

# Fort High's 'Class of 2017' celebrates graduation

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The Ice For Kids Arena was a sea of purple last Thursday evening.

Proud family members and friends looked on Fort High's Class of 2017 crossed the stage—beaming—to accept their Ontario Secondary School Diplomas.

Camera clicks and cheers could be heard as each graduate accepted their diploma. Parents swarmed the floor to get the perfect shot of their son or daughter celebrating this important milestone.

"I always thought finishing high school wasn't a big deal," said Socorro Galusha, who performed Yael Naim's "New Soul" during the interlude of the ceremony.

"But when I was up there, graduating and singing, I realized it was one of the best moments in my life thus far," she noted.

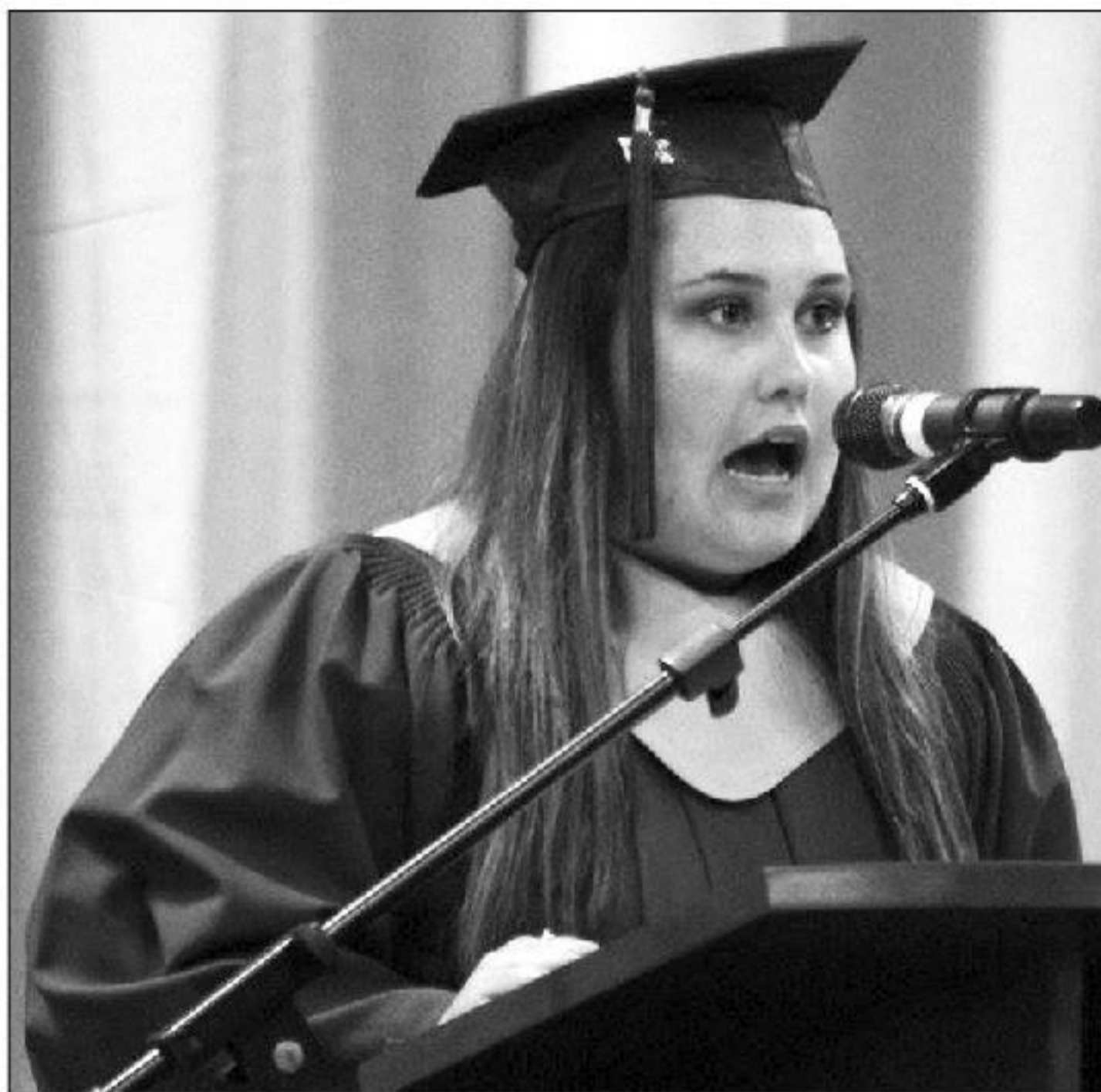
"I felt nothing but pride and happiness knowing I had accomplished this feat," Galusha enthused.

