



**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**  
**FALL CONVOCATION**  
**October 9 & 10, 2014**

**Convocation Address**  
**By Sir Mason Durie**

An expert on Indigenous and Māori development

*An honorary Doctor of Science, honoris causa, was conferred on Dr. Mason Durie during the Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology, and Faculty of Health Sciences ceremony on Thursday, October 9, 2014. The following is Dr. Durie's Convocation address:*

First, thank you for your welcome to this country, and to this university. Chancellor, it is a great honor for me to be here and to be in this territory of the Squamish Nation, and I bring greetings to them and to you all, and to this wonderful university from the people of New Zealand and the country of Aotearoa. So *Tēnā tātou katoa*, greetings to you all.

Chancellor, it's been a great privilege to receive an honorary doctorate from this great university, and it is a privilege not only for myself, but for my wife, and for our colleagues, and for our people. It's also been a privilege to be able to echo the words of the Vice-Chancellor and the Chancellor, in congratulating those of you who are graduating today. I feel I'm in great company.

Graduates, congratulations. Your achievements are a tribute to your own industry, your ability to handle complex and intellectual challenges, and your determination to see a task through to successful completion. And a special word to families and friends who have come to celebrate this occasion with you – your support over the years has been an important part of their success. So to partners, to children, to parents and grandparents, we also extend our congratulations, because their success is your success.

In New Zealand we have a Māori proverb that recognizes achievement not as a solo effort, but as a collaborative undertaking. *Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari i te toa takitini*. Anything I may have accomplished is a tribute to the many who have made it possible. However, rather than reflecting on the wisdom of the past, those of you who are graduating today are more likely to be thinking about the decades that lie ahead of you. And of the many challenges you will need to address, three of those stand out as having worldwide significance.

First, global inequalities between rich nations and poor nations will become progressively more untenable. Already, there are over 130 million people who live in extreme poverty, and as a result many children will never reach adulthood. A rapidly growing world population, coupled with worldwide food shortages will greatly exacerbate those disparities.

In addition, a second challenge will come from the effects of climate change, unrestrained urbanization, and overstocked farmlands. Already, there is clear evidence that without global reductions in carbon emissions, without

the revegetation of denuded landscapes, and without greatly improved water quality in rivers and lakes, the planet will be seriously compromised, and so will humanity.

And the third challenge that will confront you over the decades ahead has a double edge to it. Global colonization brings with it entry to worldwide markets, international educational prospects, access to unprecedented volumes of knowledge and information, and exposure to the world's music, art, and literature. The opportunities for you as graduates of Simon Fraser University have already greatly exceeded those that were available even a decade ago. But globalization also carries with it the prospect of undermining the distinctive heritage and culture that has come to distinguish nations, and peoples, and communities. Just as colonization had long lasting and often devastating impacts on indigenous peoples, both here and in New Zealand, the prospect of globalization carries with it similar warnings.

Well these three challenges, global inequalities, global warming, and global colonization, need to be confronted. That could seem a really daunting task, but together you may actually already hold the answers. Your real strength lies not only in your individual accomplishments, impressive though they are, but in the power you have as a group and in the wide range of knowledge and skills that underpin your collective scholarship. That collaborative approach has been evident in the faculties here today: the Faculty of Communications, Arts, and Technology has pioneered inter-subject study; the Faculty of Health Sciences recognizes both Indigenous and Global health as areas that require serious attention; and within the Faculty of Applied Sciences, there is a recognition of the ways in which knowledge and information can be disseminated across borders, across age groups, and across communities. Answers to the global challenges over the next 50 years will require even greater collaboration. That does not necessarily mean abandoning deep learning in favour of broad learning, but it does mean transcending the limitations of a system where the acquisition of knowledge is split into time-worn subject domains.

Obviously, universities have a leadership role to play here. Unlike governments, universities have the advantage of being once removed from political bias; they are research focused, and they're not constrained by short time frames as elected governments are. We would not want to ignore our own national priorities, or the concerns of our own people. But as Simon Fraser University has shown, we should not see those goals as the sum total of a university's mission.

Graduates, the world that you will live in and work in stands to benefit from your collective energies. In the presence of such a diverse group of graduates with a hugely impressive range of skills, there can only be room for an optimistic conclusion. And the obvious conclusion is that the impacts of global inequalities, global warming, and global colonization, serious as they are, can be mitigated by a new generation of graduates working together to bring balance and sustainability in the decades ahead.

As graduates of this university, you are well prepared to be citizens of the world and carriers of Canadian traditions. And in that respect, the nation and the planet are in good hands. Congratulations again on your success. Chancellor, all of us who have been honoured today are greatly indebted to the University for giving us opportunities to learn from each other, to understand the world around us, and to value the gift of education. My sincere thanks go to you, to the university council, the Vice-Chancellor, the Academy, and all who have contributed to our collective successes.

And finally, graduates. *Kia hora te marino, Kia whakapapa pounamu te moana, kia tere te Kārohirohi i mua i tōu huarahi.* May peace be widespread, may the waters that you will travel over in the years ahead – may they glisten with brilliance and may their shimmering light guide you safely towards your destinations. *Kia ora*, and stay well.