# Convocation 2015: June 2, 2015 Morning Ceremony part 1

[BAGPIPES PLAYING]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

DON TAPSCOTT: Good morning. I'm now supposed to ask you to, please, be seated, but I see we have a group of real leaders here taking initiative. My name's Don Tapscott. And I'm the chancellor of Trent University. And I'm a proud graduate.

In fact, I've had my share of accolades over the years, more than my share. But there's been no greater honor for me than to be the first alumni chancellor of this great institution. And I'd like to begin by thanking Mother Nature for this magnificent day.

Our Mother Nature, thank you. You really brought it on. Although, some of you in the audience may see there is, in fact, a little cloud over there, which is kind of upsetting. But just be calm. It's going to work out.

So students graduating this week are, of course, sharing a very special milestone at Trent. This convocation marks the official end of our 50th anniversary year. It's been a great year. And celebrating your graduation is a pretty perfect way to wrap it up.

For 50 years-- sadly, I speak from experience-- Trent has been challenging the way that we think about the world and about learning itself. And today the good news is more than ever Trent graduates are in demand. In fact, I know firsthand-- it worked for me-- that as a Trent graduate, you're uniquely equipped and prepared for the exciting and challenging future that lies ahead. In fact, you're not just prepared for it, you will shape it. I'm sort of the view that the future is not something to predict, it's something to be achieved. And with your Trent experience, I think that you do have the tools to achieve a new future, to take advantage of the opportunities around you, and to reinvent yourself lifelong.

This is your moment, this is your time to imagine, to set out to create a life of prosperity. But more than that, to create a principled life that's consequential and one that's uniquely your own. So heartfelt congratulations to each of you in reaching this important milestone. And I now declare the convocation open.

[APPLAUSE]

LEO GROARKE: Good morning. My name is Leo Groarke. I'm the president and vice chancellor of Trent University. And I'm delighted to be able to welcome you to the convocation this morning.

Welcome, especially, perhaps, to all the visitors who are coming to Trent, both from across Canada and maybe very especially from around the world. We have a number of international visitors. And I'm glad that you're here to enjoy the beautiful weather that we enjoy at Trent every day.

[LAUGHTER]

I also want to tell you that the ceremonies today are being broadcast around the world on the World Wide Web. And I'd like to say hello to those international people watching us. Maybe a special shout out to those of you in Shanghai, Tokyo, Sydney and other places where it's the middle of the night.

I did want to know one special guest today. I wanted to recognize Brian Davies, the chair of the Trent Board or Governors. Brian.

[APPLAUSE]

I'm hoping that everybody will enjoy the events today. I did want to acknowledge that we are located in the traditional territory of the Mississauga and Anishinaabe, adjacent to the Haudenosaunee territory in eastern Ontario. Especially in a week, when Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission will present its findings on the regrettable history of the residential school system, it is important to honor and recognize the traditional occupants of this land.

I did want to emphasize what I think the ceremony today is about. And the short story is it's about our graduates. It's a moment for us to celebrate the successes of the graduates, their accomplishments, to look forward to the future.

I think in celebrating that success, we also celebrate the successes of the families, friends, and faculty that have helped make this accomplishment possible. To our graduands, I do want to say thank you. Thank you for allowing the rest of us to bask in your glory today.

As you leave, I hope you will leave with fond memories of Trent. And I hope even more than that with memories of what Trent strives to be. And I think in this year of all years with the 50th anniversary celebrations, this is something particularly special.

I did want to say to all our graduands today that you're graduating on the 50th anniversary of Trent. And I expect you all to come back here 50 years from now to this same spot when Trent will be celebrating its 100th anniversary.

I did want in each of the convocations to say something about what's going at Trent. What I thought I would mention today is that Trent University will be announcing this week the formation of two new schools at the University-- the School for the Study of the Environment and the School for the Study of Trent. I think these two schools highlight the interdisciplinary nature of a Trent education.

And one of the things I invite the audience to do as you look through your program is to look at all the different programs that students have taken here. Trent's a place where people will combine archaeology and chemistry or philosophy and biochemistry. It's a very special part of Trent that we believe that an education is about a mix of different disciplines and approaches to knowledge.

To the graduands, I'm going to ask you to keep in touch after the ceremony. When you leave, you're not leaving the Trent family, you're just joining another component of it. That's our alumni family, which is 44,000 strong. As you set out in the next chapter of your life, I hope you will keep in touch and involved. Mr. Chancellor, I now call on Professor Paul Elliott to introduce a remarkable individual who we will recognize with an Honorary Doctor of Science degree.

[APPLAUSE]

PAUL ELLIOTT: Mister Chancellor, Drew Monkman has inspired generations of Peterborough's residents to share his love of the natural world. During a 33-year career as a French immersion teacher in elementary schools, Drew helped numerous young people connect with the wonders of nature. When I meet someone from Peterborough under the age of about 40 who has an interest in the natural world, I know if I ask them when their interest began, there is an excellent chance that they will say, when I was in grade five, I had this teacher called Drew Monkman.

