

President's Speech - Alumni of Distinction Awards

September 30, 2021

The prepared remarks of President Claude Brulé.

Thank you Sam [Laprade]. Good evening. Kwe. Bonsoir.

It is my honour to join everyone tonight to celebrate this year's distinguished group of award recipients. I want to offer a special virtual welcome to our distinguished guests, members of our Board of Governors, the Students' Association Board of Directors, and our Alumni and Friends Network Advisory Committee.

Tonight, among our honourees, are 10 alumni who have made outstanding professional *and* community contributions. They have demonstrated outstanding leadership in their field, as well as a deep commitment to the well-being of others through their inspired advocacy, deep investments in their communities, and dedication to diversity and equity.

They include:

- A best-selling author.
- A prominent federal civil servant.
- A dedicated social services worker who also serves as a local councillor.
- A distinguished First Nations poet.
- An influential journalist.
- A constable with a decades-long history of volunteerism and leadership.
- An advocate for small businesses in the National Capital Region.
- A dedicated health care professional, volunteer, and teacher.
- A recent graduate with a compelling vision.
- And, one of this city's top chefs.

The list of accomplishments they are being recognized for is long. Just a few of many examples include:

- Supporting people and businesses during the pandemic.
- Safe-guarding mental health for individuals in crisis.
- Promoting economic vibrancy among Canadian Arctic communities.
- Protecting Indigenous heritage.
- Piloting a healthcare program for under-served patients.
- And, improving access to education for Black students.

We also celebrate Mercury Filmworks as our Employer of the Year. Not only has the organization hired a remarkable 94 of our alumni, it has gone above and beyond by mentoring our graduates. This past year, Mercury Filmworks also generously created an annual award that supports our students embarking on careers in animation and film production.

This year, we also pay special tribute to Brian Fraser who embodied Algonquin College's mission by launching his hopes and dreams for a career in radio broadcasting before even graduating in 2016.

Faced with what ultimately proved to be a fatal illness, this young man nevertheless found the courage to embody his alma mater's values of caring and integrity by publicly promoting the need for blood donations. His voice garnered national attention. He received an outpouring of support from the public, as well as the sports community that he loved. He helped many who, like himself, faced a health crisis and needed the public's support.

In his honour, we will be awarding tonight for the first time, the newly named Brian Fraser Recent Graduate Award. We are honoured that Brian's parents Sheila and Rick and brother Ian are with us this evening for this special recognition.

All of this year's cohort of award recipients are shining examples of paying it forward, building communities, and demonstrating authentic and empathetic leadership. Equally important, they have contributed to our collective strength and resilience at a time when we needed it like never before.

If there is one thing that the pandemic has taught us, it is that together we thrive by investing in the needs of our people.

And, to maintain this momentum, we must always look forward by responding quickly, nimbly, and creatively to changing circumstances.

As Algonquin College looks to the future, we are guided by these principals, which are enshrined in our new Strategic Plan. It reaffirms the College's commitment to a supportive, learner-driven culture, one that will continue to be animated by meaningful and mutually supportive connections both on and off campus.

It is for these, among many other, reasons that I am excited for the prospects of our future alumni. We will help safeguard *their* momentum through journeys of self-discovery and professional development so they too have opportunities to shine like tonight's award recipients.

I am proud of Algonquin's connections to those we celebrate tonight and to every member of our College community who has invested, in countless ways, in the hopes and dreams of our learners.

And finally, I would like to acknowledge that today is National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Day, a day where we asked everyone at Algonquin College to honour the lost children and survivors of residential schools, their families and communities by reflecting on the legacy and impact these residential schools have had, and take an action that deepens our collective commitment to making Indigenous Knowledge and Truth and Reconciliation an integral part of our institution's culture.

Miigwetch. Thank you. Merci Beaucoup.