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RASC NIAGARA CENTRE

January—February 2009
Volume 28, Issue 1

The Niagara Whirlpool

President's Report
By Dr. Brian Pihack

Firstly, I would like to wish the best of the season to all of the Niagara members. The upcoming year certainly promises to be one of our busiest. Stan has already put plans in motion to help in the celebration of the "International Year of Astronomy." Please remember that someone once introduced you to the hobby, so here is your chance to return the favour. Since we have a lot of events planned for IYA, we will need extra help throughout the year. Please speak with one of the executive.

It is my understanding that the National Executive has put the National office building up for sale. If you have an opinion or thoughts about the sale of this property, please send them to Joe Otonicar via email. This situation has caused a bit of ire, and I feel that the National Executive needs to be aware of our thoughts on the matter.

Darlene Sloggett has put



Dr. Pihack did a presentation for visitors at the Welland Public Library on November 26, 2008.

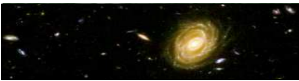
together a display at the Niagara Falls Public Library highlighting our group. Before the next meeting, please spend a moment and take a look!

Our beginner sessions at the A.N.Myer High School planetarium have been going strong. If you are a beginner to astronomy or if you just feel like getting together with your fellow astronomers, then this is a great venue to do that. We start at 7:00pm and run until 9:00 pm on the first

Thursday of each month (January excepted). Anyone who would like to put on a presentation is encouraged to do so. Afterwards there is usually time for a coffee as well.

I bid everyone the best for the New Year.

Respectfully submitted,
Brian Pihack



Vice-President's Report By Stan Sammy



Stan enjoying a sunny day at the Frozen Banana Star Party.

I would like to ask all members of The Niagara Center of The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, to join us in celebrating International Year of Astronomy in 2009 (IYA2009) by acting as ambassadors and guides to the many members of the public who will be attending the planned nights of observing and touring of the night sky.

IYA2009 is an initiative of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The International Year of Astronomy will be a global celebration of astronomy and its contributions to society and culture, highlighted by the 400th anniversary of the



"...IYA2009 is first and foremost, an activity for the citizens of planet Earth."

first use of an astronomical telescope by Galileo.

The aim of IYA2009 is to stimulate the worldwide interest of astronomy and science, especially that of young people. IYA2009 events and activities will take place at the global, regional, and local levels, to promote a greater appreciation of the inspirational aspects of astronomy that embody an invaluable shared resource for all nations.

The UN has designated UNESCO as the lead agency for the IYA2009, while the IAU will function as the implementing body. The full text of the UN resolution is available on the IYA Canadian website at <http://www.astronomy2009.ca>

In Canada, IYA2009 plans are already underway. A collaboration of amateur and professional astronomers has formed a National Coordinating Committee and is organizing a year-long slate of programs to bring astronomy to Canadians.

The IYA2009 is a global collaboration for a peaceful purpose – the search for our cosmic origin, a common

heritage that connects every citizen of planet Earth. The science of astronomy represents millennia of collaborations across all boundaries: geographic, gender, age, culture and race, providing a full consistency to the UN Charter principles.

In that sense, astronomy is a classic example of how science can contribute towards a deepening international cooperation and collaboration.

The IYA2009 is, first and foremost, an activity for the citizens of planet Earth. It aims to convey the excitement of personal discovery, the pleasure of sharing fundamental knowledge about the Universe and our place in it, and the merits of the scientific method.

The inspirational aspects of astronomy represent an invaluable resource for humankind and for all nations. So far an impressive 135 nations and 31 organisations have signed up to participate in the IYA2009 – an unprecedented network of engaged astronomy communicators and educators.

Continued on Page 3...



Star party camping in Powassan.



Vice-President's Report continued...

Galileo Moment

The Niagara Centre would like your help to promote and organize IYA2009 "Galileo Moment" opportunities that will allow more than one million Canadians to experience, with their own eyes, some of the marvelous objects in the heavens that are invisible without the aid of a telescope or binoculars.

Viewing can be done day (Sun) or night (Moon etc) throughout the entire year and will encourage naked eye enjoyment of the heavens, too.

Such gatherings may include:

- Astronomy at Mall events
- Sidewalk astronomy events
- Star parties in local settings ie. Conservation, Provincial, National parks ,etc.

- Astronomy in the Vineyard events
- Open house events at universities, schools and clubs with observatories to be complemented with public lectures

Primary audience:

All residents and visitors to the Niagara Region, students in all grades with a focus on grades 6 - 9

Objectives:

Primary: To enable youngsters to observe astronomical phenomena with their own instruments, and to record their observations for submission to a national website.

To learn to identify objects like the Moon, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn in the night sky.

Secondary: To improve astronomy education in Canada at the grade school level.

Reach of program: Schools across Canada. Possibly also at star parties organized by the Niagara Centre.

