

## University and community join to celebrate World Water Day next week

Sunday, March 21st, 2010 | 3:00 pm

Submitted

UBC Okanagan is commemorating World Water Day, recognized each year on March 22, with a number of events aimed at promoting the importance of water as a valuable resource and basic human right.

“This is a great opportunity for the university and Kelowna community to increase awareness about water quality both here in the Okanagan and globally,” says Allisha Luther, student coordinator of World Water Week. “With so many bodies of water in close proximity to each other, a myth exists that water is in abundance here in the Okanagan. In reality, the Okanagan has one of the lowest per-capita water supplies in Canada and highest per capita use.”

Kicking off World Water Week is a public panel discussion hosted by the Okanagan Basin Water Board and UBC Okanagan at Manteo Resort on March 22. The discussion, from 11 a.m. to 12 noon, will focus on Communicating water quality challenges and opportunities and will address the question: What shared Canada/U.S. water quality issues will shape the Okanagan’s future? “World Water Day is a wonderful opportunity to engage the community and increase awareness about water issues,” says Luther. “Water scarcity is an issue that threatens communities all around the world. This is an opportunity to involve the community and garner support in raising the profile of water issues on a political level.”

Also on Monday is a free keynote address in Penticton by Robert Sandford, Canadian Chair of the United Nations International Decade “Water for Life,” a national partnership to advance long-term water quality and availability issues in response to climate change in this country and abroad. The presentation, part of the UBC Okanagan Distinguished Speakers Series, will take place at 7 p.m. at the Penticton Trade and Convention Centre. (Visit [www.ubc.ca/okanagan/speakers](http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/speakers) to pre-register for this talk). On March 23, the public is invited to the university’s official opening ceremony of World Water Week. Following a Drum Procession through the UBC Okanagan courtyard that will end at 11 a.m. in the University Centre Ballroom, Robert Sandford will speak on water ethics. At noon, the ceremonies will continue with brief speeches by university dignitaries, Nelson Jatel, Water Stewardship Director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, and Bernard Bauer, director of the Okanagan Sustainability Institute.

Following the official opening of World Water Week, the public is invited to join guided tours of campus sustainability, take in poster and video presentations by students, pick up some baked goods from student-run Course Unions. “And for the grand finale, there’s a Poetry Slam by creative writing students from 2:15 to 4 p.m.,” says Luther.