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Future Chicken is a Canadian-made, digital universe for kids that hatches hope through engaging videos, a TV series and games designed to spark curiosity and engage in sustainable actions.

Future the Chicken wants to inspire your kids.

The plucky hero is part of Future Chicken, a Canadian-made digital universe that's hatching hope for children ages 6 to 10, featuring engaging videos, a TV series (called Future Chicken Today Show) and games designed to spark curiosity, get kids outside and engage them in sustainable actions.

The multiplatform educational experience follows the adventures of Future, who travels back and forth from present day to 2050, showing kids the impact of their actions in the earlier era on the future. Together, Future and her team of Planet Protectors tackle subjects such as water preservation, sustainability and animal life.

With ecoanxiety in children on the rise, Catherine Winder, Future Chicken co-creator and CEO and executive producer of Vancouver's Wind Sun Sky Entertainment, believes kids want to take action and help, but they need the tools. Her initial inspiration for the project came from fellow co-creator Annabel Slaight, who is also the retired co-creator of Owl, Chickadee and Chirp magazines and currently runs an ecology farm on Lake Simcoe.

"Climate change is not just weather," says Slaight. "Climate change and climate action have to do with making the world a better place. It's about people and animals and the environment and how all will thrive when they're living in greater synchronicity."

After hearing from kids visiting the farm who felt they'd be more motivated to partake in climate action if they could get a glimpse of the future, and realizing negative climate stories far outweigh the positive, Slaight put together a research project called the Potato Report, which looks at positive actions happening today that could lead to a better future, through the eyes of kids. It was also the piece of research an anonymous private funder used to connect Slaight with Winder, who has worked on properties such as Star Wars: Clone Wars, Angry Birds and Ice Age, to eventually create Future Chicken.

"We really had a combination of two important backgrounds: Us on the learning side and how to involve kids in the environment, and Catherine, who is a huge expert in using the media to accomplish big things," says Slaight.

Initially, the duo received \$750,000 as an investment to develop the idea. Today, it has evolved into a TV show, interactive website, podcast, games on Roblox and Kahoot! and digital shorts recently launched on YouTube Kids.

Annabel Slaight and Catherine Winder created Future Chicken after finding that children were more motivated to partake in climate action if they could get a glimpse of the future,

To get there, the duo consulted with parents and kids and put together a comprehensive panel of consultants and experts and a learning advisory committee comprised of top scientists from Trent University. They also tapped experts from other notable kids' programs, including those from Nickelodeon and Children's Television Workshop. "No one has done this since Sesame Street," says Winder. "Meaning, created an ensemble of characters that kids could form parasocial relationships with and be inspired to take action."

The second season of the TV show recently launched on platforms such as CBC, CBC Gem, Knowledge Kids and the global TV channel Da Vinci, which services more than 100 countries. The 11-minute instalments are a mix of comedy, games, science, music and Q&A sessions with guests such as Property Brothers host Drew Scott, a 12-year-old beekeeper named Elizabeth Downs and Anishinaabe Indigenous rights activist Autumn Peltier.

As of January, Future Chicken is also on YouTube Kids, which was a big win given the platform's strict safety and quality guidelines. "It's a huge feather in our cap," Winder says. Slaight adds that, even more importantly, the content is resonating with children, who connect with the characters.

"This began with kids' ideas," Slaight adds. "When you're creating something for kids, you've got to involve them. It's so formative in terms of how kids think and feel about the world they live in and what they can do to make it a better place."

For Future Chicken, that means evolving across the board, from the marketing strategy, to the educational mission, to changing the look of Future herself. Slaight reveals that Future eye lashes are a new addition, for example, and are something kids have really responded to.

With the show's recent successes and growing interest, Slaight and Winder look at 2024 as a beta timeframe, but now they're ready to fly the coop. They've developed a series of Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) shorts, which are currently available on YouTube, tapping into another youth trend. They also have a partnership with Kids Help Phone, and they're in conversations with various schools and science centres for interactive experiences and events and Future Chicken-themed educational materials. And they're actively searching for more funding partners who are involved in children's development rather than those looking to sell another toy.

"The funding is modelled from Sesame Street, too," Slaight says. "That show was funded by philanthropic organizations. We've been very fortunate, but we are looking for more partners. We have tremendous capacity to grow, but we need to put together interesting and important funding to do that."

Editor's note: A previous version of this story misidentified the main character of Future Chicken as Potato. This version has been corrected to reflect that the character is now named Future.