



NEW PLYMOUTH BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL
TE KURA TAMATĀNE O NGĀMOTU

HEADMASTER'S SPEECH
SENIOR PRIZEGIVING
Thursday, 1 November 2018

Tihei mauri ora, he mihi ki te runga rawa
He mihi ki Taranaki te maunga
Te whare e tū ake nei, tēnā koe
Te marae kei waho rā, tēnā koe
Ki a koutou rā te kanohi ora,
te iwi o Te Atiawa nui tonu,
te hapū o Ngāti Te Whiti
E kui mā, e koro mā, rau rangatira mā
Nau mai, haere mai ki te kura Tamatāne o Ngāmotu
Ki te kaupapa nunui o te rā
Hei whakahōnore ngā rangatira a apōpō, i mua i te aro
o a rātou whānau me a rātou hoa rānei
Piki mai kake mai whakatau mai rā
Anei te whakatauki e ki raa - 'Kia Tū Hei Taurira'
Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa

To translate, I acknowledged the greater forces at play in our world, I acknowledge our mountain. I acknowledge this hall, this school, Te Atiawa, and Ngati Te Whiti. I acknowledge everyone here. Welcome to you all, especially our young leaders who we honour today in front of their families and friends. I also referenced our own wise proverb - *Be The Example*. Greetings to you all.

Welcome to all our invited and special guests. To our Board of Trustee members, especially our Chair, Ms Leigh Sampson, NPBHS staff, old boys, parents and caregivers, and most importantly, students. I say "most importantly" because today is about you. As in my maori welcome, today is about recognising your many great achievements and the great heights you have scaled in 2018.

Whilst tradition is very important to us young men, and there are many traditions that we will hopefully hold onto forever, I do believe in trying different things to see if we can improve.

There is no point telling you young men to 'give things a go' and 'be bold' if, as a school, we are shackled to the past, scared to change or move from our spot like a possum in a headlight.

I am proud to say that as a school we have tried many things; not all have worked and some are still in their infancy so need more time to determine their success or not.

One example is today. Traditionally we have our prize-giving in the evening. Unfortunately, we have had many students missing from that evening event. The small turnout means that the event has lacked a little atmosphere. I think all seniors should attend and show respect to their peers in the final act of the school year.

To the parents and family members: I apologise for the inconvenience that having prize-giving during the day has on your work. (All complaints to the Deputy Headmaster please.) Although I suspect many might be quietly thanking us for the chance to escape the daily grind of your jobs.

I believe we will have some other refinements around our leavers functions / graduations so I am sure this change won't be the last in this area.

When speaking about change, I have observed something quite surprising for me in this role : I don't want to offend you young men, but the most resistant to change are often the students.

I thought students would be more easy-going and free-spirited around change. A good learning curve for me. The introduction of Huia Ropu has been difficult for many students to grasp; most notably seniors.

Trying to extract yourself from the nothingness of what was 'Groups' has been hard. If students reflected and realised they previously spent 40 minutes each week at Groups really only undertaking school admin. We have added only an extra 15 minutes on top of that time, and look what we have covered this year during Huia Ropu: Goal-Setting, Mindfulness, Academic Mentoring, Financial Literacy, Growth Mindset, Time Management to name but a few, and not to mention the ambitious and very successful school-wide project of 'Something for Nothing'.

What an amazing gift to the community you all gave. What a special showing of solidarity and commitment to service. I believe this is the start of something extraordinary. Health and well-being, teaching life-skills is without a doubt going to be an increasing part of education in NZ.

I am proud that NPBHS is trying hard to lead and not to follow.

Huia Ropu is only part of a bigger picture of change to the house and deaning system. I am very pleased with how it has worked out. Sure, we have some refinements and another year or two of it running to measure its full impact. I don't think there is any dispute that having one consistent support team around you for your entire schooling is the right thing to do.

Our previous year-level Deans were deserving of great praise, but it was impossible for them to have the same kind of relationship with families and students that a Dean of a House can have over five years. I want to specifically thank Mr Moore and Ms Clarke who have driven this strategic change.

Something else we tried a little differently this year than previous years: We closed the school for two and half days and coped without clean running water during that time.

I think it's every Headmaster's goal to have thunderous cheering and rapturous applause for expelling great words from this lectern. It seems a little ironic that the announcement to the whole school of my decision to close the school early one day caused that very reaction. Still it was a memorable moment for me in 2018 and I am sure for all of you too.

There were two very sad events in 2018 which I wish to respectfully acknowledge. The first was the passing of year 10 student Blair Magon from meningococcal disease. Such a tragedy to lose one of our students so suddenly.

Young men, you were amazing in your support of the family where we held a special assembly in his remembrance and to educate you all about meningococcal disease with respect to Blair's family's wishes.

I received a heartfelt letter from the family only this week (some 7 months later), thanking the school again, thanking all of **you** for your respect to them and helping them so much in a time of extreme sadness.

The second was the passing of an institution: TT Ryder, the school's 7th Headmaster. Tom gave an impressive 16 years of service as Headmaster from 1979-1994. Foremost in his mind was an unrelenting focus on excellence. He demanded, rather than requested, the best from everyone.

