

UNB has strong showing at entrepreneurship competition

As entrants prepare for the 2008 NBIF Student Entrepreneurship Prize, The Brunswick looks at UNB student winners of last year's Breakthru competition.

by Josh O'Kane



Submitted to The Brunswick

Will Trivett, pictured here with Derek MacKay and Gregory Morris, is part of Trivnet Media Systems, which won the Gold Prize at November's Breakthru competition.

Each year, the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation (NBIF) holds a Student Entrepreneurship Prize competition to help fund students' business ideas on their way out of university. Last November, NBIF held a new, separate competition entitled "Breakthru," which was open to members of the whole province, despite UNB's strong presence, with students as members of both the gold and platinum winners.

Calvin Milbury, VP Business Development of NBIF, says the Breakthru competition was the next natural step after running the Student Entrepreneurship Prize (SEP) for five years.

With the SEP, Milbury says that "we were focused on students and the next generation of entrepreneurs. [However,] we saw there was a need to promote entrepreneurship across the province. So we decided to create a provincial business plan competition."

The Breakthru competition was thus launched last June and promoted throughout the summer. Entrepreneurs had until September to submit their business plans.

Will Trivett of Trivnet Media Systems, a computer science student at UNB, says he didn't know about that deadline, or the competition, until the last moment.

"We only heard about Breakthru about two weeks before the deadline to enter," says Trivett. "We threw an application in. I had no idea what to think of it. I had no idea the prizes were so big."

Things worked out for he and the rest of Trivnet once they did apply – the group walked away with the gold prize of the competition, including a \$50,000 equity investment and \$16,500 worth of in-kind services.

Trivnet's pitch was for a multimedia device for restaurant booths, which allows customers to choose television shows, surf the internet, and perhaps most important, have the most up-to-date menus and restaurant information.

"About two years ago," says Trivett, my father John was driving home from Montreal to Saint John and stopped in an Irving station. There were TVs playing everything but what he wanted to see.

He wanted to see an Indy race that was on, the first time with a female competing. He was upset that there were 12 TVs and he couldn't hear anything.

"He came home and asked me if I could take a system and build it with TV and internet to access in a restaurant. It sort of developed from there; we thought, 'what else could we add to it?' So we added a menu

and nutritional information."

Trivett says the system allows restaurants to more easily and quickly manage and update their menus and information. Though the current design is only for booths, he says that ideally, a design could be set up for other seating area setups.

Trivnet's team also consists of

Rivers Corbett, Phil Wilson, and Will Trivett's father, John. Will, the only UNB student on the team, is in charge of hardware development and system management. Despite still being in school, he says he puts in ten hours a week for Trivnet, and will spend the summer helping it get off the ground.

Trivett says the competition and the events leading up to it, including an entrepreneurial boot camp, has helped give the fledgling company direction.

"It's been a great learning experience. We learned a lot about what direction you need to head in. It's the first among many steps."

He says he plans to use the money invested by NBIF to leverage more funding. Right now, he's also knee-deep in paperwork with hopes that he can have a working model prepared for trade shows by April. To maintain his focus, Trivett also says he plans to put off graduation by a year by taking fewer classes at a time, leaving more time to work with Trivnet.

Greenlight Geomatics took the platinum prize of the competition, securing \$100,000 in equity investment from NBIF and \$39,500 in in-kind services.

Brad Pierce, who became involved with the company through the UNB Business Faculty's new Activator program, says that Breakthru is a fantastic way for entrepreneurs to get their businesses off the ground.

"On top of being well-organized

and professional, I think it's a great opportunity for anyone within the province who has an idea to get some startup capital – if it is going to be a feasible venture," says Pierce, a UNB MBA student. "It's a good opportunity for anybody in New Brunswick to start thinking about and to have an opportunity to start a business."

Greenlight Geomatics' product is an environmentally friendly system for companies involved in vegetation management to increase efficiency in herbicide spraying operations. Using geographical information and global positioning systems set up in a laptop computer, the product automates the spray of herbicides to avoid damaging areas deemed "environmentally sensitive."

Herman Koops brought the idea forth, a land surveyor from Miramichi. He pitched it to UNB students through the Activator program, who then performed a feasibility study and market opportunity analysis to determine whether the product will be feasible in the market. Pierce was one of the members of the group who performed that study. The product certainly proved feasibly, as it took home the platinum prize from NBIF's Breakthru competition in November.

Also involved in the company are UNB students Khaled Taha, Anthony Ilukwe, and John Lord – which shows that even when the playing field was opened up to the rest of the province, UNB has managed to provide top entrepreneurs.

Pierce thanks the Activator program for giving students such opportunities.

"It's given students an opportunity to be a part of a real life startup venture. A lot of people want to start their own businesses, but it's tough without your own experience. This is a great way for students to get to know that process within a real life venture."

He will be staying on with Greenlight Geomatics after his graduation at the end of this term.

Graduating students have another opportunity to pitch their business ideas soon. The NBIF Student Entrepreneurship Prize, which is available only to students graduating in that calendar year, was one of the first initiatives by the foundation.

"Back in 2003, when NBIF was created, one of the key pillars of our mandate was to build a culture of innovation in the province," says Milbury. "We thought one of the ways of reaching that goal was to target the next generation of innovators, so we created the Student Entrepreneurship Prize."

