



## OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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*"To be Canada's premiere collegiate athletic conference by developing and inspiring leadership through excellence in academics, sport & citizenship"*

# MEMORANDUM

To: Alan Rogan, Athletic Director, Lakeland College

From: Timothy Dooley, ACAC Commissioner

Date: October 9, 2025

Re: Lakeland Volleyball Hazing Incidents

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### Facts:

On the 2025 Labour Day weekend, the Lakeland College Women's and Men's Volleyball teams held team activities culminating in rookie parties on September 1, 2025. The ACAC was made aware of these events on September 9, 2025 by two reports received from the parents of two Women's Volleyball student-athletes who had decided to leave the program due to the negative experiences they had reported.

From September 9, 2025, the ACAC worked with Lakeland College to investigate the incidents of hazing. The ACAC received information that the Athletic Director had obtained from members of the Women's Volleyball team, and members of the ACAC and Lakeland College interviewed first year student-athletes who participated in the Volleyball team activities. Although a final report was prepared by Lakeland College arising from the investigation, that report was not shared with the ACAC.

The investigation confirmed that the Women's and Men's Volleyball team held a rookie party on September 1, 2025. Prior to the Women's team rookie party, new team recruits were informed that the party was a tradition, and something they would just have to "get through". As part of this rookie party, rookies were provided alcoholic drinks by the veterans, made to dress in embarrassing costume (apparently as "Gollum" from the Lord of the Rings), were made to perform for the veterans in costume, and were asked embarrassing and inappropriate questions of a sexual nature. Throughout

these events, the rookies were encouraged to drink alcohol. It is reported, and I accept, that the rookies, except for one rookie who did not drink alcohol and made that clear, became quickly inebriated.

The Women's Volleyball rookies then engaged in a scavenger hunt. One of the items on the scavenger hunt was to attend the residence of an Assistant Coach, who is also a student at Lakeland, to consume a shot of alcohol. One of the scavenger hunt activities was to kiss a boy; two of the rookies reportedly kissed a boy on the cheek. The rookies were then to take a picture at the Lakeland sign, which is apparently tradition. Despite the fact that I expect this picture is in the possession of student-athletes, Lakeland was not able to obtain a copy of this picture to provide to the ACAC.

At least one of the Women's Volleyball rookies became extremely intoxicated, and her roommate, the rookie who did not consume alcohol, spent the night monitoring her. In the morning, those two student-athletes were picked up by their parents, and decided to withdraw from Lakeland and the Women's Volleyball program.

The Men's Volleyball team also held a rookie party the same night. Unlike the Women's Volleyball team, there was only one male rookie. The male rookie indicated that members of the Men's Volleyball team took turns engaging in the rookie events with the sole male rookie, acting as "stand-in" rookies. The Men's Volleyball rookie party involved the consumption of alcohol, including a drink for the rookie and stand-in rookies provided by the veterans. The party involved a "beep test" where participants would "shotgun" a beer during. The Men's Volleyball rookie was provided with a maid's costume to dress in for the party. The male rookie also took part in the rookie scavenger hunt.

It appears that Lakeland College Volleyball staff were aware of the rookie parties occurring, even if not aware of the extent of the events. One of the Women's Assistant Coaches, who is a student, played a part in the scavenger hunt. While there was reason to look further into the events of the rookie party, which is apparently an ongoing and annual tradition, to determine whether it was a violation of Lakeland's own policies or the ACAC's Operating Code, it appears that staff did not do that. Literature supports that hazing and rookie parties, which would violate the ACAC's Hazing Policy, are a widespread problem within sport. The Lakeland Volleyball rookie parties came to the attention of the ACAC because of two student-athletes who were not willing to accept the "tradition" and spoke out. They are commended for doing so.

### **Policy:**

The following are relevant excerpts from the ACAC's Operating Code. The ACAC's Hazing Policy has been reproduced in full due to its relevance to the above incidents.

## **Article I, Section 3 – Ethics**

### **5. Code of Conduct**

### **5.1 Student-Athlete Code of Conduct**

5.1.8. Zero tolerance for any hazing activities (i.e. including but not limited to rookie parties, initiation, public humiliation, locker room activities, etc.).

### **5.2 Coaches Code of Conduct**

5.2.12. Ensure that hazing and events that would lead to hazing do not occur and are dealt with immediately upon notice.

5.2.14. Ensure the safety of the student-athletes with whom they work.

### **5.3 Athletic Personnel Conduct** [including director of athletics, athletics staff, and coaches – rule 5.3.1]

5.3.8. Directors of athletics are expected to protect the health and safety of the student-athletes:

5.3.8.5. Directors of athletics shall make every effort to ensure that athletes and other participants conduct themselves in a manner that reflects a positive image of the institution they represent and Alberta Colleges Athletics Conference.

