



**Claire Wilson**  
**Graduate, Geography**

I have graduated from California State University, Fullerton with a Master's in Geography. During my studies I researched the concept and application of sustainability initiatives for the tourism resorts of Whistler, British Columbia and Queenstown, New Zealand. My research was recognized through a grant from the New Zealand Ministry of Tourism. Prior to this degree I have worked extensively in the tourism sector in China, Mongolia, Russia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. I intend to work in the field of public policy upon graduation.

### **Commencement Speech**

Who would have thought...

Who would have thought, that a chance encounter with a lovely Japanese American bloke on the shores of Lake Baikal would lead me to standing here today.

And standing here today, I feel honored and grateful to be graduating with such a delightful and enchanting group of people.

There's an old Maori proverb which goes;

He aha te mea nui i tenei ao: he tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing in this world: it is people, it is people, it is people.

One thing that has struck me about this department is a great sense of community. The pluralistic nature of geography lends itself to this state, and as Aline once discussed with me – geography creates good citizens. This combined with the dedication to the subject, particularly from those in the geography club – Bren, Aline, Kevin, Mario, Anne, Tiffany and everybody else who have spent time in the geography lounge - when you probably should have been

studying. All these people have contributed to creating a community that you will take with you throughout the rest of your life and careers.

All this today would not be possible without the unwavering and diligent support of the faculty, staff and adjunct faculty who provide the backbone to this department. It's not an easy time to be employed by the California State University system what with budget cuts, furloughs and over capacity classes. Despite this adversity the academic integrity of this department is well above par and staff and faculty always have time for students.

I have so many fond memories of my time here. In 20 years time I probably won't remember the topic of many of the essays I wrote, but I will remember waxing and waning lyrically about the ills of the world in Dr Taylor's human geography seminar class; I will also remember how to argue like Rush Limbaugh or Mike Mike on the perils of climate change thanks to Dr Miller, I will remember listening to Dr Voeks' colorful stories and the 'excitement' I felt in GIS with Dr Carroll. I'm grateful for Dr Drayse's conscientiousness, which inspired me to get my thesis done. I am also grateful for the time getting to know Sherry via the nuances of Geog 100. But mostly, I will remember the many interesting conversations and enjoyable activities undertaken with all of the students here today.

As geographers, we are inherently curious creatures. As time progresses I encourage everyone who is graduating here today to embrace that curious tendency and seek out the various adventures which will come your way. And if any of you end up in New Zealand – my mum cooks a delicious lamb roast. Geography has prepared us well for these adventures and the people you are graduating with today are a fantastic support method to see you on your journey.

In Maori and NZ culture, it's tradition to finish a speech with a song or waiata. So I'll leave you with this song, te Aroha, which translates as Love, Faith, and Peace be amongst us

all.

Te aroha

Te whakapono

Me te rangimariee

Tatou tatou e.

No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou tena koutou katoa.