

Professional Studies Honour Roll Call, 2021

Dr. Peter Ricketts Acadia President and Vice-Chancellor

Welcome Class of 2021, so this record of your academic accomplishment at Acadia University today.

I'm delighted to present the Honour Roll of every member of the graduating Class of 2021. Now, usually we only read out the names of those who are physically attending the convocation ceremony. However, in this extraordinary year of COVID-19, we want to make an exception and announce every graduate's name by faculty and degree. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to hear your name read out along with your fellow graduates.

Added to the Honour Roll Call are the messages from the honorary degree recipients and the dean of your faculty. The stories that they share are inspiring and uplifting, and I know that their words will serve you well as you embark upon the next phase of your life as a proud member of the Acadia alumni family. And as I said before, I look forward to inviting you all back to join us here on campus when we can celebrate your achievement in person.

And so, until we meet and celebrate again, remember how very proud we are of you. Take care and thank you.

Dr. Rob Raeside University Marshal

I am Dr. Rob Raeside, University Marshal. As university marshal, I'm pleased to present the Class of 2021 for the Faculty of Professional Studies, including the graduates from the Fall of 2020.

Honour Roll Call – *List read aloud and printed on screen.*

The Hon. Justice Murray Sinclair Doctor of Civil Laws Acadia University

- Well, thank you very much, Mr. President, Chancellor, members of the Board of Governors, members of the Faculty and Staff, Acadia University, parents and friends of the graduates, and my fellow graduates.

Thank you for this great honour that you've bestowed upon me. And thank you for allowing me to be part of this very important day that all of you will hopefully never forget, I certainly won't because this now puts us into a category of people who are always going to be connected. And I look forward to the opportunities to meet you all personally, instead of through cameras like this in the future.

As you go forward from this day, I want you to think about a few things. One of them being that just look around you for a moment and you've already, of course, acknowledged, I'm sure your family, your friends, those people in the community who supported you and brought you to this point, but I do want you to look around at your classmates. And I want

you to remember that those classmates that have been with you through this journey are the people upon whom you are going to rely in the future and feel free to rely upon them because they will feel free, I hope, to rely upon you.

From time to time in my profession as a lawyer, as a judge, and even as a Senator, I've called upon my former classmates just to get their views about things, whether it's on the law or whether it's about just matters in the public interests, matters of public policy, because they are my weathervane. They were the ones who helped me make decisions.

They weren't the ones who necessarily whispered in my ear, I have a wife for that, I have daughters for that, and also my late grandmother is constantly by my side whispering in my ear about what is right and what is wrong. And so those important influences never leave us but your friends, they're the ones who will help you make those important decisions as you go forward.

And so never forget them, be sure that you remember them and be sure that you make a commitment to them as well that you will be there for them when they need you because I'm sure that they will need you.

This is an important day in everybody's life right up there with getting married, having a baby, with losing somebody important in your life and finding a way to deal with that and move on. But this is a day for celebration.

This is the day when you will hopefully use this as an opportunity or as a key to a room filled with opportunities, that you will either be able to take advantage of or you will find that maybe you don't want to take advantage of it because some of those opportunities may not be really what you like to do. But somewhere in that room is something that's waiting for you. So feel free and, in fact, look for it, look hard for it because at the end of the day, when you get as old as I am right now, and you look back at your life, you're going to say to yourself, "I'm sure glad I did that. I'm sure glad I went in that door. I'm sure glad I answered that phone call. I'm sure glad I went and saw that person." Because that's important.

At the end of the day, it's your life and what you do with it and how you influence it, and what you do for others with it, that is really important. So, thank you for sharing this day with me and thank you for letting me be part of your life and I'll leave it for you to figure out how you can get a hold of me when you need me, too. Thank you. Have a great day.

The Right Hon. Paul Martin
Doctor of Civil Laws
Acadia University

- Thank you, President Ricketts and members of Acadia University's Faculty and Board of Governors for this honorary degree, which I am very proud to receive. And thank you for the invitation to speak to the Class of 2021, who I want to congratulate for their hard work and who probably think that after all they've been through, that I should have had to work a little harder to get my degree.

Again, to the graduates, let me thank your parents especially your mothers as it's Mother's Day. Your friends and your loved ones who supported you all the way because Canada will benefit enormously from the contributions you will make to our future.

At Acadia, you have been taught to innovate, to create and to master a storm. This is important because your generation is being asked to rise to the challenges which are of a magnitude, we haven't seen since the world wars. How you choose to face those challenges will have a lasting impact, not just on you but on the generations that will follow you.

