



**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
SPRING CONVOCATION
JUNE 3, 4, 5 and 6, 2008**

**Convocation Address
By Dr. Rick Hansen**
President and CEO of Rick Hansen Foundation

An honorary doctor of laws was conferred on Dr. Rick Hansen during the Faculty Education and the Faculty of Applied Sciences Ceremonies on Friday, June 6, 2008. The following is Dr. Hansen's convocation address:

Mr. President and Mr. Chancellor, ladies and gentleman, members of this incredible University, Simon Fraser and all that you've done over many decades to encourage hopes and dreams and most importantly the fellow

chemotherapy at that time. We got this old heavy wheelchair out for him and he jumped in that chair and started pushing it. At first he was pretty weak and he could barely touch the bottom of the rim with his shot, but when I watched him in that practice I saw this intensity, this fire in his eyes, this belief in what he could do. And I knew it wasn't going to be long before he made himself one of the best players on the team. And that's exactly what Terry did.

We were very fortunate in that we spent a lot of time together. He was in Kinesiology here and I was out at UBC and we had a lot in common and we shared rooms together when we trained and traveled, we competed together, we forged ourselves like great friends do.

And when I'm here thinking of symbols of success to celebrate I can't help but think of the hill. Here we are on the top of the hill celebrating that success and the kind of progress that you've made to get to this point. Terry and I, we wheeled that hill up Gaglardi Way every week in celebration of our journey in the pursuit of our dream. The hill is a metaphor for the things we do to achieve excellence.

I'll never forget the first time we parked our cars down around Lougheed Highway and we started looking up and wondering could we make it. The uncertainty as we got up that hill, that very first stroke, getting to the top took an hour. I know too the progress that continued to be made, and then there were plateaux wondering if we could continue. There were times we started getting a little bit bored and we had to find that it wasn't about the objective and it was about the process and that every time we came to the hill there was a chance to learn, to grow, to be able to achieve our goals and dreams and to find some meaning in the pursuit of that moment.

I'll never forget too when Terry passed away, the legacy that he left for so many people across this country and around the world. And after he was gone I continued to wheel that hill in the pursuit of my dream to be a world class athlete. Gaglardi way helped me to transform that first one hour journey into a twenty three minute endeavor and a sprint. And to be able to achieve that moment, to be at the top of the hill celebrating that accomplishment, knowing just before a world championship that I was ready. That it had been a culmination of work that was passed on through years of effort -seven years of energy on the hill – pursuing the dream. Knowing every single day what it took, one stroke at a time. Incredible obstacles and challenges, the bad weather that pursued, the obstacles of doubt, the obstacles that were there mostly in the mind. And here on this great hill that is Simon Fraser University that is always waiting. A friendly friend waiting there to encourage, to challenge to stretch the imagination, to be able to think about what was possible.

At the top of the hill we build a celebration which truly brings a sense of energy. The potential energy that we grow and nurture and accumulate in the pursuit of our dreams. Now in this moment when we actually celebrate, our energy is turned into kinetic energy because what goes up must come down. And as you graduands turn towards the hill and the celebration of this moment and you move forward out into the next phase of your life,

the things that you've accumulated to get to this point are the things that carry you forward. To know that you've done it before and you can do it again; to know who's been there with you. To know that you've had family and friends, you've had a great institution of teachers, role models and mentors.

Maybe you've been lucky like me to have had a wife who's been there for you and with you at every single point of the way. Amanda, I say thank you to you and all that you've done to help me be here at this moment. You represent the amazing team that's off my shoulder that has helped me think of an idea, of a dream, of an accessible and inclusive society. It propelled me through the Man In Motion tour. At the end of the tour we were just at the beginning of realizing that dream. In twenty years since we've made great progress as a country.

And as we look to the future here receiving this award on behalf of my team I say thank you. Thank you to this great university. Thank you to the friendships, the role that you've played in helping me to achieve this goal. I say thank you to the graduands and past alumni who have come through this great institution propelled with a sense of passion and commitment that you can and you will and you do make a difference. It's what makes this country strong. I believe that there's a sense that anything is possible, that the best work is in front of me. This moment is such an inspiration. I look forward to the next hill to the next life learning, because life is not a destination, it is a journey filled with new goals and new dreams. The sense that anything is possible and I hope you will never ever give up on your dreams. Thank you very much everybody, thank you.