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## **School of Liberal Education celebrates Blackfoot heritage by accepting image of the turtle as an official symbol**

For more than 50 years, Indigenous culture has been woven into the fabric of the University of Lethbridge, enriching programming, teaching and research, and creating an environment where students find community, support and success. Today, the University's School of Liberal Education is proud to celebrate this heritage by accepting the Blackfoot image of the turtle as an official symbol.

In Blackfoot culture, turtles are considered to be a symbol of creation and motherhood, and embody a similar idea as that conveyed by the term "Mother Earth" in English.

"By adopting the turtle as a representation of the ideals of Liberal Education, we are at once respecting the heritage of the Blackfoot culture and the land on which we sit, while celebrating the core philosophy of the University," says Dr. Shelly Wismath, dean of the School of Liberal Education.

The Blackfoot people and many other cultures around the world create geoglyphs, which are arrangements of rocks or other durable materials in prominent places in the landscape. Geoglyphs often depict animals or shapes considered to be spiritually significant and convey special meaning to the members of a culture.

There are a number of turtle effigies or geoglyphs on traditional Blackfoot territory. One such geoglyph, the West Lethbridge Turtle Effigy, is located just south of the U of L campus and overlooks the Oldman River valley. Currently, a Blackfoot artist is creating a rendering of the effigy that will be used by the School of Liberal Education going forward.

"To Blackfoot people, the turtle is patient, wise, knowledgeable and long-lived," says Mike Oka, consultation manager, Blood Tribe and External Affairs. "The Blackfoot saying, likakimat mookakiit, meaning be wise and preserve, can be used to describe a turtle's characteristics. These characteristics fit well with the University's liberal education philosophy."

Distinguished Niitsitapi Scholar, Dr. Leroy Little Bear (BASc '72, DASc '04), has translated the four pillars of the School of Liberal Education into Blackfoot. They are as follows:

Breadth – Kanohsoohka'pii

Connections – Sokitapiiwahsini

Critical Thinking – Isstanisskska'taksini

Civic Engagement – Isstaahkohanaokoi'kio'pi

The School of Liberal Education was established in July 2017 to promote liberal education as the University's foundational teaching and learning philosophy. It is based on four pillars: breadth across disciplines; connecting and integrating knowledge across disciplines and viewpoints; critical thinking and problem solving; and education for citizenship and community betterment. Students with a grounding in liberal education, which incorporates the sciences, social sciences, fine arts and humanities, are better prepared to solve problems in the 21st century and to succeed in future careers.

To view online: <http://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/school-liberal-education-celebrates-blackfoot-heritage-accepting-image-turtle-official>

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