

Indigenous Metaverse Receives Funding to create Experiential Education

York University's Academic Innovation Fund invests in Biskaabiiyaang: The Indigenous Metaverse to develop its Indigenized curriculum

Biskaabiiyaang today announced an investment of \$40,000 from York University's [Academic Innovation Fund](#) to support the design of an Indigenous-led metaverse delivering Anishinaabe language and First Nation cultural competency programs within a virtual world. Using immersive quests, activities, and learning games, Biskaabiiyaang aims to increase the number of Anishinaabemowin second-language speakers over the next decade. It will also become a living archive safeguarding the heritage of Indigenous Peoples.

The Academic Innovation Fund (AIF) supports projects that advance York University's priorities in terms of teaching, learning, and student experience. For Biskaabiiyaang, the priority is advancing the University's eLearning and Experiential Education programmes. Professor Maya Chacaby, a Sociology Department Member at Glendon Campus, is the Project Lead and Biskaabiiyaang's Chief Visionary.

York University's support of the project will help design the virtual world and develop its Indigenized curriculum.

"It is exciting to see how Biskaabiiyaang is embracing new forms of virtual learning to engage learners in unique ways to preserve Indigenous languages, traditional knowledge and culture. It's a wonderful and important reflection of the values of our [University Academic Plan](#), York's [Indigenous Framework](#) and overarching commitment to the [Sustainable Development Goals](#)," says Lyndon Martin, Acting Provost and Vice-President Academic.

"Biskaabiiyaang is an exceptional example of the innovative work our faculty are undertaking to provide students with a high-quality learning experience. This project particularly enriches pedagogy by exploring Indigenous stories through immersive, gamified learning that both preserves and sparks interest in Anishinaabemowin," says Will Gage, Associate Vice-President, Teaching and Learning.

Since the project's conception in 2021, Professor Chacaby has worked with project partners York University, the Nokiwin Tribal Council, and UniVirtual (formerly known as CNDG) to design the Indigenous metaverse both in terms of visual and educational content. Contributors include Anishinaabe Elders, the Indigenous Youth Council, and Professor Chacaby's students.

Professor Chacaby describes Biskaabiiyaang as, "A world where Anishinaabe culture thrives, where even the trees, plants, fish, and birds all have something to teach through quests, stories, and the language itself; a place where you can connect with others and learn how to be well in the world."

About Biskaabiiyaang

Biskaabiiyaang is an Indigenous-led metaverse that delivers Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) language and First Nation cultural competency programs. Through partnerships with the Nokiwin Tribal Council, York University, and metaverse builders UniVirtual, Biskaabiiyaang archives and safeguards the living heritage of Indigenous Peoples.

The project runs in tandem with the UN Decade of Indigenous Language and aims to support Anishinaabe resurgence by delivering Indigenous knowledge, histories, language, sciences, and

philosophies in a unique, immersive environment. Through experiential education, learners explore and engage with an Indigenized curriculum and connect with community Elders during social, real-time events. Biskaabiiyaang is a safe space to learn, collaborate, and adventure together, regardless of geographical location.

To learn more, visit www.biskaabiiyaang.com

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