"If we can't reach these people as soon as they leave university, they may end up taking a job and getting some debt. They may never get a chance to do their entrepreneurial venture. But if we give them some money and some support, they can use that money to start a venture. If they're entrepreneurially driven, we can give them a leg up."

The SEP application due date is February 25. This year, a grand prize of \$30,000 will be given out, as well as two second prizes of \$20,000. One of these prizes will go to a university-based team, and the other to one from one of the province's community colleges.

The silent witness

Submitted by the University Women's Centre

Since 1990, there have been 32 women in New Brunswick who have been killed by the hand of a spouse, boyfriend, or common law partner. While the "Silent Witness Project" was first conceived in the United States, New Brunswick was the first province to bring it to Canada, thus setting an example for the country.

Launched in 2002, the "New Brunswick Silent Witness Project" consists of four organizations that came together to create life-sized wooden silhouettes to represent women from this province whose lives were tragically cut short. These life-size silhouettes, which have been painted red, are adorned with a shield that shares each victim's name and their story. Through this project, the Charlotte County Family Violence Committee, the Provincial Caring Partnerships Committee, the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation, and the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research hope to help uncover the root causes and solutions to family violence, while at the same time supporting the victims and survivors of it. The goal of the project is two fold: to remember the case of Shailla Bari and to make people aware of how serious a problem domestic violence continues to be in New Brunswick.

Bari was a 26-year-old business student at UNB who was killed by her estranged husband in 2003. A dedication ceremony will be held in memory of Bari and a life-size red silhouette will be crafted in her honour and will be the 16th to join the project.

The bilingual New Brunswick exhibit, which was previously housed on UNB's campus in the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, now travels the province to raise awareness about domestic violence. The Project hopes to eventually craft a silhouette to honour every woman in

New Brunswick whose life was tragically lost as the result of domestic violence since 1990. There are currently fifteen silhouettes, and soon Bari's will be added to the exhibit.

The ceremony will be held on Wednesday, February 20, 2008 from 6-8 pm, in Fredericton at McLaggan Hall, room 105, on the UNB campus. The event is being co-hosted by the UNB Women's Centre, the Multicultural Association of Fredericton, and the Global Union. A reception will follow. This event is free and everyone is most welcome to join us for this important occasion.

For more information on the Silent Witness Project, please visit silentwitness.ca



Internet

Life-size silhouettes are created in memory of women whose lives are cut short by domestic violence. Their name is placed on each silhouette.

Former astronaut wants a ministry of science

By Misha Warbanski
CUP Quebec Bureau Chief

MONTREAL (CUP) -- If Marc Garneau could wish upon a star, Canada would create a Ministry of Science.

The former astronaut spoke at Concordia University's engineering department on Jan. 31. And while he showed images of the world from space, Garneau wasted no time before getting political.

Garneau is already preparing for the next federal election in which he'll run as a Liberal candidate in Montreal's Westmount riding.

"Important decisions are made around the cabinet table," said Garneau. "Science isn't around that table."

Garneau also called for a national science policy to help move Canada away from dependency on natural resources and a national science advisor "with teeth ... who can talk directly with the Prime Minister."

"All countries want to innovate," he said. "Finland was an agrarian society 50 years ago, but now they're knocking people's socks off with innovation."

Garneau says he thinks Canada is moving in the right direction, but that the country needs more vision, with increasing emphasis on science and technology. For this, he says, the federal government must be willing to invest in education.

"You have to have good universities. We need universities to promote future innovators," he said, adding that Canada's greatest natural and renewable resource should be knowledge.

He pointed to Liberal party initiatives in the 1990s as examples of the direction Canada should go. The Canada Foundation for Innovation, for instance, has put billions of dollars into equipping post-graduate research labs and the Canada Research Chair program has also been extremely successful, he said.

"It has helped to attract the best minds to our universities. But it has attracted scientists who want to work with other top-notch scientists."

Garneau did not address cuts to education transfer payments made in the same era.

Aside from research and education, Garneau says Canada needs more big companies like Bombardier and RIM (the makers of BlackBerry), to invest in product development and a framework for transforming research into commercially viable products and services.

"[A lot of research] has promising potential, but there's no one to take it to the private sector," Garneau said. "To take something to the pilot stage requires a lot of money."

Garneau says he hasn't always been an environmentalist, but the view from space changed all this.

"Being in space forces you to take a more global view," he explained.

Canada should grab the opportunity to develop in green technologies, Garneau said, and sell them around the world.

He says he supports the Liberal Party's plan to implement carbon taxes on big polluters.

This, Garneau says, will free up more money to invest in environmentally responsible technology.

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ARE YOU PLANNING TO GRADUATE IN MAY?

HAVE YOU APPLIED TO GRADUATE?

All potential graduating students **MUST** apply to graduate by March 1, 2008 in order to be considered for Spring Encaenia. This is a firm deadline. If you have not yet applied to graduate please go to the UNB homepage under Quick Links, Graduation, Application to Graduate and complete the form.

<http://unb.ca/schedules/gradapp/>

Graduate level students should contact the Graduate Secretary in their Graduate Academic Unit (Dept./Faculty) to apply to graduate.