Each degree has a story

For at least one 1997 graduate, receiving a degree meant more than finishing her final assignments. Ursula Selman completed her Master of Public Administration thesis while her family battled to save their home from the rising waters of the great Winnipeg flood of '97. Selman, Director of Community Services for the City of Winnipeg, not only had to coordinate a range of municipal services during the record flood but also to finish her thesis. All the while, the flood waters were approaching her family's home.

Selman, who completed her degree on a part-time basis, attended Convocation with her husband and two daughters. Another mother, Karen Taff, graduated in the same class as her daughter, Pam Taff '95, followed her mother across the stage at the same Convocation. Pam Taff, who graduated with Bachelor of Arts degrees, said "I'm so proud of my mother for going back and getting a degree." Taff, who had been working on her degrees while her mother attended Convocation, completed her degree in 1995 and during that time developed a product, a device that turns city traffic lights green for emergency vehicles. The device, which is designed to improve response time and safety for emergency vehicles, was inspired to return when she saw her children go to university.

Close to 1500 students were eligible to receive degrees and diplomas at Western's 269th Convocation held in Alumni Hall October 23-24. Among the graduates were Karen Taff (right) and daughter Pam who earned Bachelor of Arts degrees. Working on their degrees together under the same roof has brought the two of them closer together, says Pam.

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Carole Fontaine has been working on her degree for more than a few years. The 49-year-old achieved her BA in English, a degree that she started in 1966. She left school to raise a family and returned part-time in 1989. Fontaine is challenged by exams. She was inspired to return when she saw her children go to university.

Scragg, 48, was one of the first MBA grad students. He started the program in 1995 and during that time he developed his own videofaceted Executive MBA Program. He started the program and launched his own production company in 1995. He is now working on a product that uses traffic lights for emergency vehicles. The device, which is designed to improve response time and safety for emergency vehicles, was inspired to return when he saw his children go to university.