

New Indigenous Artwork to Transform Centennial Village at Olds College

Web Story

Olds College of Agriculture & Technology is welcoming new artwork to Centennial Village with a large-scale installation by emerging Indigenous artist Luke Silinski set to transform the space this summer.

The new foyer wall installation, scheduled for Aug. 5, 2026, reflects the College's ongoing commitment to celebrating Indigenous voices, stories and perspectives across campus. An unveiling event for the College community will follow in late August.

Silinski, a Cree artist based in Wheatland County, Alberta, brings a deeply personal and story-driven approach to his work. A lifelong artist, he began by sketching stories inspired by books, films and traditional teachings in his school notebooks. Today, his work continues to centre on storytelling, drawing from his family, community and the knowledge shared by Elders.

The Centennial Village installation marks several milestones for the artist: it is his first commercial commission, his first mural and his largest piece to date.

At the heart of the artwork is a rich tapestry of Indigenous teachings and prairie symbolism.

Chief Mountain, a sacred site to the Blackfoot and Blackfeet peoples, anchors the piece. Known for its resemblance to a Chief in a traditional headdress, the mountain represents spiritual journeys and the search for one's place in the world.

Surrounding this are elements drawn from the Seven Grandfather Teachings, a set of guiding principles central to many Indigenous cultures. In Silinski's interpretation:

- Sabe (Sasquatch) represents honesty
- Bear represents courage
- Bison represents respect
- Eagle represents love
- Beaver represents wisdom
- Wolf represents humility
- Turtle represents truth

The artwork also incorporates the Four Sacred Medicines: tobacco, sweetgrass, sage and cedar, each representing direction, purpose and connection to ceremony and daily life.

The prairie landscape itself is a focal point. Flowing fields symbolize both Indigenous relationships to the land and the agricultural traditions that define the region today, reflecting a shared history of sustenance and stewardship.

Additional elements – including the Medicine Wheel, a snowy owl and the Chinook arch – further ground the piece in place, honouring cultural teachings, seasonal rhythms and the unique environment of central Alberta.

Together, these elements create a powerful visual narrative, one that bridges past and present, and invites reflection, learning and connection.

The installation at Centennial Village is part of Olds College's broader efforts to create spaces that reflect diverse perspectives and foster meaningful dialogue. As students, staff and visitors pass through the space, the artwork will serve as both a landmark and a living story.

The College community is invited to experience the new installation beginning Aug. 5, with details about the official unveiling event to be shared in the coming weeks.