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## **Toby and Bernadine Boulet champion initiative to support student teachers pursuing rural placements**

### **\*Media Availability\***

**Bernadine and Toby will be available to media on Tuesday, Nov. 26, 1:30 p.m. in the Turcotte Hall Foyer, Faculty of Education.**

Retired teachers and University of Lethbridge alumni Toby (BEd '89, MEd '04) and Bernadine (Bernie) (BEd '88) Boulet are paying it forward by championing the Faculty of Education's new initiative, Paving Roads to Success – a transformative fundraising campaign that addresses the support needs of third-year student teachers pursuing rural placements.



Bernie and Toby, with over 60 years of combined teaching experience, understand the positive impact student teachers have in rural settings and the financial challenges they face due to additional travel and living expenses with rural placements. They are financially supporting the initiative to help reduce these barriers and empower student teachers to bring quality education to underserved communities across Alberta.

"I taught in Lethbridge, working with student teachers and giving back to the community of education," says Toby. "We need student teachers. They are a massive part of our community, and we recognize that students in rural placements need help financially because they're paying additional expenses. Supporting our future teachers benefits everyone and we feel as though we have a responsibility to help. It's what communities do, support each other."

Doug Checkley, instructor and assistant dean of field experiences, says the support is sorely needed by students, who are facing ever-increasing economic stress, as well as the University's rural partners.

"Our partners now have the opportunity to host third-year student teachers. When students spend a full 16-week practicum in a smaller community, the chances of them looking for employment there greatly increases," says Checkley. "It's a win for the students and a win for our rural partners who we are hoping to support in finding new teachers for their communities."

Bernie knows well how impactful a rural placement can be on a young teacher. Her 36-year career began in a rural setting and imparted experiences she'd never imagined.

"The opportunity I had to be part of a rural community and what I learned about Indigenous culture, I carried with me through my entire career," she says. "In a rural placement, you gain an appreciation of what it's like to be part of a rural school and understand the impact a school can have when it is the hub of a community."

Toby and Bernie's son Logan had his sights set on becoming a teacher before his life was tragically cut short as one of the victims of the 2018 Humboldt Broncos bus crash. His short time in Humboldt made an impression upon him and speaks to the power of living in a smaller community.

"He had been registered at the University to go into education and was going to be a teacher," says Toby. "He told me and Bernie, 'Humboldt is a nice town; I could teach here. I could live in Humboldt and teach here'."

Those interested in supporting the Paving Roads to Success campaign can give [here](#).

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/toby-and-bernadine-boulet-champion-initiative-support-student-teachers-pursuing-rural>

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*Our University's Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people*

*and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.*