



## Secondary school students dream of being their own boss

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(NORTH BAY) – The dream of becoming an entrepreneur is alive and well for 18 secondary school students from North Bay and across Ontario. They recently participated in Canadore College’s first Panther’s Lair Entrepreneurship Competition. The top-finishing entrepreneurial proposal, RJ Shirts, from Chippewa Secondary School in North Bay, will produce customized T-shirts.

"We decided to create environmentally-friendly tie-dyed t-shirts using organic dyes made from vegetables such as beets," said winning teammates Jayda James and Rahim Patel. "This project was a great learning experience and all the judges were really helpful in providing advice for us, especially about pricing strategies."

"We created the Panther’s Lair to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and entrepreneurial talent," said Josh Willard, Manager of Marketing and Recruitment. "This networking and direct feedback from our expert panel of community business leaders and faculty from the Entrepreneurship Academy underscores the culture of entrepreneurship we are developing here at Canadore."

"I was very impressed with both the presentation skills and the level of thought and detail put into the ideas," said Michael Bodkin, Entrepreneurship Academy professor. "The competition was set up to emphasize feasible businesses that the students could actually start. Most businesses that were presented were actionable which is very impressive for any competition let alone one that had high school students as young as Grade 9."

"This was our first time participating in a competition like the Panther's Lair," said Chloe Rivet and Macy Bard, two student participants from North Bay. "We decided to create a business plan for eco-friendly candles with ceramic holders. The competition was so valuable and such a great experience. We learned everything about business plans, from target market to break-even points. We're in Grade 9, so we're not sure about career plans but this competition opened our eyes to business."

Following the format of well-known television shows where entrepreneurs pitch their business ideas to potential investors, Panther’s Lair gave the students a chance to show their entrepreneurial spirit. The students were competing for gift cards and future Canadore tuition credits. The judges had a variety of ideas to consider, including a subscription-based educational platform, exotic mushrooms and other microgreens, candles and a bling jewelry business.

"This was a highly valuable experience," said Samara Paleczny, Business Teacher at Chippewa. "These Grade 9 students had very little prior business knowledge. The Canadore staff was very helpful in directing us and helping to support our progress. The students learned

creative and critical thinking skills and how to 'put themselves out there'. The groups also learned the meaning of real-life deadlines just as they might have to do in their chosen careers," said Paleczny.

"It was a pleasure to take part in Canadore's Panther's Lair competition, judging the proposals from the student groups," said Peter Chirico, President of the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce. "The energy, enthusiasm and preparation done by all was refreshing and inspiring. After witnessing the presentations, I am confident that the entrepreneurial spirit needed in the business community is safe with the next generation, and our future is bright."

"I am so impressed and encouraged to see the passion and quality of the inspired competitors who so professionally presented their proposals to the 2022 Panther's Lair judges," said Phillip Richardson, a local business leader. "Although there could only be one official winner, in my books they are all winners!"

"The high calibre presentations clearly demonstrated the interest and capability in our entrepreneurial community," said Colin Williams, Canadore College Dean of Arts, Design, and Entrepreneurship. "We hope to continue to invest in entrepreneurs and assist with bringing their ventures through to fruition. I want to extend my sincere congratulations to everyone that partook in this extraordinary entrepreneurial event."

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For more information contact:  
Cindy Males  
Public Relations and Communications Specialist  
705-475-2538  
cindy.males@canadorecollege.ca