

Convocation Address: Grenfell Campus
Dr. Gary Kachanoski, President and Vice-Chancellor
Friday, May 13, 2011
10 a.m.

B.A. (Hons.), B.A., B.Sc. (Hons.), B.Sc., B.N., B.F.A (Theatre), B.F.A. (Visual Arts), B.B.A., B.R.M., M.Ed., M. P.H.

Honorary: Stephen Lewis

Good morning and welcome to spring convocation. A special welcome also and congratulations to all of our new graduands. I am honored to join you on your special day.

Congratulations also to your parents, your families, friends and professors who have a part in the success that you have achieved today. They have each played their role in supporting you, opened your eyes to new ways of looking at the world, offered their direction, guidance and encouragement.

But, ultimately, of course, it was your efforts and talent that got you to today's convocation, so congratulations.

Every spring and every fall, the Memorial University community in Corner Brook gathers together for convocation, which has become synonymous with graduating from Memorial University – and yes, that is 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 academic accomplishments, but also to re-affirm and express our on-going responsibilities to serve the public good.

This is demonstrated later in convocation when you will hear Chancellor Hillier intone the words “I admit the candidates to these degrees and confer upon them all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities associated with the degree.”

Graduands, I want you to take a moment to think about what that means.

Today you are being admitted and welcomed as a part of the Grenfell Campus and Memorial University convocation and you become part of a family of alumni that now numbers almost 70,000.

Today you earn the rights and privileges from claiming to your name the breadth and depth of learning, and experiences and know-how 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 family, for your community, country and the world.

That’s the responsibility part; the responsibility to be active, engaged citizens and to make the world a better place to live – more just and safer, more prosperous, more sustainable, and more interesting.

So as we take this opportunity to acknowledge your achievement – the rights and privileges you have earned – let’s also re-affirm the responsibility that comes with your education.

With that sense of responsibility in mind, I am very pleased to acknowledge and welcome Stephen Lewis, who will receive an honorary degree for, among many things, his advocacy and contributions to understanding and improving the human condition, his contributions to Canada and for his role in effecting social

change internationally. We are honored that he is here and you will hear more about him and from him later.

It is a privilege for me to officially take part in spring convocation for the first time. I was here last spring, but as a special guest in the audience meeting some of you for the first time.

My very first address to the Memorial University community as president was made right here in Corner Brook at Grenfell's fall convocation last October.

That was more than coincidental. Personally connecting with this campus and this community was a fundamental initial goal of my presidency. I always look forward to spending time here in Corner Brook and I'm pleased to say that I even have my own office at Grenfell Campus.

Being part of this community is important to me, it's important to the position of president and for Memorial University. I'd like to think that Grenfell's community is getting used to seeing its president walking the halls of the buildings up on the hill.

So I'm in Corner Brook regularly – in particular over the late fall and winter as we worked through the process to search for and find the new vice-president for the campus.

In early February, after an extensive national search and significant community consultation, we were pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Mary Bluehardt as our vice-president for the Grenfell campus.

Dr. Bluehardt, comes to us from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, where she is currently the dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences. As the former director of the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation at Memorial,

Dr. Bluechardt is already very familiar with the province and Memorial, and that experience will also serve her well in Corner Brook.

Since her appointment you may have seen and heard about Dr. Bluechardt or met her during one of her visits here, and she joins us again today as a special guest in the audience.

Those who have met her already know this, but the rest will soon find out. Mary Bluechardt is a thoughtful, personable, visionary team builder. I just know you're going to enjoy working with her.

As we welcome our new vice president for the Grenfell Campus, it is also important to acknowledge the contributions of our acting vice-president, Dr. Holly Pike.

When Dr. Pike first took on this important role, I'm sure she didn't expect the appointment to last as long as it did. She came into the job at a difficult and complicated time. But through all of her term, Dr. Pike continued to provide positive leadership for the campus and the university. I know her wise counsel was welcomed by my predecessors and has been very helpful to me.

So, Dr. Pike – Holly – I want to extend to you my personal thanks, as well as our collective thanks on behalf of the Grenfell Campus and the entire Memorial University community.

In late January we also announced the successful conclusion of another important, extensive national search and the appointment of Dr. David Wardlaw to the position of vice-president (academic) and pro vice-chancellor of Memorial.

Dr. Wardlaw is currently the dean of science at the University of Western Ontario and prior to that served as the head of the Department of Chemistry at Queens University. He brings tremendous experience in academic administration, a

strong background in science and science promotion, together with a commitment to student learning initiatives and community engagement.

