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**Title of Presentation:** Recipe for an epidemic: Environmental perspectives on the 1885 smallpox epidemic and historical anti-vaccination

### **Abstract**

When smallpox swept through Montreal in 1885, many refused the vaccine that may have spared 3,000 lives and prevented at least 19,905 other cases. Thus far, the epidemic's literature has linked anti-vaccination sentiment to the linguistic and ethnic identity of Montreal's French-Canadian Catholic population. This project seeks to deconstruct how class and its impact on the urban environment of Montreal affected anti-vaccination protest. In a rapidly industrializing and urbanizing city, working-class Montrealers living in abject conditions during the epidemic met the smallpox pathogen on their own terms and dealt with it traditionally. Failures of municipal health authorities to appeal and cooperate with this vulnerable demographic and address their concerns led to anti-vaccination sentiment, and even riots. By viewing class, language, and ethnicity-nationality as separate though intersecting aspects of French-Canadian identity, this project seeks to deconstruct culturally deterministic justifications for vaccine rejection and reintegrate environmental concerns in the epidemic's narrative.