"I'm ready to move on and find myself even more while pursuing the career of my dreams."

FFHS principal Bill Daley took to the stage before the diplomas were distributed to congratulate the graduates on their success, reflecting on the fun they had throughout their four years at Fort High, and also wishing them well in their future endeavours.

Valedictorian Mackenzie Wright delivered her address after the graduates all had received their diplomas.

She began by thanking families, friends, the principals, and the board of education for their continued support towards the students in the graduating class.



**Valedictorian Mackenzie Wright thanked teacher, educators, family members, and friends for their support and wished her classmates well in their future endeavours.**

—Photo courtesy of the RRDSB

Throughout her speech, Wright acknowledge the anxieties the class may have.

"I'm sure that most of us can't help but let our minds wander to what the future holds for us," she remarked.

"I would like to be able to stand here and assure you that there is no need to worry, that you should cast all of your fears away and that the world is yours.

"That would make me a liar, though," she said.

"So instead, I will tell you that I have faith in you and that you are capable of overcoming those struggles."

She also encouraged her classmates to take advantage of any opportunities that life may present them.

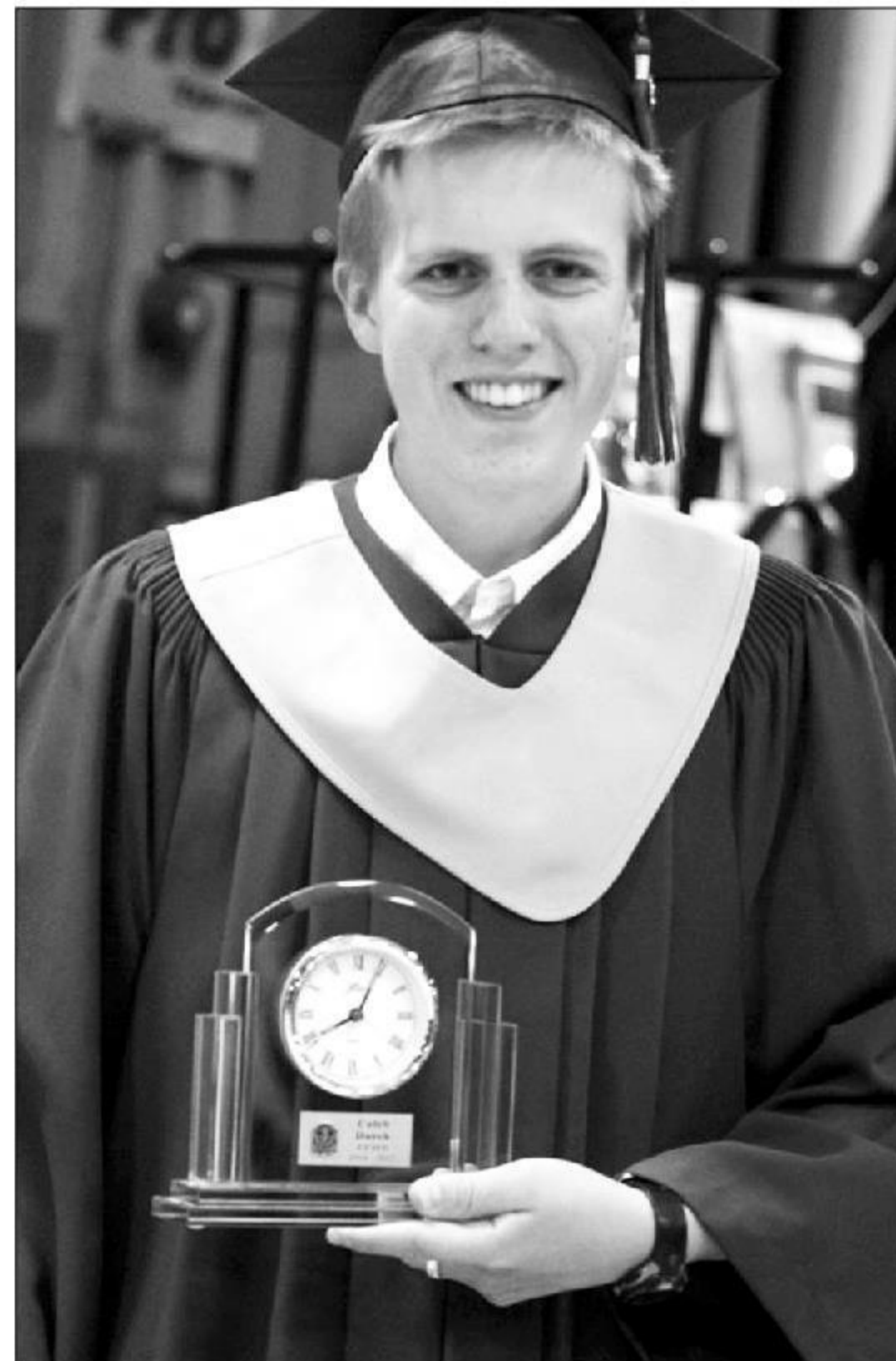
"Take advantage of the situations that life presents you

