

**MEDIA RELEASE**

For immediate release

## **Stem cell superheroes swoop into Sherbrooke to teach about growth, healing and regeneration**

Super Cells science exhibit launches first leg of 5-year international tour

**September 25, 2014** – There’s the Builder, the Renewer, the Regenerator and a tricky little character known as the Transformer. These four unusual and charming superheroes are the guides in a new science exhibit to be officially launched today at the Sherbrooke Museum of Nature and Science. Their goal? To show museum visitors the power and wonder of stem cells, our body’s master cells.

The exhibit, entitled “Super Cells: The power of stem cells” was conceived and built for the general public and children by the museum in collaboration with Canada’s Stem Cell Network. The planning and production spanned nearly two years, and included consideration of what children are taught in school as well as their natural curiosity. Preliminary visits with children in schools and in science museums formed the basis for the content contained in the 150m<sup>2</sup> exhibit, which uses a variety of hands-on, interactive modules to reveal the important role stem cells play, not just in our early development, but in our daily lives and in our future health.

“How does a lizard grow a new tail? Where does disease come from? How do we start little and get big? These were the kinds of questions the kids asked us, which shows a real interest in the mysteries of the body—mysteries that are largely the domain of stem cells,” says Lisa Willemse, Director of Communications at the Stem Cell Network and project lead. “Much of it is easy to explain, once they understand that stem cells have the ability to make all the kinds of cells in the body. For example, you can tell them that every second, stem cells in your bone marrow make about 2 million new red blood cells. You snap your fingers, and just like that, another 2 million cells were made. Soon they all start snapping their fingers, knowing that every time they do it, something remarkable and vital to life has happened in their own body. In the exhibit, we are able to show how this works with some wonderful animation.”

Animations, touch-screen displays, videos and stunning images are part of the colourful exhibit. Each of the four sections has a specific area of focus, whether introducing the concept of a cell, to explaining how stem cells form the body from fertilization to birth and beyond, to showing where stem cells live in the body’s tissues and organs. One of the largest sections is a small replica of a lab, where visitors can see how stem cell research is done, what challenges exist, and can try their luck with a game that asks them to grow and implant new cells into an eye, in hopes of giving sight to a person who has gone blind.

“The Museum is extremely proud of having been selected by the prestigious Stem Cell Network to conceive, build, stage and be the first to showcase this exhibit,” says Marie-Claude Bibeau, Director General of the Sherbrooke Museum of Nature and Sciences. “Our multi-disciplinary team worked with the Network and an international scientific committee to bring visitors a vibrant interactive exhibit on the rapidly evolving topic of stem cells. This confirms the museum as the largest provider of small and mid-size exhibitions in Canada. The museum has a notable impact on Sherbrooke’s tourist and cultural offering.”

Once Super Cells wraps its inaugural show in Sherbrooke on January 5, 2015 it will embark on a five-year international tour, with stops planned in the United Kingdom, California and across Canada.

The Super Cells: The Power of Stem Cells travelling exhibition was produced by the Stem Cell Network and realized by the Sherbrooke Museum of Nature and Science, in partnership with the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, the Centre for Commercialization of Regenerative Medicine, and the UK’s Cell Therapy Catapult, and with contributions from EuroStemCell. Additional background on the Super Cells exhibit is available at: [www.supercells.ca](http://www.supercells.ca)

#### **About the Stem Cell Network**

The Stem Cell Network, established in 2001, brings together more than 120 leading scientists, clinicians, engineers, and ethicists from universities and hospitals across Canada. The Network supports cutting-edge projects that translate research discoveries into new and better treatments for millions of patients in Canada and around the world. Hosted by the University of Ottawa, the Stem Cell Network is one of Canada’s Networks of Centres of Excellence funded through Industry Canada and its three granting councils. [www.stemcellnetwork.ca](http://www.stemcellnetwork.ca)

#### **About the Musée de la nature et des sciences de Sherbrooke**

Le Musée de la nature et des sciences de Sherbrooke goes back 135 years when it was created by the teaching priests of le Séminaire de Sherbrooke in 1879. It started producing exhibits in 1984 and became le Musée de la nature et des sciences de Sherbrooke in 2002 when it moved to its current location in the old Kayser plant in downtown Sherbrooke. The museum’s mandate is to foster interest for nature and science through interactive and accessible exhibits. With a budget of two million dollars, the museum presents a permanent exhibit and show, four temporary exhibits and a wide ranging scientific program. It employs 30 full-time and 10 part-time people. The award winning Musée de la nature et des sciences de Sherbrooke welcomes about 40,000 visitors each year, in addition to the 150,000 that goes through one of its four virtual exhibits and the 14 others currently on tour in Canada and abroad. [www.naturesciences.qc.ca](http://www.naturesciences.qc.ca)

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