The two overwhelming issues that you face are hardly as secret. The first is climate change. According to the World Meteorological Organisation, 2020 is on track to be one of the three warmest years ever recorded. All of which occurred after 2015 even more concerning the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases continued to rise this year despite the fact that we all spent that time tucked away in our homes because of COVID-19.

The second issue is the pandemic which has ravaged our world and our way of life. We were not prepared for COVID-19. You know this. You all made countless personal sacrifices towards our greater goal of controlling and eradicating the virus. Had the world been more prepared, your sacrifices would not have had to be so great.

Clearly the world is prepared to work together today to mitigate the consequences of COVID-19. The question is, are we prepared to work together tomorrow to prevent the next pandemic, which is unknown?

In this context, some members of the World Health Organization have set up an independent commission to explain what a new normal might be. The argument they make is valid. COVID-19 was only the latest microorganism to jump from animals to humans. It was able to do so because we created the conditions that made it a probability.

Quite clearly, we need to invest in early warning and better data systems so that future infections are identified more rapidly. A pandemic by its very nature is a global attack and so the response to the next one must be based on collaborative research, information sharing and a renewed support for multilateral bodies such as the WHO. Here Canada must play a decisive role as nations struggle to come together to ensure the future. What does this mean? It means we must learn from history.

After the First World War, countries refused to work together. They created the League of Nations, which was the forerunner to the United Nations but then they shut it down. They refused to work together economically causing the greatest depression in modern history. And ultimately, they gave birth to World War II.

On the other hand, following the Second World War, countries joined together. They created the United Nations and the great multilateral institutions all in the recognition that it was impossible to carry on without the infrastructure supporting collective action.

The result was more positive change and the strongest global economy in recent history from which everyone has reaped the benefits. Yours and the generations to follow must not allow the world to repeat the same mistakes that were made after the First World War.

And Canada has a vital role to play here especially as the superpowers continue to disagree at arms length. For Canada to play this role, we must maintain a leadership position in the G20 and in the other multilateral institutions to which we belong. And why do I raise this at your graduation?

It's because we are a democracy and your voices, and your opinions will be of great importance to the role Canada plays.

While governments initiate change, it is people who drive it, who sustain it, who never let go regardless of the politics at play.

Whatever you do, if you're a professor, an artist, a computer scientist, a researcher, you must push for global cooperation. These are not empty words because if you find it within yourselves to harness the full breadth of what Acadia has given you, working in community, the ability to innovate, you will be at the forefront of those leading us to better outcomes.

This is the challenge that I would put to you today. And I know that you are capable of rising to it. While I was studying up for this event as any good student would do, I read Acadia's strategic plan. In it, President Ricketts articulated a perspective which I could not support more strongly. And I quote, "You are the first generation of students who will graduate into a world that is physically transforming at a rate never before seen and you would experience not only the human world is changing, but the planet itself is transforming before our eyes." End of quote.

Graduates, you came to Acadia to learn and to pursue the next great innovation. The next great dream, the next great collaboration. Let there be no mistake. You must hold on to what you have been given here. It is the anchor that will keep you rooted to what matters as we all face up to our responsibility to each other as Canadians and as citizens of the world. And on this, I would make my final request of you.

Due to the very nature of our country which is a great mosaic of diversity, Canadians have a unique opportunity to work with those who seek a global unity of action but at an important facet of doing so is to demonstrate that we can deal with the chasms within our own country especially those which arise from the treatment of the First Nations, the Métis Nation and the Inuit of this land.

For all of us, reconciliation is the crucial moral and economic issue of our time. Indigenous people are the youngest, and the fastest growing segment of our population. They have not been given the tools they need to succeed.

Even today, 40% of Indigenous children live below the poverty line. 50% of children in child welfare are Indigenous. Imagine the trust that needs to be rebuilt. Reconciliation isn't just a word. It's a very real practice that each and every one of us must actively support and indeed live. It is the road that allows young Indigenous people to pursue their ambitions in Canada's business world.

Ambitions such as were demonstrated in Nova Scotia a few months ago by the purchase of 50% of one of Canada's largest seafood companies by a coalition of Mi'kmaq Nations opening doors for the next generation of their young. This is an example of people refusing to accept a status quo that doesn't work.

And with that, I suspect the example you'd like me to follow is not to speak too long. So let me leave you with one last comment.

As you enter the world as alumni, know that Acadia has given you a gift that is priceless. It is the knowledge that you can make the difference. When you feel the urgency in you, use

it to fight for a world that works. Don't settle. Don't settle when your question feels like I wasn't really answered. Don't settle when you can build bridges not barriers. Thank you.

