



For immediate release — Tuesday, May 10, 2022

Moving forward in a good way, EleV Navigator Team given Blackfoot name

The EleV Navigator Team earned a significant honour Tuesday at the University of Lethbridge, helping set the stage for the important work they will soon begin in the Blackfoot communities of Kainai, Piikani and Siksika.

Seeking to set the paths of the EleV Navigators forward in “a good way”, Blackfoot Elders Francis First Charger and Cathy Hunt advised for the EleV Navigator Team to receive a Blackfoot name as a true honour to welcome them into their roles as community liaisons. On

Tuesday, First Charger bestowed the name Iksitawapa Akakatsiyiwa (Going All Out Society) on the EleV Navigator Team.



During the ceremony, First Charger described how they arrived upon the name and how impressed he was with the navigator team.

“When we talked with them, I could see they have a lot of enthusiasm, their hearts are in the right place, and they are a very diverse group. Now that the six of them are working together they are like a family. The name is hard to translate but when I look at this group, I see they have a lot of fire in them and I see them going all out.”

Shanda Webber, ULethbridge manager of strategic Indigenous learning initiatives, says the ceremony carries great significance in Blackfoot culture.

“Receiving a Blackfoot name is a great honour, and also bears a great responsibility,” says Webber. “Every name has a meaning. Every name has a story. And once bestowed that name, it is now the individual or group who carry that name to hold true to the meaning and story of the name. I know the navigator team will hold our new name in high regard and honour our role in community.”

Established in late 2019, EleV is an innovative partnership between the Blackfoot Confederacy, ULeithbridge and the Mastercard Foundation established to create educational opportunities for Indigenous youth and bolster supports to ensure their success.

The EleV Navigator Team consists of six dedicated navigators, of which one education and one employment navigator is dedicated to each of the respective Blackfoot Communities of Kainai, Piikani and Siksika. The primary focus of the EleV Navigator Team is to enhance opportunities for authentic relationship building and provide in-community supportive services and communication to guide Indigenous learners along their education and career pathways.

“Grounded in our Indigenous teachings and ways of knowing, our navigator team understands that everyone in the community plays an important role in assisting youth to navigate their way to post-secondary and beyond,” adds Webber. “Navigators are the community liaisons, the advisors and co-creators who will be working with community to make sure their voices and priorities are heard. They will help forge a path where we can work together for the success of our students.”

The Tuesday naming ceremony featured an offer of prayers with pipe, followed by the giving of the Blackfoot name, a praise song from the University’s Special Advisor to the President, Dr. Leroy Little Bear, and a celebratory feast.

Dr. Mike Mahon, ULeithbridge president and vice-chancellor, says as we move out of the pandemic there is significant momentum behind the EleV partnership as it reengages with the Blackfoot communities.

“From the outset, EleV was designed to work in partnership with the Blackfoot Nations to ensure the program continues to meet the unique needs of Blackfoot youth and communities,” says Mahon. “The navigators play a crucial role in this process of relationship building and it’s exciting from my perspective to see this team beginning to fully immerse into community to assist students as they further their education. Their work is also supporting the creation of employment and economic development opportunities through the sharing of connections and resources with the Blackfoot Confederacy.”

The navigators will begin their work in the Blackfoot communities through a series of meet-and-greet sessions beginning next week and continuing into June, buoyed by a new name that aptly captures their significant place in the EleV program.

Upcoming Sessions include:

**Meet the University of Lethbridge EleV Team
Building Community Connections within the Blackfoot Confederacy**

Kainai Nation Event

Wednesday, May 18, 2022
5 p.m. (Doors open at 4:30)
Multi-Purpose Building

For more information, please contact:
Jill Chief Calf, jill.chiefcalf@uleth.ca or
Trent Frank, trent.frank@uleth.ca

Piikani Nation Event

Thursday, May 19, 2022
5 p.m. (Doors open at 4:30)
Piikani Secondary School

For more information, please contact:
Deserae Yellow Horn, d.yellowhorn@uleth.ca or
Verona White Cow, verona.whitecow@uleth.ca

Siksika Nation Event

Coming in June, details to be announced

For more information, please contact:
Leroy Wolf Collar, leroy.wolfcollar@uleth.ca
Ek-Kanakii Mekaisto, kanakii.mekaisto@uleth.ca

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Contact:

Trevor Kenney, News & Information Manager
403-329-2710
403-360-7639 (cell)
trevor.kenney@uleth.ca
@ULethbridgeNews