



University of  
Lethbridge

**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Pediatric cardiologist and public health changemaker Dr. Ruth Collins-Nakai to receive honorary degree**

An influential medical doctor who has significantly enhanced the health and well-being of Canadian society, Dr. Ruth Collins-Nakai is the second of four distinguished individuals who will be awarded an honorary degree by the University of Lethbridge at its Spring 2022 Convocation.

“At the University of Lethbridge, our graduates leave here ready to make valuable contributions to the betterment of our society. Dr. Ruth Collins-Nakai embodies that spirit as a pediatric cardiologist and influential changemaker for public health policies like seatbelt laws and smoking restrictions on airplanes,” says ULeithbridge Chancellor Charles Weaselhead. “As a southern Alberta-born individual whose career has been devoted to bettering the world around her, we’re very proud she has accepted our offer of an honorary degree.”

The University will present Dr. Ruth Collins-Nakai with an honorary Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, at the Spring 2022 Convocation Ceremony IV, Thursday, June 2, 2022, at 2:30 p.m. in the 1st Choice Savings Centre for Sport and Wellness.



### **Ruth Collins-Nakai**

Growing up in Pincher Creek, Alberta as the child of physician parents, perhaps it’s no surprise Dr. Ruth Collins-Nakai entered the same field. Graduating with her MD from the University of Alberta in 1972, she went on to complete a fellowship in pediatric cardiology at Harvard Medical School. Collins-Nakai joined her alma mater as assistant professor of pediatrics in 1977.

Collins-Nakai spent over 30 years at the University of Alberta in various roles, including full professor and associate dean of the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry.

Known as Dr. Ruth to her patients, her experiences providing care helped build Collins-Nakai into a strong public health advocate. Working with children who had suffered catastrophic injuries from vehicle collisions inspired her to successfully advocate for seatbelt laws in Alberta. She was instrumental, in her role as a member of the Canadian Medical Association, in convincing Air Canada to ban smoking on planes. She also advocated for prevention of cardiovascular risk factors that can start in childhood, as well as for affordable and accessible childcare and early learning opportunities.

She was highly regarded as a mentor and professor, earning various teaching honours. In addition to establishing the Heritage Pediatric Cardiology Program, precursor of the current Western Canadian Congenital Heart Program, Collins-Nakai was the first to perform many innovative interventional catheterization procedures in Western Canada. The energy, compassion, intellect and leadership Dr. Collins-Nakai generates are not confined to medicine. She has been a strong supporter of the need for education and science in Alberta and has worked to increase research funding overall in Canada. Among the many awards and honours she's received was an appointment to the Order of Canada in 2016.

To view online: [https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/pediatric-cardiologist-and-public-health-changemaker-dr-ruth-collins-nakai-receive-honorary#.Ynk\\_qxPMJFw](https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/pediatric-cardiologist-and-public-health-changemaker-dr-ruth-collins-nakai-receive-honorary#.Ynk_qxPMJFw)

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