A message from United States Senator, Minnesota, Amy Klobuchar

Thank you President Raich, for the invitation to join you all today.

It’s great to be here, virtually of course with the Class of 2020 with Rainy River Community College.

Faculty and staff, thank you.

The success of the Rainy River students is your success too.

And to the parents, grandparents, all the family members, enjoy these moments!

Ya know, my daughter graduated from college not that long ago.

I remember the pride and the panic, but back then it was forgetting the motor board and losing the in laws!

Ok, I eventually found them, but now I think you know you have much bigger challenges.

I know it can be isolating, we all know that.

But it doesn’t in anyway take away from all of the achievements of this graduating class.

To the graduates, congratulations!

You know from an early age I believe that no matter where you come from, you can succeed.

My grandpa was an iron ore miner in Ely, who had to leave school when he was 15 to work in the mines.

But he saved money in a coffee can in the basement to send my dad to college.

My dad graduated from Vermilion College at two-year college, then it was called Ely Junior College.

Later, he joined the Minneapolis Paper as a sports reporter, beginning his decades long coverage of professional sports.

His main beat was the Minnesota Vikings.

Which had just become a National Football League franchise.

My mom, she taught second grade until she was 70 years old and we lost her a few years ago, but I still run into people who tell me they are proud to have had her as a teacher.

So today, I’m joining you as a granddaughter of an iron ore miner, the daughter of a teacher and a journalist with a degree from a two-year community college in northern Minnesota, and the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from the state of Minnesota.

That is the power of education.

You’re graduating during a challenging time.

Challenging because of economic and international and political upheaval, and yes the pandemic.

But I know somewhere out there the graduates with the solutions.
You will give us a technological innovations and work on the cures and your passion for care taking is going to be really important.

And also your passion for new ideas.

I have no doubt you’re prepared for this.

I’ve seen your generation’s passion for making our world a better place.

And don’t take my word for it, studies show that your generation is more diverse, more inclusive, more globally-minded than those that have come before.

And tell your parents this, studies have actually shown that your generation works as hard, if not harder, than the generations before you.

You’re ready to take what you’ve learned to do the very best you can.

That’s because the education you’ve received here at Rainy River Community College has taught you to reach out to people, from other sides of town, or from other states or across racial lines, across religious lines and yes please even across political lines.

As a small college, you’ve had the benefited privilege of getting to know each other well, and it’s those friendships that will lean on to get through challenges, like the one we face today.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was our president through a similar time of crisis, once said this, he said, “Courage is not the absence of fear. But rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear.”

In the midst of this pandemic, we’re seeing this everyday with our heroes on the frontlines saving lives.

They understand that courage is not the absence of fear.

Of course it’s scary to go to jobs at hospitals, or to work in the frontline as a first responder.

But rather, they’ve decided that something else is more important than fear.

That’s their life mission.

To them, that’s more important than fear.

In the midst of this pandemic, we’re seeing this everday, with those heroes.

We’re seeing it everywhere we go.

But we will also see it with you.

Because this is a scary time.

You are going out there in an economy that’s nowhere near where you thought it would be when you first started at your school.

But your life’s mission, your life’s mission will get you through this.

Your life’s mission will do this.
So, I want you to remember that mission, to remember your friends and everything you’ve learned at Rainy River.

Your teachers, your family, your hopes, all of that is more important than fear.

And by the way, it may mean choosing to volunteer.

It may mean patience when you had a plan for something that isn’t happening right now.

It also may mean bold ideas or it may mean a kind word, a momentary gesture, getting groceries for someone who needs your help, or calling your grandma.

That’s what this is all about.

You must be the guardian angels with the courage to lead this country.

I know that’s a lot on your shoulders, some pretty heavy ones, but I know you’re ready to be bold, to lead and to fly.

Congratulations Class of 2020!

**Processional by the Minnesota Orchestra**

**Canadian National Anthem by RRCC 2020 Graduate, Casey Meyers**

O Canada!

Our home and native land!

True patriot love in all of us command.

With glowing hearts we see thee rise,

The True North strong and free!

From far and wide,

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

God keep our land glorious and free!

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**American National Anthem by RRCC 2020 Graduate, Casey Meyers**

O! say can you see by the dawn's early light,

What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,

Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,

O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?

And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Welcome by Dr. Roxanne Kelly, RRCC Provost

Good afternoon and welcome to the 2020 Rainy River Community College graduation.

