Call It a Vision Quest: Machinima in a First Nations Context
By Elizabeth Lameman and Jason Edward Lewis

Abstract
In media such as films and video games, First Nations people are rarely imagined in the future. Mostly, we are presented as icons from the past, or as a people whose glory days are over. By creating Aboriginal characters that live in the future, we get to express Aboriginal people as a vibrant, even integral, part of the future.

However, despite advances in accessible technology, films and video games are both resource and time intensive modes of media, especially in the science fiction genre. For Aboriginal communities and individuals, these costs often prevent us from making our own media. Machinima provides an option that drastically reduces costs while simultaneously offering a unique media-making experience.

Mohawk artist Skawennati Tricia Fragnito, with the help of the research network Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace, set out to create a machinima series that offers new cultural perspectives, including a contemporary, Aboriginal point of view of actual historical events that have deeply affect Native North American people. Most importantly, it draws a line from the past to the future over which First Nations people are alive and kicking.

TimeTraveller™ is a science fiction/cyberpunk tale of Hunter, a young Mohawk man of the 22nd century who looks to his past to figure out what his own future will be. Frustrated by the state of the world in 2121, Hunter seeks a Vision Quest, but unlike his ancestors, he doesn't have to actually go to the top of a mountain. Advances in Virtual Reality technologies have made it possible to recreate any three dimensional space. He uses TimeTraveller™, a device that allows users to virtually "travel" throughout time to visit famous people, places and events. The primary storytelling mechanism of *TimeTraveller™* is a machinima series, composed of ten 5- to 7-minute episodes, shot in the virtual world Second Life (SL).

This essay first discusses the motivation behind using SL, including practicality, cultural flexibility, and exposure. Secondly, it discusses how Skawennati Tricia Fragnito and her team navigated the space of learning new technology while making machinima in SL, including advantages and disadvantages to the SL platform and the importance of a team. In general, it reviews the technology and process used to make machinima in a cultural context, while addressing challenges and offering solutions. Lastly, it describes the current progress of *TimeTraveller™* and steps for the future, both in this machinima series and in culturally motivated machinima overall.