

Whaia te iti Kahurangi ki te tuohu koe me he maunga teitei - seek the treasure you value most dearly: if you bow your head, let it be to a lofty mountain.

This whakatauki's importance and meaning will hopefully become transparent as my speech progresses.

This year has been incredibly tough. For everyone. It has put us in testing times and times that were never expected. I didn't anticipate this and it's been a hell of a year to be head girl, but from this, I, as well as everyone else, have learnt many life lessons and how we can..... and need to be able to adapt to sudden change.

I was in the South Island with my family in July. My mum brought me a t-shirt that had a quote on the back. This quote took me a while to understand, it read "the man on top of the mountain didn't fall there" this quote resonated with me and my journey. You have to work hard to get to the top.

School has been a challenge. Climbing my mountain. Starting right at the bottom and having buckets of energy. Near the middle, you start to get tired and need your second wind to come along and pick you up. My senior years were tough and I worked as hard as I could to get to the summit of my mountain. I've now made the summit and it feels surreal.

Although this mountain is complete, I can see a much bigger one over the horizon. One that I am ready to tackle head-on, moving on to my next adventure in life.

Year 7 to 8 was the bottom of this mountain. I started very timid and shy not knowing how 'big school' worked but all I knew was that it was

going to be a long journey. Thriving in a new environment I made new friends and took on different responsibilities.

Year 9 to 10 is where I started to get jaded, fatigued from the journey travelled... the middle. Not quite a senior but also not a small kid anymore. Joining school sports and finding my passions.

Year 11-13 was where I got my second wind. There were more challenges thrown at me in these years like when you are nearly at the top but start to run low on water and the sun is beating down on you. These challenges knocked me for a while but I had to work as hard as possible to get to the summit.

Throughout these 7 years at Whangaparaoa College, I have grown in confidence and determination to do my best in anything. I have been given opportunities that have made me a better person and a better leader.

School has taught me the importance of resilience and becoming the best version of yourself, for yourself. Taking risks, and doing things that are out of your comfort zone.

You will go through friend groups and feel like the world is crumbling around you. Sometimes even the best of friends grow apart....However, keep the fondest memories at the surface, everyone grows up and into their own person on their own pathway at some stage. This year has proved that things don't always go to plan, some things happen in your journey through life that impacts you forever. However, you can go through tough times and search for better ones as long as you have people around you who love you. And with this, you can find the people who build you up and support you. Your constants. I have made amazing memories and found friends for life.

2020 has been a strange year. It felt like we spent more time at home than at school. This year has shifted everybody's everyday lives and had an effect on our wellbeing. There are four dimensions of Hauora - Mental and emotional, physical, spiritual and social. These are the four pillars to wellbeing and we need all of these walls or pillars to stay standing. This year has tested those walls and how strong they are. Mental and emotionally we were put under stress - sports were postponed; schoolwork was disrupted and we were isolated from our friends and family. Socially, physically and spiritually, we weren't able to connect with each other, within school or extracurricular activities. I wasn't able to finish the netball season with my team or go to training each week. Our senior ball was postponed 4 times and camps and trips were cancelled. This is just a small segment of some of the things that were taken away from us. People lost jobs, businesses were demolished and some people lost loved ones overseas. This has obviously caused stress and upset to home life and the people's overall outlook on life and the future.

However, we are still standing...Our pillars were tested but we are still here...still upright... and still moving forwards. Ultimately, this year altered everyone's perspectives on the importance of whanau. From this, I personally have come out of this with a new found appreciation for time. I was able to take time to stop and smell the daisies, and time to bond further with my family at home, that time is important to me. I have learnt that whatever happens, we can find alternative ways to succeed, and alternative ways to connect with each other.

In the not so distant future, I will be attending university with a completely different group of people and living in a new area. Excited for new opportunities and independence, it is scary but as I said, this is another mountain I will have to tackle, starting at the bottom.

By the time the current year 7's are year 13, some of us will be married and potentially have kids, it's a crazy concept. The class of 2020 will go

down in history. We are finishing school in a crazy year. I have been privileged enough to be Head girl this year alongside Lucas, Kian, Holly, Alex and the rest of the amazing prefects. All of us can say we never thought this year would be like how it was but I want to thank you for all your hard work and effort, we couldn't have done any of it without you.

My thanks go out to the teachers, Mr Thomas, the DP's, deans, teacher aids, support staff and the ladies in the office. This year has been one for the books, but you keep this school running, so on behalf of the learners, thank you. This opportunity has been something that I will be forever grateful for and I have been so lucky with the immense amount of support you have given me and give the learners every day.

I would also like to take a moment to thank my parents and whanau who have held my hand through the entire journey and will likely remain as my 'sherpas' into the future. All the work that I have done and successes I have had I couldn't have done without them...you can't climb a mountain alone.

To the year 13's this is the end of an era. We've made it. Next year we are moving onto new things whether it's university, working or whatever you are planning to do. This is our time. Our time to take these precious days, weeks, years that we have spent together...cherish them and start our new journeys. It feels like yesterday where we were seated in the auditorium being sorted into our classes in year 7....yet we have now gone from practising formal dancing for the year 7 formal to our final ball in the blink of an eye. I am excited to see where life takes you all and wish you the very best. Thank you for making my school experience one I'll never forget.

To everyone else, make the most of your time at school. Trust me it goes so fast. Time doesn't stop, so take every opportunity that comes your way. Excel at your strengths and work hard on your weaknesses. Year 7s-10s you have years ahead of you left in college so find your

passions and pace yourself up your own mountains through the remainder of your time here. Year 11, 12s. It's our time to hand over to you, continue to work towards your goals, be the role models you are and most importantly... have fun in your last years.

Whangaparaoa College will always be a massive part of my life and holds the most memories. And now we leave as part of a whanau that I am proud to belong to.

Thank you.