



## 'You give me hope,' David Suzuki tells University of Guelph graduates

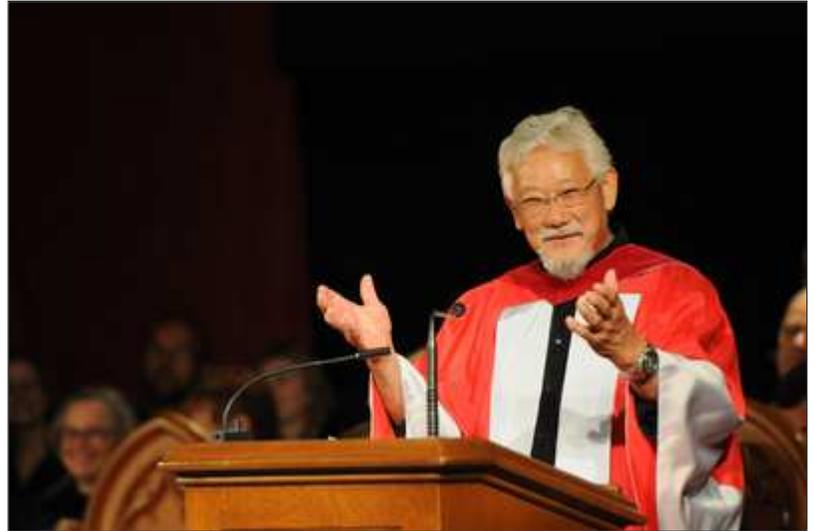
Chris Seto, Mercury staff

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GUELPH — Before addressing the graduates at their convocation ceremony, David Suzuki reminded the audience that the land they were celebrating on was once First Nations land.

It was this land "they took care of for thousands of years, and I'm grateful that they did so well, before we arrived," he said.

This reminder set the tone of the 11-minute convocation address that Suzuki delivered to a packed War Memorial Hall at the University of Guelph on Thursday morning. He began speaking to the graduates soon after receiving an honorary doctorate of laws degree of his own.



**Congratulations.** Canadian environmentalist David Suzuki addresses graduates at the convocation ceremony for the University of Guelph's College of Biological Science, after receiving an honorary doctorate of his own. Chris Seto, Guelph MercurySource: Chris Seto, Guelph Mercury

Addressing students graduating from the College of Biological Science, he introduced himself as a geneticist. He said when he looks out at the students sitting in their black robes, he said he sees them as the culmination of a genetic experiment.

"Today, your parents now must witness the successful completion of that genetic experiment that began so long ago," he said, adding congratulations to the parents as well as the students.

Looking back on the history of human beings, Suzuki identified one thing that set us apart from every other species on the planet – our brains.

"Foresight was our great advantage; the ability to look ahead," he said. This allowed humans to occupy every continent on the planet.

"We can exploit the entire planet for our use, and that amplifies our ecological footprint many, many times."

When all of it is added together – our consumption, numbers, technology, and global economy – Suzuki said "we have become a new kind of force on the planet.

"Collectively, our species is now altering the physical, chemical and biological properties of the planet on a geological scale," he said.

Looking out at the students and parents, Suzuki pulled out a document and held it above his head. He said the piece of paper was a 1992 publication of a document called [World Scientists Warning to Humanity](#), and it described a strong warning from the science community of the day. Signed by more than 2,000 of the top scientists of the time, the paper warns that "human beings are on a collision course," and must act in order to avert disaster.

"If we continue to say that our highest priorities are economic and political then we will maintain our destructive path," Suzuki said.

He said his generation and the baby boomers that followed, "lived like kings and queens", without considering the world they would leave to future generations.

"This is the moment that you must apply your minds and your energy to find solutions to the great challenges that confront us today."

Coming to the end of his talk and looking down towards the graduating class before him, he said their bright faces, "full of idealism and energy", gives him hope for the future.

"Congratulations on reaching this stage of your life. The biggest challenges lie ahead."

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**David Suzuki:**

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