

For immediate release — Monday, May 11, 2026

Influential artist Faye HeavyShield to receive University of Lethbridge honorary degree

A visual artist, cultural worker, mentor and teacher, Faye HeavyShield has earned national and international acclaim for her artistic works that are deeply connected to her Blackfoot culture. Eager to share her practice with youth and emerging artists to help preserve Blackfoot ways of knowing, the University of Lethbridge will recognize HeavyShield's contributions by presenting her with an honorary degree at Spring 2026 Convocation.

"Faye HeavyShield utilizes her artistic practice to emphasize her deep connection to Blackfoot culture and the land upon which she was raised," says ULethbridge Chancellor Terry Whitehead (BA '94). "By doing so, she is connecting the past, present and future within Blackfoot ways of knowing. Her work is inspiring, cultural, educational and intentional and her willingness to share it with Blackfoot youth and support the work of developing artists is truly exemplary."



The University of Lethbridge will bestow upon Faye HeavyShield an Honorary Doctor of Letters, honoris causa, at Spring 2026 Convocation, Ceremony I, Thursday, May 28, 9 a.m. at the Co-op Centre for Sport & Wellness.

Faye HeavyShield

To gain an understanding of how Issitaki, Faye HeavyShield, sees the world, one needs only to look at the art she creates, the mediums she utilizes and the complex themes she addresses. To get a better glimpse at the character and conviction with which she conducts her practice, look to the people she has influenced, the youth she has mentored and the emerging artists she has inspired.

A visual artist, cultural worker, mentor and teacher, HeavyShield has earned international acclaim for her artistic works that are deeply connected to her Blackfoot culture. Committed to improving well-being and contributing to social development in the Blackfoot community and

beyond, HeavyShield's work is described as emphasizing relationality, rooted in the land, the Prairies and the foothills of southern Alberta, bonded to culture.

The impact of her work also goes well beyond Indigenous contemporary art. In 2021, HeavyShield was the recipient of the Art Gallery of Ontario's Gershon Iskowitz Prize, presented to an artist who has made an outstanding contribution to the visual arts in Canada. In 2023, her exhibition Confluence was featured at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in St. Louis, Missouri. This major exhibition spans work from the 1980s to the present day and includes two commissions responding to landscapes and histories of the greater St. Louis area. Similarly, her work is found in museums such as the National Gallery of Canada, the McMichael Museum, the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, and more.

A highly sought-after commission artist, she is currently working on a monumental new work as part of the Glenbow Museum renovation in Calgary. The new installation will be a seminal feature of the museum when it reopens as the JR Shaw Centre for Arts & Culture in 2027.

HeavyShield is deeply invested in her community and leads social services and youth engagement initiatives on the Kainai Reserve and in Calgary, teaching her language, culture and values to children and youth to connect them to art practice and Blackfoot culture. Her support of youth artists continues to inspire a next generation of Blackfoot youth and has already spurred early career recognition for student artists.

HeavyShield's commitment to critical thinking that connects the past, present and future within Blackfoot ways of knowing continues to advance knowledge in the artistic, cultural, education and heritage of the Blackfoot people, contributing indelibly to the social fabric of Nitsitapi.

PHOTO: One of Faye HeavyShield's works of art

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/influential-artist-faye-heavyshield-receive-university-lethbridge-honorary-degree>

-- 30 --

Contact:

Trevor Kenney, Manager of Public Affairs
403-329-2710
403-360-7639 (cell)
trevor.kenney@uleth.ca
@ULethbridge

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.