Dr. Anna Redden
Dean, Research and Graduate Studies
Acadia University

- Hi everyone, and congratulations to all of you who have completed a post-graduate degree at Acadia University. This is an exciting time for you, and I hope you find many ways to celebrate and savor this very special occasion.

I am Anna Redden, Dean of Research and Graduate Studies. And just like you, I am a proud graduate of Acadia University. I received both my undergraduate and graduate degrees in science from Acadia, and I remember well how exciting it felt to receive these degrees on graduation day. Some things you just never forget.

I also remember how very proud my loved ones were as I received a master's level degree, a first for my family. I am certain that your family and friends are feeling the same joy for you now, and that you are looking forward to the next step, whatever that may be and wherever you may go.

I'm confident that you're ready for what comes next. While we cannot be with you in person today to celebrate this wonderful achievement, we are thinking of you and sending our excitement and warmest wishes as you celebrate this significant milestone.

The research office staff extend their congratulations as well, and hugs too. Theresa Starratt and Joy Cunningham, one or both of whom you have interacted with throughout your graduate studies at Acadia, are thrilled to see you graduate. We are all very excited for you and happy that we could play various roles along the path to your degree completion.

As Acadia graduate students, you have put in much effort and sacrifice along the way, worked long and hard, have had ups and downs, have dealt with a pandemic that we're still experiencing, and you have persevered and succeeded in your goal. Bravo.

Most students now graduating with a master's degree have been engaged in exciting research projects with faculty supervisors at Acadia, spanning research in the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Professional Studies, and the Faculty of Pure and Applied Science. We want you to know how much we value the immense effort that you put into your graduate level coursework, the planning and conducting of a significant and original research project, and both preparing for and defending a thesis. This is no minor feat.

I hope you feel great satisfaction and pride in this major accomplishment. Throughout your life, you will remember your learning and growth experiences at Acadia, and we will remember you.

Please stay in touch in the years to come. We love to see our graduates visit the campus and to hear from you when we cannot see you in person. Please keep us posted on your career and life events.

**Dr. John Colton,
Acting Dean, Faculty of Professional Studies
Acadia University**

- Hi, I'm John Colton, I'm the acting dean at the Faculty of Professional Studies. I want to congratulate you on this wonderful, amazing day. You've accomplished so much, and you have so much to be proud of.

You should also take time to thank your family and friends and those who've supported you on this journey.

This is a new beginning for you, and when I think about new beginnings, I'm drawn to a poem that's been important in my life, Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman, in particular a few lines in that poem that go like this.

There's never anymore inception than there is now, nor anymore youth or age than there is now. Or anymore perfection than there is now.

Now when I think about that, I think about our new beginning and the moment that we're in right now. And while it's not perfect, it's the best moment that we have, and we've risen to the occasion in terms of how we've adjusted to the pandemic that's been in our lives for over a year.

The Faculty of Professional Studies has done an amazing job preparing you for your next steps in life, and we've done amazing job working with you in terms of how we've pivoted this year. The School of Education has moved all their programming online, online editions, online concerts that have, in often cases, supported local benefits and charities. Music therapy program has continued online and done amazingly well. The School of Business has had student led conferences, faculty development workshops that have supported mentorship and professional development.

The School of Education has been able to put all their students out on practicum, a miracle in itself in this context. Kinesiology, the Center for Lifestyle Studies, and that program, has provided online activities for elderly people to encourage active living, and the Community Development Department has supported strategic planning in communities around here.

The students and the Faculty of Professional Studies have developed a wonderful set of skills and knowledge that they can apply to improve people's lives, to improve wellness in our communities, to support economic development, social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship, to support healthy and active living, and to support and inspire our youth and education in the classrooms.

There's one thing I want to leave you with, and that is, how will you take the next steps in life? What sort of questions are you going to ask yourself? How will you shape your path? I do an assignment in one of my classes, leadership, where they have to do a personal development plan, and I've asked them to reflect on the four years coming in their degree. How did they want to take charge and take ownership of those four years that they have? And I guess I am asking you to ask yourself that same question; how do you want to take charge of your life? What sort of impact do you want to have on society, in communities and the businesses that you work and associate with, in local government? What sort of larger impact do you want to have potentially on issues that we are all addressing, such as climate change, equity, and social justice?

So, as you begin your journey, please keep these important questions in mind, and remember that as cliché as it sounds, you are very much the author of your story, and to be active in writing it.

I want to congratulate you on this momentous day, it's an important milestone as I said in your life. I want to let you know that Acadia University is always your home, I want to encourage you to be active in our alumni association, to contact your professors, to stay in touch with your colleagues and friends that you've met, and that you've nurtured, these relationships over the last few years.

I wish you well on your journey, and please take care. Thank you and congratulations once more.