

Bishop's University to celebrate Class of 2024 achievements during Convocation Ceremonies

Honorands Elisapie, Dr. George Siber and the Eastern Townships Community

Sherbrooke, May 27, 2024 – On June 1st, Bishop's University Chancellor Daniel Fournier will preside over the 197th Convocation ceremony, in which degrees will be conferred on over 600 graduates for the Class of 2024.

“Convocation marks an important milestone for all Bishop's University graduates, a memorable life event for students who have been the heart of our community in recent years,” remarks Bishop's University Chancellor Daniel Fournier. “They are now ready to face the new challenges that await them, and we are confident that they are well prepared to do so.”

Convocation is also an occasion to recognize the outstanding achievements of deserving individuals, by conferring Doctorates in Civil Law (D.C.L.) upon Honorands – who this year include Elisapie, Inuk singer-songwriter, director and activist, Dr. George Siber '66, internationally recognized vaccine expert, and the Community of the Eastern Townships, represented by the Mobilization Committee made up of Claude Belleau, Louise Bourgault, Yannick Crack, Chantal Lessard and Jean Perrault created to support Bishop's during the tuition crisis. The ceremony will also highlight the contribution of recipients of academic excellence and community engagement awards.

Convocation ceremonies will take place on June 1st at 10 a.m. for graduates earning degrees from the Schools of Business and Education (Dr. Siber and representatives of the Eastern Townships Community will receive their honorary degrees at this ceremony) and at 2:30 p.m. for graduates earning degrees in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences & Mathematics Divisions of the Faculty of Arts & Science (Elisapie and representatives of the Eastern Townships Community will receive their honorary degrees at this ceremony).

Graduating students Sébastien Élie and Renée Rosteius have been selected as Valedictorians for Convocation 2024 and will deliver their addresses in the morning and afternoon ceremonies respectively.

SPECIAL INDIGENOUS CONVOCATION CEREMONY

On Friday, May 31st, the Indigenous Student Support Centre will hold a graduation ceremony for Indigenous students and their families. We welcome members of the Indigenous community from Odanak who will take part in this important event.

“The Class of 2024 deserves our esteem and congratulations for successfully completing their respective programs. Convocation is also an occasion to celebrate those who have gone above and beyond, giving our community the best of themselves,” indicates Bishop’s University Principal and Vice-Chancellor Sébastien Lebel-Grenier.

LOCAL AND ECOLOGICAL FLOWERS DURING CONVOCATION

Partnering with two local flower producers, *Les Jardins d'Etc.* (Bury, QC) and *Wild Thing* (Stanstead, QC), Bishop’s University is the first university to collaborate with the Association des productrices et producteurs de fleurs coupées du Québec (APFCQ). As such, Bishop’s continues to pursue the objectives of its Sustainable Development Plan. Flowers will be available on June 1st at the John H. Price Sports Centre between 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Families are encouraged to order in advance by visiting the [Bishop’s Local Flowers for Convocation website](#).

The 2024 Honourands are:

ELISAPIE

Elisapie's unconditional attachment to her territory and her language, Inuktitut, remains at the core of her creative journey. Born and raised in Salluit, a small village in Nunavik which is only accessible by plane, Elisapie is an emblematic Canadian Inuk singer-songwriter.

Her 4th solo record *Inuktitut*, for which she received the 2024 Juno Award for the Best Contemporary Indigenous Artist, is composed of ten covers of classic rock and pop songs ranging from the 1960’s to the 90’s translated into Inuktitut, mother tongue. Elisapie reimagines these songs to make them her own. Through this musical road trip, Elisapie tells her story by this act of cultural reappropriation. Since winning her first Juno Award in 2005 with Taima, her band at the time, Elisapie’s body of work has been frequently praised. Her 2018 album *The Ballad of the Runaway Girl* was shortlisted for the Polaris Music Prize, earned her numerous Félix Awards, and received a nomination at the Junos.

She performed with the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal at the invitation of Yannick Nézet-Séguin, at the SummerStage Festival in New York City’s Central Park and in the NPR office for her own Tiny Desk Session, as well as in several venues and festivals locally and internationally.

Aside from her musical career, Elisapie is known for her acting roles in TV series and experimental movies. A devoted activist, Elisapie created and produced the first Canada-wide broadcast TV show to celebrate the National Indigenous Peoples Day, *Le grand solstice* (2021, 2022, 2023). She also directed *If the weather permits* (2003) a National Film Board documentary and with her television/film company Sanajik Films, she produces documentaries telling stories through Indigenous and Inuit eyes.

