



**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
SPRING CONVOCATION
June 14, 15, 16 & 17, 2011**

**Convocation Address
By Dr. Brian Williams**
Renowned Olympic Sports Broadcaster

An honorary Doctor of Laws was conferred on Dr. Brian Williams during the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences ceremony on Thursday, June 16, 2011. The following is Dr. Williams' convocation address.

Dr. Fee, Chancellor Louie, President Petter, Members of the Board of Governors, and Senate, faculty, granduands, honoured guests and friends.

I am truly honoured to be here this afternoon and believe me it is great to be back in the Lower Mainland.

Now, I would be remiss if I did not address last night. I know many of you are concerned. And let me tell you folks, people are angry from coast to coast in this country. I've talked to people in the East and the West, they're angry that a group of thugs could tarnish the reputation of such a great city. They're calling from all over the world.

Prior to coming here I did NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams ... that being the good looking, young, Brian Williams, making ten million dollars a year in New York City. And by the way, as we were on the satellite, Brian in New York, myself in Downtown Vancouver he said, "I have ten honorary degrees." And I said "good, I've got one from Simon Fraser and it equals any ten you have."

Brian like so many others was absolutely stunned. He wrote that love letter to Canada about the decency and integrity of this country when he was here. He asked me, "Will it hurt Vancouver?" My answer is not in the long run.

To quote your Police Chief Chu, a graduate of this great university, "These were anarchists disguised as hockey fans. They came with goggles." This was from the Police Chief this morning, "They came with incendiary devices, masks, fire extinguishers, they were intent on doing one thing, and that was to do damage."

And it's very interesting. The Police Chief said, "You might remember that first Saturday morning of the Olympics when they had that trouble at the Hudson Bay Store and it was quickly put down." They recognized many of the same people here last night that were involved in that incident at the Hudson's Bay Company.

It was scary. As my wife and I left the arena we had no idea in the game what was going on. We get out on Georgia Street we see the smoke by the Post Office, and as we walked up town I saw a young man put on a bandana to cover up his face and we realized this was indeed serious. But I will tell you people are calling into the Police Department. There's a website. They're downtown cleaning up, the people of Vancouver want these thugs caught, they want them arrested and they want them punished and the Police Chief has promised that will happen.

And you know why last night will not hurt this city and this province? It's because the Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games have changed this country forever in a profound and positive manner. No longer as Canadians are we apologizing for winning, or apologizing for excellence, we've done that in the past.

To quote Jennifer Heil, the brilliant young skier from Edmonton, who attends McGill University, majors in economics, fluently bilingual, she told me prior to the Vancouver Games, "Canadian athletes are no longer happy just to show up and get the uniform."

The outpouring of pride and patriotism in the streets ... I'd get off the air at eleven o'clock at night and try and walk back to the hotel ... it was like nothing I'd ever seen.

I can remember sitting down with Dr. Jacques Rogge, the President of the International Olympic Committee, about five days into the games and I said, "Look, between the two of us we've probably seen about thirty Olympic Games, have you ever seen anything like this?" And he replied, "Only in Sydney, Australia." And of course the summer games are bigger in number. I will tell you about six days later I ran into Dr. Rogge again and he replied to me that Vancouver had surpassed Sydney as the greatest Games he had ever seen.

And as I walked and I think that this is so important about our country. As I walked the streets at night I would see faces of every colour, new Canadians, recent immigrants, Canadians whose families have been here for generations. All wearing something or yelling something that said

And our aboriginal people—John Furlong told me in Prague, Wayne Gretzky was there, I'd done a football game in Regina, Prime Minister Chretien had flown in from the July 1st celebrations. July 2nd in Prague when the late Jack Poole and John Furlong were awarded the Games, Furlong promised he would treat our Aboriginal people with more than tokenism. He would treat them in a meaningful and respectful manner. He certainly lived up to that.

When I spoke with Shawn Atleo, wonderfully, highly respected Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Shawn Atleo said to me that he truly hoped that, "Vancouver would truly inspire young Aboriginal men and women to take part in the Olympics in the future."

And by the way, remember this name, especially you ladies, Mary Spencer. Mary Spencer is an Aboriginal young woman from Southern Ontario. Women's boxing is making its debut in the Olympics next summer in London. Mary Spencer is a solid favourite for the gold and should she win gold she will be the first aboriginal athlete since Alwyn Morris from Montreal who won a kayaking gold back in Los Angeles back in 1984.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Olympics are first and foremost about the athletes and their wonderful stories.

I see the statue to Terry Fox. His parents, Rolly and Betty, had asked Charmaine Crooks, myself and John Furlong to select the winner of the Terry Fox Award. Somebody that embodied and stood for the values that Terry stood for. Obviously, a slam dunk was the figure skater and some of you were here from outside the country, Joannie Rochette. She won a bronze medal. This was not a pity medal folks, I've covered figure skating. For her to win a bronze under ideal conditions would have been a major accomplishment. To win a bronze with her mother passing away at the airport as she arrived in Vancouver at only age of 52 is something that is beyond description. So, she was a slam dunk winner.

But I lobbied for another a lady from the small country of Slovenia. Her name was Petra Majdic. You might not remember the name, but you might remember the incident. It was up on the Callaghan Valley on the way to Whistler it was before the women's 20K cross-country event and there's a ditch. I'd say it's a good 3 meters, ten feet deep. She falls into the ditch, she gets up, it turns out she had a punctured lung and three broken ribs, and went on to win a bronze medal.

So, it's appropriate that I see the great Terry Fox statue as I walked in here today as they were the winners of the Terry Fox Award. All this happened in spite of the worst recession in a lifetime, the warmest winter in 100 years and the tragic death of the Georgian luger on the morning of the opening ceremonies. How did it happen? It happened because the athletes and those running the games were prepared and had sufficient practice and preparation.

I will leave you with one quick story. And I tell the graduates, believe me, there are no shortcuts to practice and preparation.

I as a boy lived in the East Kootenays in Invermere. I'm not sure you read recently in the paper about the Big Game Guide from the East Kootenays, he was guiding Canadians and Americans in Eastern Africa. And one day walking back to the safety of his base camp, it was about from me half way down this facility, he heard a noise. And he turned around and low and behold he's face to face with a killer lion. So, he doesn't want to do this but he has to take his gun, he moves the Canadians and the Americans to the safety of the base camp. The lion is about ten feet away,

three meters, as steady as I am now he aims and fires and misses. I mean this guy's dead, the white foam is coming out of the lion's mouth. The lion is scratching the ground. He comes at the Canadian Big Game Guide, jumps over top and disappears into the woods. The poor Canadian has dinner, goes to bed, he can't sleep. He gets up around midnight sets up floodlights, goes out into the woods and practices short target shooting. At first light he's ready. This will never happen again. As he's taking down the targets he hears a noise in the trees. He goes over and separates the bushes. You know what he sees, ladies and gentlemen. He sees the lion practicing short leaps.

As you leave here, Larry King the great talk show host was once asked, "Are you ever nervous?" He replied, "Only when I'm not myself." I would add, "I'm only not myself when I'm not prepared."

This is a great honour an absolute thrill for my wife, Charlene, and myself to be here today. I wish you nothing but good luck and good health and thank you.