



Inside this issue:

Vice-President's IYA Report	2
Website Report	3
Editor's Report	4
Eclipse Trip	5
Member's Observing Report	6
Events Horizon	7
Buy, Sell & Trade	8
Did you know?	9
Masthead	10



RASC NIAGARA CENTRE

March—April 2009

Volume 28, Issue 2

The Niagara Whirlpool

President's Report
By Dr. Brian Pihack

Our IYA 2009 has started with a visit to A.N.Myer high school. The grade nine class spent one and a half hours learning about astronomy and enjoying the planetarium. Shortly thereafter we were in Welland at the YMCA facility. There about 60 students were exposed to the wonders of the night sky with an audio-visual presentation and scopes being set up out side. I was told that the views of Venus and the Moon created a lot of excitement. It was nice to see a lot of members show up as well. My grand green laser was also shown up by a \$30.00 model. If you would like some info, come talk to me at the meeting!



Brian and Dave Stremlaw speaking to a group of children at the Welland YMCA to help kick off International Year of Astronomy 2009.

Stan Sammy is doing a fantastic job of organizing our IYA events. If you would like to help out in this world wide program, just drop a line to Stan. We have many more events planned at the library in Welland, museum in Port Colborne, Rock Point Provincial Park and Long Beach Conservation Authority. Don't forget that you learned astronomy from someone so now it is time to return the favour and promote our hobby as well.

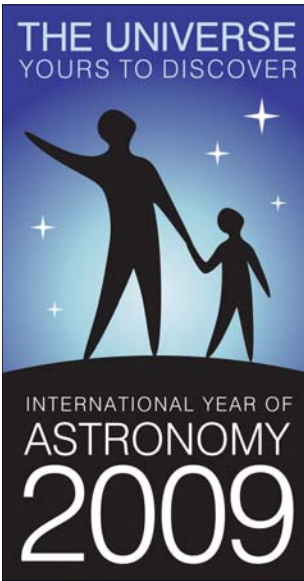
Our beginner group meetings are also going very well. At the beginners class at the Niagara Falls Public Library in February, we discussed such things as — the new Martian rock that was found and the surprise that it contained, satellite collisions, as well as elemental forges and the mineral, iron. This in addition, of course, to constellations, and binocular objects for the upcoming month.

Our members only beginner's group at A.N.Myer for the month of March will take the findings of the Martian rock a few steps further, and the "iron thing" to a human understanding!! Confused, then you'll just have to come out!

Respectfully submitted,
Brian Pihack



Vice-President, Public Observing and IYA Coordinator's Report by Stan Sammy



The IYA 2009 celebrations started in New Zealand on January 1st, however the Grand ceremonies took place in France on January 10th. Today there are over 140 nations actively celebrating IYA 2009.

In Canada many universities, schools and of course all centers of the RASC are bringing Astronomy to many, many Canadians.

January

During January, we held two IYA events. The first was at A.N. Myer for one of their grade nine classes with 30 students in attendance.

The second IYA event was at the Welland YMCA. The program included two AV presentations in addition to stargazing in the parking lot. At the first of the AV presentations by Dr. Brian Pihack, there were 60 children from ages 6 to 10 years participating followed by another 60 children from ages 10 to 15 years at the second presentation. There were about 30 adults and children who took the opportunity to look through the telescopes set up outside. We handed out bags of astronomy goodies to the attendees at the event.

February

Sunday—15th

We were at the St. Catharines Museum from 1:00 to 10:00pm. There was public observing (both solar and stellar) as well as AV Presentations once again put on by Dr. Brian Pihack. Between 1:00 and 6:00pm, solar scopes were set up in the parking lot for members of the public to observe the sun. Approximately 200 people observed for the first time. Stargazing at night was enjoyed by a steady flow of about 300 attendees.

The AV presentations at 6:00pm and 7:00pm were standing room only consisting of approximately 70 child and adult attendees at each session. This program was well received by the public and museum staff. In the future I would like to see the Niagara Center have a closer relationship with the museum by adding one or two more programs during the period when Starlab is there.

March

Wednesday - 11th

Members of the Niagara centre will be at a school in Smithville for an evening AV Presentation and Stargazing.

Tuesday— 17th

We will be at the Welland Library during the day from 2:30 to 3:30pm where we will put on a March Break program for children. Our program will also include solar viewing.

