**Heleina Garisau – Ōritetanga Learner Success Conference, August 2019**

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Uraura ki te rā, werawera ki te rā.

Ko te ata kai ihia, ko te ata ka hāpara.

Ko te ata kapua ka rū, ko te ata ka tū.

Rere mai te ihiihi, rere mai te wanawana.

Rere mai Tamanui-o-waho,

Rere mai Tamanuiterā.

Whano, whana, haramai te mahana,

Haumi, hui e, taiki e.

Ko te mea tuatahi mōku, he mihi tēnei ki tō tātou Atua.

Ko ia te pūkenga, te kaihanga o ngā mea katoa.

Ō tātou tūpuna kua hoki ki tua o te ārai ki te kāinga tūturu, tēnā rā koutou.

Haere, haere, hoki atu ki reira, okioki tonu mai.

Ki te reo tuatahi, e kui, mō tō karanga ātaahua rawa, reka rawa.

He waiwai ake aku karu ki te rongo i tērā karanga ki a tātou hei whakatau i a tātou.

Ki a koe, e te rangatira, nō Ngāti Whātua, tēnā rā koe.

Tēnā rā koutou te whānau a Ngāti Whātua kua whakatau i a mātou i tēnei rā.

Ki ngā rangatira, ki a tātou katoa, e huihui mai i tēnei rā, tēnei te mihi aroha ki a tātou katoa.

Ko wai tēnei e tū ake nei?

He tamaiti o te Runga Rawa ahau.

He uri o Ngāpuhi, o Ngāti Kahungunu, o Ngāti Awa, o Ngāti Pākehā hoki.

E mōhio ana au ko wai tēnei.

He tamaiti o Russell rāua ko Rebecca Wateford, née Herewini.

He māmā nō Naia rātou ko Jess, ko Ocean, ko Bonnie, ko Haven, ko John-boy, ko Tiaria, ko Reia te pōtiki.

Me aku mokopuna, ko Cora rāua ko Māhaki.

This morning I'm so grateful to be with you all. I'm thrilled at what I've heard so far. I'm excited to be here as a representative of NorthTec and of Whitecliffe and I want to acknowledge my phenomenal tutors, not only my teachers, but all my educators over my lifespan. I'm happy to say that I'm a mature student.

I think the thing that is most poignant for me is that they lit something in me. I learned about this at Maunga Kura Toi. They lit te ahi kōmau ki roto ki ahau, this flame. This flame and this thirst and this hunger for education.

And when you light the flame in somebody, you don't have to chase them. They'll chase you. I messaged three of my tutors, previous tutors, this morning at four o’clock in the morning to tell them what I was about to do, and to thank them to mihi ki a ratou.

For the love that they gave me, because they did. I knew that they cared about me. I knew that I was important to them. I felt important, and because of that knowing, because of that care I knew that I could do what I needed to do.

So those that are in governance I have a gift for you actually, I made it myself, with earth, and fire, and water, and kōkōwai is a reminder about that ahi kōmau. The fire that we need to ignite in our students and that comes from the transference of knowledge from our teachers, from our kaiako. And so I ask, how are the teachers feeling?

How are the teachers feeling in our current system? How are the educators feeling? Because it's from the bellies of our teachers, and our kaiako that the fire in the bellies of our students is ignited. I am committed to a life-long learning career. I am a living enquiry. I am the embodiment of my ancestors. I am the embodiment of my ancestors. This is a creative response to an assignment from last year.

So this is me, the embodiment of my ancestors - and I want to speak to the gun. I want to speak to the gun, because it's a metaphor, right? It's a metaphor, and it was literal. I'm a descendant of Ngā Puhi. And to the gun in this whakaahua, this image, represents for me, power. It represents power. And this history that we have in Aotearoa of power over. Of the dominant paradigm of power over. And so you'll see here that I'm moving forward, I'm not running away from anything. I'm willing to look into the stories of my past, into the stories of our country.

I'm willing to have a really good look and see if those are the things that we want to continue to perpetuate. If they're the things that we wanna change. And so I carry that power with me, and I move into the paradigm shift of power with. Power with. And I heard that. I heard that today. My heart was singing at this shift. When you have power and then you can empower others. That right there is what it's gonna take. The paradigm shift from power over to power with.

And I'm committed to that cause. We are created to be agents to act. Agents to act not objects to be acted upon. And isn't that the essence of Ōritetanga? To give access. To give access. Giving people the power to engage. "Education is the latchkey to success in life". Gordon B. Hinckley said that. Russell M. Nelson said "Education is the difference between wanting to help people, and being able to help people". Education has given me the gift of being able to reclaim myself. In the words of Rebecca Solnit, she says, the stars we are given, the constellations we make, that is to say stars exist in the cosmos.

But constellations are the imaginary lines we draw between them. The readings we give the sky, the stories we tell. Through education, I've been able to reclaim myself. I've been able to re-story. I've been able to re-constellate. And I can tell stories about myself that I wasn't able to tell before. But I can tell them now, and they're different because I'm the hero of my story, as are we. We are the heroes of our stories. So here we are in this moment. This moment right here and it feels like I've got this humming feeling in my body.

Because it feels like an age of shifting, of change. Of real change. Not tokenistic change. But when we can empower our people to tell the truth about our history. The things that haven't worked and to look at ways that we can make things work. Not just those in governance, not just the educators, all of us.

Because ako in te ao Māori, ako, one word, means the same. It has a duality. To learn and to teach. So I learn to teach and teach to learn. It takes a bit of humility to be able to do that. This is a grand orchestration. To use the power which is in each of us. For this season that we get, a finite season and it's only short. Who knows how long? But we get this moment, right? What are we gonna do with it? I know what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna do everything I can, in my power, to bring myself back to my heart.

Because the seed of all learning, is in the emotional heart. Ko te ngākau, te mata, me te kūaha o te wairua. The feeling heart is the doorway and the window to our wairua, to our spirit. So I whole myself, I'm practising my fragmented pieces to pull them all together. And so that at the end of it I wanna be able to bring my whānau close, my loved ones close to me. And to come to a place where I'm weary, I'm worn out, but I'm satisfied, weathered and wind swept with wonderful stories to tell.

Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

[APPLAUSE]

[MUSIC PLAYING]