



## Graduation Ceremony 2012

Written by Michael Vasili Richardson, Health Sciences

Good evening parents, friends, teachers, mentors, administrators, and of course, the Graduating class of 2012.

Today, we have become Vanier graduates. The home of the cheetahs is now also the home of tomorrow's doctors and lawyers, teachers and psychologists, musicians and engineers, architects and nurses. No matter what our reasons were for choosing Vanier so very few years ago, what is important now is that we are all here tonight to celebrate our triumphs, our achievements, our victories both individually and as a school, and the journey on which we have all embarked toward our future destinations.

Each of us has had our own unique experiences at Vanier; a combination of good times and bad times, times of laughter and of joy, times of school spirit, and of course, times of last-minute studying for that exam that we forgot was taking place tomorrow morning. (Good thing for Starbucks!)

Graduation marks the end of yet another extraordinary chapter in our lives. With this chapter closed, I am certain that many of us are already anxious about starting the next one because, unlike an English book, we cannot skip through the pages of life to see how long the next chapter is going to be. We all have our own book of life that has not yet been written and every day that passes is another page we write in ourselves. Luckily, as Vanier graduates, we have been given all of the paper and ink we need to write our own stories. And with the love and support of our families, friends, and fellow graduates, our stories *will* become best sellers.

One thing that I will reflect upon as I throw my graduation cap in the air is the way that Vanier has been my home away from home for the past few years. As one of our generation's most inspirational motion pictures said, coming into Vanier, I felt like a one-man wolf pack. In fact, I'm sure many of us felt exactly the same way. During our time at Vanier, we have all met so many new people, made lasting friendships, lived through lifelong memories, and added many new members to our wolf packs.

And I'm sure you can agree that waking up on Monday morning was never an easy task, but knowing that the rest of our pack was there made it all a little easier. So, as we all begin writing our next chapter, let us all remember that sense of family that helped us get through Monday morning classes, or better yet, how our friends were our support system

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we needed as we made complete fools of ourselves during UB karaoke. Just as importantly, let us all remember how our friends were always there with us to savour those wonderful, gourmet meals... at Decarie Hot Dog. All this to say, let us embrace the life lessons that we have learned in CEGEP that have prepared us for the bigger and better things that we will soon explore.

Ever since we were children, we have been told that we needed to start planning for “the future.” My grandfather, for example, would always tell me that if I planted a seed today, I would be able to eat the fruit tomorrow. One thing I realized in CEGEP is that I don’t think my future will *suddenly* begin one day down the road; in fact, I think my future has already begun. Every lesson I learn today can be applied tomorrow, and this is the lesson I would like to share with all of you. Treat every day as a new learning experience, and another opportunity to grow as an individual.

As I sat in front of my laptop with a lukewarm cup of coffee finalizing this address, I decided that I wanted to leave you all with one final thought. No matter what our futures will hold, there will be times in our lives where self-doubt will stand in the way of an open door. When this happens, let us all remember the following: Albert Einstein did not speak until age 4, and was originally told he would never amount to anything. Beethoven was told by his music teacher that he was hopeless as a composer. Michael Jordan was cut from his High School basketball team. Oprah Winfrey struggled as a small-town journalist, and Abraham Lincoln was defeated in eight presidential elections before becoming the most inspirational president in U.S. history. Fellow graduates, if there is one thing that Vanier has taught me, it is to **never let *anyone* tell you that you can’t**.

Thank you family and friends for being with us both tonight, and throughout our own lives. More specifically, thank you parents for being our coaches; thank you friends for being our teammates; and thank you teachers and administrators for being our mentors. Once again, congratulations to the Vanier graduating class of 2012! Let us all leave this ceremony tonight ready to show the world that *Vanier* graduates (not John Abbott or Dawson...) will stop at ***nothing*** to achieve greatness.

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