June 17, 2020

NEWS RELEASE

OKANAGAN HOSTS FILM SCREENING & PREPS FOR B.C. AQUAHACKING FINAL, FUNDING TECH TEAMS TO SOLVE WATER ISSUES

Kelowna, B.C. – Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and Aqua Forum are hosting two virtual events as the 2020 B.C. AquaHacking Challenge – aimed at tackling some of the province's biggest water issues – enters its final stretch. The organizations are screening *Brave Blue World* on Friday, June 19, and even secured the film's producer, Paul O'Callaghan, as a keynote speaker for the B.C. AquaHacking final on June 25. Both events are free and online.

"Despite the continued need for physical distancing with COVID-19, we're very happy to be able to bring people together, to celebrate those who continue to work to ensure a clean, abundant water supply to meet growing demand," explained OBWB Executive Director Anna Warwick Sears. "These two events are the perfect pairing."

Brave Blue World tells the story of people and projects around the world, working to address various water challenges, including water contamination, wastewater, water scarcity, and more, issues we are facing right here in the Okanagan, Sears pointed out. Indeed, these issues – and others – are at the centre of the B.C. AquaHacking Challenge that was launched last fall, engaging young professionals across Canada to develop new tech solutions to address B.C. water issues.

The film is inspiring on its own, but also has some star power, with Liam Neeson as narrator and actor Matt Damon, co-founder of Water.org. "We invite people to join us in watching the film from the comfort of their own home, and at a time that works for them," said Sears, adding that the documentary is available between 1 p.m. and 11 p.m. Pacific Time (PT).

Viewing numbers for the June 19 "Brave Blue World" screening are limited and REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED at https://braveblueworld-aquahacking.eventbrite.ca.

The film is the ideal jumping off point for the B.C. AquaHacking final, while energizing two other AquaHacking Challenges currently underway in Winnipeg and Atlantic Canada, added Désirée McGraw, Aqua Forum's Chief Executive Officer.

"This year we are so proud, despite COVID-19, to host three digital events tackling water issues in Canada. And we are very excited about AquaHacking's BC Challenge. It's our first-ever challenge west of Manitoba, plus it was the first challenge to be launched this year and will be the first one completed! We could not have asked for better partners than the OBWB, and we look forward to selecting and showcasing innovative water solutions to wicked water problems. The future of Canada's freshwater is in good hands!"

On June 25 at 1 p.m. (PT) the B.C. AquaHacking Challenge final will be hosted on the OBWB's Okanagan WaterWise Facebook page at www.facebook.com/OkWaterWise.

The final will include a keynote speech from O'Callaghan, pitches from the five final teams – with an opportunity for the public to vote for their top choice – and the awarding of prizes. Top prize is $20,000 in seed-funding and placement in a start-up incubator to help the team bring their solution to market. An additional $30,000 will be awarded to the other four teams to assist their projects to move forward. The five teams are:

- **Elite** from UBC Okanagan in Kelowna, tackling stormwater contamination
- **GAPSS (Gravity Assisted Particle Separation Systems)** from UBC Okanagan in Kelowna, working on stormwater contamination
- **Ozero** from Sherbrooke University, Quebec, addressing invasive mussels
- **Above Atlantis** from UBC Vancouver, University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University, addressing flood risk, and
- **UniteAG** from University of Victoria and Toronto's Queens University, solving stormwater contamination.

Special thanks to B.C. AquaHacking Challenge funders: De Gaspe Beaubien Foundation, RBC Foundation, Real Estate Foundation of BC, Telus Friendly Future Foundation, Teck Resources, IBM, Mitacs, Ovivo and Lavery Lawyers.

Please find a Backgrounder with Fast Facts attached, including the names of team participants and more on their solutions.

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BACKGROUNDER & FAST FACTS

B.C. AquaHacking Challenge by the numbers:

- 195 participants registered from post-secondary institutes across B.C., Alberta, Ontario and Quebec, forming 30 teams, of which 20 pitched at the semi-final in March 2020 (Watch here: https://bit.ly/BC-AH_semi-final_FBLive)
- 76% of participants were undergraduates; 8% - young professionals;7% - MSc students; 6% - college students; 3% - getting their PhD

B.C. AquaHacking Challenge issues:

- contaminants in storm water
- outdoor water conservation
- flood damage and risks
- invasive zebra and quagga mussels
- access to potable water in Indigenous communities

Participants per water issue:

- Stormwater contamination: 26%
- Invasive mussels: 8%
- Flood Damage and Risks: 23%
- Outdoor Water Use: 26%
- Potable Water in Indigenous Communities: 17%

The five finalist teams:

- **Above Atlantis** (UBC Vancouver and Simon Fraser University) – Issue: flood risk. Solution: Interactive online platform makes flood risk information more accessible to the public, adaptable to changing climate scenarios, and able to integrate public sourced information. *Team members: Joshua Kamijan, Jay Matsushiba, Hanieh Daliri, and Shantanu Dutt.*
- **Ozero** (Sherbrooke University - Quebec) – Issue: invasive mussels. Solution: A technology to decontaminate ballast water in sport boats to prevent propagation of zebra and quagga mussels in freshwater. *Team members: Benjamin Farley, Maxime Guay, Olivier Harpin, Matys Tessier, Olivier Liberge, and Christophe Morin*
- **Elite** (UBC Okanagan - Kelowna) – Issue: stormwater contamination. Solution: A gravity-based filtration system that removes oil, dust and petroleum contaminants from water. *Team members: Keyvan Khadem, Gavin Saini, Ahmed Ramadan, and Harvir Mann.*
- **GAPSS - Gravity Assisted Particle Separation Systems** (UBC Okanagan - Kelowna) – Issue: stormwater contamination. Solution: An engineered system that fits under existing storm drain basins to remove hydrocarbon compounds, sediment, and particulate matter from the point source. *Team members: Jacob Sol, Rudransh Kumar, Cole White-Robinson, Jayden Wong, Graeme Kumagai*
- **UniteAG** (University of Victoria and Queens University - Toronto) – Issue: stormwater contamination. Solution: A digital simulated platform that provides feedback to policy makers on the efficacy of farm incentives aimed at water conservation and nutrient management to protect water quality. *Team members:* Waseem Jawad and Luke Trinity.

- B.C. AquaHacking Challenge is one of three programs being held across Canada this year. Other challenges are taking place in Winnipeg and Atlantic Canada.

- Aqua Forum was founded by the De Gaspe Beaubien Foundation to connect youth and young professionals with an interest in freshwater issues, clean-tech innovation and entrepreneurship, with mentors who could help them launch real-world solutions. The AquaHacking Challenge is the organization's flagship program. After five years of programming in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin, the program is now coast to coast thanks to funding from RBC Foundation.

- B.C. AquaHacking Challenge funders: RBC Foundation, Real Estate Foundation of BC, Teck Resources, Telus Friendly Future Foundation, IBM, Mitacs, Ovivo and Lavery Lawyers

- Advisory committee partners: Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission, Okanagan Sustainability Leadership Council, Urban Systems, City of Kelowna, Okanagan Nation Alliance, and the B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology – Cleantech Planning and Innovation Branch

- Academic partners: UBC Okanagan and UBC Vancouver, Okanagan College, Simon Fraser University, BC Institute of Technology, University of Victoria and University of Northern B.C., as well as several universities in Alberta, Ontario and Quebec.

- Implementation partners are: Hackworks, Waterlution, Purppl, and the OBWB's Okanagan WaterWise education and outreach program.

For more on the B.C. AquaHacking Challenge 2020, visit https://aquahacking.com/en/bc-2020/.