I am Dr. Roxanne Kelly and it is my privilege to serve as the Provost at Rainy River.

As is the case every year, it is my great pleasure to say graduation is the very best day of the year. This year has presented the graduates with unique challenges and they have proven that they are up to meeting those challenges.

Graduates, to get to today you have overcome a wide range of issues including time, distance and technology.

You didn’t give up and in spite of everything, you’ve made it to the finish line.

The college staff and faculty are extremely proud of all that you have accomplished and everything that is yet to come.

We look forward to seeing what your futures hold.

None of this would have been possible without some very important people.

The Rainy River Community College Foundation that provides a great many scholarships that change the lives of students every day.

Those men and women who have served or are serving in the military and their dedication to keeping us safe and free.

And last but certainly not least, the countless families and friends who have supported the graduates on this journey.

Without you, today certainly would not have been possible.

Now it is my pleasure to introduce Interim President of the Northeast Higher Education District, Dr. Michael Raich.

Greetings on behalf of NHED by Dr. Michael Raich, Interim President of the Northeast Higher Education District

Hello 2020 Rainy River graduates.

My name is Mike Raich and I am serving in my first year as the Interim President of the Northeast Higher Education District which includes Rainy River Community College.

When I accepted the position this past summer, never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be addressing all of you at commencement virtually.
Just as you never imagined that your lives, your education, and your commencement ceremony would be so severely affected by a pandemic.

I want to thank Provost Dr. Kelly for her leadership and the caring and creative faculty and staff at Rainy River Community College for going up and beyond this year to ensure education and services to students continued through spring semester.

It was truly a team effort that allowed us to complete this academic year.

The good news is you made it! Despite the challenges you faced throughout the past few years, whether COVID-19 related or not, you persisted and earned your degree from Rainy River Community College.

People usually pursue higher education because they want to advance their lives in some way.

They are at Point A and dream to be at Point B.

In this educational journey, learning life’s lessons often occur beyond the classroom walls and this year provided a solid example of that sentiment.

The fact that you are able to wade through the adversities and the fears associated with COVID-19, and persist to the point of graduation, is a testament to your will and determination.

You will continue to come across road bumps in your life, we all do. It is inevitable.

But you can take what you’ve learned from this year, both in and outside the classroom, and it will serve you well in meeting future challenges on life’s journey.

I will end with a quote by Martin Luther King Jr. because what would a commencement ceremony be without a quote?

He said, “If you can’t fly, then run. If you can’t run, then walk. If you can’t walk, then crawl. But whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.”

The point by whatever means, march ahead and keep chasing your dreams.

You all found your own way to keep moving forward this spring, and for that, I along with Rainy River’s faculty and staff are very proud of you.

Congratulations Rainy River Class of 2020! I wish you the best of luck during the rest of your life’s journey.

Dr. Roxanne Kelly, RRCC Provost

Thank you President Raich. We would now like to share a message from the Chancellor of the Minnesota State system and the chair of the Board of Trustees.

A message from Minnesota State Chancellor: Devinder Malhotra

Greetings, students! I am Devinder Malhotra, Chancellor of Minnesota State.

Graduation is a seminal moment in your educational journey.

And I know you and your families have been anticipating it for a long time.
The resolve and grace you have demonstrated in persevering through your studies, are all the more impressive and inspiring in light of the challenges and obstacles this global health crisis has thrown your way.

Your academic accomplishments are truly amazing.

Among the struggles and sacrifices, I recognize you did not get to walk across that graduation stage with your family and friends in the audience cheering and celebrating your achievement.

Your family, friends, faculty and staff who supported you are so proud of you and your accomplishments.

We are all rooting for your success.

Congratulations, graduates!

A message from Minnesota State Board of Trustees Chair, Jay Cowles

Hello graduates. I am Jay Cowles, Chair of the Minnesota State Board of Trustees.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I commend you for your hard work, sacrifice, and dedication to your education.

The professors who mentored you, the staff who guided you, your friends, your family, and the people who are dedicated to ensuring that all Minnesotans have access to a college education, every single one of us is excited to learn about the success that comes as you continue your journey.

And dear graduates, know as you leave this place, that it and the 37 colleges and universities of Minnesota State will be here for you, throughout your career.

No matter your need or the place you find yourself, on your educational journey.

Congratulations, graduates!

Dr. Roxanne Kelly, RRCC Provost

If we were together now, I would ask the audience to practice cheering for the graduates.

Even though we’re not together, please do that now wherever you are.

