

For immediate release — Tuesday, December 9, 2025

International Women's Day Leadership Conference featuring powerhouse lineup

On March 11, an impressive roster of leaders will be at the University of Lethbridge campus for its 2026 ULethbridge International Women's Day Leadership Conference.

The conference aims to bring people together for a day of conversation, networking and inspiration for International Women's Day. This year, the keynote speakers are Jully Black, Canadian R&B artist and Juno Award winner and Dr. Malinda Smith, Associate Vice-President (Research EDI), University of Calgary.

Black is an award-winning singer, actress, entrepreneur, motivational speaker, philanthropist and fitness guru. She is a vocal advocate for the LGBTQ2S+ community and, in 2022, founded the Jully Black Family Foundation, which offers scholarships to help women pursue education.

Smith is a distinguished scholar and leader with a PhD in political science from the University of Alberta and multiple degrees from Western Michigan University, including an MA, MDA, and a BA magna cum laude in political science and criminal justice.

"This event is about connecting and learning from inspiring individuals who have been change makers and leaders in their communities," says Martha Mathurin-Moe, vice-provost, Accessibility, Belonging & Community at ULethbridge.

"We want to continue to shift the conversation around leadership and representation and celebrate International Women's Day, a global day that celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women."

This annual one-day event will bring together a diverse audience to learn from world-class leaders in research and academics, business, politics and Indigenous education and outreach.

The 2026 conference theme — Disrupting the Superwoman Narrative, Embracing the Power of Rest — will examine how the superwoman archetype is not always empowering but full of hidden expectations,



unseen emotional and mental labour. The keynotes and panellists will explore how to navigate opportunities, expectations and outcomes as women in leadership and community, stay grounded and authentic and how rest and self-care is resistance.

The panel of prominent local leaders sharing their insights during the Lethbridge Leaders Forum includes the following:

- Whitney (BMgt '06) and Kirby Maronda – The Property Twins Real Estate
- Iitoomsaokaa'sii, Diandra Bruised Head (BSc '17), Indigenous Learning and Impact, Manager, Iniskim Indigenous Relations, ULethbridge
- Jenn Schmidt-Rempel (BA '93) - Councillor, City of Lethbridge

“Year after year, this conference inspires us to continue breaking barriers and creating opportunities for one another. We look forward to learning from these thought leaders and to providing exceptional professional development opportunities right here in Lethbridge,” says ULethbridge’s Vice-President (Research) and event co-host, Dr. Dena McMartin.

Hosting this annual event demonstrates ULethbridge’s commitment to providing intentional spaces for empowerment, ingenuity, and knowledge-sharing, says event co-host Dr. Michelle Helstein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic), ULethbridge.

“Empowered women empower communities,” says Helstein. “This panel of esteemed local leaders demonstrate how our Lethbridge community is full of individuals shaping the future with resilience, creativity, and courage.”

Tickets are limited and on sale now. Early bird pricing is in effect until Jan. 30, 2026. Exclusive sponsorships are also available until Feb. 13, 2026. For more information, visit go.uleth.ca/womensconference.

[Read online.](#)

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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.