GEORGE SIBER, MD

Dr. Siber is an infectious disease trained physician with more than 40 years of experience in developing vaccines and antibody products. He is Adjunct Professor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins Medical School, a Visiting Researcher at the Institute of Microbiology, Chinese Academy of Sciences and President, Siber Biotechnologies LLC.

From 1996 to 2007, Dr. Siber served as Executive Vice President and Chief Scientific Officer of Wyeth Vaccines (now Pfizer) where he led the development and approval of multiple innovative childhood vaccines, including the first pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (Prevenar 7 and 13), the first rotavirus diarrhea vaccine, (Rotashield), the first meningococcal meningitis conjugate vaccine (Meningitec), and the first nasal influenza vaccine (FluMist).

Prior to working in large pharma, Dr. Siber was Harvard Medical School Associate Professor of Medicine at Dana Farber Cancer Institute and Director of the Massachusetts Public Health Biologic Laboratories where he developed multiple vaccines and immune globulins, including the first antibody licensed for respiratory syncytial virus (Respigam) which led to the development of monoclonal antibodies to RSV (Synagis and Beyfortus).

Dr. Siber currently serves as a vaccine consultant to biotechnology companies, NGOs and government. He was a Co-founder and Board Member of Affinivax which developed a 24-valent pneumococcal vaccine and was acquired by GSK in 2022. Dr. Siber currently serves on the Scientific Advisory Boards of Advaccine, CanSino, Clover, ILiAD, Valneva, Vaxart and Vaxxinity and has been a consultant to the NIH, EU, WHO and the Gates Foundation. Dr. Siber was member of the Board of Trustees of the International Vaccine Institute. Dr. Siber has received multiple awards including the 2016 Albert Sabin Gold Medal in vaccinology. Dr. Siber holds a BSc degree from Bishop's University, and MD degree from McGill University, received post-doctoral training in Internal Medicine at Rush-Presbyterian Hospital in Chicago and Beth Israel Hospital in Boston and in Infectious Diseases and Vaccinology at Boston Children's Hospital and Beth Israel Hospital, Harvard Medical School.

THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS COMMUNITY

Tucked into the southeastern corner of Quebec, the Eastern Townships are located on the traditional territory of the Abenaki people. The presence of ‘the people of the dawn’, original stewards of this land, dates back centuries.

Extending from the shores of the Saint Lawrence River to the edges of the Appalachian Mountains, the region is a tapestry of small cities and towns, picturesque villages, rolling hills, farmland, rivers and lakes.

The Eastern Townships are renowned not only for their stunning natural landscapes but also for their rich cultural heritage and unique linguistic diversity. English and French have deep roots in the region, contributing to a dynamic, mutually respectful identity. It is not uncommon to hear both languages spoken fluently in the same conversation.

The Eastern Townships’ distinct heritage is a source of pride for those who call the region home, fostering a sense of inclusivity and dialogue. The people of the Eastern Townships have long recognized the advantages that our region’s unique identity affords to residents, and take pride in preserving, promoting and supporting English and French as vital parts of that identity. This sense of solidarity ensures that the Eastern Townships remain a vibrant and welcoming place for people of all backgrounds to live, work, visit and study.

As one of the longest-standing institutions of the Eastern Townships, throughout its 180-year history Bishop’s University has welcomed students from the local community, from across Quebec, from the rest of Canada and around the world.

The unique circumstances and role of Bishop’s University within the region were underscored in dramatic fashion in October 2023, when the Quebec Government announced its intention to double tuition fees for Canadian students from outside the province. With approximately a third of Bishop’s students falling into this category, such a policy would have posed an existential threat to the University.

The Eastern Townships community rallied staunchly in support of the University, with more than 200 primarily francophone leaders of the Eastern Townships urging the Quebec Government to exempt Bishop’s from the proposed tuition increase. Together with the solidarity and dedication of Bishop’s students, faculty and staff, we were successful in securing a positive outcome.

Bishop’s University was the beneficiary of unwavering support from the leaders of the Eastern Townships community, led by the mobilization committee of former Sherbrooke mayor Jean Perrault along with Louise Bourgault, Claude Belleau, Yannick Crack and Chantal Lessard. These

leaders were able to convince the Quebec Government that Bishop's University, and the students we welcome to campus from the rest of Canada, are an essential part of what makes our region unique. We owe them, and the entire community of the Eastern Townships, an immense debt of gratitude.

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