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Indigenous students have option to wear own regalia as University makes changes to Convocation

Some significant and meaningful changes to University of Lethbridge Convocation proceedings will debut this week as the U of L graduates over 1,300 students at its 2018 Spring Convocation ceremonies on Thursday and Friday.

For the first time, self-declared North American Indigenous students will have the option of wearing their traditional regalia to Convocation in lieu of the black gown. As well, each of these students will also be presented with an Indigenous Stole that was designed and created by Charlene Bruised Head-Mountain Horse and her colleagues in the Iikaisskini Gathering Place.



Located on traditional Blackfoot territory, the University has long incorporated Indigenous culture into its formal proceedings. The newly created stole features traditional symbols such as an eagle feather, an Inukshuk, the Métis infinity symbol, the U of L buffalo and school crest.

“The Indigenous stole represents and reflects an inclusiveness to our Indigenous students on campus,” says Roy Pogorzelski, director of Iikaisskini Gathering Place. “The eagle feather represents our status and non-status First Nations students, the infinity sign represents our Métis students, the Inukshuk represents our Inuit students and the buffalo acknowledges the University is situated on Blackfoot territory. The stoles that are being gifted to our Indigenous graduates celebrate their success and accomplishments throughout their academic journey and the wearing of cultural regalia portrays an active commitment towards reconciliation by the University.”

Students will still wear the U of L hood during proceedings, as the colour of each hood represents the Faculty and degree they are receiving.

“Seeing the pride of culture amongst our Indigenous students as they wear their regalia in this context is a very meaningful thing,” says Kathleen Massey, the U of L’s associate vice-president (students). “I expect to see great variety in colours, representing the diversity and inclusivity of our campus. And colour means celebration, which will really add to the festive nature of the event and the significance of the celebration.”

One further addition to this year’s program is that Convocation will be signed for the deaf and hearing impaired.

“I feel a great sense of pride in making these changes to our ceremonies,” says Massey. “This is a very public event and an opportunity for the University to express its values. These are meaningful changes that embrace the diversity in our community and say that the U of L is always a home for them.”

Spring 2018 Convocation is open to the public (Thursday, May 31 and Friday, June 1, 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. each day), or can be viewed via live streaming by following the links at uleth.ca/convocation.

To view online: <http://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/indigenous-students-have-option-wear-own-regalia-university-makes-changes-convocation>

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