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Chief Victor Buffalo to be presented with University of Lethbridge Honorary Degree

Renowned businessman, statesman and diplomat, former Samson Cree Nation Chief Victor Buffalo, will be bestowed a 2015 Honorary Degree by the University of Lethbridge Senate.

“We are very humbled to have Victor Buffalo accept our offer of an honorary degree,” says University of Lethbridge Chancellor Janice Varzari. “His incredible spirit and lifelong determination to better the lives of Aboriginal peoples throughout the country is truly remarkable.”



The University of Lethbridge is proud to confer upon Chief Victor Buffalo the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, at the Fall 2015 Convocation ceremony, Saturday, Oct. 17, 2015 at 10 a.m. in the 1st Choice Savings Centre for Sport and Wellness.

Victor Buffalo

A distinguished businessman, statesman and diplomat, former Samson Cree Nation Chief Victor Buffalo has significantly advanced economic and educational opportunities and championed the human rights of Aboriginal peoples in Alberta and across Canada.

The odds were against Buffalo’s success, but his fierce determination and unbreakable spirit allowed him to triumph over adversity. Born in Samson Cree Nation, Alta. in 1941, he was removed from his family at age seven and sent to an Indian Residential School. He grew up lonely and disconnected from his aboriginal heritage and culture, but the experience fostered a resolve to create better opportunities for aboriginals in Canada.

This is what he ultimately achieved during his five terms as chief of the Samson Cree Nation.

Among Buffalo's biggest achievements was leading the creation, in 1981, of Peace Hills Trust, Canada's first and now largest aboriginal-owned financial institution. Boasting nine branches in five provinces and a majority aboriginal workforce, the institution has helped promote the success of countless aboriginal businesses in areas ranging from tourism to farming and ranching.

Samson Cree members have benefited from many other economic development opportunities initiated by Buffalo. He helped to bring to fruition initiatives such as Samson Oil and Gas Inc. and Samson Lake Louise Mall, and partnered with other First Nations communities in the St. Eugene Golf and Resort Casino in Cranbrook, B.C. He has also been a board member for organizations such as the Alberta Indian Investment Corporation, the National Aboriginal Industries Committee and the National Aboriginal Diabetes Association. As well, he helped found the Indian Resource Council, which represents more than 130 First Nations with oil and gas interests.

An important mission for Buffalo has been improving access to education for Aboriginal peoples. In 1980, he established the Samson Education Trust Fund, which supports community members to complete college, university and trades training. He also established four state-of-the-art schools for his reserves, and strengthened relationships with local post-secondary schools to provide programming for and about First Nations people. Samson Cree Nation now has one of the highest ratios of post-secondary graduates to population of any First Nations community in Canada.

Buffalo has also advanced the status and rights of Aboriginal people in Canada through his role as president of the International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development. Under his leadership, the organization supported the development of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Victor Buffalo was also at the forefront of the movement to recognize aboriginal and treaty rights in Canada's constitution.

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