

President's Speaking Notes 2023 – FINAL

Good afternoon, Kwe, Bonjour à tous et à toutes....

Graduates, welcome, this is your day.

I offer you my heartfelt congratulations, and I am both humbled and honoured to help celebrate your success today.

On behalf of the Algonquin College Board of Governors, I extend a warm welcome to you, your loved ones, faculty, employees, and friends to our 2023 Convocation Ceremony.

I understand that some of you may have friends and family who cannot be here today but are thinking of you with love and pride. So, let me extend my welcome to all who are watching this event online.

I know that many of you are also joined here today by people who support you — and who have likely helped you in some way as you have taken this journey ... Helped you with encouraging words, late-night pep talks, picking

up the slack at home, or maybe even providing an emergency loan – or even better, a grant ... or two!

If you are a family member or a friend of a graduate, please stand (as you are able) or give a wave so that our graduates and the entire Algonquin community can show their appreciation.

Thank you for your support to our graduates.

Graduates, there is another group of people here today who are very proud of you and your achievement. I would like to personally thank all of our employees – our faculty, support staff, and administration at Algonquin College – for their roles in your journey. I want to especially thank the faculty for their part in getting you to the successful completion of your program of study.

Your teachers have prepared you to be entrepreneurial, to thrive on change and be resilient. They have helped you to develop your capacity to pivot with agility, to take calculated risks, and to do so with imagination to capitalize on the many possibilities that await you.

We know that the world you are entering upon graduation has its share of challenges — socially, economically, politically, and environmentally – and you may feel that it's more difficult to recognize the opportunities on your horizon.

We also continue to acknowledge the consequences of our past, and work to be better allies to Indigenous Peoples in our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, as well as be better allies to People of Colour and those who are marginalized, through our commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility.

But if history has taught us anything, it's that with great adversity and challenges also come incredible opportunities, and that's what ultimately brings out the best in people.

Remember, too, you are not alone on this journey. You are part of a community of more than 220,000 Algonquin College alumni, and the Alumni & Friends Network offers many opportunities for you to stay connected.

So, as you embark on the next chapter of your journey, I hope all of you will seek to reach your full potential ... in your career and in your life pursuits.

But what does it mean “*to reach your full potential*”? We often hear the term, but do we ever pause to really think about it? Does it mean your physical potential, or your emotional or intellectual potential? In my opinion, the sweet spot of full potential is the intersection of all three...

For me, reaching my full potential meant a desire to leave the place where I grew up, and explore bigger possibilities that I knew and felt were out there.... to challenge myself and see what life had to offer beyond my familiar surroundings....

And so, at the age of 17, I joined the Canadian Forces, left home, travelled to another province, and began studying Engineering Physics.

My time in the military taught me many valuable lessons about self-discipline, learning to problem-solve, leadership, and in particular, finding balance between

assertiveness and humility. It was a chance for me to see our great country and explore the world.

And after 22 years of service, I was ready for a different kind of challenge. That's when I joined Algonquin College.

My journey - from that of a 17-year-old young man leaving home, to this podium today - has not been without its own set of challenges and sacrifices....

When I was a student... nothing came too easily. I discovered early that I would have to work hard, harder than many of my peers, to achieve good grades and find success.

Along the way, I also discovered that every experience I encountered was filled with learning opportunities... There were many times I did not achieve my desired goals upon first attempts, and the paths I *thought* I should be following, changed as a result.

It is all part of the journey... Coming to understand that your potential is there to be unlocked, and that there is always another door waiting to be opened and new experiences that will enrich your life.

As you embark on your own journey, remember to keep an open mind, stay curious, never be afraid or too proud to ask for help, and do venture out of your comfort zone!

When I attended this year's Colleges and Institutes Canada conference in Montreal, I was impressed by what keynote speaker Wes Hall had to say about living to your potential. You see, he speaks from experience as a man who rose from a Jamaican plantation shack to the boardrooms of Bay Street to become an accomplished businessman, author, inclusivity advocate, and founder of the BlackNorth Initiative... He said....

“Never wait for “perfect” to do what you want to do, or what you're passionate about. If it's the right thing to do... don't wait for the perfect time to do it. Do it now!”

Graduates... I stand before you with pride and confidence in your potential. I encourage you to stay true to your aspirations and don't let adversity hinder your progress.

Instead, use the education and experiences that you have gained at Algonquin College as your compass to overcome those challenges and forge a path towards a future that is truly remarkable.

In closing graduates, I offer you my most sincere congratulations... and I wish you the best of luck in all your future endeavors. The world awaits your talent and tenacity, and I have no doubt that in reaching your full potential, you will surpass even your wildest dreams.

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