



# AquaHacking

A new event brings hackers together to develop real-life solutions for pressing water issues.

**AQUAHACKING 2015** is the first of a series of events that will address the preservation and restoration of regional waterways in Canada. Defined as a “stimulating get-together in which technology is put to work for water,” the event will bring hackers together to develop real-life solutions for water problems in a designated region. Water Canada talked to Katherine Adams, the director of AquaHacking, about the inaugural event and how technology and computer specialists can contribute to solutions for water issues.

**Water Canada: What exactly is AquaHacking?**

**Katherine Adams:** The very first AquaHacking 2015 – Ottawa River Summit is a two-day event dedicated to the health of the Ottawa River and the issues it faces. People with different technical backgrounds [will] come together, form teams around a topic, and collaboratively code a unique solution from scratch that generally takes shape in the form of websites and mobile apps.

Our approach includes discussion beforehand between various key stakeholders. These interdisciplinary discussions allow us to identify the various challenges [in the selected watershed] and to reflect on possible technological solutions that will be developed by hacking teams before the event during six coding days and four meet-ups.

The hacking teams will then have the

opportunity to present the fruits of their labour at AquaHacking 2015 – Ottawa River Summit. A jury will determine the top three finalists that will share \$15,000 in prize money and the public will be invited to vote for the people’s choice award. All the technological solutions developed during AquaHacking 2015 – Ottawa River Summit will be offered to the community.

**WC: What are the primary goals of the AquaHacking event?**

**KA:** The primary goal of AquaHacking is to trigger a movement by putting technology at the service of water across Canada that will allow all of the country’s waterways to benefit from this kind of initiative.

We want this project to have a practical focus. That’s why one of our goals is to pull together the combined talents of various groups of digital professionals to develop functional technological solutions—mobile applications mainly—that will address issues identified beforehand by the water milieu. The excellent news about this approach is that, from one event to another, the local community will not only benefit from the new technological solutions developed, but also from the solutions created during previous AquaHacking events since most rivers face similar issues.

**WC: How can technology and computer specialists contribute to solutions for water issues?**

**KA:** In today’s world, we enjoy many technological advances for every aspect of our lives. However, our water management structures do not always reflect this progress. We feel it is essential to reduce this gap by fostering the emergence of innovations through technology. This would ensure more effective preservation and a better conversation about our waterways. It would also contribute positively to its restoration in order to maintain the integrity of its ecosystem and water quality.

Also, hackers feel the need to contribute positively to their community and the best way for them to do is probably by doing what they do best—hack, program, code, design—all in the name of a great cause!

**WC: Are there hopes to spread the program in Canada or internationally?**

**KA:** AquaHacking 2015 – Ottawa River Summit is the first of a series of events [that will benefit other] watersheds across Canada. As a matter of fact, we are already planning for the next event. So stay tuned for some official announcements sometime next summer.

**AquaHacking 2015 – Ottawa River Summit will take place on May 29-30 at the Hilton Lac-Leamy in Gatineau, Quebec.**

*This interview has been edited for print. To read the full interview, go to [bit.ly/AquaHacking\\_wc](http://bit.ly/AquaHacking_wc) —Staff*