# Convocation 2015: June 3, 2015 Morning Ceremony part 1

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[BAGPIPE MUSIC PLAYING]

[SECOND SUITE IN F, MOVEMENT ONE BY GUSTAV HOLST PLAYS]

JOHN TAPSCOTT: Good morning. Graduating class, you may be seated. I was going to say that to the rest of you, but I see that you took a leadership view on this issue of standing. My name is Don Tapscott and I'm the chancellor of Trent University, and I'm also an alumni, a proud graduate. And I've probably had more than my share of honors over the years, but no greater than being the first alumni chancellor of this great institution.

I'd like to begin by thanking mother nature for today. What a glorious day-- let's bring it on for mother nature.

[APPLAUSE]

And those of you who've been part of the Trent community, you sort of view this environment that we're in is as part of the landscape, of which it is. But I've been to a number of convocations in various parts of the world, and I can tell you, there's no more spectacular venue to convocate than where we are, right here, today. Now I'm one of four Tapscott boys that graduated, two years apart, from Trent University.

And I hitchhiked here from Aurelia in 1966, to learn about this little university, liberal arts and science being created on the autonomy. And I decided I wanted to come here, and it's been a wonderful experience for me, but it's also affected my life profoundly. And students graduating this week are actually sharing a very special milestone with us. This convocation marks the official end of our 50th anniversary year, and it's been a great year.

And celebrating your graduation is a perfect way to wrap it up. For 50 years now, Trent has been challenging the way that we think about the world and learning itself. And today more than ever, the good news is Trent graduates are in demand. And I know firsthand, because it worked for me, that as a Trent grad, you're uniquely equipped and prepared for the exciting and challenging future that lies ahead.

You have a lot of knowledge, but what's more important, you know how to think, and how to collaborate, and how to put things in context. And you know about the interrelationship between things, and you know about the big picture, and you have a passion for learning, lifelong. And you're uniquely positioned, not just to respond to the future, but my view is that the future is not something to be predicted-- it's something to be achieved.

And in fact, you're going to shape the future. With your Trent experience, I think that do have the tools to take full advantage of the opportunities around you, and also to reinvent yourself lifelong, as you go throughout life. So this is your moment-- this is you're time to imagine. Go forward, create a prosperous life, and a life of happiness. But hopefully more.

This is an opportunity, today, to think about designing a life that's purposeful, and that's consequential. Heartfelt congratulations to each of you on reaching this very important milestone. And I now declare the convocation open.

LEO ROURKE: Good morning. My name is Leo Rourke, I'm the president/vice chancellor of Trent University. I want to share with you that this is my first set of convocations at Trent University. I would say, as an administrator, that I've been to many convocations. I tried to count them up last night, and I think it's numbering 42 or 43. And I will say, I'm especially delighted at the way Trent runs its convocations-- not just the setting, but also the size.

Trent's a-- we're very proud of Trent being a personal university. And I'm used to convocations where there are 500 or 600 students going across the podium. And it's so refreshing to be at a place where we do it in a way that we have 100, or maybe at most, 125 students. I think that's very much a sign of what Trent is.

I'm very delighted to welcome everybody here today. I want to especially welcome our visitors-- visitors from across Canada, and maybe especially our international visitors. I would tell you that I was talking to parents and families and friends yesterday, and I talked to people from Uganda, Australia, Ireland, Lagos, Ecuador, Nigeria, the Netherlands, and the Bahamas. To those visitors, I do want to give you a little bit of a tourist tip.

First, I congratulate you on coming to our campus now, rather than in February. Very wise choice. I would also want to encourage our visitors to take some opportunity to explore the Trent campus. On the other side of the river, there are nature trails. I advise you to go and walk in them. And the best thing you can do when you come to Peterborough is to get in a canoe or kayak, and get out on the water.

