Still Much Left to Accomplish

Boozhoo! Hello! My name is Hayden Gilmour, a graduating student of Lord Selkirk Regional Comprehensive Secondary School aka “the Comp” and member of the Youth PASS committee for the past few years. A few weeks ago, I received a letter informing me that I’ve been selected as PASS Co-Valedictorian and to receive the gold Medallion. An unreal gift and first off, I would like to say I'm honored and happy to receive this award. I never thought going into this program in grade 9 that it would have such a lasting impact on me and I just want to thank everyone who has helped me grow and pushed me towards achieving my goals while helping a program focused on building our cultures youth into strong independent leaders.

The moment of receiving this reward was a short-lived joy, for maybe a minute I was ecstatic about it and that doesn't mean I don’t appreciate it I really do. Just it was quickly replaced with the thought of how there is so much more left to accomplish. Not only for my own education but in terms of health, relationships and our whole culture of people still suffering the effects of generations of trauma. So, as I sat in my room next to the outlet to charge my laptop, I thought of how to talk about what Truth and Reconciliation in Action means to me and that we all need to believe in even after a victory there is so much more to accomplish. And what better to do that then talk about the recent discovery that left people speechless. As just a few days after receiving the letter our whole country was shellshocked by the discovery of the 215 indigenous children found buried near a former British Columbia residential school. That’s nearly three times the number of children that attend my reserve’s school and 20 less than the graduating Indigenous class of 2021 at the comp.

Many people in our country woke up to a harsh reality thousands of Indigenous people have known for decades. 25 years from the last residential school closing, to the discovery of children who would've survived some could have been elders in their communities today. This is a gruesome reminder of what we have come from and a reason why the feeling of complacency did not last long after receiving this award. As we get farther from the days of those such crimes, we must continue to push for justice and truth for the lost time of our past. There is always the ability to accomplish more if you strive for it. As the Indigenous community has done with our population being the fastest growing in Canada, more graduates every year across the board and efforts to encourage our culture to future generations becoming more prevalent. We can be the next big change for ourselves, communities, friends, and families if we strive to accomplish more in anything you want to do. We all have the opportunity that in the past was just a dream. A dream that past generations have lived their lives fighting for. The dream of a better education and life for all of us. And they accomplished it. We all now have the basic Opportunity’s many were denied, and we should take it as a victory and inspiration to continue to fight for the truth of our past to be brought to light and amendments to be made. This is what Truth and Reconciliation in Action means to me. An uphill battle that was made more even through the efforts of our past leaders and the belief of there will always be more to accomplish.

Before I go, I would like to show appreciation for the people who have helped me with surviving high school. Thank you to my mother, friends and amazing girlfriend for being my support through tough times, to Mr. Richard for teaching me more than any classroom and to the rest of the teachers who have made high school a once in a life time experience.

So once again I would like to thank The PASS Committee for giving me an opportunity to speak, for the incredible award and the knowledge gained through my time in the team.

Thank you for listening.

Hayden Gilmour