## **Article II, Section 6 – Hazing Policy**

The ACAC is committed to the dignity, well-being and care of the student-athletes and others that comprise its membership. It is the objective of the ACAC to provide a safe environment in which members may pursue their athletic, academic and career goals.

The ACAC does not tolerate any form of hazing and undertakes to protect all members from hazing and initiation rites. This will include officers and staff of the Conference and athletic personnel of member institutions such as the AD's, other staff, coaches and sport therapists as well as all student-athletes.

### **1. Definition of Hazing**

Hazing is a broad term encompassing any action or activity which does not contribute to the positive development of a person; which inflicts or intends to cause physical or mental harm or anxieties; which may demean, degrade, or disgrace any person, regardless of location, intent or consent of participants. Hazing can also be defined as any action or situation which intentionally or unintentionally endangers a student for admission into or affiliation with any student organization.

Such activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Keeping the date of initiation/pre-initiation secret
- Requiring new members (of teams) to use separate entrances to buildings/locker rooms/dressing rooms
- Paddling or striking in any manner
- Marking or branding
- Phone duty
- Treasure of scavenger hunts/road trips

- Requiring calisthenics such as sit-ups, runs, etc.
- Requiring the carrying of items such as rocks, helmets, swords, books, paddles, etc.
- Preventing/restricting class attendance or sleep
- Requiring personal servitude
- Forcing members to eat/drink
- Work parties for 'rookies' only
- Staging any form of a line-up
- Preventing/restricting normal personal hygiene
- Causing indecent exposure
- Applying a substance to someone's body
- Physical harassment such as pushing, cursing, shouting, etc.
- Requiring uncomfortable, ridiculous, or embarrassing dress (i.e. diapers, helmets, etc.)
- Treating a person in a degrading fashion
- Requiring new members to practice periods of silence.

## **2. Categorization of Activities as Hazing**

2.1 Some activities are easily categorized as hazing. Others may not be so easily classified. To be sure, consider the following questions:

- Is this activity an education experience?
- Does this activity promote or conform to the values of the ACAC?
- Will this activity increase the respect for the ACAC?
- Do new and initiated members participate equally in this activity?
- Would you be willing to allow parents or administrative officials of the college/university to witness the activity?
- Would you be able to defend this activity in a court of law?
- Does the activity have value in and of itself?

2.2 A good rule to follow when deciding whether an activity is hazing is this: *If you have to ask if what you are doing is hazing, it probably is.*

## **3. Institutional Responsibility**

Each member institution shall ensure that there is in place within the institution an effective hazing policy.

## **4. Individual Member Responsibilities**

The ACAC Executive and committee members, staff and athletic department delegates of member institutions are responsible for assisting with the prevention and discouragement of hazing by:

- 4.1 adhering to the principles of this policy;
- 4.2 not behaving in a manner contrary to this policy;
- 4.3 not allowing or condoning behaviour contrary to this policy;

4.4 taking all complaints of hazing seriously and assisting with the implementation of the investigative procedure;

4.5 educating student-athletes regarding their rights and responsibilities with respect to hazing.

## **5. Enforcement**

It shall be the specific responsibility of the Athletic Director of each member institution to see that this policy is communicated each year to all coaches, team personnel and student-athletes and to ensure that all adhere to this policy.

5.1 Violations of the Hazing Policy: Violations of the above policy shall be dealt with through application of Article III, Section 1.

### **Ruling:**

The ACAC's jurisdiction to address Lakeland's hazing incident has been discussed during the investigation of the above incidents. If the ACAC could not address hazing that occurs at member institutions that is a violation of its Hazing Policy and the ACAC Operating Code, the ACAC's Hazing Policy would run contrary to its opening statement of protecting its members and would be of no import or effect. As violations of the Hazing Policy are specifically contemplated to be addressed through the ACAC's Violations section of its Operating Code, I find that the ACAC does have jurisdiction to address incidents of hazing at member institutions, and further that the ACAC's jurisdiction to address these incidents is not frustrated simply by a member institution not reporting those incidents to the ACAC and voluntarily engaging its process. If the ACAC were not able to investigate or sanction hazing simply because an institution did not want to engage the ACAC, the ACAC's ability to enforce its hazing policy would be frustrated.

