

**Water protection leaders & 84-year old grandmother Nan-b de Gaspé Beaubien believe youth will save Canada's water**

*The AquaHacking Challenge invites 1,7 M university students across Canada to develop clean-tech solutions for Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Basin*

**At a glance:**

- 5th edition of the AquaHacking Challenge in Canada
- \$1,7 M will be invested by sponsoring partners and the De Gaspe Beaubien Foundation to create new Canadian clean-tech startups to help solve Canada's water crisis
- This year's chosen territory for the challenge, the Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Basin, is the largest system of freshwater on Earth containing 21% of the world's freshwater
- AquaHacking has enabled the creation of 12 startups and will have engaged 1000 Canadian students since 2015
- Issues to tackle in 2019 were submitted by WWF, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, Municipal Enforcement Sewer Use Group (MESUG), McMaster University, Université de Sherbrooke, L'Association pour la protection de l'environnement du lac Saint-Charles et des Marais du Nord (APEL) and Service de l'Eau, City of Montréal
- Anyone aged between 18 and 35 is welcome! AquaHacking is looking for committed and creative minds, whatever their field of expertise, but especially students, water researchers, developers, digital designers, programmers, engineers, technology enthusiasts, entrepreneurs and people who want to save the world! Registration is open until May 15th, 2019
- The 5 winning teams will split \$50,000 and be incubated with partners to create viable start-ups

**Montreal, March 25, 2019** –Now on its 5th year of launching successful tech startups for critical freshwater issues, AquaHacking is kicking off its 2019 challenge. Over the next six months, AquaHacking and its partners will empower Canadian youth (18-35) from all universities to help solve real problems impacting the quality and sustainability of the St. Lawrence Basin and the Great Lakes. The winners of the challenge will be announced at the finals in Montreal next fall, following months of mentoring and first-round eliminations at the semi-finals in Toronto next June. Registration is open until May 15.

**The biggest territory in AquaHacking history: The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Basin**

This year's territory is the largest and most ambitious yet, tackling the primary drinking water source of over 40 million people and containing 21% of the world's fresh water. "Water quality is a growing public health issue and we need to act now for tomorrow and the next generations. Canadians can count on the four generations of our family to engage and support innovative, tech-savvy Millennials to establish water-tech startups for our country", said **Nan-b de Gaspé Beaubien**, one of the founders of AquaHacking.

## **Solving water issues through entrepreneurial philanthropy and business building**

Entrepreneurship has always been the way forward for the de Gaspé Beaubien family and their foundation. “Some years ago, when my husband Philippe and I approached our grandchildren and asked what issue our foundation should invest in, we were honestly shocked when they said water—we believed Canada’s freshwater was in pristine condition.” Nan-b’s quest to educate herself on the current state of water resulted in the creation of Aqua Forum, a roundtable of top water experts from across North America. “I knew that resolving the issues would require more than just experts with knowledge, we would need the brilliance and energy of young people to develop long-term solutions,” said Nan-b.

## **Creating clean-tech startups that find demand-related solutions for freshwater issues**

There are several significant threats to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Basin that will be addressed during 2019 AquaHacking Challenge. The five new issues for this year are road salt, wipes in our sewage systems, microplastics, municipal water and drinking water fountains, and the need to create floodproof communities. These issues are championed by leaders from across the water sector including NGOs, municipalities, and water organizations. They are vetted by a committee of experts to ensure appropriate scope, impact and viability for the challenge. While the science and technology behind the solutions is essential, the support of experts to champion and ultimately implement the solutions is key.

## **From student movement to entrepreneurship: a national success story for young Canadians in favor of environmental protection**

Since its first challenge in 2015, 12 active start-ups headed by Canadian students have been launched, demonstrating an astounding 75% success rate compared to the average startup success rate of 10%. There are currently 10 critical water issues actively being worked on, and by the time the finals are underway this fall, 1000 tech-savvy Millennials will have directly engaged in solving freshwater issues. “Currently, we are profitable and we are about to open 4 positions for 2019. Without AquaHacking, none of this would be possible,” said **Naysan Saran and Nicolas St. Gelais from CANN Forecast**, the 2016 winning team. “Through the AquaHacking Challenge experience, I was definitely challenged personally and professionally and I had to push myself. I am very grateful for that,” said **Jason Deglint, winner of the 2017 edition, and CEO of Blue Lion Labs.**

- 30 -

## **About Aqua Forum**

Aqua Forum is the charity that facilitates AquaHacking and is supported by various organisations such as the de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation, its founding partner, as well as IBM, RBC, Keurig, GHD, Ovivo, Logistec, Ontario Power Generation and the Goodman Family Foundation. Aqua Forum runs the AquaHacking Challenge and is developing a new programme focused on positioning water-related issues as a health issue to raise public awareness and incite new action on water quality improvement efforts in North America. Register for the 2019 AquaHacking Challenge here: <https://aquahacking.com>

**Source:**

AquaHacking  
Carmen Joy King  
Head of Communications  
[carmen@aquahacking.com](mailto:carmen@aquahacking.com)  
514-237-7927  
[www.aquahacking.com](http://www.aquahacking.com)  
[www.facebook.com/aquahacking](http://www.facebook.com/aquahacking)

**Interview requests:**

Olivier Lapierre  
Account Director  
EGS Group  
[ol@egspr.com](mailto:ol@egspr.com)  
514-583-3868

**COMPLIMENTARY NOTE****Available for interviews:**

Nan-b de Gaspé Beaubien, Co-Founder of de Gaspe de Beaubien Foundation, Co-Founder of the Business Families Association, Founder of Aqua Forum, and Member of the Order of Canada

**Issue leaders for the 2019 AquaHacking Challenge**

- Elizabeth Hendriks, Vice-President, Freshwater, WWF Canada
- Anthony Merante, Specialist, Freshwater Conservation, WWF-Canada
- Scott McKay, Québec Program and Policy Manager for Canada, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative
- Barry Orr, Spokesperson, Municipal Enforcement Sewer Use Group (MESUG)
- Dr. Gail Krantzberg, Professor, McMaster University, Engineering and Public Policy Program, Booth School of Engineering Practice and Technology
- Pedro A. Segura, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Environmental and Analytical Chemistry Laboratory, Department of Chemistry, Université de Sherbrooke
- Sonja Behmel, Scientific Coordinator, L'Association pour la protection de l'environnement du lac Saint-Charles et des Marais du Nord (APEL)

**Past winners**

- Naysan Saran and Nicolas St. Gelais, 2016 winning team, Co-Founders of CANN Forecast
- Jason Deglint, 2017 winning team, CEO of Blue Lion Labs