

OZERO

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1st place

BC AWARDS
AQUAHACKING
2020 CHALLENGE

Benjamin Farley, Co-founder and Electrical System Development Manager (Sherbrooke University)

Maxime Guay, Co-founder and Marketing Manager (Sherbrooke University)

Olivier Harpin, Co-founder and R&D Manager (Sherbrooke University)

Olivier Liberge, Co-founder and Communications Manager (Sherbrooke University)

Christophe Morin, Co-founder and Computer programming Manager (Sherbrooke University)

Matys Tessier, Co-founder and Financial Expert (Sherbrooke University)

(submitted/OBWB)

AQUA HACKING CHALLENGE

By Vernon Matters Staff/OBWB

Challenge produces new solutions for water issues

Jun 26, 2020

Young professionals from across Canada are helping to find solutions to some of B.C.'s most challenging water issues through the B.C. AquaHacking Challenge.

The 2020 program, put on by the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and Aqua Forum, provided ideas on how to deal with invasive mussels, flooding, and stormwater contamination.

Representing universities from across Canada, presented their projects to address water challenges in B.C. and beyond, Judges and participants voted for their top choices and winners were announced.

The winners are:

5th place – **UniteAG** from University of Victoria and Toronto's Queens University, solving stormwater contamination

4th place – **Elite** from UBC Okanagan in Kelowna, tackling stormwater contamination

3rd place – **Above Atlantis** from UBC Vancouver and Simon Fraser University, addressing flood risk

2nd place – **GAPSS (Gravity Assisted Particle Separation Systems)** from UBC Okanagan in Kelowna, working on stormwater contamination,

1st place – **Ozero** from Sherbrooke University, Quebec, addressing invasive mussels

The final prizes are \$20,000 in seed funding to the 1st place team, \$15,000 for 2nd, \$10,000 for 3rd, and \$2,500 for the teams placing fourth and fifth.

"I'm so pleased and proud of the work of all the teams, and was delighted with the strong showing of the hometown teams," noted Anna Warwick Sears, OBWB's Executive Director. "We are very happy to see these projects go forward to become start-up innovations. And we are very pleased that the first place team, Ozero, is focused on preventing the spread of invasive mussels! All of these issues are so important to the people of the Okanagan, and elsewhere. We welcome new partners and new solutions to help address them."

"We are grateful to OBWB for their invaluable partnership in making the B.C. AquaHacking Challenge such a success, and look forward to building on this in the near future," added Desiree McGraw, Aqua Forum's Chief Executive Officer. "We salute and celebrate the final teams who embody our mission to engage and empower the next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs and ideas in solving pressing water problems."

Olivier Liberge, co-founder and communications manager for Ozero, explains his team was working on a ballast wash to combat invasive zebra and quagga mussels as part of their Bachelor's degree when they learned of the B.C. AquaHacking Challenge. "We chose the project because we were interested in the lakes of Quebec and Canada, and making them a better place. We know water is a valuable resource and we wanted to preserve it," he said.

Indeed, invasive mussels was one of five issues chosen as part of the B.C. challenge. The others were stormwater contamination, flood risk, outdoor water use, and drinking water in Indigenous communities.

"We've seen mussels in our lakes and how they propagate very easily, and so we wanted to tackle this problem. You can see that they have caused biodiversity to drop," Liberge added. "And because they are filter feeders, the water is clear, but algae has more access to light so this creates toxic algae blooms, Our beaches are covered in mussel shells that smell. It's very sad. Tourists don't go there."

"With this prize, we will be able to take our product out across Canada and prevent more lakes from being invaded from this and other aquatic invasive species. We are very excited."

To watch the broadcast of the B.C. AquaHacking Challenge final, visit the OBWB's Okanagan WaterWise Facebook page at <https://bit.ly/3i4KL6g>. A program with more on the teams, their solutions, the judges and more, can also be found at <https://bit.ly/31cRvZA>.

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