



THE LEARNING CONNEXION

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Bennett Pomana Coordinator of the Taita Clubhouse – Graduation Speech 2020

Kia ora my name is Bennett Pomana, I am the coordinator at Taita Clubhouse. Taita Clubhouse is and after school facility an after school programme. We are tech based and we cater to rangatahi between the ages of 10 and 18. We do anything and everything that's tech based, so if kids want to make music then they come here, make music. We have the Adobe Suite set up on our PCs. We have about 10 PCs here, so if they want to do any type of digital art or anything like that, they can come here and do it. We don't adhere to any school curriculum and it's the kids that dictate what we do here, so that's what we are all about, we're all about being creative. We're all about being artistic, using your imagination.

One of the things I say to all the kids and our staff too is we just come here to make something, make anything, make noise, make music, make mess even, as long as we are being creative, I'm down with that.

I've been asked to come here, well I've been asked to do this video by my bro Kiran and he is one of your tutors and this is for everybody that is graduating. A huge mihi out to you all, congratulations, you did it! I've been asked to give you some words of wisdom, you know because I've come up through an artistic type of route to get to where I am today. I've done quite a few things in my short time on this planet, some of the things that I have done include, well I was in the first hip hop crew in Aotearoa. It was called the Upper Hutt Posse. Our first video was filmed at the Taita train station, and that was part of a programme called, it was from way back in the day and it was called Radio With Pictures, and the dude that interviewed us was called Dick Driver. So that was way back in the 80's. So we went on to make an album and do heaps of positive stuff, the Upper Hutt Posse, if you don't know google it check it out, check out the videos on YouTube.

Following that I joined another crew, another Hip Hop crew called Dam Native, we did another album, so Upper Hutt Posse album was called 'Against the Flow' and the Dam Native album is called 'KDRU' which is 'Kaupapa Driven Rhymes Uplifted'. So I'm a product of Upper Hutt, raised in Upper Hutt, born in Gizzy. Spent my first few years, went to my first primary school in Newtown, Newtown Primary School. Then we moved out to the Hutt and finished all my schooling out here, went to Brentwood School it's no longer there, Fergusson Intermediate that's still there and a couple of my kids went there as well and Upper Hutt College, that's me.

Following that I went on and pursued a career in music, like I said with Upper Hutt Posse and Dam Native. Then progressed into television on a show Mai Time which was probably way before your time, so it was a magazine based programme where we just talked about things that pertained to us. My first interview was with a dude called Tony Hawk. I didn't know jack about him, and as we were heading out to the event where he was, it was the first Big Day Out, and you know on my way out there I'm trying to suss out who he is, what he did, doing my research on the way out because I was fresh into TV and like I

said it was my first television interview, so besides the fact that I was shitting myself I also discovered that this dude was a pro skater, was a millionaire at that point and just doing heaps of cool stuff. Got there and the dude was totally down to earth and it was the best first interview that anyone could have had, the dude was so chill.

After that, I got into radio broadcasting, I was a producer with a radio station called Flava, Flava your home for hip hop, R&B. I worked alongside Stacey Daniels, Stacey Morrison, David Fane, Pete Marsden a.k.a Pete Palangi. Cool times. I was also the Daytime host and the drive host as well. I've done heaps of stuff and all of it is within the arts sector, so the fact that you guys have made the choice to study and now are graduating, man huge respect and major props out to you all for enduring and endeavouring to follow your passion. Passion is what it's all about, passion is what has gotten me to where I have been and enabled me to do a lot of things that I wouldn't have otherwise been able to do.

Without art in my life I don't know where I would be now, ever since I was a youngster, my mum always, she was the one that got me into arts into drawing she recognised that I could draw, and so she always fully encouraged it. She also encouraged me to read encouraged me to utilise our library, back then it was the mobile library bus which used to come around to our hood, in Merton Street, Upper Hutt. Once a week I would go in there and grab the maximum amount of books that I was allowed to take out for a week, which was 10 and then I would just go home and devour them. Mum was also a staunch and avid subscriber to Readers Digest, so we used to get heaps of books, you know the first ones that I remember were called the World's Last Mysteries, and it spoke of and encapsulated and show photos of South American cultures like Mayans and Aztecs.

Like I said art has been a huge passion for me, it is what keeps me grounded and balanced, without art in my life I go crazy man, I go insane. You know when I don't do anything, because I still do music to this very day, I record, I've got a recording set up at home, got my own little studio and stuff. I find that if I don't go and write and record at least every couple of days then I start feeling a little off balance, off kilter.

What's my point, you made the right choice, now it's up to you guys to use what you have learnt and start forging your path in the world. Now with Covid 19 and the lockdown period the world is going through a transition, it's changing, where what was normal isn't normal now. So you have the chance and the opportunity to use that which you have to go and create a new path, a brand new path for yourself. And I'm hoping that, fingers crossed, that it is a path that you are going to be happy with, with the choices that you make whilst you are forging this path. Now with the arts stuff during the course of my life it hasn't always been easy, I haven't always had the support that I should have when I was coming up and doing music stuff you know hip hop music. My old man wasn't always the most supportive, or as supportive as he should have been, he always called hip hop music that music talky music. But I'm lucky that my mum supported me in that. I went on and from that support from my mum, I have received awards for music I have received awards in the television industry, TV award, I've won a music award and radio awards too. So basically I've been quite fortunate and really lucky to have been successful in everything that I have done.

I'm not being a blow arse about it either I'm just saying that I've been in the right place and made the right choices and that will apply to you too, It comes down to making the right choices and even when you make bad choices you have to learn from them. Don't be afraid to fail when you go out there in the world and put all your skills to use, and it's practice. Just keep going. Michael Jordan, what's that analogy

that he uses you know he's failed x amount of times, thousands of times but that has just made him stronger and strengthened his will to succeed. I'm not saying that you are going to fail all the time, but if you do just get back up, brush yourself off and keep going.

I salute you for what you've done and what you've achieved especially in these times, crazy times indeed, you should be celebrating with a huge graduation type of day but instead we're doing this here. Now I'm not diminishing anything, all I'm saying is congratulations. I'm proud of what you've done. Your whanau are proud of you and you have to be proud of yourself too for achieving what you've achieved. So use your powers for good and go out there and create a life that you will be happy with because life is short, go out there and have fun. Utilise all your gifts, all your skills and get into a lane where you are successful and happy and I think that's all I've got to say. Nga mihi kia koutou. Before I go though let me leave you with this karakia.

Whakataka te hau ki te uru
Whakataka te hau ki te tonga
Kia mākinakina ki uta
Kia mātaratara ki tai
E hī ake ana te atakura
He tio, he huka, he hau hū
Tihei mauri ora!

Cease the winds from the west
Cease the winds from the south
Let the breeze blow over the land
Let the breeze blow over the ocean
Let the red-tipped dawn come with a
sharpened air.
A touch of frost, a promise of a glorious
day.