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April 1, 2008

Ontario student filmmakers foresee virtual schools by 2020
ORION announces winners of FutureFlick Contest

TORONTO – Students may be learning in virtual, online environments by the year 2020, according to the vision painted by Ontario students in the ORION FutureFlick digital short contest.

Using futuristic technologies to attend school by blending physical and virtual spaces and interactive holograms is one of the recurring themes in video submissions received by the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION), which announced the winners of its FutureFlick Contest and \$5,000 in prizes in Toronto yesterday.

University of Toronto at Scarborough student Christian Lee Foster of Courtice, Ontario took first place and \$2,500 for his film, *Nefarious Prelation*, which illustrates what might await students in 2020, with access to at-home and online teaching and learning tools, where professors engage with students as 3D holographic projections.

Second place and \$1,500 was awarded to Arpad (Mac) Szoke of Brampton for his animated film, *The Exam Scam*, about a forgetful student downloading data directly into his mind, just in time for an exam. Third place and \$1,000 was awarded to Natalie Evans and Matthew Kinch of Toronto for *Friends in High Places*, which shows how future technology may help a student deal with a bullying problem.

The clips were premiered at the FutureFlick Theatre at the ORION@5 fifth anniversary celebrations March 31 at the MaRS Centre Auditorium. ORION asked Ontario students to produce a video that visualizes what may lie beyond YouTube, Second Life and Google and how future technologies, such as interactive multimedia and the seamless blending of physical and virtual reality, might impact life as a student in 2020.

Among other themes emerging from the submissions, students foresee having the choice of attending school at a physical location or remotely through technology. Two films suggest educational institutions may be largely empty buildings by 2020. Some show that, regardless of technology, students will continue to face traditional issues such as bullying and the high cost of tuition. Clips also portray a bleaker vision, with students dealing with poor air quality, a depleted ozone layer, and armed guards in schools.

Judges from the broadcast, education and film industry reviewed entries which came from high schools, colleges and universities from across the province. Winners and finalists are posted to the ORION FutureFlick website at www.orion.on.ca/futureflick/winners.html.

About ORION

ORION is an ultra high-speed research and education optical network that connects all of Ontario's universities, most colleges, several medical and other public research facilities and several school boards to one another and to the global grid of research and education networks. Stretching nearly 6,000 kilometres over 21 communities, ORION links over 1.3 millions students and 75,000 researchers, faculty and staff, as a critical platform supporting scientific discovery and innovation. Visit www.orion.on.ca.

- 30 -

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