

Welcome class of 2026, friends, and family! My name is Khyara and I am a co-valedictorian with Brook!

I'd like to congratulate everyone here for graduating today. I know it wasn't easy, and I am incredibly proud of you.

Just a few years ago, I was struggling to attend Valleyview Secondary. Every little thing made me anxious and I couldn't find a reason to get out of my bed. I fully stopped attending for a year before I tried tutoring, but it didn't work out either. I had lost all hopes and dreams of seeing myself graduate.

When I was first recommended to attend TREC I hated the idea because I was just so tired of trying. But then, when I arrived at TREC I noticed it was a lot different from my previous experience. The environment was more relaxed and accepting - it was less overwhelming.

My anxiety didn't go away overnight - it took me a year and a half constantly pushing myself to start attending regularly, but slowly I did make progress. I started to get more comfortable with the people around me and the space I was in. I found something I felt passionate about doing - I love to cook and bake.

Over time I was able to attend more classes and for full days 3 times a week. It was mainly for the lunches - specifically the potato casserole, but still, I continued to show up.

I started to volunteer at school, mostly in the kitchen, but occasionally helped out with some other things. Volunteering in school turned into volunteering outside of school at the Kamloops Food Bank.

By grade 11 I started focusing on graduating. I had to really start putting in effort into my school work. Graduating felt so obtainable more than it ever had before. Between all the hard work and consistent stress, there were some amusing moments like when Tracy accidentally set off the fire alarm while trying to make toast for breakfast.

Now that I've graduated I will be attending the ESTER kitchen program at TRU. Eventually I plan to finish my training in the Culinary Arts Program. But I will not forget about TREC alongside the memories and skills it has given us.

I'm very proud of all of us for graduating. It's crazy to even think about. It's something that I thought I would never get to experience, but we were all able to push through to the end.

My advice for you is to keep trying, keep showing up. Give everything your one hundred percent. Because it will be worth it. You are worth it