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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **OKANAGAN YOUTH INVITED TO BE CLIMATE HEROES AS PART OF CANADA WATER WEEK CELEBRATIONS**

**Kelowna, B.C.** – In celebration of Canada Water Week (March 17-23) and UN World Water Day (March 22), the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB)'s Okanagan WaterWise program has re-launched its 7<sup>th</sup> youth challenge and is inviting young people to be climate heroes.

“We are all witnessing and living the effects of climate change, right here in our own valley,” noted OBWB Communications Director Corinne Jackson, who also manages the Okanagan WaterWise outreach and education program. “Young people are increasingly aware of the extreme weather events we are experiencing, from historic flooding that threaten homes and close beaches, to repeated droughts that require conservation to ensure enough water for food production and returning salmon. They’ve also experienced record-breaking temperatures and wildfires, affecting the air they breathe, the water they drink, and more.

“But it’s not good enough to be aware. We want to encourage and empower young people to take action. The fact is we have solutions and it’s time to put those solutions into action for a secure water future,” Jackson added. “One of the best ways to encourage protection of this valuable resource for future generations is to educate our children and youth, and provide them with a voice to teach others. We are inviting the youth of our community to tap into their inner hero, to act on climate, and invite others – kids and adults – to join them.”

The theme for this year’s challenge was inspired by the documentary [“Beyond Climate,”](#) recently screened by OBWB-OkWaterWise in partnership with UBC Okanagan’s Institute for Biodiversity, Resilience, and Ecosystem Services (BRAES). Directed by Ian Mauro, narrated by David Suzuki, and featuring several Okanagan residents, the film is a timely, touching and hopeful look at how climate change is affecting us here in the valley and around B.C., and how we can turn this around.

This year’s Okanagan WaterWise Challenge invites local classrooms, as well as individual youth, five to 18 years old, to “Be a Climate Hero” by participating in various activities that can improve our water and our planet. A special page has been set up at [OkWaterWise.ca](http://OkWaterWise.ca). By clicking on the “Challenge” button, teachers, parents and youth will find contest details, including activities to learn more about the issues we are facing, and challenges to tackle these issues head on.

Challenges include joining the popular #trashtag effort to clean wetlands, creeks and beaches. Wetlands are important for many reasons including flood protection and as carbon sinks. Other potential activities include planting indigenous trees to absorb carbon and give off oxygen. As part of the contest entry, participants must submit a multimedia entry (e.g. video, photo essay, drawings, etc.) that demonstrates their super power efforts and invites others to join in.

Participants will be entered to win water prizes including, for class entries, a 2-hour boat charter on Okanagan Lake for an on-the-water classroom experience to learn more about the water of our valley. Entries are due April 30. Full details are at [OkWaterWise.ca](http://OkWaterWise.ca).

Special thanks to challenge partners: City of Vernon, City of Kelowna and YMCA H2O Adventure & Fitness Centre, City of Penticton, The Okanagan Science Centre, Regional District of Central Okanagan's Environmental Education Centre of the Okanagan, Kelowna Cruises and Cruise Okanagan.

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