Drew showed his students how to observe nature, record seasonal changes, and introduced them to the rudiments of taxonomy. He worked with students, their parents, his colleagues, and the community to transform part of the schoolyard of Edmison Heights School into a naturalized learning space. This innovative long-term project has been a great example of how to transform tarmac and grass into a vibrant and much-loved learning resource and nature sanctuary. It is now a place where children can become friends with a tree, observe bees working pollinating flowers, or where they can just enjoy quiet contemplation.

In addition to his work as an inspirational teacher, Drew Monkman has been a prolific author. For several years his weekly column in the Peterborough Examiner, "Our Changing Seasons", has introduced readers to seasonal changes in their local environment and promoted an understanding of the impact of human activities. He's also the author of two books Nature's Year in the Kawarthas and Nature's Year-- Changing Seasons in Central and Eastern Ontario. He will shortly publish a co-authored book that is a seasons-based activity guide for children and adults.

Through his website he reaches more people with his posts on local nature sightings, an archive of his past newspaper columns, as well as information on the impact of climate change on seasonal patterns in the Kawarthas. All of this is supplemented with his regular Tweets.

Drew has served on the board of Camp Kawartha and is a past president of Peterborough Field Naturalists for whom he continues to lead field outings. He participates in special bird-monitoring projects and is an active member of "For Our Grandchildren", a group that works to increase awareness of the threat of climate change. He speaks regularly on a wide range of topics, including our obligation to be responsible stewards of the natural world.

Drew studied biology and geography for two years at Trent University, before completing a degree in journalism at Universite Laval in Quebec City. He later went on to complete a Master's degree in education at the University of Toronto. He has already been recognized with a number of awards for his writing and environmental advocacy, including induction into the Peterborough Pathway of Fame, the Carl Nunn Media and Conservation Award from Ontario Nature, and the Environmental Excellence Conservationist Award from the Otonabee Regional Conservation Authority.

Drew's love and knowledge of nature was nurtured by another local environmental hero, the late Doug Sadler. Trent University also acknowledged Doug with an honorary degree. And I envisage a time in the future when we honor one of Drew's proteges, because passing the baton on to future generations is his greatest motivation. Mr. Chancellor, I am delighted to present to you for the degree of Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa, Drew Monkman.

[APPLAUSE]

LEO GROARKE: Congratulations, Dr. Monkman. It's now my privilege to invite you to address convocation.

[APPLAUSE]

DR DREW MONKMAN: Mr. Chancellor, Mr. President, members of the graduating class, faculty, family, and friends, I really can't begin to tell you how surprised and delighted I was to receive President Groarke's phone call informing me of this honor. I've always had a strong affection for Trent, as I'm sure you, the graduates, do. My daughter, Julia, graduated here. And I spent two very formative years as a biology and geography major at Trent in the early 1970s.

The tranquil riverside setting in itself is stunning, not to mention the university's many rich and diverse nature areas. I've been getting distracted here all morning with just the number of different birds flying over from ospreys to great blue herons, to various swallows, the tiger swallowtail, butterflies-- really, really quite amazing. In all my life, I've extolled the virtues of natural heritage. And it's something that Trent has in spades. And how lucky you are to have attended a school with such beautiful and inspiring surroundings.

A strong connection with Peterborough and the Kawarthas has been a hallmark of Trent's right from the universities beginning 50 years ago. And happy birthday, by the way. This connection is particularly true when it comes to the many faculty members and graduate students who have spoken to or been active members in groups like the Peterborough Field Naturalists, our local nature club-- Professor Elliott, for example, who just introduced me. In addition, Trent students and faculty are or have been involved in numerous campaigns to protect the local environment.

But this day is really about you, the graduates. Please forgive me if I trot out a few cliches, but as you grow older, you realize that most cliches do tend to be true. That probably is a cliche in itself.

The first thing I would say is not to underestimate what you have accomplished. You have every right to feel a deep sense of satisfaction. University graduation is one of life's landmark events and represents a huge amount of hard work. But if you're anything like I was upon finishing fourth year, you're mostly feeling an immense sense of relief and an irresistible urge to get out and celebrate.

As has already been mentioned this morning, I think it's important to recognize the contributions of the many people who have guided you on this journey-- professors, teaching assistants, librarians, family, friends. Their inspiration, dedication, kindness, and patients are another reason why you have been successful in your studies.

And to the many parents, grandparents, and friends of the graduates here this morning, I'm sure you, too, are beaming with pride. I know my own father sitting in the front row here certainly is my mother, too, would have been thrilled to see me receive such a prestigious honor. Many of you have worked for years to make this day possible. Be proud of your efforts and diligence.

You, the graduates, have earned more than just a degree. You have also developed a greater social conscience and very likely a spirit of reform. This leads me to make a special request. Don't lose your desire to make the world a better place.

There's certainly lots to be fixed, especially when it comes to humankind's relationship with the environment. You are well prepared to take on many of these challenges. And always remember what Margaret Mead famously said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." And remember, too, that change can come fast and furious. Just witness the recent election an Alberta.

