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In effort to reduce financial barriers, University waives application fees for Indigenous students

Indigenous students applying to study at the University of Lethbridge will no longer have to pay an application fee as the University has introduced new changes to remove financial barriers to participation in university education.

Effective immediately, graduate and undergraduate application fees for self-declared Canadian Indigenous students are waived. In a second policy update, self-identified members of Aamskapi Pikuni, the Blackfoot Nation in Montana, are now eligible to study at ULethbridge paying domestic tuition rates, rather than international tuition fee rates.



The changes represent the University's continued commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, specifically those calling for closing the education attainment, and income and employment disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.

“Our goal is to remove barriers for Indigenous students so they can access this incredible world of education,” says *likaisskini* (Low Horn) Dr. Leroy Little Bear (BASC (BA) '72, DASC '04), vice-provost, Iniskim Indigenous Relations. “Too often we hear of potential students who are wanting to apply but must decide whether they take that chance and spend the money not knowing they will qualify or use that money for necessities in their life. We cannot let that be a barrier for what could be a life-changing opportunity.”

ULethbridge is committed to increasing Indigenous student enrolment and outlined this objective in its 2023-2026 Strategic Enrolment Management plan. The plan calls for the University to realize an Indigenous student enrolment rate of 10 per cent of total

enrolment by 2026. Currently, Indigenous students represent six per cent of total enrolment.

“It is an aspirational goal, and we believe it is also a very achievable goal,” says *Naamoipiiksi* (Hummingbird) Shanda Webber (BA '05), director, Iniskim Indigenous Relations. “It is integral we find ways to work in partnership with the Blackfoot Confederacy and surrounding Indigenous organizations and communities to eliminate barriers for students to access the university and then find success once they are enrolled. These new changes will help us create more pathways for Indigenous student success.”

Information on how to apply can be found online: undergraduate students (ulethbridge.ca/future-student/indigenous-student-application); graduate students (ulethbridge.ca/future-student/graduate-studies/indigenous-student-application).

Blackfoot students in Montana have traditionally been welcomed at Iniskim but with international tuition fees in place, few have accessed a ULeithbridge educational experience.

“There is no contrived international US-Canada border on the ancestral lands of the Siksikaitstapi, we are all part of the Blackfoot Confederacy and now our university recognizes this through this change that opens the door to Blackfoot students who may live in Montana,” adds Little Bear.

More information on the Blackfeet International Student tuition fee can be found online (ulethbridge.ca/sites/default/files/2024/09/blackfeet_waiver_pdf.pdf).

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/effort-reduce-financial-barriers-university-waives-application-fees-indigenous-students>

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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.