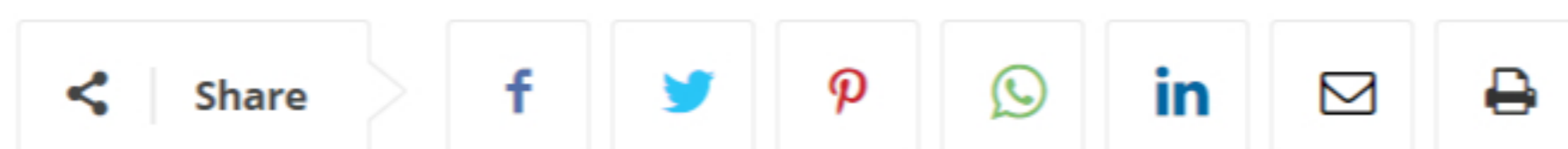


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AquaHacking Challenge Expands into Western Canada for 2021

By **Simran Chattha** - January 14, 2021 113 0



The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and Aqua Forum are partnering once again to host the AquaHacking 2021—Western Canada Challenge.

AquaHacking is a tech challenge for post-secondary students and young professionals with an interest in freshwater issues, clean-tech innovation, and entrepreneurship. As part of the Western Canada AquaHacking Challenge, participants from B.C. to Manitoba are asked to tackle one of five water issues and are paired with mentors to help develop and launch real-world solutions and eventually start-ups.

“We are excited to declare the AquaHacking 2021 Challenge in Western Canada open,” said OBWB Executive Director Anna Warwick Sears. “The AquaHacking format is a fantastic way of bringing people together in a common—and important—cause. It’s wonderful to be expanding beyond B.C.”



“We are very pleased to continue to work in partnership with OBWB and co-host the 2021 Western Canadian AquaHacking Challenge,” added AquaHacking Director Kariann Aarup. “This tech innovation challenge is an excellent opportunity to engage young talent to work on water issues that still need solutions. We are excited to be engaging with water organizations and post-secondary institutions in B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.”

The five water issues, selected by an advisory committee and to be addressed as part of this year’s Western Canada challenge, include:

1. Optimization of drinking water/wastewater treatment plants. Question for participants: How can we improve the operations of primary water/wastewater utility infrastructure?
2. On-farm nutrient capture and recycling. Question for participants: How can we capture and reuse the valuable nutrients from livestock operations and improve the health of nearby rivers, lakes, and aquifers?
3. Improvements to water systems for Indigenous communities. Question for participants: How can we improve access to clean drinking water for Indigenous communities in Western Canada?
4. Toxic algal blooms. Question for participants: How can we improve testing and reduce the incidence of toxic algal blooms?
5. Innovative ‘social’ technologies for water information. Question for participants: Are there new ways we can link to existing social media and communications technologies to support community access to water information?

“All five water issues developed as part of this challenge are relevant across Western Canada, and beyond, and will support communities large and small,” said Sears. “I can’t wait to see what innovative technologies the hackers come up with.”

This challenge is one of two AquaHacking events being held across Canada in 2021. A second challenge is being held in Quebec in the Mille Îles River’s watershed. With both events, students and early-career professionals who participate will receive mentorship and skill building workshops. They will also compete for more than \$50,000 in prizes as seed funding and a secured spot in a local start-up incubator.

Supporters and funders of the Western Canada Challenge include: De Gaspé Beaubien Foundation, Okanagan Basin Water Board, RBC Foundation, Lavery Lawyers, Ovivo, Mitacs, and Teck Resources.

Implementation partners include: Hackworks, Waterlution, and the OBWB’s Okanagan WaterWise education and outreach program.

More information about the Western Canada AquaHacking Challenge is available [here](#).

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 “Flooding is a critical issue facing many municipalities that will only become more acute as we continue to experience the effects of climate change,” wrote Alyssa Kelly and Eric Meliton (@EricMeliton). [watercanada.net](#)

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