THE MAYOR CLLR CYRIL XABA KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE INKAMANA HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, 1 NOVEMBER 2025.

- Program Director: Mr Thulasizwe Ndlovu
- Abbot of Inkamana Abbey: Right Reverend Father Boniface Kamushishi (OSB)
- Chairperson, Inkamana High School Alumni Association: Mr Sthembiso Mzobe
- Principal, Inkamana High School: Mrs I. Fourie
- Chairperson, Inkamana High School Alumni Association Board of Directors: Dr Fikile Ndlovu
- Dr Lubisi

Good evening, distinguished guests, beloved staff of Inkamana High School (IHS), proud alumni, honoured parents, and guardians, and most importantly, our vibrant learners. It is a profound honour to stand before you tonight as your guest of honour, to celebrate the shared past, to

recognise the promise of the school's present, and to seize with boldness the potential of our future.

To our dedicated Principal, the teaching and non-teaching staff, thank you for your unwavering commitment to excellence and for nurturing the next generation. To the parents and guardians: your support gives wings to the dreams of our young people. And to our learners: you are the reason we gather; you are the future that the alumni wish to hand to you, stronger, richer, full of possibility.

We know Inkamana High School was founded in 1923 by the Benedictine missionaries of Inkamana Abbey in what is now the heart of Zululand. From its humble beginnings, one class of Grade 5, fifteen pupils, boarding and paying sixpence a month, it has grown into a school renowned for academic excellence, character formation and leadership.

Over many decades, Inkamana has produced not only excellent matric results but also citizens of integrity, service, and leadership. It’s a legacy you, our learners, step into today.

Let us take a moment to recognise some of the remarkable individuals who passed through these halls, people who have carried the Inkamana values into national and international arenas:

- Zanele Mbeki, former First Lady of the Republic of South Africa.
- Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, former Deputy President of South Africa.
- Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali, acclaimed poet who brings voice and vision to our literature from these roots.
- Prince Gideon Zulu of the Zulu Royal Family, who matriculated here in 1956.

These names are not just a rollcall of success, they are proof that the foundations laid here at Inkamana can lead to leadership, service, and impact at the highest levels.

We pause tonight to pay special tribute to the Missionary Benedictine Sisters, whose unwavering faith, compassion, and commitment laid the very foundation upon which Inkamana High School stands. For decades,

the Sisters have been the quiet architects of this institution’s excellence, nurturing not only the intellect but also the spirit of every learner who has passed through these gates. Their devotion went beyond the classroom; it was a ministry of love, service, and sacrifice.

In times of change and challenge, the Sisters remained steadfast, ensuring that Inkamana remained a beacon of light in the heart of Zululand. To the Sisters' legacy, we say thank you; your prayers, patience, and perseverance have shaped generations of leaders, and your legacy continues to inspire us all.

We further extend our deep gratitude to the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing, whose global vision and spiritual guidance have nurtured education and faith across continents. Their presence here in South Africa has left an indelible mark, fostering values of prayer, hard work, humility, and service.

From Tutzing to Vryheid, their mission has been one of empowerment: to cultivate minds and hearts capable of building a just and compassionate society. The Sisters remind us that education is not only about learning

facts, but about shaping souls, building communities, and deepening our connection to God and one another.

Now, let us reflect on why institutions like Inkamana High School matter far beyond the classroom, far beyond matric results, and how they underpin the development of our province and country.

Education equips learners with literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, the building blocks of a modern economy. In a province like KwaZulu-Natal, with its rich potential and urgent needs, schools like Inkamana play a vital role in developing human capital. When learners from this region attend, graduate, and go on to tertiary study, employment, or entrepreneurship, they contribute to economic upliftment, reduce inequality, and expand opportunity.

Inkamana's ethos, rooted in the Benedictine values of listening (Ausculta), prayer and work (Ora et Labora) builds character. A school that instils discipline, mutual respect, service to others, empathy and integrity is a school doing much more than teaching subjects: it is forming citizens. In a diverse society like ours, schools become the places where young

people from different backgrounds learn to live together, respect each other, and contribute to the community.

As we have seen from the alumni, schools are breeding grounds for leadership. Whether in public service, business, culture or civil society, the behaviours, attitudes, and grounding developed at school matter. When Inkamana asks its learners not only to aim for personal success but “to work for the good of their fellow men” (Inkamana’s mission statement), that is leadership in formation.

Inkamana serves the Abaqulusi region, and by providing quality boarding education even in a rural setting, it ensures that talent does not go untapped, that young people from this region can compete nationally and internationally.

When learners stay in school to learn, they graduate, and go on to contribute towards building a better future for all, the ripple effect touches families, communities, and the region.

Every learner who graduates becomes an alumnus, a possible mentor, a potential leader in their community, and a role model for the next generation. This multiplier effect means the school is not only the building, the teachers, the classrooms, but a living network of people who shape the province's future.

For us, as the leadership of eThekwini Municipality, education remains the cornerstone of our vision for an inclusive, sustainable, and globally competitive city. We recognise that every classroom is a seedbed for the leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs who will shape Durban's future.

Through partnerships with schools, universities, and training institutions, the city continues to invest in human capital, from improving access to digital learning and infrastructure to supporting youth development, vocational training, and entrepreneurship initiatives. We believe that when a child succeeds in school, a family is uplifted; when a community values education, a city is transformed.

It is through education that we will drive social cohesion, stimulate economic growth, and ensure that every young person in our municipality has the tools to participate fully in the opportunities of tomorrow.

Learners of Inkamana High School: you are part of this remarkable story. The baton is now in your hands.

- Embrace every opportunity: academics, sports, culture, service.
- Work hard, not only for your own advancement but for the benefit of others.
- Remember you stand on the shoulders of those who came before you, and you pave the way for those who will come after.
- Dream boldly and act diligently, remembering that character matters as much as marks.

To the Alumni Association, you are committed to supporting the school: to mentoring, to resources, to encouragement, to fostering the link between past and present. Together, you form a community of support. To the teachers and staff: thank you. You are the stewards of this legacy. To parents and guardians: thank you for entrusting your children to this institution, and for partnering in their development.

Inkamana High School is more than bricks and mortar. It is a beacon of hope, a forge of character and leadership, a wellspring of excellence in our province. May it continue to thrive. May the learners of today become the leaders of tomorrow. And may every one of us, alumni, staff, parents, learners, give ourselves wholeheartedly to the mission of this school: not just to succeed, but to serve.

As we look ahead, let a recommittal of the guiding words of the school: *Ausculta* — to listen deeply with the ear of the heart — and *Ora et Labora* — to pray and work with devoted purpose. In doing so, a way forward for Inkamana High School will continue to be charted where each learner, alumnus, educator, and partner becomes a steward of community, integrity, and excellence.

Finally, allow me to express my deepest gratitude for the honour bestowed upon me this evening. To be recognised by an institution as storied and impactful as Inkamana is both humbling and inspiring. I accept this award not as a personal achievement, but as a shared recognition of the many hands, mentors, and hearts that have guided my journey and the success of so many learners who have graced these historical halls. May the flame

of excellence and compassion continue to burn so brightly in the Inkamana name.

Thank you, and may you go forward with determination, integrity, and purpose. Much success to the school and each learner!