That was great, I could hear the cheering from here.

And now we do the official part.

President Raich, I hereby certify that the students listed in the program, after successfully completing the courses of spring semester, will have met the requirements for graduation from Rainy River Community College.

I present to you the 2020 Rainy River Community College candidates for graduation.

Now it is my honor to ask Amy Amundsen and Donita Ettestad to introduce the graduates.

Presentation of the Class of 2020, Amy Amundsen, RRCC Staff

Tenneyson Amdahl, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors and plans to attend the University of St. Thomas and major in business. Then continue on to law school to become a lawyer.
Gracie Bahr, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors. She plans to major in Biochemistry and Cognitive Science and Mathematics and then go on for a PhD in Neuroscience and Music Therapy.

Eugene Barnes the third, from Kenner, Louisiana, is a member of PTK and has earned an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors. His future plans are to attend a four-year university to continue to pursue a degree and play basketball.

Elizabeth Batdorf, from International Falls, MN, is a member of PTK and has earned an Associate of Arts degree with honors and plans to start the RN program this summer through HCC.

Sophia Benedix from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

Brenden Benike from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and plans to attend Bemidji State University for Marketing.

William Bess from Tucson, AZ, has earned an Associate of Arts degree with honors and plans to go to a university to finish his schooling and get a Psychology degree and to continue playing baseball.

Dayton Busch, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and plans to attend Minnesota State University Mankato for Dental Hygiene.

Jesus Carmona, from Tucson, AZ, is a member of PTK and will graduate with an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors and plans to continue playing baseball and get a degree.

Adam Davies from International Falls, MN, has earned a CDL certificate.

Thomas Emanuel-Roche, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and plans to hopefully attend NDSU for Engineering.

Emily Fairchild, from Littlefork, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree with honors and plans to attend Winona State University and major in Criminal Justice and Psychology.

Fabian Figueroa is from Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico and has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

Teah Goulet, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and plans to pursue a career in Forestry.

Alexis Graves from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

Tyler Gray, from Vail, AZ, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

David Griffith, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and plans to live in the twin cities and pursue modeling.

Jace Hallin, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree, and plans to attend Bemidji State University and play football there.

Nehemiah Harrigan from Coral Springs, FL, has earned an Associate of Arts degree, and plans to continue playing basketball at a four-year school while also pursuing a dual major in Communications and Business Management.

Tucker Hauschen, from New Port Richey, FL, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

McKenna Holt, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree, and plans to attend cosmetology school next year.
Emma Johns from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree, and plans to go to UMD to major in Criminology.

Aurora Johnson, from Two Harbors, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

Kira Johnson, from Duluth, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

Marissa Kerry, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and is undecided as to her future plans.

Alexandrea Krause, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

William Laabs, from Minneapolis, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and plans to attend a four-year university.

Emily LeMasurier, from Red Deer, Alberta, Canada, has earned an Associate of Arts degree. She plans to continue to play softball at Bethany Lutheran and work toward a Teaching degree.

Benjamin Lucek, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and plans to go to school for Mechanics.

Hannah Mark, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and is planning to go to BSU to major in Criminal Justice.

Kenneth Markel, from Tucson, AZ, is a member of PTK and has earned an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors.

Kora Martin is from Thorsby, Alberta, Canada. She is a member of PTK and has earned an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors. Kora plans to attend a four-year school to get a Communications degree and play softball.

Gunnar Mason, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

Casey Meyers, from International Falls, MN, has earned a Fitness Specialist Certificate with honors and plans to become a Physical Education teacher and coach.

Ian-Michael McCambridge, from International Falls, MN, has graduated with an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors.

Vilawn Mobley, from Orlando, FL, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

Erin Moseman, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and is planning to take time off to travel and then attend Columbus College of Art and Design.

Elina Nelson, from International Falls, MN, and is a member of PTK. She has earned an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors and plans to attend Johnson University in Knoxville, Tennessee, to major in Visual Media Production and Design.

Sarah Parker, from Westminster, CO, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and plans to work with special needs kids or become a police officer.

Julia Perdoni, from International Falls, MN, is a member of PTK and has earned an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors. She plans to be an organic farmer in Hawaii.
Alfonso Pesqueira, from Tucson, AZ, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and plans to play baseball and finish school at the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire.

Evan Peterson, from Littlefork MN, is a member of PTK and has earned an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors and is currently undecided.

