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**Changing Perceptions: Engaging the Public with Scientists in the Era of Alternative Facts**

Organized by: Jesse Rogerson, Canada Aviation Space Museum and Stephanie Deschenes, Canadian Association of Science Centres

Speakers: Chantal Barriault, Director, Science Communication Graduate Program, Laurentian University and Science North; Stephanie Deschenes, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Science Centres; Marianne Mader, Managing Director, Royal Ontario Museum; Rachel Ward-Maxwell, Researcher-Programmer, Astronomy and Space Sciences

Moderator: Jesse Rogerson, Science Advisor, Canada Aviation and Space Museum

**Takeaways and recommendations**

* The more the public is taught the correct answers, the more they will agree with ‘scientific findings.’ i.e., “you just don’t know enough, let me teach you” doesn’t work. An outcome of their understanding is they will be more interested in helping fund science. But let’s focus on the deficit model as the ‘lack of understanding’ being the reason for disagreeing with a science-based conclusion.
* Canadians are interested in science, and see value in science.
* Polarizing ideas are associated with values, and those associated to a social group
* Separate knowledge and identity – who we are influences how we interpret the information we receive.
	+ Does the information fit with what I know and believe? If not, do I need to protect my personal interests, beliefs and values?
	+ Faced with information incongruent with values, people often look to trusted sources to evaluate that information.
	+ The echo chamber forms because trusted sources tend to be people who hold similar values to our own.
* Science communication is less about the facts and more about connecting.
	+ What can we agree on and where do we build from there?
	+ Museums and science centres are partnering with researchers to give visitors the opportunity to participate with scientists in the process of research.
* Science centres, scientists, and educational institutions are seen as trusted sources for accurate, fact-based information: they are viewed as not having a hidden agenda.
* Museums and science centres are safe spaces, where respectful, difficult conversations can happen – “We’re not going to convince everybody; yet we can still respect everybody.”
* A museum/sci centre is a much more accessible location to interact with scientists, as opposed to a government or university lab. You simply can’t visit those places. This makes it natural to partner with Museums/Science Centres, we have your audiences, you have the story to tell, let us help