Students, teachers and even parents were very clear on the required standard and, while not everyone liked this pressure and attention, no one was in any doubt as to why he demanded it. It was for the betterment of the boys and our school.

Now I appreciate for you young men, you didn't know Mr Ryder like I did, like many of the staff did, like the 1000's and 1000's of students before you did, but your respect to him was wonderful to see.

Despite my best efforts, and very successful efforts to drench you all, I was amazed at how you did the right thing and never complained or waived. To run from shelter to deliver a spine-tingling haka in the rain, was one of those selfless acts I will never forget.

Our weekly full school assemblies are such an important part of our tradition. They often tell very good stories about a school year. For example, Nathan Wallis, renowned international neuroscience expert spoke to you all. I sincerely hope young men, that you remembered his messages (summarising scientific evidence) around the effects of drugs and alcohol on the vulnerable teenage brain.

Another key take-out for me was the message that teenagers view almost every facial expression from adults as angry. Even neutral and mildly happy expressions are transmitted as angry to the teenage brain.

Wow, all this time you thought I was angry at you, you thought your teachers were angry at you, you thought your parents were angry at you. The truth is that we were really only angry for about 95% of that time. 5% of the time we are just too knackered to be angry.

Truthfully, that did hit home to me and I hope others who heard that message as well. We should all remember to smile more.

Our Alumni Meriti (our Distinguished Old Boys' hall of fame) increased by two this year. Young men, I hope you see value in these presentations. I hope you really enjoyed them and heed their messages. We had two outstanding additions in 2018: Dr Sam Hazledine and Mr David Bremner.

I would like to acknowledge all new staff. We have had many excellent additions to our team this year. I would also like to acknowledge all staff who have left in 2018:

In terms of teaching, we have very few who have moved on in 2019.

Mr Paul O'Keefe left us this year to take up a position overseas and was not only a character, but a very good technology teacher, who was with us since 2012. He had a passion for extra-curricular activity and was a regular coach of many sports teams.

Mrs Brenda Elgar has been employed since 2009 and has decided to retire. Many students have benefited from your care and expertise. Thank you Brenda.

Mr John Tullett. John is retiring from education after an impressive 23 years of service to NPBHS. Mr Tullett is an educator in the true sense of the word. He is not an instructor. He really tries to empower and inspire his students to reach their potential.

He has a unique and special ability to connect to students and enable them to produce work they never thought they could possibly do. John, we will miss that passion and knowledge. We will miss your paint-stained clothes and hands. We will miss your different sense of humour and staffroom speeches. We will miss this self-proclaimed rebel without a cause. We will miss your friendship.

We wish you all the best with your new adventures and thank you very much for your contribution.

We have had a number changes to our support staff this year. I would like to acknowledge and thank the following support staff who are leaving or have left during 2018: Zoe Kirkcaldie - Finance Manager. Stephanie Gibbons, Librarian. Dorothy Grant - BOT Office. Ben Sapwell-West - Cricket Development Officer.

Jason Smith and Stephanie Crow who were both Teacher Aides. Stewart Maunder also ends his incredibly long association with our music programme. His impact and influence on our musicians has been stunning.

To our BOT Chair Ms Leigh Sampson: Thank you for your ongoing support. I know she doesn't enjoy public speaking and also doesn't like attention. You deserve all the attention and any accolades the school currently enjoys. It is your last term on the Board and you will be missed. No-one studies the Board papers and business of the school as intently as you do. You care for the students and ensure we stay focussed on them.

I really value your support and outstanding leadership. That enables our very committed Board to work together effectively for the betterment of the students. I am grateful to have such an excellent Board of Trustees.

Thank you to Anton Besseling, our student representative. Anton, you were the supreme professional and tirelessly dedicated to your role as Student Representative.

The students can be left without doubt you had their best interests at heart and voiced your opinion at the many Board meetings you attended with intelligence, fairness and good humour. I and the students will miss your contribution.

Heath Parkes takes over from Anton and I know he will add his own unique, but high-performing style to the position.

We have had a very strong top six student leadership team this year. I would like to thank the heads of houses who have all performed their roles with distinction.

Particular mention must go to Adam Smith who has been outstanding in his role of head boarder. Adam, you have been reliable, honest, and have represented the hostel and the school with mana and integrity.

To our high-performing deputy head boy, Oak Jones. Oak you are a man of many talents from a family with many talents. I remember parts of a speech you gave in maybe year 10 that had reference to an Oak tree.

I can't remember it word for word but I do know you have lived up to that speech, you have been very formidable during your role supporting Isaac like an Oak tree. Your sporting and academic achievements are testimony to your work ethic and commitment to high performance.

Head Boy, Isaac Jourdain. Sometimes Head boys are good at sport, top academics, or exceptional musicians. Sometimes Head boys are born to just lead.

Isaac I don't mean to take anything away from your sporting prowess, or your academics (for which you earned a Tiger Jacket - no mean feat) but your real point of difference is your leadership. Isaac you are a leader, a natural leader, a selfless leader, a thoughtful and empathetic leader. Yes, you have an unhealthy obsession for shoes, but hey, no-one's perfect.

