

# Trailblazers & Pathmakers – Empowering Girl’s Leadership

*Welcome Address from Anne-Marie Kee Head of School and Foundation,  
Lakefield College School, November 21, 2017*

Good morning and welcome to Lakefield College School.

I am proud to be Lakefield’s twelfth Head of School and Foundation and would like to share a few quick facts about our school:

- We have 362 students, 262 of them board here, which means they sleep in one of our 12 houses on campus
- Our students are from 36 countries, so we are a global campus
- We have over 300 acres of land, giving us the most land per student in the country. We believe that outside is better and our students spend more time outdoors than most schools.
- We have exceptional arts and sports opportunities. We believe that students should be athletes and artists.
- We have a low student to staff ratio and exceptional teachers. We believe in relational learning.
- We have a very large endowment, which means we offer the most financial aid per student in the country. We want the best students to come here, regardless of parent income
- Until 1989, we were an all-boys school, so it has been only for the past 30 years, that we have made a commitment to cultivating girls’ leadership, and I am very proud of our girls here, especially Betsy, Madison, Katherine and Alice who recognized the need to bring female leaders together in this room for an incredible program today.

Before joining the Lakefield community, I ran a national organization for independent schools, called CAIS, and a real priority for me was to see more women take on leadership roles. So, when this school was looking for a Head of School, I accepted the responsibility of being the only woman running a co-ed boarding school in Canada.

When I was your age, I too was chosen to attend a conference for girls that aimed at cultivating girls’ leadership. I remember thinking that the women were a bunch of extreme feminist types who were all a little off—hopefully none of you are thinking that of the adults here today—and I remember thinking at the time that women were equal to men and there was no need to hold a separate conference on this topic.

Flash forward to about 14 years ago, when I was offered a job during a lunch meeting with two much older and quite prestigious men. When they told me the salary, I knew it was significantly lower than what my predecessor earned and I knew that the budget could manage a higher salary. But I sat there at that lunch meeting and said nothing. I went home, and frankly, I cried that life was so unfair.

I realized, however, that I could say something. I didn’t know if it would make a difference and I had to get over my fear of being perceived as trouble or overly confident or selfish. But I made a choice to present my views on what I thought was fair compensation. I did research; I wrote out a script; I rehearsed it, and I made a call. I presented my reasons for why I deserved more salary, and that call changed my life. I earned more money and then I worked harder than I had ever worked in my life to prove to myself that I earned it.

Now this is just one small example, and you will hear many more significant compelling stories today, but my point is that there will be times in your life, when you will need to dig deep and make a choice for yourself.

We are privileged in that we live in Canada and we always have a choice. When I decided to take on this job, for example, I made a choice that I imagine some of you may have to make one day – the choice was to pursue my career here and live separately from my husband and daughter who remained in Ottawa.

As two professionals in a marriage, we found ourselves having to make a choice and we decided that our marriage was strong enough to sustain long distance living. There will increasingly be times when you have to make choices and depending on your stage in life, you may be called upon to make tough choices around family and career.

But my hope for you is this – trailblazers and pathmakers realize there is always choice in life. And when you are confronted by situations in your life, whatever stage you are at, my hope is this – that you will choose courage. Choose the road less travelled by and surround yourself with other courageous women who have done the same.

Our world needs women who continue to choose courage; our world needs women who have chosen courage to come together and talk about these opportunities and how to support fellow trailblazers and pathmakers.

Welcome to Lakefield College School, and welcome to a day of challenge and inspiration.