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Science World Introduces *Symbiosis* A First-of-Its-Kind Learning Ecosystem for Canada

(Vancouver, BC)—We live in a time of unprecedented change. High-tech innovations are rapidly transforming 21st century societies and the Canadian marketplace is increasingly dominated by novel, knowledge-based jobs requiring high levels of literacy in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Failing to prepare the next generation to be STEM literate threatens the health of our youth, the economy and the places we live. STEM literacy needs to be integrated into the broader context of what it means to be a 21st century citizen. Also important is inclusion of an extra letter, “A,” for art and design, resulting in STEAM. The idea behind *Symbiosis* is to make STEAM learning accessible across Canada.

Every major Canadian city hosts dozens to hundreds of organizations that engage children and youth in STEAM learning. Yet, for the most part, these organizations operate in isolation. The result is that a huge proportion of Canadian youth, particularly in First Nations and other underserved communities, are not receiving quality STEAM learning opportunities.

In order to address this pressing need, Science World British Columbia (scienceworld.ca) is spearheading the creation of *Symbiosis*, a deeply collaborative STEAM learning ecosystem. Driven by a diverse network of cross-sector partners, *Symbiosis* will become a vibrant model for scaling the kinds of learning and careers needed in a knowledge-based economy.

Today, Science World is proud to announce that *Symbiosis* has been selected by STEM Learning Ecosystems, a US-based organization, to formally join a growing movement. In just two years, the STEM Learning Ecosystems initiative has become a thriving network of hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals, joined in regional partnerships with the objective of collaborating in new and creative ways to increase equity, quality, and STEM learning outcomes for all youth. *Symbiosis* will be the first member of this initiative outside the United States.

Symbiosis was selected to become part of the STEM Learning Ecosystem initiative because of a demonstrated commitment to cross-sector collaborations in schools and beyond the classroom. As STEM Ecosystems evolve, students will be able to connect what they’ve learned, in and out of school, with real-world, community-based opportunities.

“It’s so important to consider the entire continuum of education,” said STEM Learning Ecosystem Co-Chairs Gerald Solomon, Executive Director, Samueli Foundation, and Ron Ottinger, Director of STEM Next. “The growing Community of Practice shares ideas and best practices for innovative learning that will benefit students’ individual development and prepare them for the demands of the 21st century workforce.”

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Scott Sampson, President and CEO of Science World British Columbia, stated that, “By merging classrooms with communities, *Symbiosis* has potential to be a game-changer for education and the economy in British Columbia and beyond, providing children, youth and adults access to mentors and other critical resources.”

Science World is excited to be playing a catalyst role in this large-scale effort. Nevertheless, for *Symbiosis* to realize its bold vision, the community-based collaborations must be far-reaching and diverse, likely spanning government, K–12 schools, post-secondary institutions, business, libraries and a variety of non-profits.

As presently envisioned, *Symbiosis* will launch with two pilot projects, one in Vancouver and the other in Prince George region. Building on a strong established partnership, The Exploration Place, a Prince George based science museum, will serve as a lead partner in that community. Insights gained from these pilot efforts will inform further growth of the learning ecosystem.

This is just the beginning of this ambitious community effort. With the support of the STEM Learning Ecosystems and through connecting with and building our own regional coalition, the current plan is that within five years, every child in British Columbia—regardless of geographic location, ethnic background or family income—will have access to this interconnected web of STEAM learning opportunities. If successful, the resulting learning ecosystem could become a national model for scaling literacy and careers in STEAM-related fields.

In the initial planning phases, *Symbiosis* has received expressions of strong support from a wide range of community collaborators, including:

Applied Science Technologist and Technicians of British Columbia (ASTTBC)
Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia (APEG)
BC Colleges
BC Association of Institutes & Universities
BC Science Teachers Association (BCScTA)
BC Tech Association
Classrooms to Communities
Environmental Educators Professional Specialist Association (EEPSA)
Genome BC
Geoscience BC
Kootenay Library Federation (KLF)
Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU)
Let’s Talk Science
Mitchel Odyssey Foundation
National Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC)
University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC)
Science Fair Foundation

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Sierra Club BC
Simon Fraser University (SFU)
Society of Canadian Women in Science and Technology (SCWIST)
The Exploration Place
TRIUMF
Westcoast Women in Engineering, Science and Technology (WWEST)

Learn more about the national initiative at stemecosystems.org. Address specific questions to info@stemecosystems.org. Join online conversations on Twitter [@STEMecosystems](https://twitter.com/STEMecosystems) and #STEMecosystems and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/scienceworldca), [@scienceworldca](https://www.instagram.com/scienceworldca) [@TheExplorationPlace](https://www.instagram.com/TheExplorationPlace).

About the STEM Funders Network: The STEM Funders Network brings together grantmakers working in STEM to learn from one another, leverage their collective resources and collaborate on high-impact projects they could not undertake alone. The vision of the STEM Funders Network is that all students should have equal opportunity to engage in high-quality STEM learning experiences that will enhance their ability to succeed in a STEM career or other chosen path. See stemfundersnetwork.org for more information.

Current STEM Ecosystems funding and local supporting members of the STEM Funders Network include: [Amgen Foundation](#), [Broadcom Foundation](#), [Burroughs Wellcome Fund](#), [Carnegie Corporation of New York](#), [KDK-Harman Foundation](#), [Motorola Solutions Foundation](#), [Overdeck Family Foundation](#), [Pinkerton Foundation](#), [Samueli Foundation](#), [Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation](#), [Simons Foundation](#), [Steinman Foundation](#), [STEM Next \(Supported by the Noyce Foundation\)](#) and [Tiger Woods Foundation](#).

For more information, please contact info@stemecosystems.org.

About Science World

Science World British Columbia is a charitable organization that engages British Columbians in science and inspires future science and technology leadership throughout our province.

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