

*RESPECTING THE STANDARDS OF THE PAST;  
BUILDING A LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE*

Good afternoon everyone.

My name is Wade MacLauchlan, and I have the privilege to serve as President of the University of Prince Edward Island

I am delighted to welcome you this afternoon, for the culminating event of your PWC Grand Reunion 2003. This wonderful student centre has become the new crossroads of our university. Today, it serves as a gathering point for the traditions, heritage and affinities that attach to Prince of Wales College, and that underpin a proud history of higher education on Prince Edward Island.

I congratulate the organizers of this Grand Reunion, and all of you as participants, for such a splendid turnout.

500 people enjoying the good humour, the sense of purpose, and the genuine friendship that mark this Grand Reunion is an achievement truly to be treasured and celebrated.

I am sure I speak for everyone in admiring the efforts of the entire organizing team, led by Barb Macnutt and Bob Lund. I ask you to join me in giving them all a fine round of applause.

I call now on Barb and Bob, for some concluding business.

[Including celebration of the 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday of a very special guest, Miss Eleanor Lowe, our most senior graduate as a member of the PWC Class of 1918, who taught Art at PWC for fifty years. Miss Lowe thanked the group for the hearty rendition of *Happy Birthday* and indicated that she forgave those who had stolen fruit from her still life fruit bowl over the years.]

[Also including an invitation to stand to those present from PWC classes from the decades of the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s and 1960s]

The theme of my remarks today will be *Respecting the Standards of the Past, as We Build a Legacy for the Future*.

At the core of this wonderful Grand Reunion 2003 is a respect for the past. For friendships. For roots. For the formative period that our college days represent. For the opportunity that we have all enjoyed through education. And notably for the standards of excellence and the rigour that underpinned a PWC education.

As President of UPEI today, I can assure you that I get up every morning with a deep sense of respect for the rigorous standards of those who have built PEI's educational traditions and heritage.

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Moreover, I go *through* every day and look to the future with an enormous sense of obligation to live up those standards, to build on them, to inspire excellence among our students and staff, and to promote new levels of optimism and ambition for a whole province and society. That is the ultimate role of a college or a university. It is an unrelenting obligation. It is a job that is never done.

I can tell you today that one of my greatest sources of inspiration is the knowledge of those who have gone before us, of their sense of vocation, their utter devotion to the task, their tough-minded belief that education required work and discipline, their struggle to achieve the highest standards of excellence, often with extremely limited resources.

It is with this sense of respect for the past that I am delighted to see the success of this Grand Reunion. I am equally delighted that in 2004 Prince Edward Island will mark a bi-centennial of higher education, looking back to the Legislative Council resolution establishing Kent College in September of 1804. That resolution set aside ten town lots, which later became the site of Central Academy and Prince of Wales College, for the purpose of a college “for the education of our youth in the learned languages and liberal sciences”. It is remarkable to look back today, and to remind ourselves that this initiative to create PEI’s first college came at a time when the struggling colony had fewer than 7000 inhabitants, a rudimentary civic infrastructure, and a modest economy.

It is with this sense of respect, and obligation, that I look back on the people who led Prince of Wales College from its founding in 1860. It is remarkable to remember that PWC had only five principals during its 109 years.

The first, Alexander Inglis, did not last long (at least not by PWC standards), from 1860-68. It was Inglis who, in response to provocations from the press to take a stand on the religious educational controversies of the day, stated: “my motto is, and ever has been, to mind my own business, and nothing else.”

The next two principals, Alexander Anderson and Samuel Napier Robertson, served for a remarkable combination of 69 years. This record makes the recent news that my appointment has been renewed for a further five years somewhat less exceptional.

Far beyond their longevity, Anderson and Robertson were remarkable for their educational attainments, and for the attainments of their students. Under their leadership, PWC became known as one of the leading “preparatory” colleges in Canada. Anderson received an honorary degree from McGill and Robertson from Dalhousie, acknowledging their stature as educators and the reputation of PWC as a top-ranked “feeder school”.

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Anderson was 31 when he took office as principal in 1868. This was also Robertson's age, when he became principal in 1901, taking over from Anderson who left the principalship to become PEI's Superintendent of Schools. It is interesting to note that Dr. Frank MacKinnon was only 30 when he became principal in 1949, at the same time as he was completing work on his book on the *Government of Prince Edward Island*, for which he won the Governor-General's Award for Non-fiction. Over its 109 years, PWC was led by people of serious intellectual calibre.

Anderson was paid many tributes for his teaching excellence. One of his students, Jacob Gould Schurman, who went on to become President of Cornell University and US Ambassador to Germany [it is said that Schurman would have been a candidate for the Presidency of the United States, if he had been born a US citizen], wrote:

Professor Anderson is incomparably the greatest benefactor the Island ever had. I have sat under many instructors - speaking in many different languages - German, English, French, Italian, but I have never met as great a teacher as Professor Anderson. I owe him more than any other teacher.

