ABOUT RED IRON LABS

Red Iron Labs is a virtual reality game, content, and platform company operating in the B2B and B2C sectors. Founded in 2016 as a game company in Calgary, we specialize in making learning fun and engaging through virtual and interactive environments.

- We are a woman-led company focused on incorporating innovative design through an intercultural lens.
- We actively work with community members to find leverage points for inclusive design.
- We advocate for building a stronger digital movement in Alberta, particularly in the games and XR space.

We are mindful of our impact and in our projects, actively committed to equity in technology and economic reconciliation, and are guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #92 for Economic Reconciliation and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

RED IRON LABS LEADERSHIP TEAM

Red Iron Labs is led by **Rosalinda Hernandez**, whose area of focus is culture and intercultural competence. Rosalinda is an active volunteer in her community and is an appointed member of the Femme Wave Arts Festival, City of Calgary's Anti-Racism Action Committee (ARAC), and formerly appointed member of Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (CAUAC) from 2014-2021 and the United Nations Association of Canada, Calgary Branch, where she served as Communications Director and President between 2013 and 2019.

Mehreen Kapadia is the Operations Manager who also focuses on Community Development. Her background is in International Development and she has worked with various Calgary Non-Profits. Mehreen likes to give back through volunteering and is formally on the board of directors for the United Nations Association of Canada and Digital Alberta. Her informal volunteer positions range from helping out her local community association to volunteering to pick up trash with civic organizations. With her blend of non-profit expertise and her current role in the technology sector, Mehreen remains steadfast in her commitment to utilizing technology as a force for positive change, championing equality, and striving to make a lasting impact in her community and beyond.

THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION CALL TO ACTION #92 FOR ECONOMIC RECONCILIATION

Red Iron Labs acknowledges Moh'kinsstis, and the traditional Treaty 7 territory and oral practices of the Blackfoot confederacy: Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, as well as the Iyarhe Nakoda and Tsuut'ina nations. We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta District 6.

At Red Iron Labs, we are guided by Call-to-Action #92. The information below highlights what specific actions we take in commitment to reconciliation.

Call to Action 92.i

Commit to meaningful #92 consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.

Red Iron Labs' Response

- We've build meaningful and long-term relationships with Blackfoot Elders.
- Work with Blackfoot Elders to find links between technology and culture, and opportunities for language revitalization.
- Work with Indigenous community members to support language revitalization and economic development through implementation of traditional language support in our products.

Insights

- Consider that all these actions stem from building a meaningful relationship. We've been building these relationships since 2015.
- Relationships move at the speed of trust. This takes time and is ongoing— it's a commitment.

Call to Action 92.ii

Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

Red Iron Labs' Response

- Partner with IndigeSTEAM (an Indigenous-led organization) to deliver coding and 3D modelling training to youth interested in developing skills in STEM education and careers.
- Attend yearly job fairs at Tsuut'ina's Bullhead Adult Education Center to promote opportunities in the game sector to youth through education pathways.

Insights

- Consider that our commitment in the partnership ensures that our team members who are involved in these actions have had training in intercultural communication and competency.

Call to Action 92.iii

Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

Red Iron Labs' Response

- Work with Native Counselling Services of Alberta to deliver sessions for our team regarding systemic racism.
- Annually mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation by having our team self- and group- learn about the legacy of residential schools. Topics are focused on the history and intergenerational impacts to reinforce the importance of acknowledgment.

Insights

- We recognize the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour the children who never returned home and Survivors of residential schools, as well as their families and communities.
- Our commitment is to learn our history of residential schools, and truly listen to the stories being told by survivors, so we can begin to make small changes in our daily lives to become better allies and deepen our relationships with Indigenous Peoples.
- Attached are resources we put together this year.

Critical Analysis and Opportunities

Looking critically at our actions helps us assess how to do better. We see opportunities for improvement in equitable jobs/training and providing skills-based training on intercultural competency and anti-racism.

In 2023 we are integrating programming that focuses on these areas. This includes working with anti-racism facilitators to ensure our work is ongoing and a part of our culture at Red Iron Labs.

UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals

Collaborating with IncluCity, a non-profit that plan, design and run testing sessions with an inclusive and representative group of Calgarians to improve the usability of services and solutions for teams in public, private and non-profit sectors. The project is to develop a "cast" of avatars through a representation and inclusion lens.

Goals 5 & 10: Gender Equality & Reduced Inequalities

Emergent Strategies in Tech & Games: Using adrienne maree brown's *Emergent Strategies* as a guide, we are working with Jordan Baylon, Gen Queer Non-Binary Pilipinx artist who works in Anti-Racism and Disability Justice. Our goal is to identify an ongoing approach that fosters a healthy space for a diverse workforce that is grounded in self-awareness, identity, and creativity. And through this process, perhaps influence a shift in game development and company leadership paradigms.

WORK WE'VE DONE

Projects we have completed:

- **Oki, Blackfoot language app, Elder Sheldon First Rider:** Led by Elder Sheldon First Rider from the Kainai Nation, this app focuses on learning the Blackfoot language through syllabics (symbols and sounds).
- **Telling a Story in Virtual Reality, IndigiSTEAM & Colouring it Forward:** This Indigenous-led and culturally relevant programming in STEM is in partnership with IndigiSTEAM and Colouring it Forward to teach Indigenous youth how to tell stories using virtual reality tools.
- **Indigenous Care Aide Micro-Credential Program, Red Deer Polytechnic:** A virtual reality platform that assesses learners' knowledge, skills and competency by utilizing pre-built scenarios and gamification. In this "choose your own adventure" inspired simulation, the learner makes decisions that will impact the next step in their assessment, for an interactive and gamified learning experience. Core competencies are grounded in empathy and intercultural interactions.

Projects in progress:

- **VR Soft Skills Training Program, NorQuest College:** The VR soft skills training program uses headsets and simulated scenarios to help neurodivergent people practice their workplace and communication skills. Scenarios include understanding workplace etiquette, asking for help, meeting new colleagues and undergoing performance reviews. Training scenarios run between around three and 15 minutes. The work was in collaboration with ELIXR Simulations, who managed the project. We worked closely with NorQuest College Department Chair and subject matter experts who are neurodiverse.
- **Cultivate (user experience design), internal Red Iron Labs project:** Collaboration with MVX Studios to design the user experience for our metaverse game called Cultivate, with inclusion in mind as the main designers identify as racialized and Queer women.

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.redironlabs.com/