The degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, was conferred on The Honourable Dr. Wally Oppal during the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences ceremony on Tuesday, October 5, 2021. The following is Dr. Oppal's Convocation address:

When Dr. Johnson and Joanne Curry called me, it was a huge, huge impact on me emotionally, to be so recognized by Simon Fraser University. So, I am pleased to be here, and I'm honoured – deeply honoured to have this degree bestowed upon me. Now, it's a customary for people who have these honours conferred on them to make remarks, to make a speech, but I note that the program that governs these proceedings, says that I have five minutes. I'm a former judge of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals and no one puts time limits on judges, but I'm indebted to you for your procedures and so I'll try and keep within the five minutes.

I'm the son of immigrant parents. My parents came here from Northern India in the 1930s during the height of the depression – spoke very little English, they were poor, in fact, my father didn't have a job for a number of years during the depression. He died when I was 10 years old, and my mother raised us. But they didn't have the right to vote in Canada until 1947 because Asians did not have the right of citizenship in this country. And if you think there's injustice in that, you should know that the First Nations people, the people who were the stewards of the land and owned this country, the Indigenous people did not have the right to vote here until 1960. So that sort of gets me into what I really want to talk to you about, within the parameters of the time that I have.

I'm sure you're well-aware of what took place here, in the last Thursday, on the 30th of September – when the Federal government declared it to be a day of commemoration and for us to think carefully of the truth and reconciliation report, the recommendations that were made, the ef6 (d)14 (,)0.004cn.b0 Td(yp0 Td)4 (ef6 (1.-4 (c)4 (t)Tj3o5Tdnt Tw16e ef6 (1.-4 (c)4 (t)aw
about and that came of course on the heels of finding of

So, I raised those points to tell you that there's been a huge injustice to the First Nations people in this country and that's something that you, the graduates have to address your minds to. You're in a very privileged position, an honoured position where you're being given a degree, and you have a huge future that you can do huge things for this country – and particular, to correct the wrongs that have been inflicted on many of our citizens, particularly the First Nations people.

I did the commission of inquiry into missing and murdered women – the Picton inquiry. Picton was the largest mass murderer in Canadian history. A large number of his victims were First Nations women. They were treated poorly by the institutions of our country and that's something we need to keep in mind when we look towards the future. I think all of us have to look within our hearts to find out what we can best do to correct the wrongs of the past; and its potential is unlimited; and I congratulate each of every one of you who are receiving degrees today. To regardless of whatever you do in our future, and your endeavors in your occupations, in your professions – one thing you need to keep in mind that we live in Canada. Canada in so many ways, is the best country in the world as far as the western democracies are concerned. We have a justice system that's open, accessible; a free of political interference; free of political corruption; we have a policing system; a health care system. Generally, we operate under the rule of law and that's important – where everybody is equal before the law. And those are things that we need for keep in minen9.15Td()Te an(Tj()Tj(wTj-0.004 Tc 0.004 Tw 1.720 Tdh)4 er)1 e)10-1 bSndl6 ws Tj()To-4 av)0