2026 VALEDICTORIAN SPEECH

I want to start off by saying thank you to everyone who took the time to come support and watch our class of 2026 grads. Not only have we achieved such a big accomplishment by graduating but we did it as young mothers with our children. I know not all of us have had the same hardships but I would just like to talk about some of the things I've been through myself. In grade 11 I stopped going to school entirely. I thought that because I had a job that I didn't need to finish school. Shortly after I fell into the wrong crowd filled with all the wrong people. I wasn't listening to my mother. I'd go out all hours of the night drinking and partying, doing things I shouldn't have been doing, especially not if I wanted to be successful. Even though I knew what I was doing was bad I couldn't find the motivation to stop doing what I was good at. Going back to school just to see myself fail over and over again was enough to make me never want to go back. I started working daytime shifts at my job just so that I could make it to the group hangouts or parties to drink. It was during that time where I met Michael due to working at the same place, we became friends and I quickly realized that going out and constantly drinking wasn't everything in life. He showed me that there was more to life than hanging out with the wrong people who didn't truly care about me. In September of 2023 I found out that I was pregnant and going to be a mother. I was terrified. I was an 18-year-old high school dropout working at food basics. How could I possibly have a baby? My sister Whitney then helped me find the Abiona Centre and talked me into going back to school I came in for one day and was completely discouraged when I got the math diagnostic sheet and I never went back again until we got kicked out and I had to find my own place I quickly realized that if I was going to give my son a better life then It had to start with me graduating. When I first started class at the Abiona Centre for the second time, I was very anxious and nervous especially because my two courses were math and English my two worst subjects. Then I started working in Kadri and Karlos' class and they changed my whole point of view on school they made me feel confident and capable to do their courses they didn't make me feel stupid when i asked questions or

got something wrong they would just help correct me. I'm extremely grateful that I got to have them as my teachers. If it wasn't for them and their dedication to us as students I probably wouldn't be standing here right now. I would also like to thank Sophie and ebony for always being there and always willing to hear our crazy stories and just overall being the best school counselors. If you know Sophie, and ebony you know they always lose in uno (joking) but seriously if you know them you know they are two of the most genuine people and I will forever be grateful for how they have helped shape me as the person I am today. And lastly to my son I promise to do whatever it takes in life to make you happy and to give you the best childhood I can. I promise to do whatever it takes in life to be successful for you. You are my pride and joy to my baby boy; the world is yours and I'll love you forever.