

Each convocation period, the University of Saskatchewan Senate selects individuals to receive the highest honor our institution can bestow an honorary degree. I'd like to call up Brooke Milne, Dean, College of Arts and Science, to introduce this ceremony's recipient, Doug Cuthand.

Eminent Chancellor, on behalf of the Senate, I present to you Douglas Cuthand.

Mr. Cuthand is a journalist, producer, and community leader. For more than 50 years, he has been building relationships among diverse cultures in Canada and placing First Nations issues on the public agenda. Through his award-winning weekly column in local post-media newspapers, Mr. Cuthand educates readers about the rich history and daily lives of Indigenous people in Saskatchewan and across Canada. He writes with humor and love, while remaining uncompromising in the face of ignorance and racism. Mr. Cuthand's column has run for an impressive 34 years. A member of the Little Pine First Nation in Saskatchewan, Mr. Cuthand spent his earliest years in La Ranche, whose beautiful waters and landscapes left a permanent impression upon him. Mr. Cuthand studied sociology and English at Simon Fraser University, and later he moved back to Saskatchewan to lead communications for the organization now called the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations. Mr. Cuthand was elected a Vice Chief of the Federation in 1977 and served in this important role for five years.

During that time, Mr. Cuthand played a pivotal role in the successful lobbying to have treaty and Indigenous rights recognized in the Canadian Constitution. Mr. Cuthand was the first board chair for the institution that would later become the First Nations University of Canada. Mr. Cuthand has spent decades in leadership in serving in volunteer roles for the Little Pine First Nation. His work has secured new land and economic benefits for the members of that Plains Creek community. In the 1980s, Mr. Cuthand became involved in film and video production. He founded Blue Hill Productions, an award-winning production company that has brought First Nations stories to a worldwide audience. Mr. Cuthand also produced and hosted the CTV series "Indigenous Circle" for four years. With patience and determination, Mr. Cuthand has helped Indigenous and non-Indigenous people better understand one another.

Eminent Chancellor, I present to you Douglas Cuthand and ask that you will confer on him the degree of Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa. By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Legislature of the Province and with the consent of the Senate of this University, I admit you to the degree of Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa, and invest you with all the powers, rights, and privileges pertaining thereto.

It is my privilege to call up Dr. Cuthand for his remarks.

Thank you very much. I will have to get used to the doctor part.

I would like to begin by thanking the Elders and Knowledge Keepers for their support and encouragement. I would like to especially thank the singers. That was a very long procession and I am sure they did an excellent job. I would like to say a few remarks. I would also like to thank Bill Waiser for nominating me, by the way. Bill is a very good friend of mine and I was very honored that he would nominate me for this prestigious position. I would like to tell a couple of stories, which is our traditional way of teaching. Then I would like to maybe do a little bit of preaching to the choir down here.

First, I would like to pay homage to my family. My father graduated from university. He convocated at University of Saskatchewan in the spring of 1946. He spent part of the war years at university here, but on weekends he was at Camp Dundurn as a reservist. He was trained and ready to go overseas if called upon. So were all his classmates as well, I might add. It was a very different time and they grew up very fast back then. When it came to convocation, we were living in La Ronge. I say "we" because I was born in February of 1946. I was just a tadpole when it came to Dad's convocation. It was spring break up and there were no planes flying in or out. There was no airstrip and the ice was unsafe. So what he did was him and his friend David Roberts traveled down the winter road that went to the south end of Montreal Lake. They traveled and it took them five days to get down there. They had two horses, which they used as pack animals. They didn't ride them.

They also had to rebuild a couple of bridges to get the horses across because it was a spring flood. When he got to Montreal Lake, he caught a ride into Prince Albert, got a bus then, and arrived down here in Saskatoon to attend his convocation. So I don't want to hear anybody complain about the long walk from the parking lot.

