

Weykt xwexwéyterp Kika7 Saul ren skwekwst te Xaxli'p ell Spaxmn re st'7é 7kwen.

Hello everybody, my name is Kika7 Saul and I come from Fountain and Upper Nicola.

Before I start I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered here today on the unceded territory of the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc people and am thankful to get our education and to graduate here on this beautiful land.

My school journey was pretty rough, whether it be racist environments, or teachers not following my IEP. I struggled to learn in those environments with the bare minimum support.

When I had lost motivation and hope for my education, Four Directions gave me a chance to thrive. I went from failing all my classes to straight A's and B's. For once I actually found interest in learning. As Indigenous youth in the education system, the odds were always against us, but Four Directions changed that and gave us the opportunity to show we are more than capable of succeeding if we are given the right tools. "One size doesn't fit all," everybody has different learning styles and barriers, and Four Directions understood that.

Four Directions has given us more than an education and the chance to graduate. To show that it isn't just me who feels this way, this is what some of the other grad's had to say.

"It has helped me grow in many ways I would have never gotten the chance to in other schools, and if it weren't for 4D I personally would not have graduated. 4D is much more than a school, it's a beautiful community and like a family."

"It honestly bettered my life in so many ways. I was struggling with anxiety when I first got here and I feel like yall were very welcoming. Going to this school has helped me gain so many skills. I didn't think I was going to graduate if it wasn't for 4D. I hated math, but thanks to Courtney I feel like I could enjoy it more, and I've been getting A's while math is usually not my strong suit. I'm going to miss the school, the classmates, and the staff. I feel amazing that I got the opportunity to be a part of the little community our class has built."

"I don't think I would have graduated from school if it wasn't for 4D."

"Four Directions is a school that has not only helped and supported all of us succeed to graduate, but has taught us about responsibility, financial independence, and how to connect with others."

Thank you to the grads who shared their thoughts with me.

As you can see we are all very grateful for this school and staff, and how they go above and beyond not only for our education, but for us as Indigenous youth

I guess as valedictorian I'm supposed to give some advice. My advice for you guys is to remember and

cherish the memories, the lessons, and experiences 4D has given to us. I think the most important thing is to remember that we come from generations of strength, so we are starting from strength. We are the next generation's leaders.

Four Directions opened a path for me. That path was finding my passion for the land and taking the next step forward with my education. I am enrolled for the Bachelor of Natural Resource Sciences at Thompson Rivers University. I never thought I would be going into university or even graduating, let alone being the valedictorian. And I am proud to say that I am here because of Four Directions.

I'd like to give a special thanks to Courtney, Jordan, Laverne, Corine, Justin, and Robert, for going above and beyond for us. You all have changed our lives. I would also like to thank my mom for helping me get to this point in my education and life and for not giving up on me. Our parents and family members have travelled this road with us, thank you to all of them.

I will miss coming to this school but I am glad I made so many memories.

We are entering our next stage of life at a time when it is suddenly "cool" to be Indigenous. The western culture is now finally beginning to acknowledge the horrors inflicted upon our people. We ARE the generation that will see the path to true truth and reconciliation. We WILL be the generation that will walk on two legs and see with two eyes. We ARE who our ancestors dreamed of and what the elders prayed for.

I am honored to be this year's valedictorian, and I thank everyone for giving me this opportunity. I hope you all have a wonderful evening.

And as we move on in life remember:

We are strong

We are powerful

We ARE Indigenous

Kukwstselp