

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Incredible VR showcase demonstrates innovation and collaboration in Northern Alberta post-secondaries**

EDMONTON – Five post-secondary institutions joined forces to showcase the realities and possibilities of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) technology in northern Alberta.

NorQuest College was proud to host VR After Dark, a ground-breaking partnership with Concordia University of Edmonton, MacEwan University, NAIT, University of Alberta (Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine), and Health City – an economic development initiative created to catalyze health innovation in Edmonton and surrounding region – to present an amazing showcase of VR technology in health care education. VR After Dark featured interactive displays of real-world health scenarios in vivid AR and VR settings. More than 130 people attended the evening event on October 17.

Edmonton is quickly becoming a world leader in AR and VR. So it's no surprise that five of the region's top colleges and universities would pool their resources to share some of the innovative and cutting-edge VR technology in the region and help grow this community.

*“NorQuest College graduates end up on the front lines of health care. We want to ensure our learners are receiving the best possible education and step forward with the most advanced teaching technologies, including VR simulations. VR After Dark is a valuable collaboration between colleges and universities who feel the same way.”*

– Jennifer Mah, Dean, Faculty of Health and Community Studies, NorQuest College

*"Concordia University of Edmonton is excited to be a part of VR After Dark, an event that showcases Edmonton's strengths in mixed reality-based technologies. This event is yet another demonstration of the collaborative nature of post-secondary institutions in Edmonton."*

– Dr. Isha Katyal, Manager, BMO Centre for Innovation and Applied Research,  
Concordia University of Edmonton

*"MacEwan University is proud to be part of a collaboration that showcases the innovative educational opportunities that prepare our students for an ever-changing workforce. Augmented and virtual reality technologies are now vital to the education of students in the health care field, and we are fortunate to partner with our fellow post-secondary institutions to share knowledge and resources for the betterment of our students."*

– Dr. Fred McGinn, dean of the Faculty of Health and Community Studies,  
MacEwan University

*"Our allied health graduates are essential to the Alberta health care system. A polytechnic education is based on experiential, hands-on learning. We are excited to partner with Edmonton's post-secondary institutions to explore how AR and VR can enhance student learning."*

– Graham Werstiuk, Director, Center for Advanced Medical Simulation, NAIT

*"Preparing our health care trainees for the many difficult and anxiety-causing situations and interactions that they will encounter is a challenge in today's educational system. The immersiveness and presence provided through virtual reality technology and artificial intelligence allows trainees to practice authentic human interactions, developing their soft skills and easing their anxiety going into real-life stressful situations. By bringing together numerous AR/VR activities in Edmonton, VR After Dark connects us and creates growth in the AR/VR community within Edmonton. Through this growing community, we can share resources and work together to make Edmonton and Alberta leaders in this game-changing field."*

– Nathaniel Maeda, post-doctoral fellow at the Rehabilitation Robotics Lab, Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Alberta.

*"Augmented and Virtual Reality have the potential to transform the way we "see" our world. Our post-secondary institutions are leveraging these technologies in their program delivery. VR After Dark provides an ideal opportunity to showcase these strengths to the public and demonstrate how our post-secondaries are leading the way in this space."*

– Antonio Bruni, Manager, Business Development, Health City

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**About NorQuest College:** NorQuest College is Edmonton’s community college serving 18,381 students annually throughout the province with full-time, part-time, online, and face-to-face learning options. NorQuest helps learners with diverse educational backgrounds complete or further their studies through foundational programs. Our post-secondary diploma and certificate programs and continuing education options offer rewarding career paths in health, community studies, business, environment, technology, hospitality, firefighting, and diversity and inclusion training. Our suite of customized and corporate training options ensure organizations and their workforces are prepared for the demands of the future. By collaborating with business, industry, government, and communities, we ensure our learners receive workforce relevant, inclusive, and transformative educational experiences.

**About Concordia University of Edmonton:** Concordia University of Edmonton is a boutique university, small enough that every student is essential yet large enough for a global outlook. In and out of our classrooms and lecture halls, we translate what we learn into extraordinary hands-on experiences. We live and work on a small campus, a river valley oasis, but Edmonton is our workshop. We are welcoming, engaged, and committed to innovation and excellence in education, research, creative activity and community partnerships. Our ultimate goal has not changed since 1921: to be more than students and professors, to create a community of active citizens, of good and honorable people.

**About MacEwan University:** Founded in 1971, MacEwan University inspires its students with a powerful combination of academic excellence and personal learning experiences. Offering more than 65 programs including undergraduate degrees, applied degrees, diplomas, certificates, continuing education and corporate training, the university provides a transformative education in a creative, collaborative and supportive learning environment where creativity and innovation thrive. Located in Edmonton, Alberta Canada, MacEwan University offers a unique student experience that opens up diverse pathways for achievement and growth.

**About NAIT:** The Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) is a leading Canadian polytechnic, delivering education in science, technology and the environment; business; health and skilled trades. With nearly 40,000 credit and non-credit students and a 95 per cent employer satisfaction rate, NAIT grads are essential to the provincial economy. NAIT also contributes to Alberta's prosperity by helping business and industry become more competitive with Industry Solutions offered through its Productivity and Innovation Centre, including technology adoption, business and product innovation and industry-driven research. Recognized as one of Alberta's top employers, NAIT provides outstanding returns on investment for its graduates, partners, the provincial government and the people of Alberta.

**About the University of Alberta:** The University of Alberta in Edmonton is one of Canada's top teaching and research universities, with an international reputation for excellence across the humanities, sciences, creative arts, business, engineering, and health sciences. Home to 39,000 students and 15,000 faculty and staff, the university has an annual budget of \$1.8 billion and attracts more than \$480 million in sponsored research revenue. It offers close to 400 undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in 18 faculties on five campuses, including one rural and one francophone campus. The university has more than 260,000 alumni worldwide.

**About the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine:** The University of Alberta is home to North America's only free-standing Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine. We are a world class post-secondary institution that provides academic training in rehabilitation science, physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech-language pathology. A research leader in musculoskeletal health, spinal cord injuries, cardiopulmonary rehabilitation, chronic pain management, seniors' health, and the application of information and communication technologies to support community care; we are the institution of choice for rehabilitation professionals, researchers, students and scientists.

**About Health City:** Health City is a not for profit, economic development initiative created to catalyze the new health economy leveraging Edmonton strengths for local, national and global impact. Health City works with innovators to scale solutions that drive health sector transformation with global relevance; adopting them for impact in Edmonton and scaling them for export to global markets.