Thursday, November 2

**Bringing Soapbox Science to Canada: Shifting Gender Norms in Science**

Organized by: Leigh Paulseth, Ryerson University

Speakers: Emily Agard, Director, SciXchange, Ryerson University; Stephanie MacQuarrie, Associate Professor of Organic Chemistry, Cape Breton University; Nadia Octave, Medical Physicist at Centre-Hospitalier Universitaire de Québec, Université Laval; Leigh Paulseth, Enrichment & Outreach Coordinator, Ryerson University

Moderator: Imogen Coe, Professor; Dean, Faculty of Science, Ryerson University

**Takeaways and recommendations**

* Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies should be evidence-based and create effective change – as opposed to existing merely to give the people who enacted them a good feeling.
* Many STEM-engagement programs reach children who are already involved; e.g. those who have already expressed an interest in STEM, have supportive parents, live in cities, are wealthier, etc.
* To be effective and to reach a broader audience, science-engagement strategies must be grounded in the community – both physically and in terms of relating back to issues that are important to that community.
* Soapbox Science is an award-winning science outreach program, created in the U.K. in 2011, which promotes women in science; e.g. by bringing female scientists to the streets to talk to the public about science. (Ryerson’s Faculty of Science launched the first Soapbox Science event in North America in May 2017.)
* The Soapbox Science program is an easy, inclusive, affordable and proven method that challenges stereotypes of science and scientists. It also normalizes the idea that scientists come from diverse backgrounds while promoting scientific research and literacy.
* Providing opportunities for female scientists to have their voices heard can be a significant and impactful experience for the scientist as well as public participants.
* The program is portable and easily adaptable to various regions.
* It is a useful tool to develop communication skills for scientists.
* Proper training for scientists before they participate in Soapbox Science is essential; organizers should use the expertise of other professionals like improv and theatre colleagues, communication experts, etc.
* The UK Soapbox group has many materials that organizers here can use and adapt.
* Institutions that get involved should be committed to engaging for the long term; it’s not intended for use as a one-time event.
* Soapbox Science is usually spearheaded by post-secondary institutions, but could easily be adapted for use by government departments with government scientists.
* Soapbox presents a tremendous opportunity to join a global movement, something Canada is too often slow to do.