

BDC ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE 2011 E-SPIRIT NATIONAL ABORIGINAL YOUTH BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION

Honourable Lieutenant-Governor Graydon Nicholas welcomes Atlantic Canada finalists to the 11th edition of the E-Spirit Aboriginal Youth Business Plan Competition organized by the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC). This year's event involved 79 teams, 37 schools and 201 Aboriginal students throughout Canada (CNW Group/ Business Development Bank of Canada)

The winners of the eleventh annual E-Spirit National Aboriginal Youth Business Plan Competition were revealed last night in Moncton during a special awards gala ceremony. Organized by the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC), the event attracted more than 200 Aboriginal students from across the country and was hosted by the University of Moncton.

Aimed at Aboriginal students in grades 10 to 12, E-Spirit is an Internet-based business plan competition that features 16 weeks of interactive business planning resources, including online mentorship. E-Spirit also enables participants to meet and network with other students online and in person during the trade show, presentation rounds and gala awards. This year's event involved 79 teams, 37 schools and 201 Aboriginal students throughout Canada. An independent panel of experts judged group presentations and business displays that included laptop demonstrations, product samples, promotional videos, posters and 3D mock-ups.

"On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to congratulate all of this year's E-spirit competition winners for their hard work, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit," said the Honourable John Duncan, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians. "Strengthening Aboriginal entrepreneurship is a priority for our Government. We are proud to support events through the Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development that help Aboriginal youth develop the skills they need to pursue successful careers in business."

"BDC is proud to contribute to the emergence of a new generation of young Aboriginal entrepreneurs," said Wilson Neapew, National Director, Aboriginal Banking Unit at BDC. "The E-Spirit youth business plan competition provides the participants with a unique opportunity to showcase their talents and creativity. Every year we are impressed by the quality of the projects submitted and we are happy to see the students presenting business ideas that respond to the needs of their local communities."

- The Honourable Duncan

E-Spirit 2011 winners

The Gold Award was presented to Children of the Earth High School in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The students are Melanie Harris and Harriet Little, coached by Leigh Brown. Their business project, "Edible Bouquets", proposes an alternative to the traditional fruit basket. Seasonal fruits are cut and arranged to look like flower bouquets. Customers will eat the product and keep the basket as a decoration. "Edible Bouquets" creations can be purchased for special occasions, such as birthdays, anniversaries, baby showers or Valentine's Day.

The Silver Award was presented to Salmon Arm Secondary – Jackson Campus in Salmon Arm, British Columbia. The winning students, Jennifer Fenkhuber, Xavier Gerlib, Dale Tomma and Dani Valgardson, were coached by Meredith Rusk. Their business, "Kinnikinnick Tea House", plans to offer a variety of indigenous teas and foods to the local and tourist population. With the support of family, friends and community, "Kinnikinnick Tea House" is looking to build a place "a cup away from an ordinary day", where customers feel welcome to relax after a long day.

The Bronze Award was presented to R.B. Russell High School in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Students awarded are Anthony Beardy, Seth Harper, Cheyanne Fontaine, Justice Nepinak, Dylan Mason, Danielle Fawcett and Douglas Vance. The team was coached by Cora Bell. The team's business concept, "Anishinabe Welding Company", brings forward an Aboriginal inner-city business that creates and sells 3-D signs from recycled wood and sheet metal. The students will produce unique signs through a process that includes elements of original design, plasma cutting, welding and woodworking. A welding company at heart, "Anishinabe Welding" plans to develop a competitive advantage by creating and mounting customized signs for their clients

"The E-Spirit business plan competition introduces First Nations youth to the benefits of entrepreneurship by encouraging them to work together," said Gwen Bear, E-Spirit Elder. "This program, created and organized by BDC, leads the students to develop business plans that reflect the values and traditions of their local communities. During the past three days, our E-Spirit participants had the opportunity to present strong business ideas that show their commitment to their ancestors' heritage and values."

