

For Immediate Release — Thursday, September 20, 2018

## University of Lethbridge proudly raises Blackfoot Confederacy Flag

The University of Lethbridge is honoured by its relationship with the local Blackfoot community and proud to be located on traditional Blackfoot territory. Today, the University is excited to celebrate this intrinsic bond by permanently raising and flying the Blackfoot Confederacy Flag.

For more than 50 years, Indigenous culture has been woven into the fabric of the U of L, from establishing one of Canada's first Native American Studies departments to the creation of a unique protocol handbook and the dedication of the likaiskini Gathering Place, among others. The University is both humbled and emboldened by its ties to the Blackfoot community and its contribution to enriching programming, teaching and research at the U of L, and creating an environment of respect and inclusion.



“The relationship we have traditionally fostered with the Blackfoot community has taken on increased significance since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released its historic reports and findings,” says U of L President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Mike Mahon. “While we have long valued our role as leaders in creating opportunity for Indigenous populations, we recognize there is much more to be done and are eager to contribute to reconciliation efforts.”

The raising of the Blackfoot Confederacy Flag is symbolic of that desire to reconcile relations between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians.

“This is a historic occasion for the University of Lethbridge as the institution continues to work towards its commitment to the TRC’s Calls to Action and creating a safe and inclusive atmosphere on campus for Indigenous students,” says Roy Pogorzelski, director of Indigenous Student Affairs. “The raising of the Blackfoot Confederacy Flag is

an ongoing territorial acknowledgement that the U of L is situated on Blackfoot territory, and is a strong step towards creating a campus of reconciliation.”

Mahon says it is a responsibility of not only the University of Lethbridge, but all post-secondary institutions, to educate on a broad scale and to bring issues of reconciliation to the forefront.

“I believe we are a powerful collective that can contribute significantly to this nation by teaching a clearer understanding of our shared history, closing knowledge gaps for aboriginal and non-aboriginal students, and creating innovative solutions that facilitate action,” he says.

For Blackfoot students, the presence of the Blackfoot Confederacy Flag on campus is a symbol of acceptance and a commitment from the University to continue its efforts to create an environment where students, faculty and community members find support.

“It is a proud moment for our people, as our flag is lifted so are our spirits,” says Piinaakoyim “SeenFromAfar” Tailfeathers, a fourth-year Dhillon School of Business student. “The Siksikaitsitapii have inhabited this territory since time immemorial, it is only right for our flag to fly. This is a small, yet significant step forward, and it is my wish that the institution continues this important work in the years to come. This has been many years in the making, and I have been looking forward to this momentous day.”

The Blackfoot Confederacy Flag will fly alongside flags representing Canada, the Province of Alberta and the University of Lethbridge on the patio outside the Students’ Union.

To view online: <http://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/university-proudly-raises-blackfoot-confederacy-flag>

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