

President's Convocation Address 2021

Draft Script

Greetings graduates of 2021. Kwe. Bonjour.

As your President, I am both humbled and honoured to be with you on this happy occasion ... to celebrate not only your accomplishments, but also your resilience, and your determination at this unique time in the history of the College, our country, and indeed the world.

Graduates, this is your celebration – congratulations to each and every one of you!

On behalf of the Algonquin College Board of Governors, I want to welcome you — our graduates, your family, friends and guests,

as well as our faculty and staff, to our Virtual Convocation Ceremony.

While we cannot come together under one roof, we **can** come together as one College community to recognize the incredible achievements of so many. At this special moment, we also take the time to recognize and thank the people who supported our graduates along their academic journey. To all of the parents, grand-parents, friends, mentors who lent a hand or sometimes a shoulder to lean on, dispensed sage advice, or perhaps assisted financially, thank you for your support of our graduates, and I know our graduates feel the same way.

Navigating the past year has been difficult and the stories that have emerged are complex.... but through the many challenges, we have always been able to rely on our collective strength,

sense of optimism and comfort in the knowledge that we are making progress together.

While our journey through this pandemic is not over, we are seeing glimpses of hope on the horizon. Millions of people in different parts of the world and across Canada are being vaccinated, increasing the prospects of hugging our loved ones again, and returning to some degree of normalcy within our communities.

Graduates, that same sense of hope surrounds us as we celebrate today with your loved ones, classmates and mentors.

The optimism we are feeling today can also serve as a powerful motivator in the years ahead, as we begin the enormous task of building a stronger and more equitably distributed economy, ... a

more inclusive and reconciled society, ... a more sustainable environment.

The global recovery that is about to commence will provide you with opportunities not seen in generations. You are the leaders who will take the lessons we have all learned from this past year and forge a new path forward.

This pandemic has shone a light on the most vulnerable places and people in our society. We know that it has disproportionately affected women, Indigenous communities, People of Colour, the elderly, and the impoverished. And we have also been confronted this past year with harsh truths and realities of racism and injustices, past and present, against our Indigenous peoples, that many of us have not yet fully appreciated and understood, let alone take concrete steps to address them, either in our own individual ways or collectively.

The opportunity to address these shortcomings and build a society based on respect and caring lies before all of us and now includes you. You are equipped to do this important work thanks in part to the sacrifices you have made over the last year, and the education and training you have received.

You are now prepared to seize these new opportunities because you have learned to work effectively in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous times.

As you prepare to unleash your potential during these times of great unpredictability, you can take comfort in knowing you are not alone. Not only do you have family and friends, from which you can draw great strength, but you are also now part of an extended family of over 200,000 Algonquin College alumni – I

encourage you to explore the many opportunities our Alumni & Friends Network now offers you to stay connected.

The College community has so many reasons to be inspired and proud. With your indulgence, I will highlight two inspiring stories of graduates who are lending their skills to make a difference on the frontline and help with the recovery.

Luciana Vieira, a graduate of Algonquin's 1999 Practical Nursing Program who is now general manager of a retirement home in North York - left her young daughter in the care of her grandmother and moved into the retirement home full-time because the need to support the residents and her team was so critical.

Ali Visser, a recent graduate of the Personal Support Worker program, had just finished her training at Algonquin College when she was immediately hired at the Osgoode Care Centre, where she joined her mom, Jackie - a veteran personal support worker - to provide care to residents during the most dire days of the pandemic.

Ali and Luciana both exemplify the willingness to put the good of the community ahead of self-interest. These values will continue to form the cornerstone of our recovery from this pandemic... and today you are ready to step forth and play your part in this incredible story.

And speaking of stories, it's no secret that I am a big fan of the author, Neil Gaiman, and I'd like to borrow what I think are appropriate quotes for today's celebration.

“If you dare nothing, then when the day is over, nothing is all you will have gained.”

And....

“That which is dreamed can never be lost, can never be undreamed.”

Now more than ever, the world needs you to be bold. Dare yourself to dream big dreams.

I encourage you to take those dreams and be fearless in making them come true. Let the abundance of opportunity that surrounds you, and your desire to succeed be what defines you.

Take pride in the strength and resolve that have helped carry you to this day, and let it light your path as you set forth on the coming journey.

Congratulations graduates, and best wishes on your continued success!

Miigwetch. Thank you. Merci.

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