April

100 Hours of Astronomy. Thursday the 2nd through Sunday the 5th

This is an IYA project for continuous Astronomical Observations around the globe. Niagara Centre members will be at the Fairview Mall and Firemen's Park. Visit our website for more details on this event.

May

Saturday—2nd

**I n t e r n a t i o n a l
A s t r o n o m y
D a y**
Members of the Niagara Centre will be at the Fairview Mall during the day and at Firemen's Park in the evening. We will be sharing the park with members of the Boy Scouts

June

Wednesday - 3rd

We will be at the Port Colborne historical Museum. This event will also include an AV Presentation and Stargazing

Please make sure that you mark these dates on your calendar:

- March 28th—Earth Hour
- April 2nd to 5th— 100 hours of Astronomy
- May 2nd— Astronomy Day
- July 26th— Rock Point Provincial Park
- July 26th— Long Beach Conservation Park
- August 17th to 23rd— Starfest

Sincerely
Your Tour Guide to Celestial Wonders and Alien Worlds
Stan Sammy



"Today there are over 140 nations actively celebrating IYA 2009."

Glen Pidsadnick took this picture of the moon and Venus on New Years Eve with his point and shoot Canon camera. The clouds look like fingers around Venus.





Website Coordinator's Report by Bill MacSween

Web Site Statistics (2008)

Web statistics for the 2008 year ended dramatically higher than expected. I'm sure that all of the efforts of the Brian and Stan AV Roadshow along with many other members assisting, supported by public displays and some fantastic photos has accounted for most of the user interest in our website. Surprisingly, this year, we had the highest users coming from the United States. Maybe, unknowingly, we have a high number of Americans visiting the Public Starnights at Firemans Park in Niagara Falls than expected.

We have seen a huge jump in the number of pictures posted from members and Whirlpool publications being downloaded this past year. As a benchmark most pictures average about 2 meg and the Whirlpool averages about 1 meg. As a quick explanation of the posted numbers, all of the statistics shown here refer to "unique" counts. This means that for the (2008) year if you logged into the site 50 times you were only counted a one. The same applies if you downloaded last month's Whirlpool three times to view it, the download volume would only count the first time that you downloaded it. Any subsequent downloads

of the same file are not counted.

Looking below we see that on average, we are acquiring 30 unique visitors per day to the website. This means that we have 30 new people visiting our site per day that have never visited the site before.

For all those world travellers, don't be surprised if you see one of your photos or inserts from the Whirlpool being published in some local magazine or being used by a local student in one of his or her's school project.

Bill MacSween



"...we are acquiring 30 unique visitors per day to the website."

Unique Visitors

Year (2008) - 10,765 visitors - on track for 15,000 (2009) per day
- 30 new visitors per day
Big months - May, Jun, July

Unique Downloads

For Year - 10,950 meg
Per Day - 30 meg
- 15 pictures per day or 5,500 pictures per year
- 30 whirlpool publications per day or 10,950 publications per year

Unique Visitors by Country

USA - 3861
Canada - 1243
Germany - 83
Switzerland - 47
China - 32
Japan - 24
Uruguay - 23

John Dean helped some young, chilly observers with their first look at the sun through a telescope.





Brian Pihack tells us..."The day was clear and stable. Solar viewing began around 1:00 o'clock with planetarium shows as well. We had a steady flow of people throughout the day. Stan, Ed, Robert Lenz, Dave, John Dean, and myself manned the scopes during the day. At 6:00 o'clock, several other members showed up, The museum staff filled our bellies with great pizza and pop. The presentation for children was attended by about 50 people. After the presentation, Pat Sammy handed out goodie bags. We started the second presentation, the first for adults, and had about 60 people in attendance. It went very well. The third presentation, the second for adults, HAD STANDING ROOM ONLY !!!!!

I had talked about star formation, and how most stars could make the elements up to iron, then showed them a piece of iron meteorite of about 3 gms. Space Iron and coincidentally, about the same amount of iron in their bodies. from the same stellar factories! "

Editor's Report

By Darlene Marano

I would like to thank everyone for their submissions to this edition of the *Whirlpool*. You're making my job too easy! Especially when we have so much to put in, that there's not enough room for the Editor's report. All kidding aside, I look forward to publishing the next edition and thank you once again for making our newsletter informative, fun and interesting for everyone.

Clear skies,

Darlene



Visit us at
www.astronomyniagara.com



Vice-President Stan Sammy spoke to club members at the general meeting about IYA 2009 and the IYA items being given away this year.