Isaac, I have thoroughly enjoyed working with you. I didn't think it was possible for a very mature man like you to mature any more - but you still did. You led your Prefect team effortlessly. I asked you to help so many times at functions, events, and during certain critical situations.

You never failed to amaze me, with your commitment to the students, the school, your badge. You often would text or ring me 'Can I do anything to help Sir'. So unexpected. So incredibly thoughtful.

One of the many times that sticks in my mind was after the super soaking we all received on Coronation Avenue honouring the hearse with Mr Ryder. We had to still go to the funeral. Being overly-organised I always have a spare suit in my office. So I apologised to you and all the Prefects and I said, I am drenched, but I have the luxury of getting changed into a fresh set of clothes I couldn't fulfill my speaking duties at the funeral in a puddle water.

I said to Isaac and Prefects "Look I don't expect you all to go, I am sure the family will understand - you have done more than enough already. You do not need to attend".

Without hesitation Isaac and his team (absolutely soaked from head to foot) said "No problem Sir, we are going, we are attending. We need to be there - it's the right thing to do". I was so wet from the rain the young men wouldn't have noticed my tears of pride.

I really appreciated when you came to me during the year with ideas or challenged some of the decisions that were made. Some of which I had to reflect on and change because of your words. You were considered, reasonable and fair.

You turned down a trip to World Schools to be here today as the timing clashed, a very difficult decision but I hope you feel it was the right decision. A decision you arrived at on your own.

I will miss doing duty with you at the front of school, the school will miss your leadership and we will certainly miss seeing what new and exciting footwear options are available and currently fashionable.

To the rest of the Prefect team, thank you. You fronted at open days, on duty, to lunchtime meetings, and delivered an absolutely amazing School Ball. Your contribution and mark on 2018 is significant and won't be forgotten.

While we are farewelling many students, it is the parents and families we also farewell and sincerely thank. I know for many of you, it is emotional and quite hard to believe your formal association with the school might be coming to an end.

Now is the traditional part of my speech where I have about a page of thank you's. I am going to break from tradition and just thank everyone else.

Apart from adding another minute to my already long speech, some people unfortunately don't get their name read out or thanked. I find that unfair as everyone contributes something to NPBHS.

No matter who you are, how long you have been here you all contribute. To be fair no-one's contribution means more than others because without even the smallest contribution we could not achieve what we achieve each and every day.

In writing this speech and reflecting on the year that was, it reminds me what I feel most privileged about in this role; it reminds me what is so great about life and living, and reminds me why I am so optimistic about the future. The future of Taranaki and New Zealand.

It really is all of you. You constantly amaze me with your respect, humility, dignity and empathy. Yes, at times one or three of you also amaze me with your stupidity. But I can honestly say it's nothing most of us on stage haven't had some experience in and we (including me) are still not exempt from.

But you are all incredibly amazing and I feel so fortunate to have the best view in the school to experience and observe your excellence. So to all of you young men, I say "thank you". Our purpose is to improve the future and I absolutely believe NPBHS is true to it.

I will speak again briefly at the end of proceedings as we announce our leaders for 2019. Congratulations to all the award recipients here today. You are worthy winners and worthy ambassadors of our fine school.

Thank you.

.....As is now traditional, we are finishing the prizegiving with the announcement of all the key student leaders for 2019.

While I am excited and proud of who we have selected in our premier student leadership roles, I know some of our young men will be acutely disappointed. We are spoilt for choice and have taken the selection process very seriously.

The process to select our student leaders is long and gruelling. I would like to mention Mr Somers who has done an outstanding job delivering our refreshed leadership programme.

I will now announce the Heads of Houses for 2019.

I will call them up one at a time. If you can please walk up the side of the stage.

Head of Donnelly 2019	-	Cameron Dombroski
Head of Barak 2019	-	Fletcher Moles
Head of Syme 2019	-	Kristian Revfeim
Head of Hatherly and Head Border for 2019	-	Daniel Foss

I view the Deputy and Head Boy as a team who must complement each other, cover for each other, and together lead the school. It is an immense responsibility and privilege. It is an experience these boys will remember and cherish for the rest of their lives.

These two young men will have to bear the weight of expectation and the pressure of tradition. Rather than viewing these as a burden or as shackles, view them as strength, courage, and support that will guide and carry you through the toughest of times during your tenure.

I would like to call Isaac Jourdain to come forward and announce the Deputy and Head Boy for 2019.

Deputy Head Boy for 2019 - **Lewis Park**
Head Boy for 2019 - **Zac Drinkwater**

Thank you Isaac, and congratulations again to our new leaders for 2019. You can take your seat.

A reminder that guests, prize-winners, parents, and caregivers are invited to the boarders' dining room, the Sir Graeme Douglas Dining Room, for light refreshments.

Thank you to our talented musicians and singers and everyone who has helped organise today, including Mr Hyde, who organises the prize-winners.

Congratulations to all the prize-winners and thank you to all of you for making today, and this year, so very special for NPBHS.

Please stand.

P J Verić
Headmaster