Life is full of unexpected situations. The most important thing we can do is gain insights from our experiences to help pave the way for a successful future. When I was twelve, my father was left unemployed when he was severely injured at his job in the sawmill. Seeing my father permanently disabled was really difficult to adjust to. My family was not prepared for the financial problems that followed and our lives were flipped upside down. To keep our family afloat, my mother juggled two cleaning jobs and I withdrew from my swimming and karate lessons. I went to work with my mother every Saturday and Sunday morning, vacuuming, mopping, and changing tablecloths in banquet halls. From a young age, my mother instilled in me an ambition to work hard. I helped in any way I could to assist my father with his injuries and my mother with her increased responsibilities. During this time, my schoolwork became my escape from the pressures my family was facing. I spent hours immersing myself in my schoolwork and my work habits eventually resulted in excellent marks. Today, I am proud to have maintained First Class Honour roll standing throughout high school while helping my family at home. By assisting my injured father with daily tasks, specialist appointments, and providing him with constant reassurance, I discovered my passion for helping those in need.

By the time I entered grade 10, I had some understanding of how a positive mindset can be used to persevere through adversity. I had also begun to discover the joys of service and mentorship. As a young grade eight girl, I had tried out for the basketball team and unfortunately was not selected. I felt heart-broken and disappointed in myself. Nonetheless, I continued to practise. My basketball coach noticed my hard work and invited me to join the team; today, I am captain of the Senior Girls’ basketball team. This was a powerful moment in my life as I realized that commitment to a goal can be very fulfilling. All throughout my junior high school years, I tried to improve myself by volunteering for opportunities that arose in my school as a referee, scorekeeper, and coach and in the community as a City of Surrey summer camps student leader. In grade 11, as part of my work with Student Council, I began to volunteer with LA Matheson’s Graduation Committee and coordinate fundraisers such as car washes and bottle drives; this year, I have been fortunate enough to be selected as President of the Grad Committee and am excited about working with my peers to make Matheson’s Class of 2016 the best grad class ever. Alongside this work, in grade 10 and 11, I participated in a leadership and mentorship program called REACH. In that program, I gained certifications in First-Aid, Food Safe, and High Five. Those credentials helped me to secure a paid position with the YMCA as a Group Leader. The most important aspect of REACH, though, was my mentor, Monica. She was a pre-med UBC student who inspired me to study and pursue my post-secondary goals despite my family’s troubles. Following her lead, I founded I AM G.I.R.L., a mentorship program for grade 8,9 girls in my school who are facing difficulties. The I AM G.I.R.L. program was a success because of the bonds of friendship and trust that were formed between the student mentors and our program participants. I am lucky to have been a positive influence for these young girls and watch them blossom the way they have. My achievements with I AM G.I.R.L ultimately led me to become a mentor for REACH. Through this position, I am able to support my peers through community initiatives such as Camp NEXT, a summer soccer camp that my peers and I host for North Surrey youth. The time commitment of playing on the basketball team, working with Graduation Committee, and volunteering with REACH have been a strain, but I am incredibly proud of my work with these initiatives.

Last summer, I worked full-time as a YMCA Group Leader to help pay the bills at home and save some money for my grad year. While I was working, I completed the training required to become a lifeguard in my spare time. Lifeguard positions pay well and I know that my efforts to find employment as a lifeguard will help my family considerably with cost of a post-secondary education. I have not yet been able to obtain a lifeguard position, but feel confident that I will be hired for the intake of winter 2017 City of Surrey programs.

I know that life will continue to put forward unexpected situations such as my father’s accident. Helping my father heal from his injuries has taught me valuable lessons about determination. These are lessons that will shape my future as I know that I am facing some massive financial obligations to pay for post-secondary schooling. Ever since I was a child, it has been my dream has been to attend medical school and serve my community as a physician. For years, my parents supported my progress towards this objective. However, my family's unforeseen financial circumstances now make it necessary for me to seek financial assistance to fulfill my educational goals. The money from the Centennial Scholarship will greatly facilitate in making my lifelong dream of studying at UBC into a reality. I have lived a good portion of my life serving others, so it’s awkward for me to be now asking others for help. However, I know that without such assistance, I will not have the funds to pay for a UBC education. I feel fortunate to have had so many amazing academic and extra-curricular experiences through school and am excited about the prospect of potentially continuing my journey at the University of British Columbia.