



INSTALLATION ADDRESS BY
DISCOURS D'INSTALLATION DE
SUZANNE FORTIER

PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR
OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY
PRINCIPALE ET VICE-CHANCELIÈRE
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ MCGILL

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2013
REDPATH HALL

LE MARDI 5 NOVEMBRE 2013
SALLE REDPATH

McGill



YOUR EXCELLENCY, MINISTRE DUCHESNE,
CHANCELLOR STEINBERG, CHAIRMAN COBBETT,
GUESTS:

THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING HERE.

C'est un énorme bonheur de voir parmi vous tellement de membres de ma famille, amis et collègues. Et bien sûr, mon mari Douglas et mon fils Thomas. Vous m'avez toujours accompagnée dans mes rêves, mes défis, mes aspirations et mes coups de cœur. Vous m'avez guidée et vous m'avez aidée à demeurer fidèle à mes buts, à mes valeurs et à mes principes. Merci énormément.

It is a privilege to follow Heather Munroe-Blum, McGill's first woman Principal, and to build on her decade of leadership. I am honoured that she is here today. Merci Heather. So, too, am I honoured to welcome past Chancellors, Board Chairs and Principals of McGill, and, of course, our Governor General, who is not only Principal Emeritus but also McGill's Visitor. Merci beaucoup. It is wonderful to see among you so many former colleagues and dear friends

from Ottawa and NSERC, from Queen's University, the Hauptman Woodward Institute and McGill's sister universities.

What a thrill it was for me to re-enter the Roddick Gates on September 5th. It brought back many happy memories of my days as a McGill student, of the friends I made here and the professors and staff who helped make the University my home.

The world I grew up in was far removed from the world of academia.

Nous avons trois livres à la maison : le dictionnaire *Larousse*, la Bible et le catalogue de chez Eaton's. J'en ai passé du temps le nez dans ces livres jusqu'au jour où mes parents, se rendant compte de ma passion pour la lecture, m'ont ouvert un compte à la librairie du coin. Quel bonheur! J'ai aussi passé beaucoup de temps à regarder le globe terrestre et à apprendre le nom de tous ces pays, avec leur capitale, bien sûr, que je croyais ne pouvoir découvrir que dans mes livres.

My parents ran the hotel in our village, Saint-Timothée. People came there to dance, and they came to drink. They came to live with us when they were homeless. Even as children, it was clear to my sisters, my brother and me that others saw our home as a flawed environment in which to raise a family.

We did not see it that way.

We grew up in a loving home. We learned that just because some of the people we knew were down and out, that did not make them lesser human beings. They were smart, but not educated, and they saw many doors closed to them. And from them, I learned about the importance of education. As children, we learned that we all have flaws. We learned about respect and compassion.

Many years later, I heard the words of a great McGill alumnus, the poet and singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen: “There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.”¹ We saw those cracks, and we saw the light.

How exciting it was for me to come to study at McGill—and what a headache I must have been for people in Admissions. There were so many things I did not understand. I spoke very little English and understood even less. I enrolled as the single student in an unusual program, crystallography. In fact, this year I realized why it is that I never had a class reunion: I was the only student! In all my ignorance of how things worked, I did not know that there were people taking care of me.

I remember vividly how much I liked my classes, and how exciting it was for me to be doing research already in my second year. I discovered, to my surprise, that the professors teaching me were giants in their fields. My PhD supervisor, Gabrielle Donnay, and her husband José were

¹ Cohen, Leonard. “Anthem.” *The Future*. Columbia Records: 1992.

among those giants. They not only introduced me to crystallography and its great international community, but also made me a part of their family and treated me like “*la prunelle de leurs yeux*.” And I am honoured and touched that their two sons, Albert and Victor, are here today.

Et, bien sûr, j'étais à Montréal. J'ai goûté à tout ce que la ville avait à offrir : la musique, la littérature, la danse, les arts visuels, la rencontre de plusieurs cultures et de plusieurs langues. Je suis d'ailleurs ravie que plus tôt dans la cérémonie, on ait rendu hommage à Nathalie Bondil et Boris Brott, pour leur apport exceptionnel à l'environnement culturel montréalais.

Since returning to McGill in September, I have been diving deeply into the McGill of today. I am pleased to see that what I loved about McGill during my time as a student remains strong. It is also exciting to be learning how McGill has changed, and is changing.

