

Citation read on the occasion of the granting of the degree of

Honorary Doctor of Education to

Captain Trevor Greene

by the Senate of the University of Victoria

November 10, 2015

Madam Chancellor, today I have the honour of introducing Captain Trevor Greene.

It is the essence of the human condition that, at times, we feel embraced in a warm web of friends and family, and, at times, utterly and despairingly alone. Many of our experiences are touched both by competition and cooperation. Let me illustrate with two examples.

Participants in team sports such as hockey, basketball or rowing, know that success comes as the result of team work, not as the result of individual effort. Being part of a team fosters a sense of belonging, and of well-being. Even when there are individual acts of heroism or virtuosity or even failure, they function as part of the team. The teammates cooperate in their competition with their rivals. The language of fighting, and – at the same time - of pulling together is central to sport.

We also find this conceit in the arena of illness, disease and trauma. Patients are commonly talked of as fighting cancer, or not giving in to despair. And the same patients often say that they could not have pulled through without the support of their friends and family. At times alone. At times embraced.

And given the proximity to Remembrance Day, we must also note that the underlying metaphor of both of these examples is a military one and that, of course, wars themselves are prototypical cases where we find conflict and camaraderie. There is conflict between the factions, and esprit de corps amongst the troops.

Sports, trauma, and war. A seemingly eclectic triumvirate, but one which is highly relevant today as we honour Captain Trevor Greene. Captain Greene is a former elite rower who suffered a traumatic head injury while a member of the Canadian Armed Forces.

In 2006, he deployed to Afghanistan as a member of the unit for Civilian-Military Co-operation. On March 4th, at a meeting with elders just outside Kandahar City, he put aside his weapon, and took off his helmet as a sign of trust and respect. During that meeting, a young man came up and drove an axe into the top of his head. His head and brain trauma was severe, and he spent over two years in hospital. Many felt he would not speak or walk again. But here he is.

The astonishing recovery that Captain Green is making is the product of both the support he has received from his wife and the medical community, combined with the astonishing energy and commitment he himself has brought to recovery. Relearning to speak. Relearning to walk.

And just as he was in Afghanistan to rebuild social structure, now he is actively engaged in rebuilding neural structures. UVic researchers have been monitoring his brain structure since his injury. From him, we have learned that the military metaphor of treatment (doctor versus disease) fails. The patient plays a crucial role as we have seen in Captain Greene's drive. His resilience is demonstrated with every syllable and every step.

Let me conclude with some words from Tennyson's poem about Ulysses, another indomitable spirit, and traveller:

"I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone....
...this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
...'T is not too late to seek a newer world....
...that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

Madam Chancellor, I have the honour to present Captain Trevor Greene for the degree Doctor of Education, honoris causa.

Written and presented by
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