

*Citation read on the occasion of the granting of the degree of  
Honorary Doctor of Science to  
**Paul Nicklen**  
by the Senate of the University of Victoria  
June 16, 2017*

Madam Chancellor, today I have the honour to introduce Paul Nicklen.

Paul Nicklen is one of the great interpreters of the grandeur, beauty, and fragility of the natural world. He has the distinction of receiving The World Press Awards First Prize Nature Stories four times, the Shell (BBC) Wildlife Photographer of the year in 2008, and was one of five people to receive a University of Victoria Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award during the university's 50th anniversary celebrations. His work has appeared in numerous publications including more than 15 times in National Geographic. If people have seen a photograph set in the polar regions that filled them with awe, a photograph they shared with the person next to them, and remember to this day, it was probably taken by Paul Nicklen.

Paul Nicklen's photographs stand on their own as remarkable works of art, but he is first and foremost a storyteller. Each photograph has a context and a story about the subject's past, present, and future. Through these stories Paul Nicklen has communicated to the world the glorious natural heritage that we risk losing as our earth changes due to human activities. His stories have been acclaimed by US Presidents, Fortune 500 CEOs, and the millions who have viewed his TED talk. Most scientists can only dream of having such influence.

Paul Nicklen was born in the summer of 1968 in Tisdale, Saskatchewan, and moved at the age of four with his family to Iqaluit and then Kimmirut on Baffin Island. There was no telephone, no radio, no TV, and certainly no Internet in Kimmirut (identified as Lake Harbor on maps in those days), a village of 200 people. The children of the village entertained themselves by playing on the sea ice and exploring the tundra. Clearly, this experience had a profound influence on Paul's view of the world.

He left the north to do an undergraduate degree at the University of Victoria and spent time at the Bamfield Marine Station where he was well known for his love of diving and photography. He is also remembered for running out of air on at least two occasions while taking underwater photographs. This is what friends are for, to share their air. While at Bamfield, he publicly declared his intention to become a wildlife photographer after having seen a presentation by Ian Stirling of the Canadian Wildlife Service. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, after graduation Paul became a wildlife biologist in the Northwest Territories. This detour was short-lived.

Paul's first photographic expedition after retiring as a wildlife biologist was an epic worthy of Canada's early explorers. He was dropped off by airplane, alone, on a frozen lake in the Northwest Territories, and then travelled 1,200 kilometres by foot and hundreds more by inflatable canoe down the Horton River, before being picked up three months later with hundreds of rolls of exposed film. It is worth considering that each of those so-memorable photographs was the product of hundreds of hours in the field under the most demanding conditions.

Few of us attending this convocation will have the privilege of exploring the polar regions as Paul Nicklen has. But his dedication and hard work have created a collection of photographs where we feel the echo of the thrill he felt at the moment he made his glorious images. It is Paul's hope that this thrill will move us to protect a heritage that is rapidly disappearing.

Madam Chancellor, it is my privilege to present Paul Nicklen for the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*.

Written by  
Dr. Bradley Anholt  
Department of Biology  
Faculty of Science  
University of Victoria

Presented by  
Dr. Kieka Mynhardt  
Department of Mathematics and Statistics  
Faculty of Science  
University of Victoria