I tell you, I was out on a kayak last night, watching ospreys, bald eagles, blue herons-- we really need to enjoy this special environment in which we get to study and work and live. For those people who can't make it here, I do want to do a shout out to people who are watching this ceremony on the Worldwide Web. It's being broadcast around the world, as I speak.

There are some special guests I want to take note of-- Debbie Lynch, a counselor from the City of Peterborough, Brian Davies, behind me, the Chair of the Board of Governors of Trent University-- and I'm going to ask for special round of applause for Tom Simons, the founding president of Trent University.

[APPLAUSE]

On behalf of the university, I do want to acknowledge that we are located in the traditional territory of the Mississauga and the Shinobi, adjacent to the Haudenosaunee territory in eastern Ontario. Especially in a week when Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission presents its findings on the regrettable history of the residential school system, it's important to honor and recognize the traditional occupants of this land. And I would say I'm proud to be at an institution where that is a part of what we do.

I did want to emphasize--

[APPLAUSE]

I did want to emphasize today, especially to the graduates, what today is about. And it's about our graduates. And I want you to take the time-- we all have special days. This is your special day-- one of your many special days, I'm sure. But I want you to soak it up, and enjoy it. It's a day about celebrating your accomplishments, and what you've achieved, and maybe looking a little bit to the future.

I'd also-- maybe I should say to the graduates, thank you for allowing us all to bask in your glory today. I did also want to note, though, that it's a time to celebrate the contributions of your families and friends, and to celebrate what they have made possible by supporting you at Trent University. One of the things I'm trying to do this week during the convocation ceremonies is each day, I'm trying to highlight something that's going on, that will give our visitors a little bit of a picture of how vibrant a university we are.

One thing I would note, echoing the chancellor's comments, is this is the 50th anniversary of Trent. This means you're graduating from an established university that has established itself within the post-secondary institution. I will tell the graduates that there will be another anniversary, 50 years from now-- the 100th anniversary of Trent.

And I expect you all to be here at this very spot. I probably won't be here myself. But have a good time.

Today, I also want to celebrate, and in a way, thank the students about a special project that has really, I think, come to fruition, or will come to fruition over the next few years. And that's the Trent University Student Center. And I will say that behind the Bata library, hugging the river, there is going to be a beautiful new building built in the next two years.

This'll be a Trent University Student Center. Yeah it's been designed with glass, so you'll look out and see, on the one side, the river. On the other side, you see the wood lawn. But what I want to emphasize is that that project is coming to fruition because of the students of Trent University. And part of that is the students have made a commitment to donate $10 million to the project through an annual fund, but also because the students have been involved in every step of developing and planning the project.

That's getting it approved, taking it to the Board of Governors, planning the design, picking to the design, the architects who would do the project. And I will tell you that two years from now, the students that attend university will be thinking about the students today and thanking them for what they have made possible.

[APPLAUSE]

To our graduates, I'd ask you to remember that you're not leaving the Trent family-- you're just joining a different component of the Trent family. That's the alumni component. It's 44,000 people strong. It's an international community, and I invite and hope that you will stay in touch. Now, Mr. chancellor, I want to call on Molly Blythe to introduce a remarkable individual who we will recognize with an honorary doctor of laws degree. Thank you very much.

MOLLY BLYTHE: Mr. Chancellor, Trent University office its graduates and students an extraordinary, and some would say audacious, challenge-- to make a difference in the world by lining their talents knowledge and critical thinking skills with a social conscience. For those taking it up, this challenge is no doubt troubling, as they question common sense, political, social, and cultural norms. Continued support from Trent's community, inside and outside the classroom, and on and off campus, is thus crucial.

Today we honor a new member of our community, Peter Raymont, with its highest award, the honorary doctorate. His stellar career offers an exemplary model of Trent's vision. His documentary films and TV dramas consistently transform our understanding of Canadian and global issues, while demonstrating that vital alignment of talent, knowledge, rigorous analysis, and a passion for social justice.