To get home, he had to go all the way back again. By this time, David had traded off the horses and got a canoe. So they paddled up Montreal Lake. They opened parts of the spring break up and taken away the ice. They went down the Montreal River and it took them several days to get back up to Lac La Range through the portages and ice covered lakes in between. So that was my dad's convocation in 1946. I'd also like to talk a little bit about my grandfather, who kind of represents the bridge between the pre-treaty times. He was born in 1875. He was a 10-year-old boy at the Battle of Cutknife Hill.

My grandfather was arrested and charged with treason for his part in the battle. But my grandfather and his mother formed part of the diaspora that went down in the United States. And he lived in Montana for some 15 years. He returned around the turn of the century. But during that period, he lived with other tribes. He learned to speak Blackfoot. He traveled on railway cars with the Bannock Indians. They would ride on top of the railway

boxcars. And he also lived among the Crow Indians as well. My dad told me he met a man from the east, an indigenous person who had a longer history, European contact. And he told him that our future depends on education. And this was way back in the 1880s. That the future depended on education. And my grandfather carried dad with him. And when he went back to the reserve, he worked with the chief of counsel to get a day school established on the reserve. And that school turned out students, and it's still turning out students to this very day. In fact, my family has a scholarship in my dad's name that we present every year.

One of the things my grandfather told me, or told my dad, was that he learned a lot from other tribes. And he said, "You can learn a lot from other tribes." And because of that, my dad went on to, first of all, he was an Anglican minister. Then he was a professor at the University of Calgary, the University of Manitoba. And then he finished his career at the first nation's University of Canada. My uncle Adam was a school teacher, and later he became an Anglican minister. And my aunt Jean Cuthand Goodwill was Saskatchewan's first registered nurse. And all this came about because my grandfather had a vision of education as being a very important building block in our people's future.

So I'd just like to... The part about other tribes, it's rubbed off on our family. When my dad had a sabbatical from the University of Manitoba, he went to Ecuador of all places and lived among the Quechua Indians. I've been down to Mexico and Chile with the Mapuche people. And back in this March, we were in Cusco and Machu Picchu with the Quechua people. And I just want to tell you a little story about the Quechua people. My wife and I were talking to our guide in Cusco, and we told him that we're indigenous people from Canada. I'm Cree, and my wife Pauline is Mohawk.

So we were talking like this, and next thing we knew, he had whipped out his iPhone, he'd googled Mohawk, and he was looking us up. And here we were in a pre-Columbian setting with people who had built that place, they had descendants of them, and we're going on an iPhone and getting more information.

So it's just how much smaller the world has become and how much information is out there for all our people. I just want to conclude by saying that to the graduates here, one day you're going to wake up and you're going to roll over in bed, you're going to look at the ceiling, and you're going to say to yourself, "Where did it go? Where did it all go?" The years, the weeks, the months, the decades just flew by. And I'll tell you, that happens to all of us. In my case, the journey from a snotty-nosed res kid to a crazy old coot did a very, very short trip. And so I encourage all of you to get out of your comfort zone, meet other people. Like my grandfather said, you can learn a lot from other tribes.

So we live in a multicultural nation here in Canada, and we are so lucky because of it. It's not a melting pot, it's not a monoculture. We have everything at our doorstep here. So you can meet all kinds of different people, interesting people, learn things, new learned things, new approaches to life, a sense of humor is different among different people. There's so much we can learn from each other, and it's very important.

The other thing I would try to extend to the idea of learning, I would say, get out there and travel. It's so important. Go other places, meet other people, and don't stay in some all-inclusive resort where you're closeted away. Get out there and meet the real people in the communities where you go. As Mark Twain once said, travel is fatal to bigotry, racism, and narrow-mindedness. So get out there and travel and see the world. So my advice is to work hard, play hard, don't take life or yourself too seriously, and enjoy the trip. Stay healthy and never stop learning. So thank you very much, and congratulations. May God bless you all.

(Applause)

Thank you, Dr. Cuthand.