

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Honorary Degree Citation
The degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*,
conferred on Dr. Alison Gopnik
Friday, October 5, 2018

Madam Chancellor, I am honoured to present Dr. Alison Gopnik, an internationally recognized leader in the study of cognitive science who has revolutionized the way we understand the development of children's thinking and learning.

A professor of psychology and affiliate professor of philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley, Dr. Gopnik was one of the first researchers in the field of "theory of mind", studying how children come to understand their own minds and later formulating the "theory theory" — the idea that children have intuitive theories and use many of the same learning mechanisms as scientists. Her "broccoli-goldfish" study was groundbreaking in showing that children as young as 18 months old are able to anticipate and respond to the desires of others, even when those desires are different from their own. More recently, she has focused on probabilistic models and how Bayesian or mathematical inference can be applied to early learning, emphasizing the value in studying how children learn causal relationships.

Dr. Gopnik, who received her BA from McGill University and her PhD from Oxford University, has authored or coauthored over 100 journal articles. Her seminal books include *The Philosophical Baby* and *The Gardener and the Carpenter*, both titles winning the Cognitive Development Society Best Book Prize in 2009 and 2016 respectively. An elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and The American Association for the Advancement of Science, Dr. Gopnik's TED talk has been viewed more than 3 million times and she has appeared regularly on TV and radio programs, including *The Charlie Rose Show* and *The Colbert Report*. Her wide-ranging achievements have been honoured by academic societies such as the Society of Experimental Psychologists and the Cognitive Science Society.

The depth of her research, her passionate valuation of the minds of children and her commitment to principles of discovery have made Dr. Gopnik a renowned figure in her field.

Madam Cha