Peter joined the National Film Board at the age of 21. In a groundbreaking initiative while there, he taught film and video production to the Inuit of the high Arctic, giving them, for the first time, the means to tell their own stories. Later films, such as Experimental Eskimos in 2010, continued his vital work as a white ally to indigenous people. In 1978, he formed an independent film and TV company, now known as White Pine Pictures, with his late wife, the journalist and director Lindalee Tracy.

His team now investigates, produces, and films previously untold stories from across the globe. Riveting TV dramas, such as The Border and Cracked were later added to its repertoire. Not surprisingly, more than half of White Pine's 100 plus films have won prestigious national and international awards. One of the most notable is the 2007 A Promise to the Dead, the Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman, in which an aide to former Chilean president Salvador Allende tells his harrowing story.

This pantheon also includes the searing account of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, Shake Hands with the Devil, the Journey of Romeo Dallaire, released in 2005. Genius Within, The Inner Life of Glenn Gould, made in 2009, is also central to White Pine's project exploring Canadian topics. The aesthetically gorgeous series on the group of seven, including the 2011 West Wind, The Vision of Tom Thomson is another example, as is Where the Universe Sings, the spiritual journey of Lawren Harris, still in production.

Premiered on CBC last week, his latest film, Omar Khadr, Out of the Shadows, is the shocking tale of the former Canadian child soldier, much of it in his own words. It represents the key themes of Peter Raymont's career in film-- to listen and record stories of people in the shadows, and to take his audiences to places they've never been before. And, of course, to continue to make a difference.

Mr. Chancellor, I'm honored to present Peter Raymont to you, for the degree of doctor of letters, honoris causa.

LEO GROARKE: Mr. Chancellor, it's now my great privilege to invite Dr. Peter Raymont to address convocation.

PETER RAYMONT: Thank you very much. I feel a bit of an impostor being called a doctor, but maybe I'll get used to it. Dr. Blythe, Chancellor Tapscott, President Groarke, faculty, staff, honored guests, parents, and most importantly, graduates. I'd like to tell you a story. It begins on the frozen Arctic Ocean, a few hours Skidoo ride from the Inuit hamlet of Kinngait, known as Cape Dorset. It's on the southwest tip of Baffin Island.

My friend Joanasie Salamonie and his friend Paul invited me in my film crew on a caribou hunt. We'd been driving Skidoos for three or four hours over the ice, skirting the mountainous coast of Baffin Island, stopping only briefly for some black tea made with snow melted over a primus stove and digestive cookies. We drive on and on over the frozen sea, avoiding ice ridges, the sun soon to be setting on the horizon.

Suddenly, Joanasie and Paul stopped. They turned 90 degrees, drive their Skidoos over the hill, and there in the valley below is a herd of caribou-- dozens of animals nonchalantly grazing on bits of grass and lichen. I don't know how Joanasie knew they were there-- I'll never know. And as we agreed, my cameraman jumps on the back of Joanasie's Skidoo, our sound man jumps on the back of Paul's, and they take off into the valley. The caribou scatter, and within seconds, these Skidoos are out of sight.

I follow along-- this is what directors do. I follow along behind, driving the last Skidoo, pulling a kamoutik behind, loaded with all our supplies. By now it's getting gloomy, white on white. The snow is melting into the sky. It's very hard to see where I'm going.

Suddenly, my Skidoo crashes over a steep slope. It comes to an abrupt stop at the bottom of this hole, and the heavy kamoutik comes sliding over my shoulders with its steel runners narrowly missing the back of my head, and cracks the Skidoo's plexiglas windscreen. And I'm lucky not to be injured, or worse. I crawl out of this hole, and check myself for injuries-- just a cut lip-- and contemplate my predicament.

Here I am. It's getting dark. The planets and stars are starting to come out. I can't move this damaged Skidoo, I can't see or hear anyone else. It's getting very cold.

