



Welcoming Remarks for President's Dinner 2022

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President and Vice-Chancellor

University of King's College

Good evening everyone.

What a supreme pleasure it is to be able to say these words—**Welcome to the beginning of the in-person celebration of the Class of 2022 and our 232nd Encaenia!**

I am so excited about this outdoors edition of the President's Dinner. We road-tested the concept a few weeks ago with the classes of 2020 and 2021 and we figured if we could do it on May 6 with no reported cases of frostbite, doing it on May 26 would be a breeze.

I have long dreamed about celebrations such as this dinner happening in the Quad, the communal centre of not only our campus but our lives at King's. I had no idea of course, that it would take a pandemic to make this dream come true!

And speaking of tents, isn't this something to behold! Please—a round of thunderous applause for the work of the many who have created this beautiful space so that we could gather together to safely share a meal in each other's company.

Being on the land if you will, makes it all the more important that we do so recognizing and acknowledging that the University of King's College is located in Mi'kma'ki, and sits on unceded Mi'kmaw land. As we enjoy the bounty of that land this evening, let's be mindful of all the ways we benefit from First Nations' lands and territories and Indigenous wisdom and knowledge and of our responsibility to be the good guests we are called upon to be In Nova Scotia by the treaties of peace and friendship.

We also acknowledge the histories, contributions, and legacies of the African Nova Scotian people and communities who have been here for over 400 years.

I am so happy we have this opportunity to celebrate together. Coming together for one more celebratory meal, in the tradition of the formal meals in Prince Hall, has always been an important part of a King's graduation. Tonight graduands, we do this with the added joy of being joined by members of your supporting cast, your family, friends and special guests.

There is something else about this dinner that is special. Unlike formal meals and some of our other gatherings, this one and tomorrow's ceremony brings together those of you who have earned your first degree and those of you who have earned a BJ, MJ or MFA degree.

Your King's experiences have been overlapping parallel experiences and graduation brings you all together in a greater unity at the end of your different paths. Welcome to you all. I hope undergraduates and graduates you get to know each other a little over the next few days. And to those of you receiving your first degree, be forewarned—you may have your work cut out for you in matching the enthusiasm of our MFA, BJ and MJ students.

At King's, we think graduation is a very big deal. Tonight is the beginning of three days of celebrations and we do our best to pull out all the stops. This year, the pandemic has, to say the least, added some complications. Have you noticed the huge tent we are in?

Encaenia is a grand celebration because the whole college is involved in making it happen. It could not otherwise happen on the scale it happens.

I want to take a moment to recognize and thank all of the people who have contributed to making this celebration memorable. I cannot list them all, for I am sure to miss people. And if I tried to list everyone, I would come very close to reading the college directory in alphabetical order. So as exciting as that would be, I will instead simply say, on behalf of us all, thank you to everyone who has made this night and the next two days as great as I hope you will find them to be.

I promise you, we have put our whole heart and soul into the next few days and we have done it because we love you and because our cup of happiness for you runneth over.

Members of the class of 2022—the outstanding class of 2022—we are here to honour you. It is my honour and pleasure to be one of the first to offer you our congratulations. You have achieved your goal with hard work, extraordinary perseverance and by supporting one another.

Well done! **Party!** Responsibly.

Thank you for the privilege you have given to those of us who remain behind—the faculty, staff and Board of the College, the opportunity to be part of your education—of your transformation into the human being you have become since you started your degree. We are honoured and privileged to have contributed to your life story, to have learned and grown with you and to have benefited from your contributions to the life of the College.

We know of course, you did not do it alone or without assistance. We think of course of your professors—or mentors in the case of the MFA grads—and fellow students, and for some of you, your coaches.

We also think of your wider support in and beyond the Quad, including library staff, Prince Hall staff, program secretaries and the people who greeted you every day, like Stephanie, Liz and Judith.

We think also of your parents, guardians, grandparents, partners, siblings, children, friends from beyond King's, neighbours, work and volunteer colleagues, non-academic mentors and employers. The list goes on.

I am thinking also of your pets and of other animal friends you have made, including Finnigan, Bud and Teddy and Casey the Labradoodle and Shilo who are both looking down from doggie heaven with pride in all of you.

In a celebration that is quite rightly about you the graduates, let's take a moment to honour all the beings who have held you up and encouraged you to carry on.

A toast to everyone in your circles of support is not on the programme. But I think as President, at the President's dinner, I may have authority to say, let's raise our glasses to everyone whose support, encouragement and inspiration is in your degrees and in you, including all the guests, friends, and family who are with us tonight and who will be with us tomorrow. To those who have held us up, encouraged and supported us!

Graduation signifies not only what you have completed but the beginning of the new relationship you will now have with the college, each other, and thousands of other graduates as members of our alumni. There is no doubt you will stay in touch and connected with each other. If you are like the alumni I have met, the friendships you have made here at King's will endure as some of your deepest friendships.

Our hope is that your relationship with the College will also remain deep and enduring. King's will always be your college. As you know, when you come to King's, you do more than attend King's: you

become part of King's. You will continue to be part of it and it of you in the future as in the past. That may sound improbable, but I hope we can make it happen. You can do your part by being active in the Alumni Association. From tomorrow, it is your alumni association.

Remember there is a reception here tomorrow after Encaenia and that we are back under the big top Friday morning for coffee and delicious cinnamon buns.

I hope you all have a wonderful and happy evening and a beautiful and memorable Encaenia experience.

Thank you!