Potential partners in the implementation of these activities are:

- Cities and towns in the Niagara region
- School Boards and Departments of Education

across Canada -Libraries, museums and YMCAs

I have sent out invitations to the above listed potential partners as well as to the Mayor of the City of St. Catharines to join in with the Niagara Centre in observing IYA 2009.

We are amateur astronomers and observers whose objectives are " to stimulate interest and to promote and increase knowledge in astronomy and related sciences."

For more information on IYA 2009 visit the websites :

www.astronomy2009.ca or www.iya2009canada.

For information on scheduled IYA activities of the Niagara Centre please check our website.

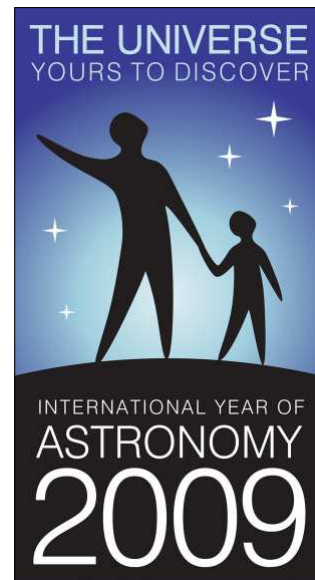
Stan Sammy



"Astronomers say the universe is finite, which is a comforting thought for those people who can't remember where they put things." -



Photo by John Nemy Mt. Kobau, BC 2008





Secretary's Report By Phil Downey

Our current membership stands at 103. Please join me in welcoming Laura Gaudet, Martin Polc and Greg Taylor to the club.



Stan Sammy receiving the Official Greeter apron from Dr. Brian Pihack.



Our December speaker, Dr. Theodor Pribulla, with Brian and Stan.

Editor's Report By Darlene Marano



"I welcome....and encourage each of you... to write a little something for our newsletter regarding your personal experiences with Astronomy ..."

I wish to begin my report by thanking Phil Downey and his father Ian for their assistance when I took over as Editor of our newsletter. The first edition in my term was a special one as we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of our Centre. Thank you gentlemen!

I hope that everyone finds the new design of the *Whirlpool* interesting, informative and a pleasure to read. I welcome all suggestions from members regarding the content and encourage each of you to exercise your creative side by writing a little something for our newsletter regarding your

personal experiences with astronomy or something that you have perhaps learned and would like to share. Please keep in mind that there are members in our Centre with varying levels of knowledge of astronomy and we want to ensure that everyone gains something from their association with the club. I also welcome your photo submissions for consideration.

In this issue, I have included a photo of our Past-President Stan Sammy receiving the customary greeter apron. The Board of Directors thanks Stan for his leadership during the past two

years. The apron suits you Stan!

Many thanks also go to Carmen Marra, who is a scientist from the U of T and a member of the Mars Society for his talk at the November meeting and to Dr. Theodor Pribulla, an astronomer from Slovakia for his talk on binary stars at our December meeting.

I look forward to an exciting year during IYA 2009 and to spending time with all of you.

Wishing much happiness and health in the coming year.

Darlene



Dark Skies Chairman's Report By Wayne Liebau

It has been a slow journey, but progress is being made. For the first time ever, The Regional Municipality of Niagara included light pollution in its recently adopted Bylaw amendment. The Planning and Public Works Committee has asked Regional staff for more information about light pollution and what could be done to address it. In October, Planner Don Campbell submitted a Memorandum that explains what light pollution is, why it is a concern, and what might be done about it. It's an excellent document worthy of our full support.

The Memorandum includes the following:

"Efforts to reduce light pollution would be consistent with Regional Council's interest in overall sustainability ... public understanding and support are critical ... The Region's role could be, first, to reduce light

pollution from its own operations, and second, to facilitate and promote action in the broader community."

"... local municipalities can make a key contribution through their role in development approvals. It is proposed that light pollution be identified as a collaborative project for Regional and local planners in 2009..."

"In addition it is recommended that the Climate Change Startup Team be asked to work with the local municipalities to address how light pollution can be reduced through changes to municipal operations."

Mr. Campbell is to be commended for his analysis and recommendations which should promote progress at the municipal level. However, we can't overemphasize the importance of the

Memorandum's statement that "public understanding and support are critical". Light pollution abatement absolutely does depend on public support. Whether and how that support will be developed is partly up to us.

RASC members are perhaps uniquely positioned to explain and promote responsible lighting. By including even a brief explanation of responsible lighting in all activities, from public starnights to having a neighbour over for a look through a telescope, we can influence public understanding and attitudes.

If you need information about light pollution and how to approach people, please get in touch.

Let's all make this a priority for the International Year of Astronomy.

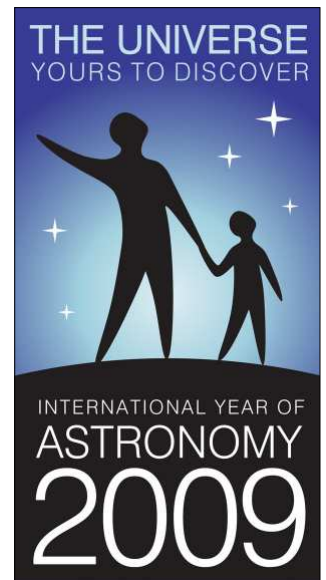
Wayne



"RASC members are perhaps uniquely positioned to explain and promote responsible lighting."



