




About the Roots of Growth Project


The Roots of Growth Project was born out of a response to a call-to-action made by The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Action Item #74 calls upon the government to commemorate the deaths of many children who fell victim to the residential schooling system (p. 12).

Residential schools were a formal schooling system that was started in the 1880s and ended in 1996. The federal government, alongside certain churches and religious organizations, attempted to destroy the culture, language, traditions, and identities of Indigenous peoples across Canada.



At least 150,000 indigenous children forcefully attended one of the 139 residential schools in Canada. At least 4,100 children died while attending a residential school, and many of these deaths still remain unreported today.


Roots of Growth, a student-lead project at the University of Lethbridge, aims to memorialize the victims and survivors of the residential schooling system by planting 4 native trees across campus.



The University of Lethbridge is planting four trees in memorial to act as a proper burial and marking for all the missing and deceased children of the residential school system. We aim to encourage healing, educate our community, and bring peace to any person who has been affected by the residential schooling system.

Two students, Cierra Ross & Aysha Partington, have a goal to inspire growth and to potentially bring closure and awareness about residential schools: “The traumatic history of the Aboriginal people has made our culture resilient, and we want to promote the importance of education, having that voice, and becoming the movement.”

The first tree planting ceremony will occur at the University of Lethbridge on September 30, 2021, in recognition of Orange Shirt Day. Orange Shirt Day is a day to remember, honour, and commemorate the journey of healing that survivors and their families must undergo.



The University of Lethbridge is launching a mobile application that will educate our community about residential schools, Blackfoot traditions and cultural significance of native plant species, as well as the Western perspective of these native plants. Through education, the University of Lethbridge encourages our community to practice reconciliation.

The entire project will be completed by both non-indigenous and indigenous students working together. We hope to continue to grow the project by re-introducing important plant species and supporting educational information across campus, as well as establishing a seed fund for students at other schools across Canada to begin their very own Roots of Growth project at their own schools.




Project Aspirations

Goal #1


Plant indigenous plants at the U of L, and expand the Roots of Growth mobile application experience. Funds will go to re-introducing plant species at the U of L. We are seeking funding for three trees this year, and hope to introduce 1 new plant every subsequent year for the next 5 years. It costs \$600 to plant a tree. In total, we are seeking \$4800 to introduce a total of 8 new plant species to our campus and feature on the Roots of Growth mobile application.

Goal #2




Provide immersive, hands-on, and reflective student Fellowships to grow the project. The University of Lethbridge's Agility Program provides a unique, one-of-a-kind learning experience for students who wish to contribute to this project. Every summer, a cohort of up to 6 students conduct field research for course credit. Students gain invaluable work experience through a part-time work placement, and begin to take meaningful steps towards decolonizing their ways of knowing. Students attend Indigenous-led conferences, seminars, and sessions. We are seeking funding to support 6 students for each summer for the next 5 years. It costs \$3500 for each student to participate in a work placement. We are seeking a total of \$105,000 to support 30 student work experiences.

Goal #3



Establish a safe, accessible, and quiet location for residential school survivors and families to commemorate, grieve, and heal. We hope to install a bench at the most accessible tree location, which will serve as the primary location for residential school commemoration. We are seeking a total of \$2000 to install one bench at the Sargent Poplar tree location.

Goal #4



Host an annual event recognizing residential school systems and raising awareness about reconciliation. Hosted every year on September 30, this event will welcome Elders, residential school survivors & family members to speak about their experiences to educate and connect our community. Both indigenous and non-indigenous communities will be welcome to come together, learn, heal, and build relationships in the spirit of reconciliation. We are seeking \$5000 to host our first annual event. Costs for the event include, but are not limited to; indigenous catering, gifts and honorariums for indigenous speakers, and parking passes for attendees. In total, we are seeking \$25000 to host an annual event on September 30 for the next 5 years.

Goal #5

Create a seed fund for students at other schools across Canada to launch their own Roots of Growth Project. We intend to build roots to help other indigenous student changemakers highlight their history and support reconciliation in their communities. We acknowledge the impact of the residential school system across the country. Our goal is to have at least one school in every province & territory commemorating the children and families who were victims of the residential school system. We hope to provide one seed fund of \$600 a year to one new school. To reach this goal, we will require a total of \$7200, which will support 12 new projects across the country.



Donor Recognition

As our thank-you to supporting the Roots of Growth Project, we want to offer donors recognition and VIP experiences. If you would like to support the Roots of Growth Project, you can consider the following options for recognition:

- **1** Receive annual reports for up to 5 years that highlight stories from students who participated in the Roots of Growth Project at the University of Lethbridge, as well as information about what schools were successful in receiving seed funds.
- 2** Get your very own desktop, 3D printed OKI signs (up to 10). These were commissioned by the City of Lethbridge in 2019 to commemorate the United Nations International Year of Indigenous Languages. Oki is the Blackfoot word for ‘greetings,’ and became the City of Lethbridge’s Official Greeting on September 16, 2019.
- 3** Be featured as a key sponsor for the project at our unveiling event on September 30, 2021. Your name or company information will be included in event marketing; including, event agendas, a thank-you during the presentations, acknowledgement in the Roots of Growth mobile application credits section, and on the Agility website.
- 4** Receive a personalized report and thank you from student Fellows who work on the Roots of Growth Project. You will be invited to hear the cohort’s final presentations at the end of the summer term where you will learn about their research and work term. Your name will be featured on job postings and cohort documents (e.g., Bruce McKillop Fellowship).
- 5** Feature your name, organization, or a message of reconciliation on a donor plaque. Donor plaques will be featured at each plant location and at the bench location. Plaques will be placed at each location as a marker and point community members to the mobile application to learn more about the Roots of Growth Project.
- 6** Attend the Roots of Growth annual event as a VIP guest. You and 1 other guest will be welcomed to one Roots of Growth event of your choice as a VIP. You will receive preferential parking, seating, and food. You will receive a unique gift bag to commemorate your visit and contribution to the project.
- 7** Attend a VIP Roots of Growth Tour. Rather than using your smartphone device to learn about the project, residential schools, and native plants, you and your guests will be guided across campus to the different tree locations. You will be able to learn from Elders, knowledge keepers, professors, and other members of the project in person. During the tour, you will learn about the plants from the Blackfoot and Western perspectives, straight from our local experts. VIP Tours are limited to 10 people per tour and are reserved for most generous donors.



Thank You!