

**Dr. Peter Ricketts
President and Vice-Chancellor
Acadia University**

- Graduands, honoured guests, colleagues, family, and friends, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to Acadia University's 2021 Convocation. The first Convocation in Acadia's 182-year history that has been held virtually.

So, from wherever you're watching, whether it be right here in Wolfville across Canada or around the world, I welcome you to celebrate the achievements of our graduating class.

And so, to you the class of 2021, I say, congratulations, you've done it!

You've successfully completed your academic studies, and you're about to receive the degrees that you have worked so hard to achieve. And you've done it under extraordinary circumstances.

Since March 2020, when we had to abruptly close our campus and move our courses and our operations entirely online, you have seen your studies and your lives disrupted by this pandemic.

I'm proud that Acadia was able to provide you with the opportunity to complete your studies on campus if you were able to do so. And we were one of the very few universities in Canada to be able to provide that to its graduating class.

But even then, of course, the experience was not exactly the way you would have chosen. But whether you completed your degree remotely, or here in person, you have shown determination and resilience and you have seen this through to the end, you've done it. And now it is time for you to own it.

You are a unique class for many, many reasons but one of them is because you have faced unique challenges, and you will be the better for it. But you're also a very special class and a very special class to me. Most of you began your studies at my first Matriculation Ceremony here in University Hall in 2017. And so, we have come through this Acadia journey together, you and I.

And I'm so sorry that we cannot celebrate your Convocation Ceremony in person with your family, your friends, and your fellow graduates. But I promise you that I will invite you back to campus to celebrate your success and your achievements in the near future when we were able to do so. And I look forward to that occasion, and I hope you do too.

But now it is your time, so take ownership of this moment. And as you go forward in the next phase of your lives, make sure you live up to the great promise of being an Acadia graduate, whether you're going on to further studies or to that all important first job or maybe you're simply taking some time out to think about your next steps after the experiences of the last year. Whatever it is, seize that opportunity that this Acadia degree gives you to chart your own course for your future.

And to your parents and to your families and friends who are celebrating your graduation today, let me also add a word of thanks. You have nurtured and supported our new graduates, dreams, and ambitions. They couldn't have done this without you, and I'm sure you're all delighted and probably a little relieved to see them graduate today. And I expect some of you have even paid for their journey. Thank you.

And perhaps if you're with your family and friends, now is a moment maybe to give them a hug if you're able, and thank them for everything that they've done to see you through to this very special moment.

Graduands, I want to thank you for spending this very important part of your lives with us at Acadia. Despite the impacts of the pandemic, I hope you will treasure your time spent here. You are part of a proud 182-year-old tradition, and you're about to join the most passionate and dedicated alumni of any university anywhere in the world.

I ask you to become active members of the Alumni Association and use the global networking of amazing Acadia graduates who have gone on to great achievements in their lives.

And you are joined today by seven honorary degree recipients who are true exemplars of successful careers and lives lived. A former Prime Minister of Canada, a renowned Indigenous leader, and former Senator. A world-class athlete and Olympian, a respected religious leader, a patron of the arts and passionate supporter of Acadia, and the two outstanding doctors who led Nova Scotia's highly successful management of this pandemic.

As I have said to previous graduating classes, it is how you act out your lives that determines the impact that you will have on the world. So let these extraordinarily accomplished individuals be an inspiration to you as you go forward and make your mark.

So, this is your moment, your achievement, and your opportunity to fulfil your dreams. You've been transformed by the experience that you've had here at Acadia, and you are now ready to take on the ever-transforming world.

So, seize this day, make it yours and make us proud. I know you will. And so today I salute your accomplishments and on behalf of the faculty and staff of Acadia University, let me say how deeply proud we are of your success.

Congratulations and welcome to the next exciting chapter of your life as a member of the Acadia family. And remember you are the author of this chapter, so make it count. And I for one, look forward to reading it. Thank you. Congratulations on a job well done.