



NEW PLYMOUTH BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL
TE KURA TAMATĀNE O NGĀMOTU

HEADMASTER'S AWARD DINNER ADDRESS

Sunday, 29 October, 2017

Kāore te kumara e kōrero mō tōna ake reka

The sweet potato doesn't need to say how sweet he is.

I thought this whakatauki was an appropriate way to introduce my topic tonight.

Humility.

Some might say humility is a bit of a contradiction to tonight's dinner?

Where we are applauding and celebrating our champions, where we only invite the best of the best students to attend. Where we heap praise and accolades on worthy nominations and category winners.

I have been open in saying we will continue to celebrate excellence, we won't bow to the common temptation and the attempted indoctrination of mediocrity.

But we will be humble, we will teach humility and we will recognise humility as a school and as a community.

The Tiger Jacket is what connects all students here tonight.

We are also connected in that we have probably all eaten kumara at some stage as well.

The Tiger Jacket is very different from a plain jacket our plain blazer. Much like the kumara is different to the plain potato.

The Tiger Jacket is very striking (some who don't understand it may even call it a little ugly). To be fair it's not a good looking vegetable.

The words Tiger Jacket and sweet potato have exactly the same number of letters. Important? - not really, but to be fair I was running out of similarities between the two.

Kāore te kumara e kōrero mō tōna ake reka

Humility must underpin everything we do.

Humility must guide us.

Humility must be a natural instinctive thing we as a school, as staff, as parents and as young men must display.

Young men - don't confuse humility with a lack of confidence. Often we associate those who do not have humility with overconfidence and arrogance and therefore we withdraw as we try to be the opposite. You can be confident without being arrogant and you can strive to be the best you can be without compromising on humility.

Someone who summed this up very well was CS Lewis (famous British novelist and poet) he said:

Humility isn't thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less.

Humility isn't thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less.

A subtle but very important message. Young men you must be confident in your abilities.

Believe in yourself. Aiming high, but thinking of others - putting others before yourself, is a trait that you need to practice, that you need to reflect on often, and, I believe, that you need to master.

Simon Sinek (World Renowned Leadership Guru) tells this relevant story about Navy Seals.

US Navy Seals are arguably the best of the best, the toughest of the tough soldiers in the world. Simon Sinek mentions that only 10% of Navy Seals make it through the initial training process.

These were some of his insights as to who gets through.

It's not the big, muscle-bound guys that make it. They look impressive, but don't have what it takes.

It's not the tattooed tough guys that make it. They look scary, but don't have what it takes.

It's not the popular all American college-educated football stars that make it. They look like leaders, but don't have what it takes.

The ones who make it through don't necessarily look impressive and there may be times during the training when they are literally shivering in fear.

But at some point during the gruelling, punishing training, when they're exhausted, when they're mentally spent and when it doesn't look as though they can go on, they dig deep and find a way to help the person next to them.

This is a great reminder that success in life isn't about how good you look on the outside.

It's what you look like on the inside. It's what your core character is like when you are in dark places, when no-one is looking.

It's about how you can help, guide and encourage others with the skills and abilities that you have.

It's not always about beating the competition, although we strive to do the things to give us the best chance of winning.

It's about finding people you can collaborate with to do something amazing.

And if you are consistently generous, inspiring and focus on the success of others, a funny thing happens.....

.....people become more responsive to your needs and you end up getting the assistance that you need to achieve your own dreams and aspirations.

You can have everything in life that you want if you will just help other people get what they want.

Young men, I want you to think back to the two Alumni Meriti assemblies we had this year. Graeme Mourie and Sir Richard Faull. Two very different, but similar men. They are world-class in completely different fields: rugby and medicine.

They, in my view, have also achieved world-class honours in humility. Never once in the time that I spent with them did they gloat, feel the need to say how good they were, correct me on any information, remind me I was in the presence of someone special.

They didn't need to say, I did this, I did that, I was good at that, NPBHS is lucky to have me.

Why not? We already know all that.

If you have to explain to others why you are so good, you clearly aren't that good. Those that know, know. Those that count, know. And those that don't matter, don't need to be told and don't need to know.

Not once did Graham Mourie and Sir Richard Faull think they were better than anyone else: students, office staff, teachers, or the contractors they met walking around the school.

They were always gentlemen, they were always humble, and always surprised at the warm reception and acknowledgement they received.

The other most striking thing about them was how they were very quick to heap praise on others and deflect their extraordinary achievements off themselves and onto others. Impressive, and something I will remember for a long time.

To all our young men here tonight, be confident, be ambitious go forth and conquer. But..... always be humble. Always be humble.

Kāore te kumara e kōrero mō tōna ake reka

Thank you

Paul Verić

Headmaster

