

For Immediate Release — Monday, June 3, 2013

First-of-its-kind meeting in Alberta to bring Blackfoot(Alberta)/Blackfeet (Montana) Elders and cultural experts together with archaeologists and land development/industry representatives, June 4 and 5

- Blackfoot Elders and Blackfoot cultural experts join archaeologists and industry representatives to better understand significance of ancient Blackfoot sites and develop future partnerships

- Working groups and further round-table discussions led by U of L Native American Studies researcher Dr. Leroy Little Bear to focus on legal issues, education of youth, relationship building processes and other partnerships that may come from this meeting

- Speakers and participants include representatives from the University of Lethbridge, University of Arizona and the University of Calgary; oil and gas industry; First Nations community representatives and Blackfoot cultural experts from southern Alberta; Montana-based Blackfeet cultural representatives; and students and interested community members. More than 150 guests are expected

DATE:

Tuesday, June 4 and Wednesday, June 5

LOCATION:

PE250, University of Lethbridge, 1st Choice Savings Centre for Sport and Wellness

SUGGESTED TIMES FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS:

Tuesday, June 4: Between 11 a.m. and 12 noon

Wednesday, June 5: Between 11 a.m. and 12 noon

An agenda is attached with the seminar start and end times on each day. Organizers can be available by telephone no reasonable notice.

DETAILS:

A local group of researchers and First Nations cultural experts are meeting over the next two days at the University of Lethbridge to learn from each other about how to more proactively preserve ancient Blackfoot sites in southern Alberta in the face of future land development.

According to volunteer conference organizer Jerry Potts, a member of the Apatohsiipiikuni (Northern Piikani, or Canadian) community, for more than a century archaeologists have recorded, studied and analyzed the remains left by Niitsitapii – the First Nations people of the area.

“This research has enhanced understanding of the material culture of ancient Niitsitapii and has contributed to the preservation and protection of many sites, but most often, these contributions are from a Western, scientific perspective and focus on the material remains – tipi rings, settlement sites and other physical reminders,” Potts said.

“This conference, the first of its kind in Alberta, brings the keepers of traditional knowledge together with archaeologists to develop the foundation a comprehensive understanding of how Niitsitapii lived with their landscape.” More than 150 participants are expected to attend over the two-day period.

Potts said that land use studies by the Siksika, Kainai, Apatohsiipiikuni (northern Piikani) and Ammskaapiiikuni (southern Piikani, or Montana-based Blackfeet) communities are using the knowledge of the elders to revive and preserve traditional knowledge about these places, integrating the physical remains with the spiritual aspects of the places.

“For millennia, Niitsitapii lived on the plains of the area that is now known as southern Alberta, southern Saskatchewan and Montana. Within this territory people not only found resources that provided sustenance for life, they also developed close spiritual relationships with aspects of the environment. These sites of historical, cultural and spiritual significance occur throughout the Blackfoot landscape.”

Some of the key points participants will discuss include:

- Ways to facilitate the integration of traditional knowledge with assessment and mitigation projects associated with resource and industrial development
- Processes to open discussions among archaeologists and Blackfoot representatives that will bring a Blackfoot perspective to their research
- How to bring a Blackfoot perspective to issues of public use and preservation of

important locations on the Blackfoot landscape, leading to culturally-sensitive site management plans

- Ways to encourage students, both native and non-native, to participate and to gain an understanding of how archaeologists and Blackfoot may have different perspectives and how it is possible to work together.

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AGENDA -- "Renewing Our Relationship with the Land": Blackfoot and Archaeological Understanding of Ancient Sites

Tuesday, June 4, 2013

9 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.

Opening address that sets the stage in terms of the need for archaeologists to work more closely with Blackfoot traditionalists as well as the importance of sharing traditional information with others and the protocols for the use of that knowledge.

Facilitated by Eldon Yellowhorn and Wilton Goodstriker

9:45 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.

Apatohsippiikuni (northern -- Canadian -- Piikani; Jerry Potts/Allan Pard, Brocket, Alberta)

10:15 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

Ammskaapiikuni (southern -- American -- Piikani; John Murray, Browning, Montana)

10:45 a.m. to 11 a.m. -- Break

11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Siksika (Chris McHugh)

11:30 a.m. to 12 noon

Kainai (Frank Weasel Head and Narcisse Blood)

Working Lunch -- 12 noon to 1 p.m.

1 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Neil Mirau (Arrow Consulting)

1:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Maria Zedeno (School of Anthropology, University of Arizona)

2 p.m. 2:30 p.m.

Jack Brink (Archaeology Curator, Royal Alberta Museum)

2:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Trevor Peck (Archaeological Survey of Alberta)

3 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. -- Break

3:15 p.m. 3:45 p.m.

Gerry Oetelaar (University of Calgary Archaeology)

3:45 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.

Lindsay Amundsen-Meyer (University of Calgary Archaeology)

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Wednesday, June 5, 2013

9 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.

Dr. Leroy Little Bear (U of L Native American Studies) reviews some legal challenges that might stem from treaties and court decisions and discusses cultural issues that might be relevant

9:45 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. -- Break

10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

TransCanadaPipeLines representatives present samples of their work with First Nations communities on various projects in Canada and the United States

11 a.m. to 12 noon

Working lunch to start the discussion that will follow in the afternoon

12 noon to 2 p.m.

Roundtable panel discussion/breakout sessions to discuss;

- What issues arise that might help the two perspectives work more closely together?
- What steps can be taken to help this information be preserved and made available to younger generations of Blackfoot?
- Is it useful to draft a Protocol or MOU that considers the responsibilities that the Blackfoot and archaeologists have toward one another?

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