As the ACAC's Hazing Policy observes in its definition of hazing, hazing is a broad term and applies to certain activities *regardless* of consent of participants. Hazing, by its very nature, is carried out on rookies joining a team, and is something they "just have to get through" as part of joining that team. It is an initiation. Rookie team members joining an established team are not in a position of equal power, and the pressure that rookies feel to participate in rookie events can lead to problematic and dangerous outcomes. The ACAC's Hazing Policy, rightly, does not consider the consent of rookies relevant to whether hazing has occurred or not. The ACAC states that it does not tolerate any form of hazing or initiation rites; whether some rookies are more comfortable with the specified conduct, or willingly participate in it, is not relevant.

The rookie parties both involved rookies receiving alcoholic drinks that had been prepared by veterans, obviously with the expectation that the rookies would drink them. There also appears to have been several times throughout the night that rookies were encouraged to chug or drink other alcoholic drinks as part of the rookie party events, whether it be dressing in costume and performing or running a beep test. While persons of legal age in Alberta are free to consume alcohol in appropriate settings, given the power imbalance at play in rookie parties or initiations, and the

*significant* risks that arise with the overconsumption of alcohol, pressure to consume alcohol as part of an initiation to a team is inappropriate and can lead to dangerous and tragic outcomes.

Elements of the rookie parties in question were clearly designed to cause embarrassment to participants, whether this was the intention of the current veterans or not. While not all persons may actually be embarrassed, that is not the point. Rookies on the Women's Volleyball team were made to dress in an embarrassing costume, which appears to have been "Gollum" from the Lord of the Rings. This included having makeup put on them, and something black applied to their teeth. The male rookie was dressed in a "maid's costume". These costumes are obviously intended to single the rookies out in embarrassing attire.

The Lakeland Women's and Men's Volleyball rookie parties, which involve activities that constitute hazing under the ACAC's Operating Code, came to the attention of the ACAC as two members of the Women's Volleyball team spoke out about what had occurred. The investigation into the rookie parties confirmed that these were not new occurrences. It appears that this is a yearly occurrence, despite the ACAC's prohibition on such activities. Due to the nature of hazing or initiation itself and the power imbalance between veteran and rookie players on a team, as well as the normalization of such behaviour in sport, it is understandable and predictable that many incidents of hazing will not be reported or spoken out about. At the same time, it also appears that Lakeland personnel were aware of these events and, even if not aware of the extent of the activities that occurred at such events, did not look further into the events or critically inquire as to whether such events were compliant with the ACAC's Operating Code and Hazing Policy or Lakeland's own policies. Member institutions must ensure that their student-athletes are complying with the ACAC's Operating Code, which includes the ACAC's Hazing Policy.

The ACAC has zero tolerance for hazing. Engaging in activities captured in the definition of hazing are also a violation of the Student-Athlete Code of Conduct. It is clear that the above incidents involved hazing as defined by the ACAC, including:

- Treasure or scavenger hunts/road trips
- Requiring calisthenics such as sit-ups, runs, etc.
- Forcing members to eat/drink
- Staging any form of a line-up
- Applying a substance to someone's body
- Requiring uncomfortable, ridiculous, or embarrassing dress (i.e. diapers, helmets, etc.)

While new team members may or may not have been "forced" to consume alcohol, as indicated, the encouragement to drink as part of the rookie events, given the power imbalance in question, is unacceptable.

As a result of the incidents described above, the following sanction is imposed:

- 1. The 2025-2026 Lakeland Women's Volleyball Team is suspended for the first eight (8) games of the 2025-2026 ACAC Volleyball season. The team is not permitted to play an ACAC match until November 28, 2025, and the suspended matches will be recorded as forfeitures.**
- 2. The 2025-2026 Lakeland Men's Volleyball Team is suspended for the first four (4) games of the 2025-2026 ACAC Volleyball season. The team is not permitted to play an ACAC match until November 14, 2025, and the suspended matches will be recorded as forfeitures.**
- 3. The ACAC forfeiture penalty of \$500 per match will be assessed to Lakeland College for each match forfeited.**
- 4. A separate letter of apology must be issued by Lakeland College to the two first year players who left the Lakeland College Women's Volleyball Team. These apology letters will be provided to Mark Kosak, ACAC CEO for approval, prior to being forwarded to the student-athletes.**
- 5. The 2025-2026 Lakeland Women's and Men's Volleyball Teams will engage in mandatory training about hazing during the Fall 2025 suspension period. The program and format delivery will be determined by the ACAC and any associated costs will be borne by Lakeland College or the Lakeland College Volleyball programs.**

Sincerely,



Timothy Dooley  
Commissioner  
Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference