

Prize a bonus, game designer says

Winner of TEC Edmonton contest launching product in U.S.

BY DAVID FINLAYSON, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE MAY 1, 2009 7:50 AM



Jason Suriano President and Executive Producer at Central Insitute for Exploration. left, with Ken Bautista CEO & Creative Director with Central Insitute for Exploration as they show off their TEC Edmonton Venture prize for Fast Growth Grand Prize Winner for 2008-2009 at the TEC Edmonton Venture Prize awards at the Westin Hotel.

Photograph by: Walter Tychnowicz, Edmonton Journal

Ken Bautista didn't have much time to enjoy winning TEC Edmonton's Venture Prize competition Thursday.

He was leaving this morning for Philadelphia to officially launch his winning interactive game at the North American Museum Association conference.

"I'm really excited about winning. Our goal was to go through the process, and maybe be a finalist, and the winning part is a bonus."

Bautista's project CIE: Seek Your Own Proof, uses websites, mobile phones and real-world locations to engage kids in the Central Institute for Exploration and explore the past, present and future.

"We've been working on CIE for two years and now we're finally launching it, and we're seeing kids and parents starting to use it," he said.

Bautista is lead interactive strategist at Red The Agency, which acquired the interactive division of his Hotrocket company last June.

The several months of boot camp that TEC Edmonton puts the competitors through, and the support from local companies, were invaluable, Bautista said.

"I believe you're not an entrepreneur until you've had your butt seriously kicked. It's exciting to be part of a great group of new young entrepreneurs."

Bautista also said going through the Northern Alberta Business Incubator in St. Albert and the Banff New Media Institute since graduating from the University of Alberta with an education degree in 2001 helped develop his business skills.

He and partner Jason Suriano won the best pitch and most viable property awards for CIE at the 2007 KidScreen Summit in New York.

The other Jump Start finalists were Cristian Scurtescu, whose company, SmileSonica, uses ultrasound to prevent dental root problems; and Trevor MacDonald of SwiftClips, which is developing interactive touch-screen software for big box stores.

The student entrepreneur winner was Gordon McKinlay of Kennelseek, which helps pet owners find boarding space anywhere in Canada and the U.S.

The six finalists in both categories share \$150,000 in cash and in-kind services.

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