



University of
Lethbridge

NEWS RELEASE

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Jackson Two Bears named Tier II Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Arts Research and Technology

The Government of Canada has named Jackson Two Bears, associate professor of Indigenous art studio and media arts at the University of Lethbridge, a Tier II Canada Research Chair (CRC) in Indigenous Arts Research and Technology.

As a Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) person, the core of Two Bears' research is respect: respect for land, culture and communities. With a focus on Indigenous land-based histories and embodied cultural knowledge, his research explores the use of digital technology to support the innovation, transmission, expression and transformation of FNMI creative and cultural practices.



“My research asks one crucial question: what does reconciliation and decolonization look like in the digital age?” explains Two Bears. “The central part of the research is thinking about how we as Indigenous people are storytellers, how we think about our history and our knowledge formation, and how that way of being is connected to land and place.”

His proposed research program involves the creation of large-scale, site specific, interactive, multimedia installations; the development of a geolocation based, multimedia app featuring mobile media, and Virtual Reality artworks; and a major publication focused on exploring reconciliation and decolonization in the digital age.

Selecting historical locations, Two Bears works with the original keepers of the land as collaborators, immersing himself in the setting, culture and history of the space. This immersive research methodology led to the development of a unique course,

LandMarks, where he invites students to join him on location, diving deeper into the history and original stories of the land, then working together to create site-specific artistic responses.

“Knowledge and learning are community-based,” says Two Bears. “We couldn’t be on campus, we had to be on location. The point wasn’t to study the location from afar but to be immersed in it, spend time there, find our way in that space.”

The course ends with an outdoor exhibition of installations in and around Indian Battle Park. For future installations and digital works, Two Bears will continue to collaborate with elders, knowledge-keepers and members of the community in specific geographical locations, primarily in Treaty 7 Blackfoot territory, and in his home community of Six Nations.

“My unique research and creative program aims to build capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect through collaborative engagement with multidisciplinary projects focused on creative renewal, revitalization and cultural expression in our communities.”

As a Canada Research Chair, Two Bears now has the resources and institutional support to continue his ambitious research-creation goals while engaging more students in his work and processes.

“I’ve always been really interested in bringing students into my research practice and providing research-based learning. Now I can facilitate more of that,” says Two Bears. “My research is interconnected with the classes I’m teaching and the work I do myself. Being a research chair helps enable these multidisciplinary processes.”

Earning a research chair in the arts not only provides additional opportunities for students and research colleagues, it also shows validity in the research topic and methodology.

“There are very few Indigenous Canada Research Chairs out there, even fewer in the arts, so this shows a commitment to different kinds of research,” says Two Bears. “In the arts we’re always working to explain the things we do and the importance of what we do, so it is great that embodied creative practice as knowledge formation is being recognized as a form of research itself.”

Seeing the development of Two Bears’ methodology, the relationships he builds with students and Indigenous communities, and the breadth of work created between him and his inspired students, the Faculty of Fine Arts is excited to see what develops through his tenure as a CRC.

“Jackson’s work, and the increased opportunities it offers our students, resonates within and outside our university and with our ongoing work towards more inclusive practices,” says Dr. Mary Ingraham, dean, Faculty of Fine Arts. “Jackson’s passion for contemporary and traditional expressions of Indigenous lifeways is without parallel and we are excited to witness the increased possibilities for new student voices and programs as they collaborate with him in the coming years.”

Two Bears is among 182 new and renewed research chairs named for the Spring 2020 Canada Research Chairs program. The Government of Canada invested \$140 million, with an additional \$4.6 million in new funding for research infrastructure from the Canada Foundation for Innovation. In its 20th year, the Canada Research Chair program continues to provide opportunities for researchers to excel in their fields and build teams of experts at Canadian institutions.

To view online: <https://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/two-bears-named-tier-ii-canada-research-chair-indigenous-arts-research-and-technology>

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Image: Jackson Two Bears, photo credit: Amanda Berg

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