

■ Arlee

# Students' business plan takes top prize

By **BETSY COHEN**  
of the Missoulian

When a group of young entrepreneurs opened a business called the "Snack Shack" in the Arlee Community Center last December, their goal was to make a profit – and to be successful enough to compete in the business plan competition at the American Indian Business Leaders' 13th annual leadership conference in Anaheim, Calif.

Last month, no one really thought they would win top honors there, said Snack Shack business partner Maranda Frost. It would be reward enough just to attend the April conference, which was conveniently located near Disneyland, the 11-year-old said.

To get there, though, it meant the children, ages 6 to 13, needed to raise \$6,000 to send eight members of the Arlee American Indian Business Leaders chapter and their chaperones.

To do so, they beaded and sold hundreds of leather pouches, sold hundreds of fruit roll-ups and beef jerky sticks, held Indian taco feeds and youth dances.

In the end, they raised the needed money, went to California and so impressed the judges, the Arlee kids came home with two top conference honors. They won Chapter of the Year, placed second in the national business plan competition – and came home with \$750 in prize money.

"The students nailed their presentation, they were fearless and I was so proud of them," said Tina Begay, the chapter's co-adviser. "They represented the Flathead

See **TOP PRIZE**, Page B2

Missoulian

B

Tuesday,  
May 1, 2007

## Top prize

Continued

Nation and Arlee community very well."

During two separate 20-minute presentations, the students explained their business and walked the judges through their business plan. They also shared the top five lessons they learned from starting and operating the business: how to

bead, to be respectful when people are talking, to be proud of their culture, to work as a team and how to run business.

Here's what the judges wrote in the comments the students received: "Business plan is complete, very nice concept, great job, excellent PowerPoint presentation."

One judge commented that Isaac Desjarlais, 10, "should teach some of his salesmanship skills."

On Monday, the chapter got

together to discuss what to do with their prize money.

Although plans for the cash are still up in the air, everyone generally agrees on two things: to save \$250 for the business and its possible expansion, and to spend \$500 on doing something really fun in celebration of their victory and achievements.

"What they finally come up with will be really interesting," Begay said. "They always come up with good ideas."