

‘Make the world a more survivable place’

Receiving honorary degree, acclaimed photographer James Balog calls on grads to take action on climate change.



(Edmonton) James Balog, the internationally acclaimed photographer whose images of retreating glaciers have helped document the effects of climate change, received an honorary degree today from the University of Alberta.

Balog and the U of A’s Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences have worked closely on groundbreaking glacier and ice-sheet research. Balog’s time-lapse photography techniques show the stark, irrefutable evidence that the ice landscapes in Canada’s northern mountains and Arctic are changing.

Speaking to graduands from the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences, Balog confessed he wasn’t always convinced by the arguments of climate researchers.

“A long time ago, I was skeptical about climate change for a variety of reasons,” said Balog.

“And guess what? When you sift through the evidence rationally, without doctrine and dogma getting in the way of clear thought, you discover that essentially all the evidence shows climate change is happening.”

Balog said his goal is to shift human perception of our natural environment. He said climate change threatens our food, our water supply, our health and other pillars of civil society. His call to the audience was blunt:

“We must take action to mitigate climate change. Intelligence commands it. Human decency demands it.”

Balog and U of A researchers first worked together on a study of retreating glaciers in the mountains of northwestern British Columbia.

Last year, time-lapse photo equipment designed by Balog was installed on Devon Island in the Canadian Arctic. The technology enabled U of A researchers to document glacier lake drainage and iceberg calving events. The university’s Devon Island research is part of Balog’s Extreme Ice Survey Network.

Balog asked the graduating class of 2013 to go forward using all the tools their education has given them.

“Use your minds, your voices, your skills to challenge the old assumptions and make the world a more survivable place.”

James Balog to speak at free public lecture

At 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 12, Balog will join U of A climate change and Arctic researchers Martin Sharp and Ian Stirling for a speaking event titled “Meltdown: Is Our Planet in Crisis?” The free public presentation will be held in the Centennial Centre for Interdisciplinary Science, room CCIS 1-430.

By Brian Murphy on June 12, 2013

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