

Vaitoelau's Story

“Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro nōnā te ngahere, ko te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga nōnā te ao.”

This whakatauki says ‘the forest belongs to the bird who feasts on the miro berry, the world belongs to the bird who feasts on education’. Graeme Dingle Foundation is fortunate to watch our young people take their opportunities; this Kelston Girls’ College student has certainly done that.

My name is Vaitoelau Ah Chee. I joined the Project K community in 2019 and am proud to be a graduate for 2020. My journey was tough and challenging but most of all the most satisfying journey of my life that I will never forget.

I entered the programme with no knowledge of interacting with people, low self-esteem, scared and most of all zero courage. I was known as the shy most quiet girl in our family. I fear the world, I fear making friends and I fear talking to people, even the girls in school.

When I got into our first event the first thing I noticed was equal treatment. I never felt so accepted and cared for. The camp taught me self-independence and courage. It opened my eyes to what the world really means.

Project K changed everything for me. Having my own mentors and having someone as Kelly that checks up on me every time and a mentor that advises me to push through all difficulties of life and then I realised what it means by what everyone else is talking about “NO ONE IS

PERFECT”. Project K taught me to never do specific things to please society, it taught me that my happiness matters. Having mentors is something that I would cherish and it is a rare opportunity. Having mentors that take me out for a walk and do fun activities was such a blessing.

Coming out of Project K with such a strong foundation of self-acceptance is a big moment of my life and I am grateful and thankful for your work and service. Project K taught me THAT I AM IMPORTANT. Thank you for the lessons you taught me. Thank you for being there for me and thank you for teaching me to face life. I am forever grateful for the opportunities.



We want every child to know: What they have inside is greater than any obstacle.