

**Media release**

## **Once-in-a-lifetime “unconference” on water ends with new connections and opportunities**

*250 water-passionate Canadians from all over the country demonstrate their commitment to a healthy water future with a photographic message from the Rockies*

(Exshaw, Alberta, October 25, 2010) Engaged young Canadian leaders representing every corner of the country are exhilarated after an once-in-a-lifetime learning event focused on protecting our most precious natural resource: water.

The Canadian Water Innovation Lab (CWIL), held from October 21 to 24, 2010, took place amongst the breathtaking natural beauty of the Rockies at YMCA Camp Chief Hector, located between Canmore and Calgary. The unprecedented gathering, dubbed the “unconference for uncommon young leaders,” the Lab saw 200 young Canadians, aged 18 to 35, developing the skills, insights, and connections to champion water management issues. These young professionals in diverse water-related fields confirmed emerging research trends, identified entrepreneurial opportunities, and uncovered key leverage areas for action on water locally, regionally and nationally. Fifty facilitators who were trained at the Banff Centre earlier this week guided them through the journey.

Hosted by Waterlution – A Water Learning Experience, CWIL is a natural extension of Waterlution’s mission. Waterlution has already hosted more than 35 workshops in nine provinces for over 750 youth and 100 policy-makers, scientists, business, Aboriginal, and community leaders — all are exceptional people looking for creative solutions to our complex water resource management problems. Water holds a central place in the Canadian imagination. Waterlution builds on that emotional connection to get water issues onto centre stage.

“The event was an overwhelming success on many levels,” says Karen Kun, Waterlution’s director and co-founder. “It brought people together that don’t usually have the time and space to genuinely explore the connections between their work on water. As participants were confronted by such diverse perspectives, the four days at CWIL enabled a deep dive into achieving a better understanding of trans-border water issues and collaboration opportunities.”

Rather than a typical “talking heads” event, participants learned experientially through field trips and one-to-one interactions with mentors such as water resource practitioners, policy makers, activists, educators, and Aboriginal and community leaders. These mentors included such water luminaries as R.W. (Bob) Sandford, the EPCOR Chair of the Canadian Partnership Initiative in support of United Nations “Water for Life” Decade; Alex Salki, a research biologist with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans; Tony Maas, WWF-Canada’s national advisor on freshwater policy and planning; Professor Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, joint faculty member in Social Work and Aboriginal Studies at the University of Toronto; and David Henderson, Managing Director of XPV Capital Corporation and a member of the 2009 Top 40 under 40.

“The biggest surprise take-away was the value people with long-time experience in the field could gain from the fresh perspective this next generation of water leaders brings to the table,” says Kun.

## Photo



*Caption: 250 water-passionate Canadians aged 18 to 35 from all over the country demonstrate their commitment to a healthy water future with a photographic message from the Rockies showing the Canadian flag with a drop of water instead of the maple leaf. Taken Saturday, October 23 at YMCA Camp Chief Hector in Exshaw, Alberta as a part of the inaugural Canadian Water Innovation Lab.*

A high-resolution of the photo in this release can be downloaded from <http://www.waterlution.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/CWIL2010CanadianWaterFlag2.jpg>.

## Participants

*CWIL's participants came from all over Canada:*

Province	# Attendees	Province	# Attendees
Alberta	51	Northwest Territories	3
British Columbia	28	Ontario	41
Manitoba	10	Prince Edward Island	1
New Brunswick	1	Quebec	13
Newfoundland	2	Saskatchewan	14
Nova Scotia	5	Yukon	5

*And by city:*

City Name	Province	# Attendees	City	Province	# Attendees
Aldergrove	BC	1	London	ON	1
Antigonish	NS	1	Markham	ON	1
Barrie	ON	1	Millet	AB	1
Beaconsfield	QC	1	Montreal	QC	7
Beaumont	AB	1	Moose Jaw	SK	1
Belleville	ON	2	Nanaimo	BC	2
Boucherville	QC	1	Nelson	BC	1
Bowen Island	BC	1	North Vancouver	BC	1
Burnaby	BC	2	Oakville	ON	1
Calgary	AB	19	Ottawa	ON	6
Camrose	AB	4	Pembroke	ON	1
Capreol	ON	1	Pickering	ON	1
Cardston	AB	1	Port Coquitlam	BC	1
Christian Island	ON	1	Québec	QC	2
Colinton	AB	1	Radium Hot Springs	BC	1
Conne River	NF	1	Regina	SK	6

Delta	BC	1	Baltimore	ON	1
Edmonton	AB	15	Russell	MB	1
Elgin	ON	1	Salt Spring Island	BC	1
Emyvale	PEI	1	Saskatoon	SK	5
Fenwick	ON	1	Spruce Grove	AB	1
Fort McMurray	AB	1	St John's	NF	1
Fort Smith	NWT	1	St. Albert	AB	1
Garden River	ON	2	St. Catharines	ON	1
Gatineau	QC	2	Stoney Creek	ON	1
Guelph	ON	2	Swift Current	SK	1
Haines Junction	YK	1	Toronto	ON	12
Halifax	NS	2	Vancouver	BC	9
Hartney	MB	1	Vernon	BC	2
Harvie Heights	AB	1	Victoria	BC	4
Hay River	NWT	1	Wallace	NS	1
High River	AB	1	Waterloo	ON	1
Jasper	AB	1	Waterton Park	AB	1
Kamloops	BC	1	Weyburn	SK	1
Kentville	NS	1	Whitehorse	YK	4
Kitchener	ON	2	Winnipeg	MB	8
Lakeville	NB	1	Woodstock	ON	1
Westmorland County					
Leduc	AB	1	Yellowknife	NWT	1
Lethbridge	AB	1			

**For more information and to interview participants and/or the organizers contact:**

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**About Waterlution – A Water Learning Experience**

*Founded in 2003 by social entrepreneurs Karen Kun and Tatiana Glad, Waterlution is a water learning organization that brings together young leaders interested or working on water-related topics – for peer-to-peer and inter-generational programs. Workshops and activities often take place over a weekend or are customized to work with partners and groups at selected events.*

*To date, Waterlution has hosted more than 35 workshops in nine provinces for some 750 youth and 100 scientists, business, Aboriginal, and community leaders, and policy makers — exceptional people looking for creative solutions to our complex water resource management problems.*