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NEXSTREAM COMPETITION FINALE SEPT. 9: INVENTORS TACKLE INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

Thirty-seven teams tackled the challenge of coming up with innovative solutions to real-world industry challenges for the first annual NexStream Tech Competition. Five of those teams have made it through to the finals. Winners will be announced online at techatchery.ca at 10 a.m. on Sept. 9, 2020.

Launched in 2019, the NexStream Tech Competition is an international technology competition that's based in Campbell River, B.C. Each year, the competition features a new set of challenges. The challenges are inspired by Campbell River and area, and apply to needs of industries around the world.

This year's challenge categories—Energy, Wildlife Monitoring, Food Security and Wildcard—generated an array of inventive products and ideas. The projects developed by NexStream teams include converting waste from seafood processing into consumer products, harnessing tidal energy and developing portable renewable-energy pods.

Brandon Pirie grew up on Quadra Island, BC. He left the island to train as a chef and received a Red Seal endorsement. When he returned to Quadra Island, he began considering opportunities for pursuing his culinary career and realized that starting up a restaurant might not be the right fit for him. When he heard about the NexStream Tech Competition, Pirie decided to enter the Wildcard category, where he cooked up his recipe for a fermented fish sauce that uses cuts left over from processing seafood.

"NexStream has been an amazing experience that has changed my life," Pirie states. *"The competition has allowed me to use my training to create an innovative product and be a part of the rural economy, while allowing me to be close to family and the lifestyle that I love. The skills acquired through the mentorship and training aspects of the competition allowed me to take an idea from concept to reality in under a year—with many pivots along the way. What I started out with and the end product are very different. I am excited to share it with the world on September 9."*

David Hauser is co-founder and chief technical officer of RecognAIse Technologies Inc. His team competed in the Wildcard category, exploring how technology—particularly artificial intelligence—can be applied to create a streamlined, automated inspection process for electric transmission infrastructure. Hauser says that entering the NexStream Tech Competition helped his team move forward with their business and develop their technology.

"The NexStream challenge, sponsored by the Campbell River Area Angel Group, provided substantial business training, advice and coaching, along with networking opportunities to refine and build our business model," Hauser states. *"In addition, the group provided financial support to build our first artificial technology server, and accelerated our technology development."*

It's all part of this economic development initiative's goal of supporting industry and business in Campbell River—and beyond.

"When we partnered with CRAAG to create NexStream, we were actively seeking ways to attract innovative technology businesses to Campbell River," says Rose Klukas, economic development officer with the City of Campbell River. *"Campbell River has a spirit of collaboration and innovation. It also offers a high quality of life and is more affordable than many large cities, all of which make it an ideal location for growing a business."*

The five finalists will be featured on the NexStream Finale webpage along with the announcement of the winners. NexStream 2.0 categories will also be released on Sept. 9.

NexStream welcomes applications from individuals, academic institutions, and organizations or businesses with fewer than 100 employees. As they move through the various stages of the competition—from submitting an expression of interest to developing a working prototype—teams vie for cash prizes of up to $75,000 and the potential for more seed capital if CRAAG angel investors determine that their innovations warrant further investment.

NexStream's rewards aren't just financial. NexStream organizers nurture the entrepreneurial ambitions of participants by offering mentorship and support from CRAAG, Campbell River and Area Angel Group and Spring, a global incubator and accelerator for entrepreneurs.

Visit https://nexstream.is/ for more information about the Competition. Find out more about Campbell River's technology initiatives at techatchery.ca.

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