

Valedictorian

2026 GRADUATION



Muku Mapaji

Nanaimo District Secondary School

Congratulations! You are graduating and you are a valedictorian this year. That's amazing! What kept you motivated to reach this milestone?

I want to leave a mark when my time in this world comes to an end. If I'm being honest, that's the driving force behind many of the milestones I chase, including this one. I wanted to talk about an idea I'd been developing over the last two years. A question I wanted to answer: What could all 8.3 billion people on this planet have in common? The search for this answer led me to this conclusion: Everyone is on the pursuit of more. It's what connects us all; we all want more of something. My pursuit has presented multiple challenges, and every grad is on their own pursuit, facing various challenges as well. I wanted to let them know that they will feel like giving up, like failures, disappointment, frustration, and will fall a couple of times, but it is so important that in those times we set our hearts ablaze, get back up, and keep going. For the sake of our dreams, ourselves, and the people we love.

Who has had the biggest impact on your journey to become valedictorian?

I can't pick a single person because the credit goes to a vast number of people and places. So it's everyone who's ever believed in me, saw in me what at times I couldn't see in myself. Parents, my sister, aunts, uncles, cousins, teachers, and friends.

What are you most excited about next?

I'm excited to continue my pursuit, and venture into the study of the law at University of Glasgow next year as well as use that chance to travel parts of Europe.

Fill in the blank: "High school taught me _____".

High school taught me to continue to be who I am, because human approval is thirst that can not be quenched, so win or lose, people we'll talk anyways. I'm only in competition with myself.

If you could choose a song to walk across the stage as you graduate-what would it be?

One last time, by Christopher Jackson, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and Original Broadway Cast of Hamilton.