Weston Piekarski, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree with honors.

Bryce Reddish, from Tucson, AZ, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and plans to continue to play baseball at a four-year university and finish school.

Melody Ruelle, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree with honors and plans to attend the University of Minnesota to major in Business Management with an emphasis in Accounting.

Sarah Schoon, from International Falls, MN, is a member of PTK and has earned an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors. Sarah plans to attend Anoka Technical College and complete the Occupational Therapy Assistant program there.

Priscilla Schrock, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors and plans to work at the International Falls Public Library.

Nathan Simutkin, from Littlefork, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree with honors.

Parker Stevens, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

Matthew Strizich, from Benson, AZ, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

Ariana Vacura, from International Falls, MN, is a member of PTK and has earned an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors. Ariana plans to go to Oak Hills Christian College in Bemidji, MN, to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Applied Psychology.

Maria Vollom, from International Falls, MN, is a member of PTK and has earned an Associate of Arts degree with honors. Maria plans to attend the University of North Dakota to pursue a career in Business.

Alphonse Wayman, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

Chad Wennerstrand, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree with honors. He plans to attend the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point in pursuit of a Bachelor’s degree in Forest Management.

Paul Wilken, from Duluth, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree.

Hunter Wilson, from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and plans to attend UMD Duluth for Environmental Science.

Tanner Wood from International Falls, MN, has earned an Associate of Arts degree and plans to go to Stevens Point to major in Forestry.

Trey Winkler, from Gering, Nebraska, is a member of PTK and has earned an Associate of Arts degree with highest honors and plans to get a Teaching degree in Math education and then teach and coach.

Recognition of RRCC/ICC Practical Nursing Graduates, Donita Ettestad, Healthcare Program Director

We are fortunate to have two nursing programs to partner with that educate nursing students at Rainy River Community College.
This allows these students to complete their nursing degree, while remaining in or close to their home community.

Through innovative programming, the following students completed their didactic and practical experience, allowing them to graduate with their nursing degrees.

The students learned flexibility and perseverance as we adjusted to a completely new format in nursing education.

Graduating from Itasca Community College LPN Program is

Cassi Harju, International Falls. Cassie’s future plans including completing her LPN boards and welcoming a new addition to her family.

Julia Herbert, International Falls. Julia plans to continue on to the registered nursing program through Hibbing Community College.

Lacy Palmer, Littlefork. After obtaining her Practical Nursing Diploma and passing the NCLEX-PN, she plans on completing the Associate of Science in Nursing degree through Hibbing Community College. Lacy hopes to work in our community as a registered nurse, after receiving her RN license.

Macy Skrien, International Falls. She is setting off on her journey to complete her RN through Hibbing Community College at Rainy River. Macy says the world is her oyster.

Hailee Schaaf, International Falls. Continuing down the nursing path, in the future is her plan. For now, she is thrilled to start her new job at Rainy Lake Clinic.

Gina Thydean, Littlefork. After passing her board exams, Gina has yet to determine exactly what her future holds.

Recognition of RRCC/HCC Registered Nursing Graduates, Donita Ettestad, Healthcare Program Director

Graduating from Hibbing Community College RN Program

Christine Baade, Baudette. Christine’s future plans are to work at Lakewood Health Center in Baudette.

Anna Bortnik, Littlefork. Anna is hoping to remain in the area, providing care to her community as a RN after passing her boards.

Kyle Bounds, International Falls. Kyle believes he will continue his education working towards a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing.

Laura Hilliard, International Falls. Laura plans to stay in International Falls and pursue her career in the hospital setting or home care with elders.

Emily Rasmussen, International Falls. Her plan is to stay local and follow her dream of being a registered nurse in our community.

Amy Weems, Baudette. Amy will be working at the hospital in Baudette following the completion of her nursing boards.

Congratulations to all the nursing graduates!

Conferring of Degrees Dr. Michael Raich, Interim President of the Northeast Higher Education District

At this time graduates, wherever you are and if you are able, please stand.
By the virtue of the authority vested in me, by the state of Minnesota and the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities I hereby confer the degrees, diplomas and certificates upon you as recommended by Rainy River Community College.

If you're wearing one, please move your tassels from the right to the left.

And to our virtual attendees, I present to you, the Rainy River Community College graduating Class of 2020.

Congratulations!

**Closing remarks by Dr. Roxanne Kelly**

Thank you President Raich and congratulations graduates! The next part of your voyage begins now.