

Dr. Leroy Little Bear named an Officer of the Order of Canada

For his advocacy of Indigenous rights and self-governance, and his work to promote access to education for Indigenous peoples globally, Dr. Leroy Little Bear (BASc (BA) '72, DAsc '04) has been appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada.

He is one of 103 new appointments announced by Gov. Gen. Dr. Julie Payette (DSc '05) on Dec. 27. Professor Emeritus Little Bear will receive his insignia at a ceremony to be held at a later date.

“It is such a great honour to receive this award,” says Little Bear. “Of course, when you receive these awards and get this kind of recognition, you don’t do the work alone. I would like share this recognition with my wife, Amethyst, who supports me all the way through. I also want to share the award with the U of L and thank our school for providing the venue for doing our work.”

“Leroy is especially deserving of this distinction,” says Dr. Mike Mahon, U of L president. “He played a key role in developing our Indigenous Studies program many years ago and we continue to rely on his knowledge and wisdom in his current role as Distinguished Niitsitapi Scholar. On behalf of the U of L, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Leroy on being named an Officer to the Order of Canada.”

He has been a mentor and instructor to students and an esteemed adviser on Indigenous matters at the local, provincial, national and international levels. In addition to helping found what was originally called the Native American Studies program at the U of L, Little Bear also assisted the University of Calgary, Bow Valley College and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in developing Indigenous studies programs, and was the founding director of the Native American Program at Harvard University.

In his role as Distinguished Niitsitapi Scholar, he plays an integral role in breaking boundaries between traditional Indigenous and western sciences, and his writings have influenced legal and policy realms. Little Bear has co-authored texts and contributed to numerous reports and publications addressing issues related to Indigenous rights, justice, land claims and constitutional issues. His work has led to a United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and he has received numerous honours, including the key to the City of Lethbridge, an Urban Aboriginal Lifetime Achievement Award and in 2016, Little Bear was inducted into the Alberta Order of Excellence.

He is a member of the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel that provides advice to Alberta’s Chief Scientist about how to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and traditional ecological knowledge into environmental monitoring. Previously, Little Bear was a member of the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity board of governors.

In recent years, Little Bear has been involved in bringing together the Buffalo Treaty, an agreement between First Nations in the United States and Canada, to protect and restore bison herds to the wild. He was instrumental in helping Parks Canada bring a herd of 16 bison to the Panther Valley area in Banff in 2017.