Sir Andrew MacPhail said of Anderson [in a 1938 radio broadcast]

The conductor makes the orchestra; the master makes the school, the college and the university too. The principal was Alexander Anderson. Of the many teachers I have known, he was the best. His authority was absolute; therefore he was never known to exercise it. A breach of discipline was looked upon by himself and his pupils as an offence against his own dignity, and therefore against the eternal order of the universe.

Whatever degree of popularity Anderson and other PWC professors enjoyed, they didn't fool around when it came to marking and they didn't buy their popularity with inflated grades. Maud Montgomery, who was at PWC in 1893-94 [which she describes as the happiest time of her life] considered Dr. Anderson to be her favourite professor, but that didn't count for anything when it came to grades. Upon receiving a 44 on her December exam in Latin, Montgomery wrote in her diary:

Isn't that awful? I never made such a low mark in my life, even in geometry. I can't understand it; although Dr. A. is a merciless "marker down".

That PWC produced Jacob Gould Schurman, L.M. Montgomery and Sir Andrew MacPhail within the space of two decades, along with many other outstanding graduates, is a measure of the quality of the place.

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Dr. Samuel Napier Robertson was also a PWC Grad during those decades. Remember that these were the same years (1870-1900) when PEI was in such a state of depression that it lost almost one quarter of its population.

Robertson, who became known to his students as “Doc”, went on to further studies and returned to PWC to teach languages. He served as principal from 1901-37. Helen MacDonald writes in “An Affectionate Look Back at Dr. Sammie and PWC”:

Samuel Robertson put great emphasis on the study of language; hence, PWC’s emphasis on English, Latin and other languages. [He] taught Latin, Greek, Ancient History, and Teacher Training. He was not adverse to sports, but looked upon them merely as a basis for health and physical culture. As a master educational authority, his vision was profound, far above the range of most of the Island inhabitants. He believed in subjecting youth to a discipline of training and his grievance was that so few caught a similar vision.

Dr. Robertson ran PWC under challenging conditions, including two strikes in the 1920's and the destruction of the college by fire in 1932.

He set a stern example when it came to discipline, and to marking. Also in his refusal to permit dances on the college premises, notwithstanding the enterprising efforts of students of the 1930s to have Robertson agree to allow dances to be held at the College, he did not relent. On one occasion when he accepted an invitation to come to a dance the students held at the YMCA, to see what was going on, Dr. Robertson made a brief appearance and pronounced:

I just wanted to see how many of you were up here wasting your parents’ money, when you should be home studying.

His successor George Douglas Steele continued those disciplinary traditions. Lloyd Lockerby [of the Class of 1933] told me a story earlier this week, of Dr. Steele’s classroom demeanour. He said that Steele would come in to class and just sit at his desk until things quieted down, which generally didn’t take long. One morning, one of the young women students was sitting near the back, chewing gum. As Lloyd told me, “she was enjoying it.” Dr. Steele, upon detecting this offence against the order of things, looked up at the ceiling and offered the following verse:

A gum-chewing girl and a cud-chewing cow  
are much the same, but there’s a difference somehow.  
Oh yes, I have it now  
it’s the intelligent look on the face of the cow.

Steele then invited the offending student to pick up her books and leave the classroom.

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Things were clearly loosened up under Dr. Frank MacKinnon's mandate. Last October, at the inaugural Dr. Frank MacKinnon lecture, Kent Stetson [who was at PWC in the mid and late 1960s] regaled us with memories of dances, theatrical performances and singing, while standards of academic excellence were maintained.

I am proud that we have established a lecture series in Dr. Frank MacKinnon's name. And to tell you that Dr. Frank and the MacKinnon family are fully supportive of the initiative. I have visited with Dr. MacKinnon on four occasions, since becoming president. You'll be pleased to know that he is enthusiastic in his interest in how UPEI is developing. On my most recent visit, when I took him a copy of the poster from Kent Stetson's lecture and a copy of Kent's text, Dr. Frank offered some quite detailed and unsolicited advice as to how we could jazz up the University's profile.

You should get eight of the fattest businessmen in Charlottetown, fit them out with tu-tus and great feathers. They would come out on the stage, and perform a kick-line routine. And then you, the President, would emerge from the feathers, to great applause....

I had a better sense of what Dr. Frank had in mind when I saw the cheerleaders routine at the Red and Blue Review on Friday night. I am also inclined to think that my performance today would not live up to the standards urged on me by Dr. MacKinnon.

While I am on this subject, I am pleased to tell you that the next Dr. Frank MacKinnon lecturer will be historian, Dr. Margaret MacMillan, author of *Paris, 1919*. The lecture will take place here at UPEI on Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup>.

One more piece of evidence of the high regard in which PWC was held among Canadian Universities. We had an e-mail message recently from Alberta Bryant Boswall (PWC '45) who taught at PWC 1950-52, recalling an incident in the early 50s when Dr. Frank MacKinnon was in correspondence with McGill to determine whether a student could receive credit for a second course in Greek, taught by Miss Seaman, even though the course did not have a regular listing in the calendar. The response from McGill was that anything taught by Miss Seaman would be given credit at McGill.

