

Silicon Knights is the largest independent game developer in Canada

With its emphasis on story-driven content, Silicon Knights produces groundbreaking video games that envelop its players in fantastical worlds that make the player think as well as act and the Ontario Clean Technology Alliance is open for business

Fast facts

Corporate profile

With names like *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem* and *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes*, Silicon Knights has blasted to the top of the video gaming world, working closely with the likes of Nintendo Company Ltd. and Microsoft Corp. Silicon Knights began in the basement of a home in St. Catharines, Ontario almost twenty years ago.

Why Ontario

Ontario provides funding opportunities for media companies. In February 2008 the Ontario government, by way of the Ontario Media Development Corp. (OMDC), named Silicon Knights as one of the winners of the OMDC Video Game Prototype Initiative. As a result, the company was given a \$500,000 grant to go toward the development of a third-person action/psychological thriller.

Business advantage

The video game industry is booming as sales of video games rose 20% in 2008 to US\$23 billion in North America, according to analysts at Media Control GfK, while sales of DVDs and Blu-ray movies dropped 6% to US\$29 billion. The growth is expected to continue in 2009, with video games poised to account for 57% of all home entertainment sales this year.

With names like *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem* and *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes*, Silicon Knights has blasted to the top of the video gaming world, working closely with the likes of Nintendo Company Ltd. and Microsoft Corp. Silicon Knights began in the basement of a home in St. Catharines, Ontario almost twenty years ago. The company was incorporated in July, 1992, and its first games were real-time strategy/action hybrids for the PC, Amiga and Atari systems. During the final stages of development of the company's last PC game, *Dark Legions™* (1994), Silicon Knights found its calling — creating and writing compelling stories, and the creation of backgrounds for characters.

The company has turned this expertise toward developing new ways to make non-linear content in games, resulting in the company's first action-adventure game, *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain™* (1996) for the Sony PlayStation. In 2000, Silicon Knights became an exclusive second-party developer for Nintendo, during which time they created the critically acclaimed *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem™* (2002). Later with Nintendo and Konami Digital Entertainment Inc., Silicon Knights created *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes™* (2004). Most recently, Silicon Knights released *Too Human™* with Microsoft on the Xbox 360.

The company is now based in downtown St. Catharines and utilizes the talents of more than 140 employees. Silicon Knights is an active member of the video gaming industry, working with the Ontario government and peers to develop an action plan for the province to make Ontario a more attractive place for this industry.

Why Ontario

Silicon Knights is nestled in the Niagara region, best known internationally for its wine industry. Company founder Denis Dyack chose to start his business in the city, his hometown, because he believes in the value of drawing on Canadian expertise. "I

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Denis Dyack chose to found Silicon Knights in St. Catharines, Ontario, his hometown, because he believes in the value of drawing on homegrown expertise

believe that talent is the overriding factor in this industry more than anything else," said Dyack, "and you could really make video games anywhere. You don't need to be in LA, or San Francisco. There is a ton of talent in Ontario — great programmers, great artists — and for me, it was just natural to stay here."

Dyack's Ontario pride extends to nearby educational facilities. A graduate of St. Catharines' Brock University, he stated, "We've got the best universities in the world here. You've got, within an arm's throw, twelve or thirteen universities that are world-class — Toronto, Waterloo, Brock (one of the fastest growing universities in Ontario). They're all in Ontario." Building on his commitment to working with local universities, Silicon Knights assists with Brock University's new Interactive Arts and Sciences program, which blends graphic arts with a writer's perspective to help the institution produce work-ready game developers. He also is one of the founders of the Interacting with Immersive Worlds conference, which is a bi-annual conference, taking place in June, 2009, at Brock University (www.brocku.ca/iasc/immersiveworlds).

In addition to great talent and excellent educational institutions, Ontario also provides funding opportunities for media companies. In February 2008 the Ontario government, by way of the Ontario Media Development Corp. (OMDC), named Silicon Knights as one of the winners of the OMDC Video Game Prototype Initiative. As a result, the company was given a \$500,000 grant to go toward the development of a third-person action/psychological thriller. The game is to be released in 2010 on all next-generation consoles. In response to receiving the award, Dyack said "this grant will encourage great talent to stay within Ontario."

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Acknowledging the potential of the gaming industry, the Canadian Federal government, in its January 2008 budget, committed to provide CDN\$28.6 million in funding to Telefilm Canada's Canadian New Media fund over the next years and will continually provide funding of CDN\$14.3 million for each year thereafter.

Future growth plans

Silicon Knights will continue its growth trajectory working with Brock University and the Interactive Arts and Sciences program, in addition to working on several new projects.

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