Mr. Chancellor, it is my privilege to present to you Rene Theophil Nuytten, a gifted British Columbian whose daring and vision have made this province a centre of high tech underwater development. Sub-sea engineer, entrepreneur, diver, marine archaeologist, author, carver and Native advocate, Phil Nuytten is that rare individual who excels in the sciences and the arts.

"Curiosity," wrote Samuel Johnson, "is one of the permanent and certain characteristics of a vigorous mind." Throughout his life Phil Nuytten has given free reign to his curiosity. As a teenager, he persuaded his friends to join the library so he could take out more books on their cards. Upon developing a passion for diving, he opened his own scuba store after graduating from high school. Eight years later, he founded Can-Dive Services Ltd., a commercial underwater operation. This was just the beginning.

Curiosity led Phil Nuytten to underwater exploration in the Arctic. He was the first person in 130 years to see the wreck H.M.S. Breadalbane. Curiosity led him to study and then solve the problem of decompression, which had plagued divers for some 300 years. His Newtsuit, the first of its kind, eliminates many of the risks associated with deep sea diving. He now has his eyes set on deep space, intending to perfect a suit that will wear well in space and underwater.

His friends and colleagues call him a Renaissance man, for Phil Nuytten’s curiosity propels him in another direction-the arts. As a young boy, fascinated by the totem poles in Stanley Park, he asked master Kwakiutl carver Ellen Nee1 to teach him to carve. Today, he is an accomplished carver and authority on Native art. His book, The Totem Carvers, documents the lives of three important Kwakwaka’wakw artists. Convinced of the importance of the art of British Columbia’s First Peoples, he supports a program that repatriates critical pieces of significant historical importance and donates them to museums in British Columbia.

Noted Canadian underwater explorer Dr. Joseph MacInnis has said of Phil Nuytten that he is an extraordinary character who, because of his wide range of skills and knowledge, seems to have surfaced from another century. Mr. Chancellor, we are fortunate indeed to have such an individual living here in British Columbia.

Adopted member of the Kwakiutl Nation, and recipient of the Order of British Columbia, Phil Nuytten shows us the limitless possibilities of the human imagination. Mr. chancellor, I am proud to present Rene Theophil Nuytten for the Degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.