

Welcome Speech to Gala 2011: Destination Education, November 19, 2011.

Good evening everyone,

What a thrill it is for me to give some brief words of welcome to you tonight.

I'm not completely sure who chose the theme of destination education for the Gala this year, but I love it. Because the idea has so many meanings that are poignant to why it is wonderful to see you here tonight and why we at Selkirk College are so blessed to be in the work of education.

Education *is* a destination, a very important one. And when a person arrives at that destination, they arrive as somebody different; someone more; full of potential; more confident *in* themselves to offer more of themselves to their community.

That destination can be preparation for a chosen career, occupation or discipline; a deeper understanding of the world and our role in it, or a renewed and expanded passion to serve; the destination is that greatest of goals in: to be a more engaged and effective citizen.

And if **education is the destination then the journey is learning**. At Selkirk College we are so proud to be part of so many learning journeys. At Selkirk College we see every day that learning is indeed the journey to the very heart of what it means to be a human being, to be full of hope for the future, to act on that hope in the service of others, and to make a difference.

How cool is that? It's cool but very humbling. I think we can celebrate tonight and still be humble!

Now, the best journeys I have ever undertaken are the ones with others, and this is why it is so great to have you here with us tonight to support and celebrate our learners, to celebrate learning in our region and our community, to experience first hand just how amazing our students are: they're cooking, their hospitality, their music, their programs that we showcased earlier, their talents and their wonderful personalities.

Consider this:

Selkirk College is in its 45th year! Some of the programs at the Silver King campus are in their 47th year! KSA was in this community before I was born. As a college, we are pushing half a century in the West Kootenay and Boundary region. Amazing!

Last year Selkirk served 11,500 learners through credential programs and non-credit continuing education courses; in a region with a population 80,000 that is 1 in 8 citizens that we have interacted with.

We offer some 70 credential programs and learning support services, 500+ CE courses in 6 communities at 9 sites. We have students from across Canada and from 17 countries. We have dear friends and educational partners from China to Guatemala, from Georgia to Suriname.

We also serve the community in many ways that include such things as a Peace Centre, a Rural Development Research center, a Geomatics research facility, a Teaching and Learning Institute, a Health Coop, sport and wellness programming, a flying school satellite in Abbotsford, and soon to be finished Shambala Music and Performance Hall and Aboriginal Gathering Place.

We do this work with some 550 highly professional and committed employees.

But we don't do this great work alone:

We get to work with some amazing learning partners Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy, Columbia Basin Trust, School Districts, First Nations and Métis governments, local government, the province, our sister colleges.

We have some great friends: Teck Metals, Shambala Music Festival, Columbia Power Corp, Fortis, BC Hydro, Celgar, credit unions, hoteliers, accounting firms, chambers, economic development organizations, forest products companies, health providers, social service partners, unions, businesses large, medium, and small and in so many sectors who help us with everything from scholarships and bursaries, supporting programs and lectures, to advising us on our offerings, to major construction initiatives.

We have such amazing individual donors, many who are employees, alumni, or retirees, distinguished award winners, members of our Board of Governors, and Honorary Life Members of our Board who support us through thick and thin and who always seem to be here with us.

There's more, and I have probably forgotten some, but you get the picture.

All of the above make it possible to distribute almost \$200,000 in scholarships and bursaries to students each year, and to make specific initiatives and projects happen.

We literally cannot do it without our community.

We are very fortunate indeed and we thank you, thank you, thank you!!

Have a wonderful evening tonight, and all my best wishes for a wonderful winter season.

Angus Graeme

President & CEO
Selkirk College