This reminds me of another story, recounted to me by Dr. John Croteau when I visited him at his home in South Bend, Indiana, in March of 2003, shortly before his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Dr. Croteau taught Economics at PWC and SDU in the 1930's and 40's, during which time he made a pioneering contribution to the development of the credit union and coop movement on Prince Edward Island. The story that Dr. Croteau told me involved a movement by the students at PWC in the early 1940's to have their papers graded anonymously, presumably in the belief that they would get fairer (i.e., better) grades if the professors did not know their identity. The college gave in to the student pressure, permitting them to write under a pseudonym. John Croteau told

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me that if the professors could not recognize a student's handwriting, they would simply show the paper to Miss Seaman, who recognized with 100% accuracy the handwriting of every student in the college.

Against this backdrop of close community and high standards of teaching excellence that prevailed at PWC, and in the spirit of respect for what those standards and traditions represent, I will now turn to a consideration of what we are doing at UPEI today to build on those traditions of excellence.....

1. *Teaching Excellence.* I am delighted to say that UPEI has been built on traditions of teaching excellence, going back to the priorities that were established in our first years. I have taught full-time in three universities and have had briefer involvements elsewhere, and I can tell you that I have not encountered a university with the priority on teaching that prevails at UPEI.

I am delighted that this emphasis on teaching excellence has recognized recently with the award of a 3M Fellowship to a UPEI professor, Dr. Philip Smith, one of only eight fellowships that were awarded in Canada this year [to a pool of 32,000 university professors]. What is even more impressive, a UPEI professor won the 3M Fellowship in 2002 [Brent MacLaine] and in 2001 [Shannon Murray]. This is a record of teaching achievement unmatched by any other university in Canada. Teaching excellence and student success are fundamental to who we are as a university.

2. *Greater Participation Rates.* Full-time enrolment at UPEI in 2002-03 is 3100 students. The largest-ever enrolment at PWC was 779, in 1963-64. This reflects a dramatic change in individual and societal expectations. Today's students graduating from high school *expect* to go on to university or college. More than 75% of Prince Edward Island high school graduates plan on higher education. From a societal point of view, it is very important that we understand and perfect the learning process to enhance the chances of success of these increased numbers of students. Not that we lower standards, but that we favour success. During the PWC era, those who did not complete a college education had many other options. That is not the case today. Hence, we cannot rely on an approach to student success that Dr. John Croteau [who taught at PWC and SDU from 1934-47] characterized as "predestination".

While there may indeed be legitimate debates about whether we should return to the rigorous entrance exams and the systematic weeding out that marked the PWC approach, we simply do not operate in the same demographic or economic circumstances as prevailed during the 109 years that PWC was in operation. As we look at our demographic future, with a rapidly-declining youth population and an increasing older cohort, higher education has to be more nimble than ever, including in lifelong learning and has to show leadership in literacy and learning for the entire population.

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3. *Inspiring Excellence.* One priority, entirely consistent with the PWC traditions, we have to encourage excellence.

Last year, we introduced the *Inspiring Excellence Awards*, offering every student coming to UPEI with an average of 85% in grade 11 and grade 12 an automatic scholarship of \$600 per year. In our entering class last fall, we had almost 200 students who met that standard.

We also have to be willing to push for higher standards of achievement in the province and in society. And to speak out about that and show leadership. This is a fundamental role of a university, a role that was certainly played by PWC, and I am proud to say that UPEI continues in that tradition.

4. *Programs to keep our own people here, and to attract others.* Six faculties. Students from 36 countries. The university of choice for PEI students. All three counties.

5. *Research and development.* \$7 million in externally funded research in 2002-03. Leaders regionally. Active participants nationally. In a wide field of endeavours. Sustainable communities. Health and environment. Bio-economy.

The National Research Council Institute. The Institute for Nutrisciences and Health. Only the 20<sup>th</sup> institute in Canada. On campus at UPEI.

6. *Facilities.* The WA Murphy Student Centre. The Athletics Complex. A university that builds a sense of pride, optimism and ambition.

7. *Resources.* Building a legacy. \$14.2 million, toward a \$25 million target. Mainly our own resources. Ruby Rogers D'Iorio, from the last reunion. This is a time to do extraordinary things. I invite you to join in this wonderful success story. When you come here for your next reunion, I want this place to be even better. Every day we get up with the firm intention to improve, and to meet new standards of excellence.

**Conclusion:** I am proud that the high standards of excellence that were the hallmark of Prince of Wales College are being carried on today through the University of Prince Edward Island. And I am delighted to have the opportunity to welcome you here today, to a university that is on the rise, that is living up to the standards of its predecessors, and that is determined to achieve the most we possibly can for this province, for our students, and for the world through advanced education and research. A university that, with your help and with the inspiration of the example of PWC, will continue to do extraordinary things.