

BDC E-SPIRIT REVEALS 2012 BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION WINNERS

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Winnipeg, Manitoba, May 18, 2012 - The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) honoured the country's most enterprising Aboriginal high school students during a special BDC E-Spirit awards gala held in Winnipeg last night. Now in its twelfth edition, BDC E-Spirit is a national business plan competition that exposes students to the benefits of youth entrepreneurship.

“At BDC, we put entrepreneurs' success at the heart of all we do,” said Wilson Neapew, BDC National Director, Aboriginal Banking Unit. “The BDC E-Spirit business plan competition is priming a new generation of Aboriginal youth to consider entrepreneurship as a career choice and find a tangible way to marry cultural values and entrepreneurial success. Accompanying BDC E-Spirit students throughout this journey and seeing how far they've come, is indeed a gratifying experience.

"On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to congratulate all of the contestants in this year's BDC E-Spirit Aboriginal Youth Business Plan Competition," said the Honourable John Duncan, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. "We are a proud supporter of BDC E-Spirit, which recognizes the accomplishments, hard-work and entrepreneurial spirit of Aboriginal youth in Canada. By investing in Aboriginal youth, we are proudly contributing to the development of our country's future business leaders and entrepreneurs."

“BDC E-Spirit goes beyond teaching the students how to develop a business plan: it encourages them to look at the Internet as a new way to network and do business,” Neapew adds. “The students are already using social media channels like Facebook and Twitter to promote their projects and stay in touch. We look forward to seeing them apply the same set of skills to start their own business and attract economic development to their communities.”

The BDC E-Spirit competition was created and developed by BDC and is supported by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones, Government of Quebec, and by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA).

Other supporters include:

The North West Company

City of Winnipeg (Aboriginal Youth Strategy) – Oshki Annishinabe Nigaaniwak

Red River College (RRC) – School of Business and Applied Arts

Greystone Managed Investments Inc.

Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN)

Université Laval

University of Manitoba

University of Manitoba – Aboriginal Business Education Program (ABEP)

MTS Services

Asham Curling Supplies

Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba (TRCM)

The University of Manitoba, a great supporter of Aboriginal business education, welcomed BDC E-Spirit students on its campus and hosted the competition's tradeshow and presentation rounds. This year's winners were selected out of over 150 students from around the country who qualified for the BDC E-Spirit finals.

For timely updates about the BDC E-Spirit competition, follow E-Spirit on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

2012 BDC E-Spirit winners

The **Gold Award** was presented to **Children of the Earth High School from Winnipeg, Manitoba**. The winning students, Courtney Johnston, Brittany Laplante, Jestine McKay, and Sierra Cromarty were coached by Leigh Brown. Their business, “Little Neechies Arts and Crafts,” plans to offer affordable, handmade Aboriginal crafts in assembly kits. The kits include instructions and all the materials necessary to make Aboriginal items—such as head-dresses, dream catchers and drum key chains. Buyers can also learn more about the history, meaning and relevant teachings about each craft.

The **Silver Award** was presented to **Children of the Earth High School from Winnipeg, Manitoba**. The winning students, Justin Harper, Tyler Belanger, Bradley Bushie, and Brandon Pottinger were coached by Leigh Brown. “Rez-zidence” proposes affordable, safe housing, cultural activities, and tutoring for some of the hundreds of northern Aboriginal students who attend high-school or university in Winnipeg.

The **Bronze Award** was presented to **Children of the Earth High School from Winnipeg, Manitoba**. The winning students, Drake Perry, Danika Phillips, and Maria Phillips were coached by Leigh Brown. Their project, “Euphoric Visions”, is a photo gallery where customers can share and sell artistic photography.

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

MOST ORIGINAL SERVICE:

“Neechimatch.com”, Four Directions Storefront School (Kamloops, British Columbia)

MOST ORIGINAL BUSINESS NAME:

“Euphoric Visions”, Children of the Earth High School (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

MOST INNOVATIVE MARKETING CONCEPT:

“Little Neechies Arts and Crafts”, Children of the Earth High School (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

BEST USE OF TECHNOLOGY:

“Twig Hockey”, Kitigan Zibi Kikinamadinan (Maniwaki, Quebec)

BEST LOGO DESIGN:

“Aboriginal Theatre and Arts”, Children of the Earth High School (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

OUTSTANDING VIDEO PRESENTATION:

“Algonquin Threads”, Kitigan Zibi Kikinamadinan (Maniwaki, Quebec)

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS:

“The Anishinabe Experience”, Kitigan Zibi Kikinamadinan (Maniwaki, Quebec)

CULTURAL EXPRESSION:

“Rez-zidence”, Children of the Earth High School (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

SOCIAL MEDIA AWARD:

“E Michael Productions”, Zeballos Elementary Secondary School (Zeballos, British Columbia)

BEST TEAM SPIRIT:

“Mkusnik For Everyone”, Sydney Academy (Sydney, Nova Scotia)

E-SPIRIT AMBASSADOR:

“Aurora Foundation”, Canmore Collegiate High School (Canmore, Alberta)

BEST TRADESHOW DISPLAY:

“Grease Trail Arts”, The First Nations High School (Hazelton, British Columbia)

BEST PRESENTATION:

“Torngask & Keukuatsheu”, Lake Melville School (North West River, Newfoundland and Labrador)

About BDC E-Spirit

BDC E-Spirit is a 16 week web-based competition for Aboriginal high school students in grades 10 to 12 that provides interactive business planning resources, online access to mentoring and extensive student networking opportunities, via the web and in person. The 2012 BDC E-Spirit edition involved 160 students in 57 teams from 25 different schools. Participants had the opportunity to network and showcase their projects during a trade show, presentation rounds, and awards gala.

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.