

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

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.

And we want and need you, our new graduates, alumni and friends, and partners to continue to join us on that exciting and challenging journey.

So it is important that every spring and every fall the Memorial University community gathers together for convocation, to admit the graduands to their degrees – one of the most important tasks we undertake today.

But university convocation is more than that.

Convocation is an assembly of our university community, and together with our extended community, we gather to not only celebrate our student and academic accomplishments, but also to re-affirm and express our on-going responsibilities to serve the public good, and to fulfill our special obligation to the people of this province.

And through that, the university embodies the aspirations of those who founded Memorial University College – to be a living memorial to those who paid the ultimate price for our freedom in WW1 and in subsequent conflicts – a living legacy dedicated to the advancement of our society through education.

The establishment of Memorial was a pivotal point in Newfoundland and Labrador's history. Indeed, it is difficult to identify a part of our society that has not benefitted from our great university.

This has long been our mandate. As then premier Joseph Smallwood said to an assembly of regents, senate, faculty and students at Memorial in 1965, "Many of you will be Newfoundland's leaders in business and commerce; in industry; in science; in letters; in the church; in public life; in education; this university is going to train leaders for Newfoundland. The

quality of that leadership is going to determine the quality of Newfoundland. That's what this university is doing. It's building Newfoundland; it's re-shaping Newfoundland; it's remolding Newfoundland."

And in recognition of this, just last week at a ceremony at The Rooms, it was wonderful and appropriate that the opening of Memorial University College in 1925 was officially designated as a provincial historic event under the Provincial Historic Commemorations Program, a program that recognizes, honours and interprets Newfoundland and Labrador's cultural and historic treasures.

As we mark over the next few years the 100th anniversary of the First World War, we remind ourselves of our profound yet humble origins, and that through teaching, research and public engagement, we work towards a better world.

Graduands, you have already had a role in this, and you have a role yet to come. 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 90,000 strong. You are Memorial's greatest ambassadors. 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 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. Congratulations to each of you as you leave here today to begin the next adventures in your lives. I know you will do us proud.

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