Christmas party at Chatters after the December meeting—eating...our second most favourite thing to do!





Member Observing Coordinator's Report By Mark Roberts

2008- was a very bad year. At least where Members' nights at the CCCA were concerned. I think that maybe too many of us got new astro gear and did not stagger our purchases right. For whatever reason, either clouds or rain plagued us this year. I believe that we only had four good nights out of twelve. Although that is not a very good ratio, the good nights were quite good. The most memorable of which was our annual Star-B-Q, where we had a great day, good food, a fine clear night and many members out to enjoy it. We also got a clear night on the last day of our 1st Annual Niagara Centre Star Party. It was worth the wait after three days of rain. My thanks to all who came out and supported our members' nights and special events this year.

Near the end of summer the Conservation Authority decided to tear down the old barn at our site. Along with really changing the scenery, this effectively shut down the observatory for a while as we waited for a new hydro

hookup. These changes are now complete and the old observatory is now up and running again. The ground around the demolition site is quite soft and I would recommend that members avoid parking around there for a while until it gets compressed a bit.

Once again it appears that members use of the observatory site is up a bit again this year. Although many scheduled members' nights were a wash, many of us still managed to get out there and get in some great observing nights on our own. It is really great to see some new names in the logbook on a regular basis. I hope that you will become old regulars, and am looking forward to counting many more in the New Year. With that being said I would like to remind you all that the use of our dark sky site is a benefit of membership and encourage you all to take advantage of it. Please feel free to contact me at (str1701ncc@cogeco.ca) or check the Niagara Centre Website if you need assistance. I would be more

than pleased to help with any questions you may have.

2009 marks the International Year of Astronomy, and the Niagara Centre is preparing for a busy observing season. Many events are being planned around the region. Our goal is to give as many people as we can their Galileo moment, their first look at the heavens through a telescope. As plans and dates become finalized mark them on your calendars. Events will also be listed on the website (EVENTS) page and in the Event Horizon (Whirlpool) along with scheduled Members Nights. Plan on attending if possible, and support the club in this worthwhile endeavor.

In closing I would like to wish everyone a Very Happy New Year.

See you at the CCCA.

Mark



Photo of Pleiades
By Mark Roberts



Photo of Orion Nebula by Mark Roberts



Darlene Sloggett setting up the astronomy display at the Niagara Falls Public Library



Events Horizon

- Jan 8 Executive Board Meeting at 7:00 pm
Members welcome—Chatters Restaurant
- Jan 15 Astronomy for Beginners Class 6:45 – 7:30pm
General Meeting at 7:30pm.
Niagara Falls Public Library
- Jan 24 Members Observing Night—CCCA
- Feb 5 A.N Myer SS—Beginners Class at 7:00pm
Members welcome
- Feb 12 Executive Board Meeting at 7:00 pm
Members welcome—Chatters Restaurant
- Feb 19 Astronomy for Beginners Class 6:45 – 7:30pm
General Meeting at 7:30pm.
Niagara Falls Public Library
- Feb 21 Members Observing Night—CCCA
- Mar 5 A.N Myer SS—Beginners Class at 7:00pm
Members welcome
- Mar 12 Executive Board Meeting at 7:00 pm
Members welcome—Chatters Restaurant
- Mar 19 Astronomy for Beginners Class 6:45 – 7:30pm
General Meeting at 7:30pm.
Niagara Falls Public Library
- Mar 28 Members Observing Night—CCCA

Please visit our website regularly at www.astronomyniagara.com for updates or changes to the Events Horizon.



RASC Niagara News

- The 2009 Observatory Key fees are now due! If you no longer wish to hold a key, please return to Brian ASAP.

- We welcome and encourage all members to assist in making the upcoming IYA2009 events a great success!

- Please forward your submissions for the March/April 2009 “Whirlpool” to the Editor no later than February 15th.



Buy, Sell and Trade

For Sale—Books for sale. Reasonable offer for any or all will be accepted. Phone Pierre after 7pm at (905)991-9035.
Our Universe - National Geographic Publication, Build Your Own Telescope - Richard Berry, The Amazing Universe - National Geographic Publication, Black Holes - Walter Sullivan, Star Ware - Harrington, Burnham’s Celestial Handbook Vol 1 -3 - Burnham, A Manual of Advanced Celestial Photography - Wallis and Provin, Astronomy & Telescopes: A Beginner’s Handbook - Traister & Harris, Astrophotography A Step By Step Approach - Little, Atlas of Neptune - Hunt & Moore, and Mounting your Telescope - Edmund Scientific #9082.



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We're on the web!
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**Moon Phases for
January 2009**



**Moon Phases for
February 2009**

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