

President's Speaking Notes

Convocation 2022

October 26, 2022

Thank you,

Good day, graduates of 2022.

Bonjour à tous et à toutes. Kwe.

I am so happy to be here today. I know this special moment has been a long time coming. As your President, I am both humbled and honoured to have this opportunity to celebrate your resilience and your achievements with you.

Graduates, this is your day – congratulations!

On behalf of the Algonquin College Board of Governors, I want to welcome you — our graduates, faculty and

employees, family and friends – to our Fall 2022

Convocation Ceremony.

What a phenomenal experience this is – seeing so many of you face-to-face, and feeling the excitement and energy of being together with family and friends. It is a wonderful extension of the same vibrancy we are seeing on our campuses, as our hallways and classrooms have very much returned to their lively pre-pandemic level of activity.

Now, speaking of friends, some of you may have friends and family who cannot be with us here today, but are thinking about you with love and pride. So, let me add my welcome to all who are watching this tremendous moment 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!

So, let's thank them and let them know we love them.

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 gratitude.

Thank you.

To the graduates of 2022, I want to thank each and every one of you for choosing Algonquin College. We know that you had many choices and we are tremendously grateful that you chose us.

I may be a little biased, but I believe that you have chosen well — you can display your certificate, diploma or degree with a great deal of pride and satisfaction.

And speaking of pride, there is another group of people here today who are very proud of you and your accomplishment. I want to personally thank all of our employees — our faculty, support staff and administration at Algonquin — for the role that each of them played in your journey. I want to especially thank the faculty for their role in getting you to the successful completion of your

program of study. Graduates, your teachers have prepared you to be entrepreneurial to thrive on change and be resilient, develop your capacity to pivot with agility, to take calculated risks and to do so with imagination in order to capitalize on the many possibilities that await you.

Now, given the turbulent times that we are living through ... socially, economically, politically, and environmentally, you may be thinking it is more difficult to recognize opportunities that await you.

When we look across the global landscape, there continues to be tragic and horrific conflicts in Ukraine which have directly affected many people across our College community, and is creating socio-economic ripples that will reverberate for a generation.

The pandemic continues to be a presence in our daily lives, leaving no aspect of how we live unchanged.

And let's not forget the inescapable consequences caused by climate change, including the devastating impacts of hurricane Fiona last month in Atlantic Canada.

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

These are indeed enormous challenges, but history has also shown us that periods of great adversity and conflict ultimately bring out the best in people.

Remember that you learned your skills at an institution that emphasizes not only the importance of being passionate about your work, but also the importance of being compassionate and being guided by strong values such as our College values of Caring, Learning, Integrity and Respect. In this regard, you must be a catalyst for better things, an agent of change — for the hope and promise of tomorrow. You have received a great education — the best in your field. Now consider paying it forward.

One of the greatest legacies of this pandemic is that we have witnessed many acts of kindness and generosity in our community. Whether it was providing or making

personal protective equipment, assisting with food insecurity, providing clothing to those in need, raising much needed funds for community-based charities, or supporting mental health initiatives – this generosity took many forms. And during your time at Algonquin College, many of you have said that nothing gives you greater satisfaction and instills a truer sense of purpose than helping others ... which reminds me of a quote from Winston Churchill: “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give”.

I agree with Mr. Churchill and my message to all our graduates today is this: Never be afraid to let your humanity shine. You can move mountains, change lives

and be fulfilled both personally and professionally by choosing to be compassionate and empathetic.

With kindness as your guide – let the many opportunities that surround you, and your desire to succeed be what defines you. Take the dreams you hold in your hearts today, and be fearless in making them come true.

As you prepare to unleash your potential, 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 a family of more than 210,000 Algonquin College alumni, and I encourage you to explore the many opportunities our Alumni & Friends Network now offers you to stay connected.

This fall, we hosted our Alumni of Distinction Awards event, which honoured the achievements of 10

exceptional alumni who have made distinctive contributions in their fields of endeavour and in their communities. It was a proud reminder of the broad range of positive impacts our graduates are having... Inspiring people, building strong communities, and living lives filled with purpose.

I know that you, the graduating class of 2022, will also make a difference, in whichever community you choose to live in!

Graduates, I hope that your time at Algonquin has sparked in you a joy for learning — lifelong learning. As you leave this ceremony and launch the next stage of your life's journey, remember that life is a zig zag. Be good and kind to yourself, and don't expect that your current trajectory

will necessarily be a straight line ... for most people, it isn't.

Instead, build your life portfolio with a variety of experiences — some from work, some from your social and family activities, some from your hobbies or leisure time. Together, it will create a mosaic that is uniquely you, a rich profile that will take you places you might not have originally imagined, where your passion makes a difference and your tenacity makes you proud.

In closing, to restate a quote that is painted on the walls of our Pembroke campus, from Fred Blackstein, a former Board of Governor member: “Be Algonquin Proud. Make Algonquin Proud”.

And on that note, Graduates, congratulations once again
and I wish the very best success.

Chi Miigwetch, Merci Beaucoup, Thank you very much.