The Longest Total Eclipse of the 21st Century

By Vincent Falvo

Are you ready to view and be part of the longest total eclipse of the century? If you have experienced a total eclipse of the sun I don't have to tell you it is like being stung with venom and the only antidote is to witness another. This summer on July 22, 2009 you have an opportunity to be bitten for the first time. In the last few years photographic techniques have improved solar eclipse photos immensely, but none are able to capture the remarkable display as your eyes can. The sun, moon and the earth will put on a lavish performance that can only be appreciated by front row seats.

The partial phases are only a premonition of the impending descent of the shadow on your observing site. Being at an eclipse allows you to savour the many characteristics of the event, some so subtle they can be missed, others impossible to overlook. A flat location such as the one

in Egypt produced a spectacular 360 degree sunset that was not as evident at our previous eclipse site. Although our previous site created the most ominous descent of the shadow that anyone could remember. The corona appears as a luminous outgrowth of the black hole in the sky, visible because of the moons presence. It constantly changes as the totality proceeds and is unique to each eclipse hence the need to journey the globe for new experiences.

The Tianhuangping Pumped Storage Power Plant reservoir in Anji City, Zhejiang Province is our chosen observing site for viewing the eclipse this year. It is considered the best location in China for eclipse day. This information was released by Prof. Jay M. Pasachoff, chairman of the Working Group on Solar Eclipses for the International Astronomical Union (IAU) while inspecting the site in

Anji city. China is no longer considered a far off place ruled by iron fisted dictators. It has vibrant cities, unique culture and profound history calling out to be discovered by today's particular traveler.

I have been a member of the RASC Niagara Centre since 1985 and my wife Brenda and I would enjoy having you join us this summer for astronomy's premiere event. We have enlisted American astronomy enthusiast Tony Simon a veteran of six total eclipse adventures to answer questions, and share thoughts and ideas on photographing and viewing the eclipse. Tony first stood in the path of totality off the Trans Canada Highway near Portage La Prairie Manitoba on February 26,1979 This was the last solar eclipse over the continental U. S. until 2017 (well, Winnipeg is only 60 miles north of the border).

We have spent months putting together an amazing tour of China with first class accommodations and stops at many of China's cultural and historical wonders. I can't think of a better place to be in this, the International Year of Astronomy.

For more information visit us at www.astronomytravel.ca.

Editor's note: This trip is being offered by an independent group. The RASC and RASC Niagara Centre are not involved in the planning or advertising of this trip. Please contact the writer for further information.



"The sun, moon and the earth will put on a lavish performance that can only be appreciated by front row seats."

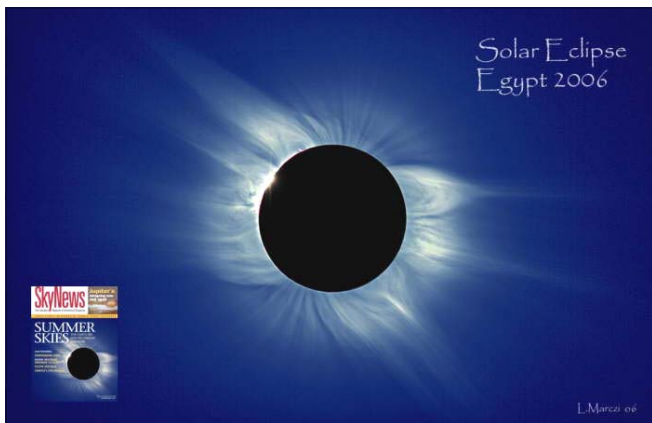
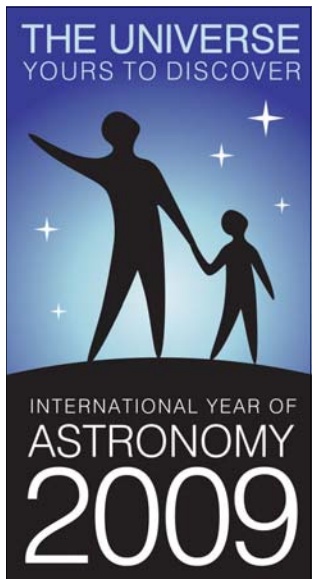
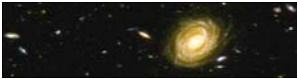


Photo taken by Les Marczki of the solar eclipse in Egypt 2006. This photo was chosen by SkyNews for the cover of their summer issue.



