

August 29, 2023

Michelle Helstein, PhD  
Provost and Vice-President, Academic  
University of Lethbridge

Jay Gamble, PhD  
Instructor, Department of English  
University of Lethbridge

Nathan Crow  
Bachelor of Management student, Dhillon School of Business  
University of Lethbridge

Dear Dr. Helstein, Dr. Gamble and Mr. Crow:

The Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship, and the Frontier Centre for Public Policy are sponsoring a debate on the question “Does ‘Woke-ism’ Threaten Academic Freedom?” at the Lethbridge Public Library on Saturday September 16, 2023 from 2:30-5:30 p.m. “Woke-ism” is a form of identity politics that has become totalitarian in nature, insisting that the “ways of knowing” of groups claiming to be oppressed be “respected” and “valued”.

Three participants – Jonah Pickle (a neuroscience student at the University of Lethbridge), Paul Viminitz (a philosophy professor at the University of Lethbridge) and me – will be arguing that it does (see attached). To facilitate critical thinking and ensure that diverse viewpoints are explored, we are seeking three opponents to put forward the “no” position.

As the previous provost of the University of Lethbridge, Dr. Erasmus Okine, declined to provide space for my talk “How ‘Woke-ism’ Threatens Academic Freedom” that Dr. Viminitz organized on February 1, 2023, and because the University of Lethbridge has retained the legal firm Reynolds, Mirth, Richards & Farmer to fight the Charter challenge about the cancellation, I assume that Provost Helstein would put forward a similar position to Okine’s (see attached).

Dr. Jay Gamble, an Instructor in the Department of English, was one of the most active opponents of my talk. On Twitter, Dr. Gamble congratulated community members for having “Drummed the fuck out on her ear” and expressed “pride in Uleth students” when they shouted me down (see attached).

Finally, Mr. Nathan Crow started a petition that resulted in putting pressure on President Mahon to cancel my talk (<https://www.change.org/p/oppose-frances-widdowson-s-public-lecture-on-the-positives-of-indian-residential-schools>). Mr. Crow mistakenly thought that I was giving a lecture on the residential schools, and believed that stopping me from speaking would ensure that the “correct” position could be disseminated to University of Lethbridge students. Crow also stated the following with respect to the violation of freedom of expression rights of Pickle, Viminitz, and me: “I support the notion of freedom of expression, but when that happens to discriminate a specific demographic of Ulethbridge students [sic], as well as support misinformation and false narratives, this is not okay” (see attached).

Thank you for considering this matter. I hope that you will agree to encourage critical thinking and help us to better understand the nature of academic freedom by participating in this event.

Sincerely,

Frances Widdowson, PhD

cc: Matthew Letts, PhD, Dean of Arts and Science, University of Lethbridge  
Paul Viminiz, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Lethbridge  
Jonah Pickle, Student, University of Lethbridge

## Debate: Does “Woke-ism” Threaten Academic Freedom?



Featuring Jonah Pickle, Paul Viminiz, Frances Widdowson and Invited Opponents

Saturday, September 16, 2023, 2:30-5:30 p.m.  
Theatre Gallery, Lethbridge Public Library

This is Exhibit " J " referred to  
in the Affidavit of

**Paul Viminitz**

Sworn before me this 27 day  
of July, 2023

  
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for Alberta

**SHAWN LECLERC**  
Barrister & Solicitor

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**From:** Provost, UofL [REDACTED]

**Sent:** January 30, 2023 8:25 AM

**To:** Viminitz, Paul [REDACTED]

**Subject:** AH175 Booking

Dear Dr. Viminitz,

I write to inform you that Anderson Hall, Room 175 will not be made available for the Frances Widdowson public lecture planned on February 1, 2023 from 4:30-6:00pm. No alternative University of Lethbridge facilities will be provided for this event.

Sincerely,

Erasmus Okine

Provost and Vice-President (Academic)



**Jay Gamble**

@DrJayDrNo

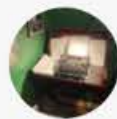
Drummed the fuck out on her ear.

5:08 PM · Feb 1, 2023 · **16.1K** Views

5 Retweets

1 Quote Tweet

177 Likes



**Jay Gamble** @DrJayDrNo · 4h

I was wondering why I had to hide reply and block a bunch of racist, residential school denying goobers recently: it appears Widdowson linked to one of my tweets and accused me of gloating.

Hardly. I had nothing to do with it. I was simply expressing my pride in ULeth students.



1



3



42



1,081



**Jay Gamble** @DrJayDrNo · 4h

What I find particularly rich about the account is her howling and whining about having her freeze peach taken from her in a piece that has links to the three "lectures" she delivered at ULeth.

She complains about not being able to talk with links to the talks she gave. 🤔🤔🤔🤔



# Oppose Frances Widdowson's Public Lecture on the "Positives" of Indian Residential Schools



Started January 26, 2023

## Why this petition matters



Started by [Nathan Crow](#)

Oki and Hello,

I have recently become aware that Frances Widdowson, a former professor with Mount Royal University, will be attending our campus on Wednesday February 1st, 2023, to offer a public lecture focused on the "positives" of the Indian Residential School system (IRS). Frances Widdowson is a former associate professor with Mount Royal University, who has recently been let go from her tenured position resulting from her perspectives and opinions on the Indian Residential School system, as well as for her public opposition towards the Black Lives Matter movement. While the Indian Residential School system is an important topic, the way in which Frances Widdowson is framing the topic has caused distrust and disappointment from myself and many other Indigenous and non-Indigenous students who attend the University of Lethbridge.

1,311 Signatures 1,500 Next Goal

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The atrocities that occurred within the Indian Residential School system are 100% accurate and true, and I strongly feel that Frances Widdowson's attendance on our campus devalues the opinions and shared histories of the many survivors who attended this colonial system. This issue not only affects the many survivors that attended the IRS, but it also affects the children and grandchildren of these survivors who are dealing with the impacts of intergenerational trauma, like myself and many other students who attend our university.

The ULEthbridge student population not only consists of many Indigenous students, but it also consists of many international students who do not know the harsh and accurate history of the Indian Residential School system. Frances Widdowson's false narrative on this issue will be the first time some of these students will be learning about the Indian Residential School system, and I strongly feel that we as an institution, have a duty to these students to provide accurate and true information on this important piece of Canadian history.

Due to the university's "freedom of expression policy", Frances Widdowson's public lecture will unfortunately go forward as planned. However, the U of L Student Action Assembly has organized a peaceful protest to demonstrate opposition towards Frances Widdowson's attendance on our campus. I will be in attendance to provide support and to show my opposition on this disappointing and repulsive matter. I support the notion of freedom of expression, but when that happens to discriminate a specific demographic of Ulethbridge students, as well as support misinformation and false narratives, this is not okay.

I want students to know that my stance on this issue is one of opposition, disappointment, and disapproval. The ULSU is currently working on an action plan to address this issue, and to provide the necessary resources and support for our students dealing with the wide range of emotions brought forth by this distasteful situation.

I want you to know that as your Indigenous Student Representative, I am appalled by this situation. I also want you to know that your feelings and emotions are valid, and I am committed to making every effort possible to provide support in this difficult time to show my opposition on the matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns that you may have.