So to keep warm, I decide I should start walking back along my Skidoo tracks. This is the day long before GPS and sat phones. After a while, I see these two Skidoos far off in the distance, weaving back and forth across the snow, searching for me. My accident is no big deal to these guys. They pull the Skidoo out of the whole, tape up the windshield with some of my warmed up duct tape, and within an hour we're dining on very fresh caribou meat-- obligingly cooked for the Kablunat inside a cozy, abandoned igloo, which they somehow knew was nearby.

You may feel, graduates, after three or four years of being on a safe, straight path here at Trent, are also turning 90 degrees, and facing an uncertain future on the edge. Don't worry. The Skidoos will find you. This was one of my first of many trips to the Arctic.

I fell in love with the Inuit, a wise, fun loving people who took care of me, and taught me so much about the meaning of life. Joanasie taught me how to breathe, how to appreciate where I am in the moment, in the universe. To listen, and to laugh. He laughed and joked a lot, and I miss him. I'm deeply humbled to be honored at Trent University this glorious morning.

Forty years ago, I had the privilege of having Rom Thom, Trent's architect, as my bowman on a fabulous canoe trip on the Puckasaw River, that flows into the north side of Lake Superior. Ron was a very gentle man, and these beautiful buildings are his legacy, of course. But for me, I'll always treasure these little pencil sketches he did on that trip. When I was a student at Queens University-- that's another place down the road from here-- we all read Kurt Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle. And Vonnegut wrote, "unexpected traveling opportunities are the dancing lessons of God."

And that became a kind of motto for me throughout my life. I've been enormously fortunate to have had so many traveling opportunities, but I think luck, I think opportunities place themselves in our path. So I urge you to reach for them, seize the day, follow your heart, soak up life, engage with the world, travel. I was very fortunate to stumble into filmmaking.

I don't think of making films as a job, or as work. It's kind of a way of life-- a wonderful passport to the world. Filmmaking takes you to places, introduce you to people you could never, ever get to see or meet in any other way. And I was thinking about this speech today. I wondered if I shouldn tell you about accompanying General Romeo Delaire to Rwanda, or traveling with Ariel Dorfman to Chile, or my time in Nicaragua during the Sandinista revolution, or most recently, meeting Omar Khadr.

I've been really fortunate to be a witness to some moments in history. And, in the words of Lewis Lapham, "to shine a bright light into dark places." But as many of you are students of Canadian studies-- and Trent is the place of Canadian studies-- I thought a Canadian story was perhaps more appropriate for this morning. So let's go back to that igloo on Baffin Island.

So I wake up the next morning to the sound of my film crew snoring. Joanasie and Paul have disappeared, and I hear them. Then I hear them laughing outside the igloo, and they're talking in Inuktitut, and I get dressed, crawl out there. And there's my friend Joanasie sitting in the snow, his bare hands covered with engine grease, and he's rebuilding the clutch on the Skidoo.

He's removing nuts and bolts, and sort of tossing them aimlessly into the snow. So this is disconcerting, to say the least. In the old days, if you had trouble on a hunting trip, you could eat your sled dogs. It's pretty difficult to eat a Skidoo. "How do you find the parts," I asked Joanasie. He said-- and I soon realized that each little gear and nut was leaving a perfect indentation of its shape in the hard snow, and within a few minutes Joanasie had completed the repairs. And after the inevitable black tea, and digestive cookies-- and delicious frozen char, which melts in your mouth-- we were off on our way in search of our day's adventure.

When I was a student, I was very proud to be a Canadian. It was 1967, was a centennial year. We had the World's Fair in Montreal, we had the Olympics nine years later in Montreal. It's hard to imagine, but this was a time before the internet, cellphones, cable TV, or Netflix. So to get information, you went to a library.

You pored through the Encyclopedia Britannica, which we had at home, mesmerized by photos and maps of exotic people and exotic places. It wasn't easy to learn about people or events on the other side of the world. Today, there's a tsunami of information at our fingertips. And as we approach Canada's 150th anniversary week, we all really have become citizens of the world. Still proud Canadians, of course, but citizens of the world.

