

Photo cutlines:

Georgianne Larvie with her visual display

Team Joe Standing Bear & Logan Tucker of "Tigers Den"

Third annual LNI Business Plan Competition inspires high school entrepreneurs to present their best ideas

Room 102 of the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center in Rapid City was home for the 2010 High School Business Plan Competition, co-sponsored by The Oglala Sioux Tribe Credit and Finance Program, The Office of Indian Energy & Economic Development, and the Lakota Funds.

Participating students had 15 minutes to show their idea to the panel of judges with a PowerPoint presentation and other visual aids, followed by another possible 15-minute period of questions and answers with the judges. Top three places of two categories, Freshman/Sophomore and Junior/Senior, competed to win up to \$1000 in scholarships.

The judge's panel was formed of local business leaders. Lila Mehlhaff (CEO, Native Legacy Magazine), David Frankel (Business Consultant and Attorney for the Oglala Sioux Tribe), Gregg Hanson (Management Consultant and business instructor at Western Dakota Tech), Eric Christianson (Business Consultant with the Small Business Development Center)

This year's aspiring young entrepreneurs were, Alexandra Hunter from Little Wound; Casey Fairbanks, Georgianne Larvie and Joe Standing Bear & Logan Tucker from White River; Kaleb Shepherd from Dupree; Christiane New Holy and Frank Sioux Bob from Red Cloud.

Alexandra Hunter presented a plan for a business called Lil' Wacipi, featuring a Native buffet dining and Hoop Dance and Lakota music experience. While she had prepared well for it she said, "I was really nervous ... I hope we can do this, even if I don't win. If I won, I would put the prize money towards my college."

Casey Fairbanks explained to the judges an idea for her own brand of a horse training enterprise called C-3 Horse Training. Her motto: "Where the real cowboy is actually the real cowgirl". Of the competition, she said, "We had a school project in which we had think up a business idea and then she asked me if I would take it to the competition and I agreed. If I won I would probably put the money in my savings for college".

Georgianne Larvie conceived an idea based on her own actual personal experience. Georgianne's Babysitting would be based at home thereby minimizing overhead costs and using to her advantage her current client base. About the presentation she

said, "I was a little nervous but think I did pretty well, and if I won, I would give the money to people who need it, and also help start my business"

Frank Sioux Bob, being a returning presenter admitted he was not as nervous since he had done this before. His business idea consisted of a screen-printing venture, which would utilize his own artistic skills. A second year presenter, Frank said he approached it differently this year. "Last year it was pretty general, and this year I went more in depth. Had better financial projections, as you saw. It's a good business and I'm pretty sure I can make a lot of money with it. If I won I would put the proceeds towards college where I plan to study Psychology."

Kaleb Shepherd read an extensive, well-researched paper outlining her hair and tanning salon to compete with similar existing business in Dupree. Her edge would be a stylish, more visible location that would be attractive to customers and a friendly proprietor. She confided that, "I was kind of nervous, but I enjoyed doing it. I think I did pretty well ... with the projected income statements, and my thorough research. I spent almost a whole semester preparing it ... This is a business I can do ..."

Christiana New Holy was enthusiastic about her manual car wash business that would invite people who want to do it themselves, the reliability of service and the lower cost, compared with a lone existing automatic option in Pine Ridge. She pointed out that to start her business "I think I would start out by asking the community ... I think people feel good when they have a clean car."

The team of Joe Standing Bear & Logan Tucker presented a plan for a recreation center called "Tigers Den". Its purpose is to create an environment and a place where youth will find entertainment and activities for after school hours. They are so committed that when asked about it Joe said "... it's going to get done, no matter what, it'll be done, because with the youth out there being in trouble and the suicide rate going up, there has to be an end to it. Why not us be those people. ... I've lived the problems, I've lived that experience to tell first hand what's going on." What would they do with the prize money? "I'll put it towards the business right away."

Lakota Funds encourages students to plan for next year's competition. This is a great opportunity to think about becoming an entrepreneur and plan for self directed future. Also, Lakota Funds thanks all the students, teachers, judges and co-sponsors for their part in making this event happen.

Lakota Funds serves tribal members with a business located on (or to be located on) the Pine Ridge Reservation. Loan types include: Micro-loans (under \$5000); Business Loans up to \$200,000, a Business Line of Credit, and the Credit Builder Loan up to \$2500. Lakota Funds also provides one-on-one technical assistance as well as business classes including Financial Literacy and Empowerment Thru Business Ownership. If you have questions or want to register for a class call 605.455.2500, or email, tbrunsch@lakotafunds.org.