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Laurier celebrates first game-design class with Games of the Year Fair

BRANTFORD – Students from the Game Design and Development program at Wilfrid Laurier University will present prototypes of their “games designed to change the world” on April 5 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Brantford Games Network lab (BGNlab), located in Grand River Hall at 171 Colborne St.

During this first annual Games of the Year Fair, the best student projects from the inaugural year of Laurier’s game design classes will be presented to the public in a game fair format, allowing attendees a chance to try them out. Members of the Game Artisans of Canada, a national organization of professional board game designers, and representatives from Lion Rampant Imports, a Brantford-based organization that is the largest distributor of hobby adventure games in Canada, will judge the entries.

Some of the games featured will include *7 Days*, a card game designed to help players understand forms of abuse; *Tales of the Cold Canadian Nights*, an adventure game where players explore the first meetings of the Europeans and First Nations people; *Food Groupies*, a game about learning to balance different types of food and exercise; and *Reality*, an improvisational game where players explore power struggles in difficult situations.

Students in Laurier’s game-design program focus on how to use engaging elements from modern games to motivate and educate players about something in the real world.

Scott Nicholson, professor and director of the Brantford Games Network, uses these public game fairs to help students learn to be confident in their work.

“Many of these students will be going into an organization as the expert on games and they need to be able to talk about the power of games and play to anyone,” he said. “Giving students, even in their first year, the opportunity to present their work to the public allows them to improve their abilities in pitching ideas and explaining games to a wide variety of people.”

Nicholson describes the Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts Game Design and Development program, which is offered in partnership with Conestoga College, as essentially a “degree in human motivation.” Students learn gamification and gameful design techniques that can be applied across a number of sectors, including education, training, human resources and marketing.

For more information about the BGNlab and the game-design fair, visit bgnlab.ca or contact Scott Nicholson at scott.nicholson@wlu.ca.