

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**  
**FALL CONVOCATION**  
**October 6, 2021**

**Convocation Address**  
**By Dr. John Borrows**

*The degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, was conferred on Dr. John Borrows during the Beedie School of Business ceremony on Wednesday, October 6, 2021. The following is Dr. Borrows' Convocation address:*

[Indigenous language]

I'm delighted to greet you in my traditional language and also acknowledge this territory.

When I graduated from law school I began articling in the small Ontario town in which I grew up. It was my dream. I lived by the lake and I could walk to the office, and I knew my clients from a lifetime of interaction. I could make a small contribution to a little corner of the world that I cared about deeply. There was nothing that I wanted more. Life was unfolding exactly as I had planned.

And then I was fired. When I was in court, with my pen and paper, I wrote 'too loudly' for the lawyer who was my principal. I found myself on the other side of my life's most treasured hopes.



It was Kingcome Inlet, home of the Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw, and it was just like home. But in this home, I saw deeper layers of connection to things more important than myself. I saw that the local was national and even transnational.

My friend Alfred Scow raised my sights. He helped me recognize that vital parts of our world are dying, and we need her help. He talked about the place of Indigenous peoples' own laws in finding this help. These laws are not perfect, but they are helpful. And so, I have been working on this idea ever since; it has been a focus of my teaching, practice, and research. That is, Indigenous peoples' legal knowledge is a vital part of Canada's Constitution.

While I sometimes long to live in that small Ontario town, I am very glad I did not give in to my own so-called passion.

To ensure such learning continues, I have learned that we need to prepare to be surprised. Home may be different than we imagine. We may be different than we imagine. We think we know where we are going, but this might be a false sense of security. Getting knocked off course can be devastating, but only if we give up and get lost in our selfishness.

We all have a lifetime of learning ahead of us. Be alive to your own adventures. When the world is not what you hoped, keep your options open. If you can't find immediate fulfillment, struggle to reach a broader and deeper congruence.

My convocation wish is that we allow experience to save us from ourselves, and our own often short-sighted dreams.

Congratulations graduate