

## **Principal's Address – Graduation Ceremony – June 9 2018**

Honoured guests, faculty, learners and Graduates. At this time, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the unceded Coast Salish Territory of the Lekwungen and Wsanec Nations. We are thankful to be able to have our ceremony here today. Welcome to the commencement ceremony for the PSII graduating class of 2018.

I was trying to think of what it is that makes life different after graduation. There is something, but difficult to put your finger on.

High school learners already experience vastly different family lives, school lives, work lives, and relationships with their peers. But there is still something universal about graduation – something that makes it feel like a threshold that is being crossed by each and every graduate, regardless of other differences.

After getting to the point when I thought it might actually be an artificially constructed rite of passage, one of the few remaining in our modern world, it came to me.

I was actually working with someone on a part of their inquiry and we discovered information on touchstones. I had always known there was an actual thing called a touchstone – not just the metaphorical way we tend to use the word – but I have to admit that I had not given it much thought.

For those who don't know, a touchstone is simply a tablet made of one of about three or four kinds of stone against which you would rub a piece of metal. The quality of the marks left on the stone would help you determine whether or not the metal was valuable.

Hence, the metaphorical use of the word.

Those touchstones in our lives – the intangible things that we DO use to determine what we should value and how we should value – are something that we create for ourselves. Or rather – re-create.

Most of you, graduates, will have a set of touchstones that you are currently borrowing. You might not believe it, but you actually get a lot of your value touchstones from your parents, other significant adults, your peers, their parents – even your teachers. You use them now on an 18-year money back trial offer. At the end of that offer – around now – you start to decide if your own touchstones will be anything like the ones you have been borrowing. Or something completely different. Or slightly fine-tuned.

I remember shopping with my new roommate – happy to get out of my own parents home finally. We had to buy all the bits and pieces you need to get an apartment functional, and also a lot of groceries and household staples. It was the longest shopping trip of my life. We both brought each of our parents touchstones with us, and it dictated brands, quantities, formats, .... everything. We argued about it all, trying to re-create our respective parents' homes. I had no idea how much my parents had rubbed off on me. The very people I thought I was escaping!

Graduates, this is the time when you will create your own touchstones. Some will look familiar and others perhaps brand new.

But rather than consciously pre-planning your touchstones, you will begin to learn what you really value in life by how you spend your time. Your energy. Your money. This is almost always a retrospective exercise.

It might sound simple, but it is the hardest thing that you will do. You will find that your values clash more often than you think. Short term versus long term benefit. Things that are good for everyone and things that are only good for someone, but someone you really care about. Even things that have value to you versus value to others.

Many adults find themselves in traps where our various touchstones send us mixed signals like this.

Admittedly, when I started this school a few years ago, I did not realize how often I would find myself facing a choice between time with my own family and energy spent trying to improve an education system that would affect many people's children, and would also affect my family eventually, but not in an immediate or direct way.

I may never know if I got it right.

And that is your choice: to remain paralyzed or to begin to test it all out as you create a life for yourself.

I am convinced by what I have seen of this group of young people graduating today that they will take on this challenge and will enjoy it.

Already, working in a school where they do not need to echo the touchstones embedded in a one-size-fits-all curriculum, they have begun the sifting and sorting of their own value systems – their touchstones that will help them determine the precious metals from the fools' gold. The things that feed their soul and the things that sap them of energy with very little return.

So, graduates, as you contemplate the next part of your life coming up and how you will create your own measure of who you will be and what you will do, don't take it too lightly, but don't fear it either. It is process that takes time, not the instantaneous push of a button or crossing of a threshold.

In the short term, have fun and be safe.

Congratulations.

See you Monday.