Dr Wardlaw also joins us today in the audience as a special guest.

Dr. Bluehardt and Dr. Wardlaw are both proven leaders who will bring great vision to Grenfell Campus and Memorial. I am looking forward to working closely with them and the rest of the Grenfell Campus community as we build on our past accomplishments and excellence.

And there is significant success to build on as we implement the exciting new initiatives for enrollment, research and administrative growth at the Grenfell Campus, fueled by the significant increase in operating resources and infrastructure funds from the province.

- Our significantly expanded marketing and recruitment activities for the Grenfell campus are starting to create an impact. The latest data we have reflects an overall increase in applications for fall 2011 of 15 per cent.
- Particularly encouraging is an 18 per cent increase in applications from Grade 12 students.
- The new academic building is slated to be fully finished and to open this year.
- Construction on a new 200-bed residence in partnership with the College of the North Atlantic will go to tender shortly.
- And we are currently in the design phase for a new analytical research laboratory facility to support environmental research at Grenfell.

The introduction of graduate programs and growth in research activity are key next steps in Grenfell's development. So, I am pleased to report to you that just a few weeks ago we formally approved the introduction of the first graduate program to be delivered at Grenfell. In fall 2012 we will admit our first graduate

students to the Masters of Arts in Environmental Policy program – the first such program of its kind ever offered in Canada.

So the stage is set for positive growth, and the possibilities are many. We have substantial investments of people and infrastructure and operating resources; we have a history of quality to build on, in a most scenic location here in Corner Brook.

Given all of this, at last fall's convocation I posed the question: what else do we need to ensure that all of these factors add up to more than just the sum of their parts – to ensure that Grenfell Campus builds on its success and reaches its full potential?

I believe, once again, it comes down to building relationships. Last fall I emphasized the need for stronger relationships and collaborations across all of Memorial's campuses, and that continues to be a priority.

Equally important is Grenfell's relationship with the City of Corner Brook and adjacent communities.

Grenfell Campus came about because of the desire to make university education accessible to people here in the western region of the province, and to have the advantage of a university for social, cultural, and economic growth and development in the region. It didn't just happen. People working together made it happen.

But, does just having a university in your community, make you a university community?

I know that many in Corner Brook want this city to be seen and recognized as a "university town." And I share that aspiration.

There is certainly already an impressive list of activities that illustrate the relationship this university campus has with your community.

Things like:

- Meeting the professional development needs of businesses and organizations in the region through development of specialized, custom-designed courses;
- Contributions to community theatre productions;
- Collaborations with the College of the North Atlantic, a key partner, on a range of projects including an exciting proposal for Bay of Islands Radio, a community/campus radio station and studio;
- Environmental research, awareness and action through partnerships with the Western Environment Centre and the Corner Brook Community Sustainability Awards, leading the Humber River Basin Project and through Grenfell's Environmental Policy Institute;
- Incubating and promoting entrepreneurship and business development and successful companies through Gateway West and Students in Free Enterprise Grenfell.

But it has to be more than just the buildings on the hill, more than the people who work and study there and more than just our collective output in research and knowledge generation.

If you look at other places that are known as university towns they share a number of common characteristics – characteristics that the Carnegie Foundation has used to define this type of special University-Community Engagement.

They include the creation of a collective spirit of collaboration and co-operation between the university and their community.

A university town is a place with true partnerships and trust and where knowledge and resources are exchanged for mutual benefit.

A university town has a high percentage of students among the total population. It's a place that expects to see and welcomes new, young, diverse faces regularly in tone and spirit, and in available services, from recreation, to transport and cultural attractions.

It's a place where the goals, aspirations, plans and priorities of the partners are highly aligned.

Over the years, I think Corner Brook and Grenfell Campus have laid the foundation for this special type of engagement. But, I think we can all agree that there's more we can do together. And we want to start exploring those opportunities and having those discussions in a more formal and structured way. That's an idea worth pursuing.

Through it we will build on our strengths, emphasize what makes us unique, and celebrate each other's success. The end result is that our students benefit, the university and community flourishes, and as a public university we serve our mission and special obligation to the people of this great province.

And to our new graduates, about to write a new chapter in your lives, I know that you will take to heart the responsibilities that come with your degree and make your mark in Newfoundland and Labrador and across the country and the world.

I wish you all the best in your future and great success whatever your path.

Thank you
