



**The Honourable Edna Ekhivalak Elias
Commissioner of Nunavut**

Nunavut Sivuniksavut Graduation

Ottawa, ON

May 15, 2011

Graduates, staff, families and friends, and invited guests; it is with great pleasure that I join you on yet another very special milestone in your young lives. Thank you for the invitation to celebrate your graduation with you.

Yesterday we started with the first joyous occasion and one long overdue; the grand opening of your lovely new learning facility. As the first graduating class that studied under the roof of the dilapidated old building and under this new roof; makes your graduation even more special. It is like saying good-bye to the old and hello to the new; very much like, I am sure the transformations that occurred in your lives since day one at NS. Let me use the analogy of the transformation of a caterpillar to a butterfly.

In fact, your whole life has been a transformation but nothing more marvelous than transformation that occurs when one takes the BIG step to move away from the comforts of home to a foreign

environment and start having to depend on oneself. Look at yourselves.

I can guess that you all came to Ottawa not knowing each other, perhaps the only one from your community, not knowing the city and city living, not knowing how to taking transit, budgeting, making meals, and or shopping for groceries to name some of the skills that you quickly had to learn before you could sink into your studies. You were suddenly within a faster paced society with your eyes bulging at all the sights, building excitement and nervousness and perhaps too, feeling insecure. Homesickness no doubt was felt. The cocoon of your comforts of home and community; your familiar environment of family and friends were suddenly thousands of miles away.

The warm, loving and caring atmosphere of the staff and Board members of NS took you into their arms and wrapped you in your new cocoon. At this stage it may look like nothing is happening; that nothing is getting through; that nothing is being learned because of one reason or another. But BIG changes are happening within your cocoon. Absorbed in your studies, changes were happening within each and every one of you.

Some of you reached the next stage earlier than others- the butterfly stage. But eventually you all reached that stage or you wouldn't be here today. Listening to the stories earlier today your individual transformations are as amazing as that of a butterfly.

Walaa, each person burst from his or her cocoon as a confident and much prouder person, standing tall, upright and shoulders back with heads high. Your beautiful, colourful wings have opened- look at you all!

As you go through life, you will find that education is a never ending process. You will continue to take flight if you challenge yourself. You will be amazed at what you can do, what strengths you have, what you can accomplish and what you want to be. You may and will make mistakes, after all who doesn't, but they are lessons in life. Aim to reach for those new milestones by doing what you want to do and doing what you feel is right.

I would like to say that you have been NS'd! NS does marvelous things and has done so for 25 years. The changes that happen during the eight months, which are witnessed first by your teachers, and secondly your families and friends, are most inspiring.

You are beaming as strong, proud confident Inuit youth!

Your parents are beaming with pride!

Your teachers are beaming seeing the changes that occurred in each and every one of you!

Your Board of Directors is beaming for being a part of the best program ever created for Inuit youth!

In closing, may you keep flying on your beautiful wings and that positive transformations continue in whatever your next step from NS may be!

I am so proud of you and CONGRATULATIONS!!!! Please rise with me in their honour.

Quana very much