because if the rain didn't come, if the sun didn't shine, and if the air remained stagnant for the next hundred years, it wouldn't matter that you hadn't been ready, it would only matter that you had taken action," she said.

Afterwards, Wright, who will be attending the University of Manitoba this fall to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree, said she feels happy to have finally graduated.

"I think now is the right time to take on all of the new challenges that are sure to come with my journey in post-secondary education," she enthused.

"Even though I am really happy to be starting a new adventure at the University of Manitoba in the fall, I am sure there will be times when I wish I was back in high school," Wright admitted.



**Caleb Dueck was all smiles after having accepted one of his three awards Thursday evening during Fort High's graduation ceremony. He won the Leading Student Award, the Governor General's Medal, and the Sir Isaac Newton Award.**

—Photo courtesy of the RRDSB

"Instead of missing Fort High, though, I hope that I am able to reminisce on all the great memories we made there.

"I can't think of a better group of people to have spent four years of high school with than the people of Fort High,"

she remarked.

Another name heard many times during Thursday night's ceremony was Caleb Dueck.

He took home three impressive accolades, including the Leading Student Award (presented to the student with the highest average in six Grade 12 credits), the Governor General's Medal (presented to the student with the highest average in their Grade 11 and 12 courses), and the Sir Isaac Newton Award (for the highest average on the first attempt in 4U physics and 4U calculus).

Other awards presented that night included:

- gold clocks to Jillian Armstrong, Victoria Beaudry, Dylan Roth, Mackenzie Wright, and Judy Wu for receiving at least three certificates of merit;

- the Lenora Colvin Memorial Award to Brent Morand for the most outstanding attendance;

- the Robert George Memorial Award to Harleigh Brow-Rose for the high standard in the practical application of automotive theory;

- the Ralph Whetsone Trophy to outstanding music students Robyn French and Landyn Gestic;

- the Murray Kitts Theatre Award to Victoria Beaudry; and

- the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award to Gabriella McDougald for going above and beyond to complete the required number of volunteer hours needed to graduate.

Rainy River District School Board technical awards also were given out to Sara Selman (transportation), Trace Gosselin (construction), Jillian Armstrong (communications), and Cole Kowalski (manufacturing).



**Socorro Galusha (at left) belted out the lyrics to Yael Naim's "New Soul" during Fort High's annual graduation ceremony at the Ice For Kids Arena on Thursday evening. She was accompanied by music teacher Lisa Loney on piano. Meanwhile, above, Nasia Kavanaugh and Avery Wilson-Hands duelled in a "Guitar Hero" battle during the "chem-free" grad party afterwards as Emma Noga looked on.**

—Kiera Kowalski photos