I sat in on several classes, from anthropology and law to water resource management and political science. I must say that I was afraid that the plugged-in students of today would be bored in the classroom. I was wrong. The students are engaged. The professors are engaged. This is the McGill I knew.

I have seen how the students participate in the life of the University and community. The integration of student life and learning is not simply a concept here. It is a reality.

Classroom learning still plays a very important role in education; you will not pick up quantum mechanics just walking down the street. But there is also so much learning that occurs outside the classroom and outside the campus.

The University is reinventing itself for the 21st century. The challenges we face, the opportunities we explore, and the contributions we make—all of these extend well beyond our own campus and country.

Nous avons la chance de vivre à une époque qui a une conscience profonde de l'importance du savoir, que ce soit pour notre développement en tant que citoyens de la même planète, le bien-être de l'être humain dans toutes ses dimensions culturelles, sociales et économiques, ou l'exploration de ce grand univers qui est le nôtre et duquel nous connaissons si peu.

We are at a *carrefour*, a time of confluence, with many things coming together in many ways. Notre place est au carrefour du savoir et de la créativité. As a university, our place is where knowledge and creativity meet. Our place is at the carrefour of diverse cultural perspectives, diverse disciplines, and different ways of knowing. Our place is also at the carrefour of the three elements of our mission. Teaching, research and service to society do not stand in isolation. They feed one another. They shape one another. They push one another into unexpected directions. They demand participation and reject complacency.

It can be messy at the carrefour. It is not easy to confront assumptions. It is not easy to push ourselves with questions for which there are not neat solutions at the back of the book. It is not easy to accept that sometimes it is not our answers that are wrong, but our questions. It can be a challenge to cultivate this highly dynamic culture filled with intense debate and intense confrontation of ideas.

We are the great collider, and even if the collider sometimes overheats, physics tells us that this is where you find the most exotic particles, the new ideas, the new paradigms, the discoveries.

I am coming back to a University that has a clear sense of identity, purpose and direction. It is a community that, led by our Provost Tony Masi, has committed to a clear plan whose acronym, “ASAP,” speaks to the eagerness to put that plan into practice. It is a community that is embracing the values of inclusion and respect for cultural and individual diversity, a community that has set very high standards for itself and is dedicated to being accessible to everyone who shares that commitment to excellence.

Our sights are high. We want our University to be a place of choice for the brightest talents, be they students, faculty or staff. We want a teaching and research environment that is dynamic and innovative.

We want an educational experience that resonates a lifetime, and a University that responds to the

needs of its neighbourhood, its province, its country, its world.

I recently received a book by one of our management professors, Henry Mintzberg. He wrote something that really resonates with me: “What could be more natural,” he asks, “than to treat our organizations, not as mystical hierarchies of authority, but as communities of engagement, where every member is respected and so returns that respect?”²

In appointing me Principal, you have given me the privilege and responsibility of working with the entire McGill community, as a community of engagement, to build on the strong foundation created through the hard work and dedication of so many people before us. I am here today to draw upon the strengths and aspirations of this community—and to crystallize their energy and ambitions into a vision and a future for our University that we can commit to, because it comes from us. I have returned to serve my University with all my heart and energy. My sights are high, and my hopes are great because of your own commitment and your pride in your institution.

Un mot reflète ce moment extraordinaire : émerveillement, mon admiration envers tout ce que vous avez accompli, et mes aspirations envers tout ce qu’ensemble, nous réussirons à accomplir.

² Mintzberg, Henry. *Simply Managing*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. San Francisco: 2013. pp. 174-5.

Not long ago, an 11-year-old boy was walking through the McGill campus with his grandmother. He turned to his grandmother, my sister Muriel, who is with us today, and declared “*C’est ici que je vais étudier.*” “That is where I will study.” His *grand-maman* challenged him: “*Oui, mais il va falloir que tu aies de bonnes notes.*” “You will have to have very good marks to get in, you know.” He answered, “*Ça ne sera pas un problème.*” “This will not be a problem.” And when she added, “*Il va falloir que tu apprennes l’anglais,*” he did not hesitate a second: “*Tu vas voir, ça ne me prendra pas de temps!*” “You will see, it won’t take me long.” Born to a Brazilian mother and a French-Canadian father, that boy exemplifies the new multicultural, multilingual generation. He is ready to be challenged. He is ready to embrace other cultures, other languages and other ways of knowing. All he needs is for *us* to be ready for him.

Merci de tout mon cœur.