50 years ago, if you wanted to make a film, you needed very expensive cameras, lenses, film stock that had to be processed in a laboratory, fancy editing equipment, splicers, projectors, and money. When I started as an editor at the National Film Board of Canada, and you wanted to make a dissolve-- dissolving one image into the other-- you had to mark the work print, send it off to the lab, where an egg cutter would splice it up on two reels, run the neg through a printer-- which is programmed to decrease the light of the outgoing shot, and increase the light of the incoming shot-- to achieve a dissolve. And if the director or the producer didn't like it, or didn't like where it was, you had to send it all back and re-mark it, and it would take another week to come back to your editing room.

Today, you can do a dissolve with Final Cut Pro, and it happens in seconds. Yet despite the speed of technology, there's no tool for inspiration, insight, or awareness. The creative process remains an organic, cellular, experiential process. There's been a great democratisation of the means of production of films and TV programs. "Filmmaking," as our own Norman Jewison says, "is the literature of our age." It's a wonderful means of personal expression-- a tool for social change.

Anyone can make a film, and many important films are made on iPhones. Footage shot on cell phones in Tahrir Square formed an inspired a revolution. And crowd funding is changing the way the rigors of film financing. The ability to be able to see-- to instantly see and hear what's happening around the world, and to be able to communicate with people anywhere has drastically shrunk our planet, and expanded our horizons.

It's also made us more conscious of our responsibility, as citizens of the world, to care for each other-- to be our brother's keeper. As Joanasie and Paul and our crew sped across the ice in the dark-- bone after bone crushing hour, the icy wind cutting into bits of occasionally exposed skin around our snowmobile masks-- I suddenly heard, over the whine of the Skidoos, great hoots of excitement. Way up ahead, I could see a single light.

When we got closer, I saw it was illuminating a flag, flutting high on a white pole, was the beautiful Canadian flag, as we have here, guiding us into the safe arms of Cape Dorset. We were home in Dorset, in Nunavut, in Canada, on this precious planet. As I urge you, as you leave the gentle confines of Trent, to follow your muse-- to find a way to contribute, to place yourself in the way of opportunity, to allow destiny to find you. Don't worry about jobs and work-- they will come, they will come.

And to your parents-- be patient. I remember my mother-- my sister Liz is here, our mother-- when I left the NFB, the National Film Board, to start my own production company in Toronto, my mom kept asking me, so when are you going to get a job? Somehow, I created my own.

Take risks, dream big, disrupt the status quo. Believe in yourself, make a difference, enjoy the life that's here for you. Thanks very much for this honor that you've bestowed on me this morning, and for letting me share this beautiful day. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

LEO GROARKE: Thank you for those wonderful comments, Dr. Raymont. You'll have to get used to the doctor. Ladies and gentlemen, graduates, we're now going to move to the presentation of degrees. And I just want to explain how this works, so that we're clear. The students will be on my right hand side.

They will be announced by one of our senior faculty members. They will come to the middle of the podium. Graduates, that your moment of glory with the chancellor. Enjoy it. Then the students will proceed to my left.

I want to introduce Tracy l interesting Tracy Al-Idrissi is the registrar of the university. That means she's the official record keeper of the university. Graduates, that means if anybody comes to the university to find out if you really did graduate, she's the person they will be talking to, so treat her very well. And then I will be there to congratulate you, as well, as will faculty and staff from the University. So Mr. Chancellor, I'd now like to ask Professor Moira Howes, the Dean of Humanities, to present the candidates for the degree Bachelor of Arts.

MOIRA HOWES: Good morning, everyone. We ask that you hold your applause until all the graduates have received their degrees, and been congratulated by the university registrar, Tracy Al-Idrisi. Mr. Chancellor, I am pleased to present for the degree Bachelor of Arts in the Honors Program, candidates whose names will be read, whom the senate that has duly declared worthy of the honor that they may receive the degree at your hands.

[READING NAMES]