



University of
Lethbridge

News Release

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2026 Alumni Honour Society inductees making a difference in their communities

Community impact is a common thread connecting six alumni being honoured by the University of Lethbridge Alumni Association (ULAA) with their induction into the Alumni Honour Society.

Nick Bohle (BFA – Dramatic Arts '17), Dr. Lori Friesen (BA/BEd '98, MEd '03), Dr. Robert Gruninger (BSc '05, PhD '09), Kalen Hastings (BA '09, MA '14), Wayne Lippa (BSc/BEd '97) and Dr. Dionne Walsh (BSc '03) are being recognized by the ULAA and University of Lethbridge for working to enhance society through caring, compassion and inspiring the next generation.

“What stands out about this year’s Alumni Honour Society inductees is not only what they have accomplished, but the range of contributions they’re making to their communities,” says Kali McKay (BA '06, MA '10), Director, Alumni and Community Relations. “Whether through health care, education, research, the arts or community leadership, this year’s honorees are using their skills and experiences to help others succeed.”

Alumni Honour Society inductees will be honoured for their contributions at the 2026 Alumni Achievement Awards Celebration on Friday, Oct. 16, 2026, at 7 p.m. in the Science Commons Atrium. Tickets are currently available [online](#).

Nick Bohle

An award-winning multidisciplinary producer, director, performer and technical specialist, Nick Bohle is elevating the arts scene in Lethbridge, helping make the city a legitimate destination for professional creative media production.

As an entrepreneur and the founder of HatChap Productions, Bohle flexes his robust creative skillset across the entire audio-visual production pipeline. He boasts credits in front of and behind the camera with Kraft Hockeyville, Netflix, HBO, APTN, TELUS, MGM and Paramount+.

Championing other creative minds, Bohle is committed to supporting the next generation of artists. He exemplifies this by teaching acting-for-camera workshops, mentoring emerging filmmakers, securing funding and creating jobs for emerging artists, and developing infrastructure and relationships that support larger productions visiting the region.

Bohle's dedication to his work and community is evident through his creative practice, industry advocacy and mentorship, helping build a stronger and more collaborative arts community in southern Alberta.

Dr. Lori Friesen

A passionate advocate for beginning teachers, Dr. Lori Friesen has dedicated her career to strengthening education and empowering those who teach.

From her early years as an elementary teacher to her work as an instructor in the University of Lethbridge's Faculty of Education, and later as a speaker, writer and mentor, Friesen has championed literacy, student wellbeing and educator support.

Her expertise in early literacy and teacher education has been recognized through prestigious Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and Alberta Teachers' Association doctoral fellowships, and her research and writing have appeared extensively in academic journals and a pair of self-authored books. Her podcast, Beginning Teacher Talk, has surpassed 800,000 downloads, extending her reach to educators worldwide.

Through her mentorship and scholarship, Friesen continues to inspire beginning teachers to make a difference in their classrooms.

Dr. Robert Gruninger

As a research scientist for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), Dr. Robert Gruninger is a world-leading expert in rumen microbiology, studying the complex relationship between cattle and their gut microbes.

Drawing on 25 years of research experience, he works to improve the health and productivity of cattle and reduce the environmental footprint of livestock production. His research has developed novel approaches to reducing enteric methane emissions, enhancing feed efficiency and preventing and managing disease.

Gruninger's work has been published in over 75 peer-reviewed papers, cited more than 6,300 times and has drawn more than \$5 million in grant-funded research, connecting him with academic, industry and community partners across Canada and the world. Active as a mentor, he takes time to work with and inspire the next generation of researchers.

Kalen Hastings

Kalen Hastings, Chief Administrative Officer for the Town of Coaldale, is recognized for his thoughtful leadership, ability to build relationships and commitment to community.

Over the past 16 years, he has worked with five municipal councils, helping navigate the changing priorities and complexities of local government.

During his time with the Town of Coaldale, Hastings has contributed to a period of significant growth and transformation, playing a key role in the joint Prairie Winds Multi-Use Recreation Centre, downtown revitalization initiatives, and critical water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure projects, which helped to springboard significant residential, commercial and industrial growth in Coaldale.

Beyond his professional role, he has shown a longstanding commitment to youth through volunteer baseball coaching, mentorship and support for sport development in the community.

Wayne Lippa

Wayne Lippa exemplifies exceptional skill and dedication to teaching excellence, inspiring a passion for chemistry among students at the University of Lethbridge and community members.

An instructor in the Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry at the university since 1997, Lippa has dedicated his career to connecting with students and taking the fear out of learning chemistry.

In recognition of his contributions, Lippa has received widespread acclaim and been awarded the University of Lethbridge Board of Governors Teaching Fellowship (2012-2013) and Board of Governors Teaching Chair (2024-2026), among other University honours.

As a Teaching Fellow and Teaching Chair in the Teaching Centre, and through involvement with SPARK symposium, Lippa provides exemplary committee service and contributes significantly to the University of Lethbridge community. Beyond the classroom, he is recognized as a passionate advocate for science outreach, performing chemistry demonstrations throughout southern Alberta alongside colleague John Eng as part of the duo known as the “Chem Guys”.

Dr. Dionne Walsh

Dr. Dionne Walsh is a compassionate physician and health-care leader whose work has transformed end-of-life care across southern Alberta.

After practising family medicine in Lethbridge, Walsh followed her passion for supporting patients and families through life’s final chapter by joining the palliative-care team in 2016.

Recognizing the need for greater access to end-of-life options following the legalization of Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD), she committed herself to ensuring southern Albertans could make informed choices aligned with their values and wishes.

As Medical Lead for Palliative Care in the Southwest Corridor and past physician lead for MAiD in Alberta’s South Zone, Walsh has been instrumental in expanding access to end-of-life care, mentoring health-care professionals, championing provider wellness and advanced education locally and nationally. Through her leadership, compassion and advocacy, she has made a lasting impact on patients, families and the health-care system.

Walsh recently joined the faculty of the Southern Alberta Medical Program, helping to educate and inspire the next generation of physicians.

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/2026-alumni-honour-society-inductees-making-difference-their-communities>

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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.