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- Hello, Acadia University. It is my great privilege and honour to accept this prestigious award and title, Doctor of Science. And I do so on behalf of my former colleagues in public health. And in fact, the hundreds of public health professionals that I have had the privilege of working with over my time as a medical officer of health and the thousands that have stepped up to the plate to assist public health in so many ways during this enduring pandemic. You are all honoured by this graduation ceremony today.

I do want to thank, in particular, the Class of 2021 for taking me into your arms. Now as a fellow grad and also alumna, and for giving me the opportunity to say a few words.

And, also Kyle Lowry, I get to say, I graduated with Kyle Lowry. How cool is that?

I was asked to offer a few words of inspiration. I have to admit, it was hard to know where to start. Over my time as a Medical Officer of Health, I've been fortunate to be surrounded by people and opportunities that have opened my eyes to the depths of character and competence and creativity that can go into having a career and making it both fulfilling and impactful. And so far, I've had a lot of fun.

I've learned way more than I would've thought or know was possible, even when I got my first degree from the University of Prince Edward Island in 1993. I didn't fully realize then just how much that was going to be the beginning of my learning and not at all an end to something. It was the opening of so many new doors and opportunities for much richer learning that I only have gratitude for today even as I continued to learn.

Of all that I have seen and read and learned, I thought maybe I'd focus on some learnings around leadership today because I do think that it's actually your leadership that the world will need over the next two decades, more than anything else. And I don't want you to have left here without somebody having told you that. I don't know, probably somebody has already.

So, there've been three books that have guided my journey around leadership that I thought I would share with you today. And the first one is this one, "The Ingenuity Gap" by Dr. Thomas Homer-Dixon, who I believe is at Simon Fraser University now. And what I love about his book, and I'm reading his second one, "Commanding Hope" right now, is not only his second but another one. "Commanding Hope." I love it because it points to the ways in which ingenuity is needed to deal with some of the world's most complex and wicked problems. Those big, hairy problems that we know, we're in the midst of right now and that will continue for the decades to come.

The next book that I want to share with you is this one called "Theory U" by Dr. Otto Scharmer at MIT and Harvard. And what I love about Dr Scharmer's work, it points to

the ways in which any of us as leaders can dip into the ingenuity, that's inherent within us to solve and dive into some of those big, hairy problems.

The third book that I want to share with you is this one. Some of you may have this book on your shelves. It's called "Yes" and it's a book that was given to me when my daughter was born in 2006. And what I love about this book, it embodies the energy that I have manifested as a leader over my time in public health.

I get excited about saying yes to things, not because I can't say no, but because "yes" is the beginning of something. It's an opportunity and why not take it?

Part of the reason I wanted to share those with you is because I think you are going to be challenged in your lifetimes to say yes to things even when they're difficult because it represents you engaging with the world, the way it actually is, not just the way we wish the world was. And wishing the world can be a certain way won't make it that way, but saying yes to the things that can create the world that we want will be needed. And I think the leaders that will be needed will be those who can engage with that.

One of the challenges that you will have, the problems that the world will face will be those big, hairy, wicked problems. We've seen so many of them even in this past year, they will continue. And not everybody will be comfortable with dealing with complexity.

That's going to be your challenge, to be the type of leader who can engage with complexity. And this doesn't necessarily mean being the leader that has the best or brightest idea. Being the leader that can hold space for others in complexity will be key.

And I hope that you'll be up for that challenge. I would also encourage you to be the type of leader who can avoid being trapped by systems who will resist. Yes, who will resist a change that could create the world that we want to have. So please, do say 'yes' to ideas because failing to try is not the worst thing that can happen. Or sorry, failing is not the worst thing that can happen to you. Failing to try is the worst thing that can happen.

Be prepared to call out obfuscation, misdirection, misdiagnosis when you see it because sometimes, things are exactly as bad as they look. And we need to own up to that if we're actually going to change. This means speaking truth to power.

Sometimes relationships are going to be more important than the issue. You'll actually need to speak to the issue and be prepared to sacrifice the relationship. Not all relationships, not all issues will be important, so be ready to discern which ones are, and then engage with them as needed.

Listen hard for what is not being said and by whom, and listen for that as much as for what is being said. Be an ally with somebody whose voice needs to be heard, in fact, speak for them if that need is there.

The loudest voices won't necessarily be the best voices or the right voices. Be aware of that. There will be a tendency for folks to want to follow the person who is speaking the

most. the person who is the tallest, the person who has the best dressed, but the person who was saying the things that need to be said might be the person to follow instead. Be ready to support that.

Don't let systems take away your time for thinking. Your capacity to think is your most powerful weapon. It's what you spent your degree investing in so use it.

Systems tend to look at the people in them and value them by how busy they are, but that busyness is keeping you from realizing the ingenuity that's needed for the next good system change. Be wary of it and take some space.

And finally, to the women in the group, I know you've probably heard this before. Use your voice because it matters. Having said all that, what I would say to you more than anything else, when the world around looks like it wants to sleep through the next upcoming monumental event, Class of 2021, classmates, engage with that.

Wake us up, provoke us, move us to action. We'll be ready. I'll be there with you classmates. No worries. So, thank you for your attention. I wish you the very best. Do good things, have fun, and know that whatever life brings you from here, you will handle it. Thank you. Bye.