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MEDIA RELEASE

Capilano University announces 2025 Honorary Degree Recipients and Faculty Emeritus honourees

NORTH VANCOUVER B.C. May 13, 2025 – [Capilano University](https://www.capilano.ca) (CapU) is pleased to announce the University will be honouring five exemplary individuals with an honorary doctorate degree and three esteemed colleagues with the title of faculty emeritus at the spring 2025 convocation ceremonies taking place June 10–12, 2025.

The honorary doctorate is CapU's highest form of recognition; it is given to people who have made significant contributions to others through their work or voluntary pursuits. Faculty Emeritus is a title awarded to faculty retirees who have provided outstanding service to the University and their discipline.

This year, CapU is pleased to recognize and honour the following individuals:

Honorary degree recipients:

Zack Bhatia, Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*
President, Chelsea Properties Limited

Ken Cretney, Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*
President & CEO, B.C. Pavilion Corporation (PavCo)

Alison Lawton, Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*
Founder & CEO, Mindset Venture Group Ltd. & Mindset Social Innovation Foundation

Elder Martina Pierre (Saw't), Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*
Lil'wat Nation Elder; Language and Culture Advisor, Skel7aqsten Skel7antsut

Garth Richardson, Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*
Juno winning and Grammy-nominated record producer, engineer and mixer



Faculty Emeritus recipients:

David Kirk, Faculty Emeritus
Indigenous Faculty Advisor & Instructor

Bob Muckle, Faculty Emeritus
Anthropology, Faculty of Arts & Sciences

Sheila Ross, Faculty Emeritus
Geography, Faculty of Arts & Sciences

Zack Bhatia, honorary degree recipient—A real estate developer, hotelier and philanthropist with over four decades of leadership in British Columbia's hospitality and real estate sectors. As founder and president of Chelsea Properties Ltd., and through his work with Mayfair Properties Ltd., he has helped shape the region's landscape, notably developing and operating the Holiday Inn North Vancouver since 1998. A strong advocate for education, Zack served on Capilano University's Board of Governors (2013–2015) and supported the Fulmer Family Centre for Childhood Studies, with personal ties to the institution through his daughter, a CapU alumna. Honored with the Queen Diamond Jubilee Medal, Zack's legacy reflects his deep commitment to community development, education and business excellence.

Ken Cretney, honorary degree recipient—A leader in hospitality and tourism with nearly 40 years of experience, currently serving as president and CEO of B.C. Pavilion Corporation (PavCo). Since joining the Vancouver Convention Centre as general manager in 2008, he has advanced to lead PavCo, playing a key role in elevating B.C.'s event and tourism sectors. His prior leadership at Vancouver's Marriott Pinnacle Hotel and the transformation of the Delta Whistler Resort into the Hilton Whistler Resort & Spa reflect his commitment to excellence. Ken is a strong advocate for hospitality education, serving as board chair of the Vancouver Community College Foundation and engaging with various advisory committees. He is also a past chair of Destination Vancouver and has helped bring major international sporting events to the province. Through his strategic vision and dedication, Ken continues to shape the future of tourism in British Columbia.

Alison Lawton, honorary degree recipient—An entrepreneur, investor and social impact leader with a strong commitment to innovation, social justice and education. As founder of Mindset Venture Group and a founding partner of Canada's first tech incubator, ideaPARK, she has built a successful track record in scaling early-stage businesses across technology, consumer goods and real estate. In 2006, she launched the Mindset Social Innovation Foundation to address global health challenges and has collaborated with organizations like the Clinton Foundation and UNICEF Canada. Passionate about storytelling and education, she produced the Emmy-winning documentary *Ghana: Digital Dumping Ground* and established UBC's international reporting program. Alison has also



been a pioneer in impact investing, backing initiatives like the Acumen Fund and MaRS Catalyst Fund, and continues to advocate for global justice through her work with the World Refugee Migration Council.

Elder Martina Pierre (Sawt), honorary degree recipient—A respected member of the Lil'wat Nation and residential school survivor, Elder Martina is a trailblazer in Indigenous education, language revitalization and community advocacy. With a Master of Education from UBC, she has dedicated her life to preserving Lil'wat language and culture, helping establish the Lil'wat community school and serving as Language and Culture Advisor for Skel7aqsten Skel7antsut. Her work bridges Indigenous and Western knowledge systems and includes co-developing Capilano University's Lil'wat Languages program. Elder Martina also authored the powerful "Women's Warrior Song," a widely embraced anthem of resilience and healing within the MMIWG2+ movement across Canada.

Garth Richardson, honorary degree recipient—Born into music at Toronto's legendary Nimbus 9 studio where his father Jack Richardson helped pioneer the Canadian music industry, Garth began his career at 15 as a live sound engineer. Mentored by industry greats like Bob Ezrin and Brian Christian, Garth's early credits include Bob Seger's "Night Moves," leading to a career working with major artists like Red Hot Chili Peppers, Ozzy Osbourne, Taylor Swift and Rage Against the Machine—whose Grammy-nominated debut he produced. His credits also include K'Naan's Juno-winning "Wavin' Flag" and multiple Juno nominations, including for the Jack Richardson Producer of the Year Award, named after his father. Passionate about mentoring, Garth co-founded the Nimbus School of Recording Arts and runs The Farm Studios, continuing to shape the sound and future of music.

[Photos and more information on the 2025 honorary degree recipients](#)

David Kirk, faculty emeritus—A proud member of the Tzeachten First Nation (Stó:lō Nation) and a visionary leader in Indigenous education. Over 17 years at Capilano University, David helped transform the institution's approach to reconciliation, decolonization and student support. Balancing Indigenous teachings with academic expertise, he has created lasting change across British Columbia's education system. Now serving as dean of curriculum and pedagogy at Vancouver Community College, David continues to champion Indigenization and reconciliation in post-secondary education.

Bob Muckle, faculty emeritus—A dedicated anthropologist, educator and public scholar who spent 35 years at Capilano University. Bob shaped the anthropology and archaeology programs, created the Seymour Valley Community Archaeology Project and mentored generations of students known as "Mucklettes"—many of whom now work as archaeologists across B.C. He is a prolific author whose textbooks are used across North America and has advanced public understanding of Indigenous history, Japanese Canadian heritage and contemporary archaeology. Though retired, Bob continues to research, write, and represent Capilano University on the national and international stage.



Sheila Ross, faculty emeritus—A geographer, educator and author whose 32-year career at Capilano University helped shape the field of physical geography and advance academic excellence. Sheila developed key geography courses, took on various roles in the university community and authored *Weather and Climate—An Introduction*, the first textbook on the topic to be Canadian from inception. Even in retirement, she continues to inspire through writing and her dedication to environmental education.

[Photos and more information on the 2025 Faculty Emeritus honorees](#)

About Capilano University

Capilano University offers students a remarkable space to thrive with industry leading instructors, small classes and more than 100 programs across five distinctive faculties. Serving British Columbia's Sea-to-Sky region with locations in North Vancouver, Squamish and the Sunshine Coast, CapU is a unique space where students are encouraged to make their mark, in and out of the classroom. Capilano University is named after Sa7plek (Chief Joe Capilano), an important leader of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nation of the Coast Salish Peoples. We respectfully acknowledge that our campuses are located on the territories of the Líl'wat, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), shíshálh (Sechelt), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlílwətaʔ/selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

For more information or to schedule interviews, please contact:

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