Cash prizes were awarded to the three winning schools in the amount of \$2,500 for Gold, \$1,500 for Silver, and \$750 for Bronze. Twelve Special Achievement awards were also presented, as follows:

Most original product or service

"Algonquin Remedies", Kitigan Zibi Kikinamadinan (Maniwaki, Québec)

Most original name

"Sitetay : A night to perform", Salmon Arm Secondary – Campus Sullivan (Salmon Arm, British Columbia)

Most innovative marketing

"Native Art Kits", Children of the Earth High School (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Best logo

"KiweQuot Publishing", Kitigan Zibi Kikinamadinan (Maniwaki, Québec)

Environmental awareness

"E-Recycling Corporation", Espanola High School (Espanola, Ontario)

Best video

"Membertou Trends", Sydney Academy (Sydney, Nova Scotia)

Best team spirit

"Chick Tips Nail Boutique", Pleasant Valley Secondary School (Armstrong, British Columbia)

Best tradeshow display

"Framing Winnipeg", R.B. Russell High School (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Best presentation

"Neechi Handbags" Kitigan Zibi Kikinamadinan (Maniwaki, Québec)

Best Use of Technology

"Anishinabe Welding Company", R.B. Russell Vocational High School (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Cultural Expression

“Kinnikinnick Tea House”, Salmon Arm Secondary (Jackson Campus) (Salmon Arm, British Columbia)

E-Spirit ambassador

“Stoney Bulls and Broncs”, Canmore Collegiate (Canmore, Alberta)

The following schools attended the 2011 E-Spirit Business Plan Competition:

Alberta

Canmore Collegiate High School (Canmore)

Ponoka Composite High School (Ponoka)

Ponoka Outreach School (Ponoka)

British Columbia

Barriere Secondary School (Barriere)

Chase Secondary School (Chase)

Clearwater Secondary School (Clearwater)

Correliou Secondary School (Quesnel)

Four Directions Storefront School (Kamloops)

Gold River Secondary School (Gold River)

Hazelton Secondary School (Hazelton)

Pleasant Valley Secondary (Armstrong)

Salmon Arm Secondary (Jackson Campus) (Salmon Arm)

Salmon Arm Secondary (Sullivan Campus) (Salmon Arm)

Stein Valley Nlakapamux School (Lytton)

W.L. Seaton Secondary School (Vernon)

Manitoba

Children of the Earth High School (Winnipeg)

Gordon Bell High School (Winnipeg)

Margaret Barbour Collegiate Institute (The Pas)

R.B. Russell Vocational High School (Winnipeg)

Sagkeeng Anicinabe High School (Pine Falls)

Sisler High School (Winnipeg)

St. John’s High School (Winnipeg)

Newfoundland and Labrador

B.L. Morrison School (Postville)

Nova Scotia

L’nu Sipuk Kina Matuokuom (Indian Brook)

Sydney Academy (Sydney)

Wagmatcook School (Wagmatcook)

Nunavut

Nuiyak School (Sanikiluaq)

Sakku School (Coral Harbour)

Ontario

Espanola High School (Espanola)

Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute (M'Chigeeng)
Saugeen District Secondary School (Port Elgin)
St. Mary's College (Sault Ste. Marie)
Wasse Abin High School (Wikwemikong)

Québec

Kitigan Zibi Kikinamadinan (Maniwaki)
Manikanetish (Sept-Îles)
École Monseigneur-Labrie (Havre-St-Pierre)

Saskatchewan

Kakisiwew School (Whitewood)

About E-Spirit

The E-Spirit competition was developed by BDC and is supported by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA). www.bdc.ca/espirit.

About BDC Aboriginal Banking

The number of Aboriginal entrepreneurs in Canada has grown to over 27,000, representing a 30% increase from 1996 to 2001. This growth in self-employment is more than nine times the Canadian average. With this increased activity comes the need for a greater variety of consulting and financial services. BDC Aboriginal Banking consists of Aboriginal people who are aware of the specific needs of Aboriginal entrepreneurs, and play a leading role in the development and delivery of BDC's customized, long-term, and flexible solutions.

About BDC

Canada's business development bank, BDC, puts entrepreneurs first. With almost 1,900 employees and more than 100 business centres across the country, BDC offers financing, subordinate financing, venture capital and consulting services to 29,000 small and medium-sized companies. Their success is vital to Canada's economic prosperity. <http://www.bdc.ca/>.