

SCIENCE NORTH TO SUPPORT BUILDING VACCINE CONFIDENCE IN ONTARIO AND BEYOND WITH FEDERAL FUNDING

(SUDBURY, ON) – The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is investing up to \$500,000 in Science North to provide evidence-based vaccination communication to audiences across Northern Ontario and beyond. This project is a vaccine confidence initiative funded through PHAC’s Immunization Partnership Fund and will last two years (until March 2023).

Science North’s *Give Vaccines a Shot!* project will increase vaccine confidence through a complement of exciting informal and entertaining learning experiences targeted to audiences of all ages and backgrounds, with a focus on engaging youth, Francophone, Indigenous and other underserved audiences.

The centre will partner with Public Health Sudbury & Districts (PHSD), the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM), the Health Sciences North Research Institute (HSNRI), Ontario Health (North) and school boards across the province to create age specific, culturally sensitive and community-based programming.

Quotes:

“Community has often been at the heart of our pandemic response. As trusted community leaders, organizations like Science North play an important role in our whole-of-society vaccination efforts. I am confident that this project *Give Vaccines a Shot!* will help increase vaccine uptake and make our community healthier, safer, and more resilient.”

– The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health Canada

“Science North has an incredible ability, coupled with expertise and experience, for communicating with the public and educating them on important matters in unique and engaging ways. This funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada will tap into this asset and help Science North to deliver innovative approaches to educating our communities with evidence-based vaccination communication. Many people want to be informed and this will help keep them and our communities safe.”

– Viviane Lapointe, MP for Sudbury

“Thank you to Science North for continually delivering science-based information in an interactive and innovative way. The pandemic related workshops are sure to build increased public confidence and inspire more people to make an educated and safe choice concerning vaccination. Nickel Belt – Greater Sudbury boasts high vaccination rates thanks to the work of great public educators, partners and selfless community minded individuals!”

– Marc G. Serré, MP for Nickel Belt and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Official Languages

“Public Health Sudbury & Districts is thrilled to be a partner in this invaluable initiative, led by Science North. As COVID-19 and variants of concern continue to impact all our communities, having credible and accessible vaccine information has never been more important. We know that many people have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine and Science North, a valuable educational resource for both children and adults across the globe, can help provide these answers. The Give Vaccines a Shot project will take complex science and share it in a clear, easy to understand, engaging and fun way, helping individuals to make an informed decision about getting the COVID-19 vaccine. We are eager to see the impacts of this initiative to increase vaccine uptake to help protect the health of our communities.”

- Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer, Public Health Sudbury & Districts

“I am so happy to see Science North lead such an important initiative that will impact individuals across Ontario. With this critical funding from the Government of Canada, Science North can help the healthcare sector communicate current science through informal and entertaining learning experiences.”

– Dr. Stephen Kosar, Chair, Science North Board of Trustees

“We are thrilled to be able to take our ‘Give Vaccines a Shot!’ vaccine confidence communications to the next level with the help of this new funding. We are grateful for the opportunity to team up with essential partners across the province to deliver this important and timely knowledge and confidence-building initiative. Our team is driven to deliver timely and credible science that empowers our audiences to learn while having fun and the Immunization Partnership Fund will allow us to do just that.”

– Guy Labine, CEO, Science North

The [*Give Vaccines a Shot!*](#) project includes the following initiatives:

- **Amplifying Ontario Public Health Online.** In partnership with public health units and Indigenous health organizations, Science North will deliver various digital programming and workshops in English and French facilitated by a Science North Staff Scientist and expert guest hosts. Topics will be determined in consultation with local public health units and customized to be relevant to community audiences, with a focus on targeting underserved populations such as Francophones, Indigenous peoples in rural and far north communities, newcomers and racial and ethnic minorities. Some programs will have the option of a live Q&A period for participants to engage in open dialogue with health care experts.
- **Digital content and events shared across Science North’s digital channels.** Live webinar events, digital content and science explainers will be shared across Science North’s popular digital channels in English and French to target specific audience groups, including teens, adults, students and parents/caregivers. Science North will respond to public queries posed on digital channels through Direct Answer videos as a way to connect with audiences on a personal level. The public health virtual talk series and the digital campaign will engage up to 630,000 Canadians.
- **Live educational programming delivered to students across Ontario.** 50,000 students in grades 2 to 12 will be engaged through virtual workshops facilitated by a Science

North Staff Scientist. Students will gain complex scientific information in a way that is understandable, fun and relatable. Webinars will be archived on Science North's Educator Resources website for future learning, and will be accompanied by in-class resources, lesson plans and activities for teachers to continue learning the classroom.

- **Hands-on learning experiences in communities across Northern Ontario.** Science North will travel its 'Virus of Misinformation' exhibit to 50 communities across Northern Ontario as part of the *Great Northern Ontario Roadshow*, which will see up to 70,000 people in 2021 and 2022. The exhibit will be accompanied by exploration-based workshops to engage youth and family audiences in fun, entertaining COVID-19 vaccination content and science learning.
- **An evaluation of the project's impact on participants' attitude towards and uptake of vaccines.** Working with research partners and a post-graduate Science Communication student and faculty from Laurentian University, Science North will evaluate the project's impact in increasing vaccine confidence. Findings will be shared with health and science communication partners.

With 37 years of experience engaging audiences in current science, and strong partnerships with health care experts and community organizations throughout the province, Science North is uniquely positioned to improve knowledge, build confidence, and empower evidence-based decision making related to vaccines during this unprecedented time.

About Science North

Science North is Northern Ontario's most popular tourist attraction and an educational resource for children and adults across the province. Science North maintains the second – and eighth-largest science centres in Canada. Science North's attractions include a science centre, IMAX® theatre, digital Planetarium, butterfly gallery, special exhibits hall, and Dynamic Earth: Home of the Big Nickel. Science North, in partnership with Laurentian University, offers North America's first and only comprehensive Science Communication program, a joint Master's and Graduate Diploma program. As part of its mandate, Science North provides science experiences throughout Northern Ontario including outreach to schools and festivals, summer science camps and more, and has a permanent base in Thunder Bay providing outreach to the Northwest. Science North is an agency of the Government of Ontario. For information, visit sciencenorth.ca.

-30-

Media Contact

Julia Aelick
Acting Senior Manager of Marketing
Science North and Dynamic Earth
705-562-3185
aelick@sciencenorth.ca

Science North is an agency of the Government of Ontario and a registered charity #10796 2979 RR0001.