

# Degrees Average

## Sheldon Bowles Honorary Doctor of Laws

Bowles is a successful entrepreneur, best-selling author, and international speaker who began his career at the *Winnipeg Free Press*. A regular commentator on CBC Radio, he's written for the *Globe and Mail*, *Time* magazine and the *Times of London*.

After moving to Royal Canadian Securities, Bowles became president and CEO of Domo Gas. Since leaving the company, he has turned his metal manufacturing plant, Precision Metalcraft, into a multi-million-dollar business.

The degree is a coveted one for Bowles, who counted it among the highlights of his career.

"I have had a career and various careers that have been so much fun, and to be honored like this this morning is just the pinnacle," he said.

Even though Bowles never attended the U of A, his fondness for the University was evident.

"Spirit is spirit, in the sense that there is a spirit here. Trying to nail it down and say exactly what that spirit is would be difficult, but I think it's a palpable spirit. There is a connection among people here to the institution, and a value in the institution and an awareness of its history, its goal, and its goals in the world," he explained.

—Olesia Plokhii



## PJ Perry Guloien Honorary Doctor of Laws

PJ Perry might stand out as the only musician to receive an honorary degree this year, but his list of accomplishments easily rivals those of the other recipients.

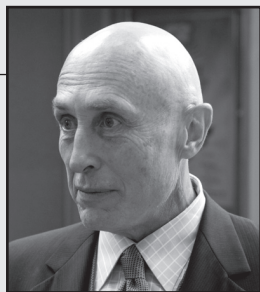
A world-renowned jazz saxophonist, he has won two Juno awards and has been awarded the Critic's Choice Award for Best Alto Saxophone six times by *Jazz Report* magazine. But the recognition from the U of A for his accomplishments stands apart from these other awards.

"It's not the same respect you get from your peers, but it's a profoundly courageous thing that University did to give a jazz saxophone player a doctorate of laws," Perry explained. "It shows that the community cares about their artists."

Perry's message to grads mirrored his own love for music and stressed how important he believes loving what you do with your life can shape who you become.

"Learn to live with passion and to expect a series of never-ending frustrations through your life," he said emphatically. "There are lots of times in our lives when we feel we're not able to do something, and I believe if we persevere and have enough passion and desire in what we choose to do with our lives, we overcome those, and in hindsight, life and our vocations are filled with these plateaus. They can be thought of as our life works."

—Ryan Heise



**"With some degree of modesty, I've got a lot of awards and recognition over the years, but this is the ultimate. Looking at the other recipients of the award, this is pretty special."**

**—E Hunter Harrison  
Honorary Doctor of Laws**

## E Hunter Harrison Honorary Doctor of Laws

With his huge grin and quintessential southern drawl, E Hunter Harrison explains what he believes is the most important quality for university graduates to take with them into the professional world.

"Leadership and the importance of leadership. [It's] a lost art, and if you could take the power of your education, expertise, and experience, and add leadership to it, it's a powerful combination."

Harrison, who has been president and CEO of CN Rail since 2003 and was named North America's Railroader of the Year in 2002, emphasized how pleased he was to receive the U of A's award.

"With some degree of modesty, I've got a lot of awards and recognition over the years, but this is the ultimate. Looking at the other recipients of the award, this is pretty special," he said.

After spending over 40 years in the industry, Harrison noted how challenging it can be for recent grads to move into established fields, working side-by-side with people that can be over twice their age.

"A lot of us do not like change—we like to do things the old way," Harrison stated. "If we can't adjust our values between a 60-year-old and 20-year-old, we're going to have a horrible time communicating. But if I understand a little bit more about their value system, and they understand a little more about mine, and you have some mutual respect, then you can get a powerful communication going."

—Ryan Heise



## Dr Robert Westbury Honorary Doctor of Laws

A renowned community figure within Edmonton and Alberta, Westbury was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws for his work in the Capital Region.

"I felt very, very humble, and I felt in awe of [the award]," he said.

Westbury's past credentials include director of curriculum development with the Edmonton Catholic School Board, president of the Society for Energy and Environment Development Studies (SEEDS) Foundation, vice-president of TransAlta, and vice-president of Grant MacEwan College.

His connection to the University stems back to his work with youth and education, particularly his connection to teaching.

"The reality of it is the things that I'm involved in are things that I think are paid off when people do go to university," Westbury said. "So my concern has always been with young people, [and] all of the research says that if you don't look after young people, they have a very difficult time surviving."

Westbury currently chairs the Telus Edmonton Community Board, the Alberta Centre for Child Family and Community Research, the Enoch/Paragon Board, and the Alberta Order of Excellence.

The future looks bright for Westbury, who dismissed any notion of retirement.

"What do I do when I get up in the morning if I'm not working? Do I have a scotch? Well, it's a little early for that," Westbury joked.

—Jen Huygen



## Wilton Littlechild Honorary Doctor of Laws

Wilton "Willie" Littlechild was the first indigenous person appointed to Queen's council in Alberta, the first Treaty Indian to serve in federal Parliament, and has represented indigenous issues to the UN since 1977. But despite these and other credentials, he still cites receiving his bachelor's degree in Physical Education from the U of A as his proudest accomplishment.

"At the time when I started, there were fewer than 100 indigenous university students across Canada. [The U of A] was a campus of about 21 000, and there were five of us," Littlechild remembered. "Now there's hundreds. I think that succeeding at that first step—getting my first degree—meant a lot to me and at the same time showed other first nations students that it's possible. If you challenge yourself and work hard enough, you can succeed at a postsecondary level."

As a student, Littlechild was no stranger to hard work. During his time at the U of A, he played on four separate varsity teams, which meant he had to fit his homework in between football, hockey, basketball, and swimming practices.

Still, he claims being a Golden Bear is what helped him get through school.

"Being on a team made it easier for me to succeed at school because I had an immediate group of friends in my teammates," he explained. "I [also] knew that if I wanted to stay on the teams, I had to keep my marks up. The discipline I learned through sport translated easily to studying."

Littlechild stayed at the U of A for both a master's degree in physical education and a law degree, and therefore considers this accolade to be that much more significant.

"It's a tremendous honour, and it means a lot to me to be recognized by my own university," he said.

—Robin Collum

