



Convocation speech to SFU Kamloops program

Minister of Advanced Education Murray Coell
Kamloops
Friday, September 15, 2006

I am honoured to celebrate this occasion with you today.

Convocations give us a time and a place to gather so we can symbolically mark a new beginning. They are unique among the milestones of our lives because they celebrate past accomplishments, while anticipating the future. And it will be a bright future for these students who have worked hard to earn their credentials. Investing in a post-secondary education builds a foundation for success that increases job satisfaction and your overall quality of life.

Last year, 18 graduates accepted their credentials – today, another 17 are here receiving theirs. To date, 350 First Nations students have earned degrees, diplomas and certificates over the life of this program. Many cultural resource workers, curriculum developers, teachers, administrators and others have been trained here in Kamloops.

This program provides students with access to post-secondary education without leaving their communities and families. Because they are staying closer to home for their education, more are choosing to stay here to work, which is helping to build capacity for First Nations.

This government supports partnerships between First Nations, industry and B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions, especially when they are working collaboratively and developing Aboriginal education programs. The SFU Kamloops program is an example of a partnership that is really working.

Government is building a new relationship with First Nations founded on the principles of mutual respect, recognition and reconciliation. But we all play a part in making sure Aboriginal people share in the economic and social development of British Columbia.

Your vision helped found this program, which is helping to build a better future for First Nations.

Congratulations to all the graduates and their families, as well as the truly dedicated faculty and staff. On behalf of the government of British Columbia, I wish you the best in all your future endeavours.