Now, many of you receiving your degree today have a special interest, as I do, in the natural world. I think you should consider accepting a special challenge. We live in an age where so many people, children and adults alike, are disconnected from nature and have very little knowledge of or appreciation for the countless species that surround us. Song sparrow just sang.

And also, for all that is in danger of being lost. As human beings, we will only conserve what we love. And we will only love what we understand, appreciate, and feel emotionally connected to. More than ever before, we need people like you to become ambassadors for nature and to help others connect to the natural world.

So how do you do this? Well, just three pointers. By helping people to pay attention and open their eyes and ears to the amazing diversity of life with which we share this planet and which is in such abundance here at Trent. As American biologist Bernd Heinrich writes, "many of us are like sleep walkers here, because we notice so little." You need to help people open their eyes.

Be enthusiastic. You genuine enthusiasm for nature will be picked up and emulated by others. Be amazed at what you see and, especially, at what others discover or tell you about. Show surprise and curiosity in everyday observations from the movements of an ant to the smell of a flower.

Every living thing is far more amazing than we can ever imagine. I guess the fact that anything exists at all is amazing. There is wonder that resides in all plants and animals, not just the charismatic. Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins calls this "the magic of reality." Learn and share some of these magical stories. The story of the evolution of flowers and pollinators and how one has shaped the other is a great place to start.

To conclude, allow me to share just a little advice. Be positive about the future. Despite the many challenges facing our planet, we live at a wonderful time in human history.

As Steven Pinker of Harvard University demonstrated in his recent book, The Better Angels of our Nature, the present is probably the most peaceful time, believe it or not, in the history of the human species. The decline in violence, persecution, and prejudice is enormous by almost every measure. People actually treat each other better now than ever before. This is an exciting and inspiring time to be alive, and certainly to be entering a career of future studies.

Cultivate your passion. Notice my use of the word "cultivate", not "follow". As Cal Newport of Georgetown University writes, "Follow your passion assumes-- a, you have a preexisting passion and, b, if you match this passion to your job, then you'll enjoy that line of work."

However, if you're anything like I was in my early '20s, it's quite possible you do not yet have a passion. My excitement for nature was not something innate, but grew slowly from what was mainly an on again, off again interest in birds. "Cultivate" implies that you work toward building zeal and excitement for a job, for future studies, or even a hobby. This is a longer process and only arises after you've put in the long hours to really become a craftsman in your area of interest.

Even Steve Jobs basically stumbled into the computer business at a time when his main interest was eastern mysticism. However, he was open to opportunity and poured a huge amount of energy into building a company around selling computers, he cultivated passion.

And my final bit of advice-- collect experiences and memories. Gathering memories is what we do in life. They are the touchstones of our experiences. It can even be useful to try to imagine the end of your life and what you want to be remembered for-- the things you've done, the, people you've helped, the relationships you've made.

And on this note, I hope that you will always say to Trent thank you for the memories. And thanks to all of you for the honor you have bestowed upon me today. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

LEO GROARKE: Thank you Dr. Monkman for those inspiring words. I did want to say that I think they're very in keeping with Trent's values, which manifest themselves in the study and research on the environment. I'd now like to ask Mr. Chancellor, professor Barry Saville, the Chair of Forensic Science, to present the candidates for the degree of Bachelor of Science in Forensic Science.

BARRY SAVILLE: Thank you Mr. President. We ask that you hold your applause until all the graduates have received their degrees and been congratulated by the university registrar. Mr. Chancellor, I am pleased to present for the degree of Bachelor of Science in Forensic Science candidates whose names will be read, whom the Senate has duly declared worthy of the honor, they may receive the degree at your hands.

[READING NAMES]

Please join me in congratulating the recipients of Bachelor of Science in Forensic Science.

[APPLAUSE AND CHEERING]

Mr. Chancellor, I now call upon Professor Neil Emery, Vice President of Research and International, to present candidates for the degree of Bachelor of Environmental Sciences Studies.

NEIL EMERY: Mr. Chancellor, I am pleased to present for the degree of Bachelor of Environmental Science and Studies candidates whose names will be read, whom the Senate has duly declared worthy of the honor that they may receive the degree at your hands.

[READING NAMES]

Please join me in congratulating the recipients of the Bachelor of Environmental Science and Studies degrees.

[APPLAUSE AND CHEERING]

Mr. Chancellor, I am pleased to present for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the Honors Program candidates whose names will be read, whom the Senate has duly declared worthy of the honor, that they may receive the degree at your hands.

[READING NAMES]

Please, join me in congratulating the recipients of Bachelor of Arts degrees in the Honors Program.

[APPLAUSE AND CHEERING]

Mr. Chancellor, I am pleased to present for the degree of Bachelor of Science in the Honors Program candidates whose names will be read, whom the Senate has duly declared worthy of the honor that they may receive the degree at your hands.

[READING NAMES]