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## University of Lethbridge officially opens Ikaisskini Gathering Centre

One of the most important areas on the University of Lethbridge campus opened today and fittingly, it is named after one of ULEthbridge's most iconic figures, [Dr. Leroy Little Bear](#) (BASC '72, DASC '04). ULEthbridge officially opened the Ikaisskini (Low Horn) Gathering Centre as an integral space for Indigenous students and the campus community to come together in ceremony, celebration and learning.

“When I came to university, there was no such thing as a gathering centre. Had there been a centre, I would have really enjoyed the place and I'd probably be running from one computer to another,” says Little Bear. “A centre like the Ikaisskini Gathering Centre starts to bring about an atmosphere of inclusion, and notions of diversity and equity all start to come into the picture. The Ikaisskini Gathering Centre serves that purpose.”



The gathering centre is an integral and unique feature of ULEthbridge. It is designed as a welcoming home away from home, a space appropriate for ceremony, smudging and celebration, where students and other members of the University community can gather and collaboratively support one another in their educational aspirations.

The centre provides students a place to meet with Elders and share stories, teaching and wisdom. It is representative of a vibrant and powerful cultural community where Blackfoot and other Indigenous languages are spoken, and where students can explore new knowledge together.

It was named Ikaisskini in honour of Little Bear and his Blackfoot name to recognize his many contributions and services to ULEthbridge and to Indigenous Peoples around the world. [Ikaisskini Indigenous Services](#), the department that oversees operation of the

gathering centre, is also named after Little Bear, who is an adjunct professor with the Dhillon School of Business, special advisor to the president and a distinguished Niitsitapi scholar.

Little Bear champions Indigenous ways of knowing and being and continues to advance and advocate for Indigenous knowledge in higher education. His work around Indigenous rights, treaties, traditional knowledge and culture has influenced students and communities around the world.

Directly translated, likaiskini [ee-GUS-ganee] means low horn.

“The real meaning of it and where the notion of low horn comes from, is if you can picture a buffalo with its head down in attack mode, that's what the low horn really refers to,” says Little Bear, who has been appointed to the Order of Canada and the Alberta Order of Excellence.

The buffalo holds great significance in Blackfoot culture as a keystone species.

“The buffalo was a very important animal in our culture. Wherever the buffalo roams, it brings about ecological balance. They're so important, that we refer to them as eco-engineers,” says Little Bear.

It's importance today comes in the notion that education is the new buffalo.

“Some of our Elders talk about the buffalo as our education portal. They start to speak about education, especially university education, as the new buffalo,” says Little Bear. “In my own life I've always pushed for education. To have my name associated with an institution like ULeithbridge is a great honour, but more importantly, is that the legacy of the buffalo is being incorporated into the overall University culture.”

The likaiskini (Low Horn) Gathering Centre is now open for students, staff and faculty to study, relax, visit with friends, family and colleagues or engage in prayer or ceremony to set their paths forward in a good way. The Centre is located in the Centre for the Arts Atrium in room W650.

The likaiskini (Low Horn) Gathering Centre is supported by [generous donations](#) from the Government of Alberta, the Government of Canada's Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) and an investment from TD Bank Financial Group.

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