

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY SPRING CONVOCATION June 7, 8, 9 and 10, 2016

Convocation Address By Dr. David Gillespie

Madam Chancellor, Mr. President, members of the platform party, faculty, graduating students, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am truly humbled. Thank you so much for this honour. years ago, almost to the day in May 1976, I sat in this normally cold and draughty, but today quite pleasant, but very spectacular place, waiting my turn to cross the stage to receive a Bachelor of Science in Biology. It has been an eventful 40 years. I would like to think that I

most singular teacher and mentor, Professor Thelma Finlayson, made of me (and actually of all her And it is truly interesting to that, that attitude, that wish, that commitment has

pervaded the university to the extent where it is really an expectation.

My career has been defined in part by a perspective I gained at Simon Fraser University which was that the overuse of chemical insecticides is harmful to human health and to the environment. Over the past 40 years I have been engaged in research to replace pesticide use in some agricultural sectors, with alternatives based on natural enemies, and I and my collaborators have been pretty successful in that regard. Simon Fraser University has been a very, very large part of that success especially colleagues and students in the Department of Biological Sciences.

The world has changed in 40 years. One of my favourite authors, the late Terry Pratchett, remarked that,

And this is

true. The 40 years have passed mostly without me actually noticing. It is only at times of reflection that the sheer enormity of the change in the world around me catches up, and I get that what just happened? feeling.

In 1976, smartphones were science fiction, as were desktop computers, the internet and digital cameras. In biology, the deliberate insertion of new DNA into a genome was only discussed in a highly cabulary of

the average person. The need to encourage women and minorities in the workforce was just being recognized, and the notion of equal pay for equal work was not yet enshrined in collective agreements. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights were unheard of. First Nations issues were rarely addressed or discussed on any stage. Scientifically, technologically, and socially, in 40 years, the world has changed to the point where it would be hard to recognize from the perspective of 40 years in the past. And I can claim, with some pride, to have been a small part of that change.

The program for convocation has some very important words for members of the graduating class, and