

GOOD EVENING FELLOW CLASSMATES, MENTORS, TEACHERS, PROFESSORS, FAMILY MEMBERS AND GUESTS.

WELCOME TO THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GRADUATING CLASS OF HUMANITIES 101.

I WOULD FIRST OF ALL LIKE TO THANK BRIAN EDWARDS FROM BISNO, WHO RECOMMENDED ME AS A STUDENT. HIS POSITIVE APPROACH AND DEDICATION HAS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN MY LIFE.

I ALSO WANT TO THANK ALL OF THE INDIVIDUALS WHO MADE THIS CLASS POSSIBLE, RELEVANT AND ENGAGING.

I WANT TO THANK MY FAMILY FOR PUTTING UP WITH ME. IF IT WASN'T FOR MY WIFE I WOULDN'T BE STANDING HERE TODAY. THE TRUE CORNERSTONE OF THE FAMILY IS BEING THERE THROUGH THICK AND THIN. MY CHILDREN MAX AND MOLLY, BEING TEENAGERS, LOOK AT ME LIKE I HAVE TWO HEADS NOW, BUT HAVE ^{John thanked me} STOOD BESIDE ME AND I'M VERY BLESSED. TO MY BROTHER WHO SAID... ENDEAVOUR TO PERSEVERE AND ^{John} TO JAMES CZANK FOR HAVING SPARKED THE NEURONS IN MY BRAIN, ^{his} WHICH WOKE ^{and for working} ME UP AT 3:00 a.m. TO WRITE THIS SPEECH, ~~JUST KIDDING JAMES!~~
^{hmm}

THE HUMANITIES 101 COURSE HAS BEEN A GREAT INSPIRATION TO ME ON MY JOURNEY TO RECOVERY. I SPENT 6 MONTHS IN ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL FOLLOWING A BRAIN INJURY. I USED TO CALL MY HOSPITAL ROOM MY APARTMENT. WHEN I RECEIVED THE "GOOD" NEWS FROM DR. HARGDON THAT I WAS GOING HOME, I WAS SCARED. I WASN'T SURE IF IT WAS A GOOD THING OR A BAD THING. I WANTED TO JUST HIDE IN MY ROOM. I MADE IT OUT WEARING A HELMET AND USING A CANE AND I'M HERE TONIGHT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT INSPIRATION.

MY STORY IS HARD TO TELL AS IT BRINGS BACK A LOT OF GOOD AND BAD MEMORIES, BUT IT IS WHAT I LIVED THROUGH ...

I WENT TO SEE MY FAMILY DOCTOR 5 YEARS AGO FOR MY ANNUAL MEDICAL CHECK UP AND HE SAID I HAD HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE. HE KNEW THAT I WAS STUBBORN AND HAD A HEAD LIKE A ROCK. HE EXPLAINED THAT IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT THAT I TAKE MY MEDICATION AND SLOW DOWN, THAT THE STRESS FROM MY BUSINESS WAS MAKING ME SICK. HE SAID YOU MUST CHANGE YOUR LIFESTYLE. I STOPPED TAKING MY MEDICATION.

IN 2010 I SUFFERED A HEMMORAGIC STROKE OR BLEED ON MY BRAIN, WHICH WAS DIRECTLY RELATED TO MY UNTREATED HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE. ?! I USED TO BE A MACHINE OPERATOR AND WHEN WE HAVE A BLEED IT MEANS FIX THE HOSE, GET SOME HYDRAULIC OIL, START THE MACHINE AND GET BACK TO WORK, BECAUSE YOU'RE ON THE CLOCK. MAN, IT SURE DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY WITH HUMANS! WHEN YOU BLOW A HOSE IT'S SERIOUS AND FIXING A MACHINE ISN'T LIKE FIXING THE BRAIN. WHEN YOU ARE IN THE HOSPITAL TRAPPED IN BED YOU HAVE A LOT OF TIME TO THINK. I NEVER HAD TIME TO THINK BEFORE. MY LIFE NOW CONSISTED OF THE TV AND THE FACT THAT I LOST ½ MY BRAIN FUNCTION.

I AM TRULY HUMBLLED BY THE PROFESSIONALS WHO SAVED MY LIFE ESPECIALLY DR. HAQ, MY NEUROSURGEON, WHO OPERATED ON ME NOT ONCE BUT TWICE. IF IT WASN'T FOR HIS QUICK THINKING AND RISK TAKING, I WOULDN'T BE HERE TODAY TALKING TO YOU. HOW FORTUNATE WE ARE IN THUNDER BAY TO HAVE THESE AMAZING DOCTORS, I WILL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL.

THANKS TO THE UNIVERSITY FOR OFFERING HUMANITIES 101, ^{to Christina and} THE PROFESSORS AND STAFF FOR VOLUNTEERING THEIR TIME, MEALS AND WISDOM. SPECIAL THANKS TO RYLY LANG AND KEITH STRUTHERS FOR THEIR KINDNESS AND GENEROUSITY. THIS IS WHAT TRUE HUMANITY IS ALL ABOUT. THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE JOINED THIS CLASS, WHERE I MET NEW FRIENDS AND WAS MADE TO FEEL INCLUDED. I WILL ALWAYS CHERISH AND REMEMBER ALL OF YOU.

THE LAST FOUR YEARS OF MY RECOVERY HAVE BEEN LONG AND DIFFICULT, BUT ALONG THE WAY I'VE BEEN INSPIRED TOO. I'VE BEEN AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE CANADA GAMES COMPLEX SINCE MY DISCHARGE FROM ST. JOE'S. ONE DAY I MET A MAN THERE WHO SAID HE TOO HAD SUFFERED A STROKE. HE SAID THAT I JUST NEEDED TO KEEP WORKING HARD AND NOT GIVE UP, IF I WANTED TO BE STRONG AND WALK "NORMAL" AGAIN LIKE HIM. HE TOLD ME TO HAVE "SISU". WHAT WAS "SISU"? SO OF COURSE WHEN I GOT HOME WE GOOGLED THE MEANING... **Sisu** is a Finnish word generally **meaning** determination, bravery, and resilience. **Sisu** is about taking action against the odds and displaying courage and resoluteness in the face of adversity.

I STILL CARRY THOSE WORDS OF HOPE AND ENCOURAGEMENT WITH ME AND SHARE THEM WITH ANYONE NEW I SEE AT THE COMPLEX WHO IS STRUGGLING.

I ENCOURAGE ALL OF YOU TONIGHT TO HAVE SISU IN YOUR LIVES AS YOU CONTINUE ON YOUR JOURNEY IN THE FUTURE.