Member Observing Coordinator's Report By Mark Roberts

Once again it seems that the weather is conspiring against us. December's member's night was a rain/cloud-out. However after approximately four months we finally got a good night of observing in on our January date. The clear sky clock said that we would have clear skies from about 8:30 until midnight and that is almost exactly what we got. Although it was quite cold a few of us braved the elements and got out to the observatory at about 5:30pm.

It was quite cloudy as we set up and we were wondering if the forecast was going to be wrong again. We decided to head into the shed to warm up with a snack and a warm drink. Upon exiting we were pleased to see that the clouds were thinning and as predicted the sky opened up right on schedule. We treated ourselves to views of numerous objects, including a

few ice pillars that formed in the southwest. I capped off my evening observing Saturn.

Ever since I got my first "real" telescope in 2003 I have been regularly observing this gem in the sky. I have watched as it's ring system has gone through almost half of its tilt cycle of about 15 years. With any luck I will get to watch the second half of the show.

Special thanks to Les Marczi for plowing at the CCCA, making sure we all have had ample room for parking and equipment. With any luck the bulk of the snow, and the coldest temperatures are now behind us.

Comet Lulin is moving out of Libra and moving into Virgo and is visible in binoculars and small telescopes in the early morning hours throughout February. It will also be within 2deg. of Saturn on the 24th. The Moon,

Mercury, Jupiter and Mars will be grouped together in morning twilight on the 22nd. In March there will be two shadow transits of Titan on the planet Saturn, one on the 12th and again on the 28th. I'm not sure if I'll be able to spot these but I'm sure going to try. I urge you all to try and observe some of these highlights.

Members Nights in March and April are on Saturday the 28th and the 25th respectively. On March 28th we will also be observing Earth Hour 2009 from 8:00 until 9:00 pm. As always, observing begins at dusk and ends whenever you have had enough. Also, as always, try and arrive a little early to set up. Weather permitting, I look forward to your company at these events.

Keep your Eyes on the Skies
Mark



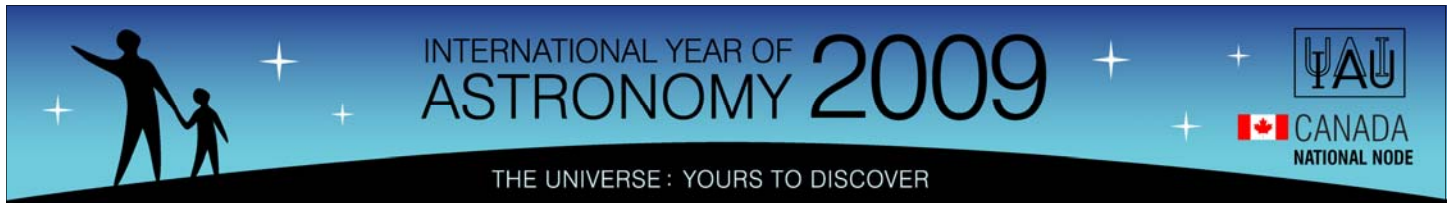
Special thanks to club member, Richard West, for his talk on "Extra Solar Planets" at our general meeting on February 19th.



Photo of the Andromeda Galaxy imaged at the CCCA, 1st Annual Star Party 2008 by Mark Roberts. (Prime focus, 65 x 60 sec ISO 800 images, dark frames subtracted, combined with registax, processed with Photoshop CS2.

Some of the goodies that are being given out for IYA 2009





Events Horizon

- Mar 5 A.N Myer SS—Beginners Class at 7:00pm
Members welcome
- Mar 11 Smithville—AV presentation and stargazing
- Mar 12 Executive Board Meeting at 7:00 pm
Members welcome—Chatters Restaurant
- Mar 17 Welland Library—Children’s program
- 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
- Apr 2 A.N Myer SS—Beginners Class at 7:00pm
Members welcome
- Apr 2 to 5 100 hours of Astronomy— Fairview Mall and
Firemen’s Park
- Apr 9 Executive Board Meeting at 7:00 pm
Members welcome—Chatters Restaurant
- Apr 16 Astronomy for Beginners Class 6:45 – 7:30pm
General Meeting at 7:30pm.
Niagara Falls Public Library
- May 2 Astronomy Day—Fairview Mall and
Firemen’s Park
- Jun 3 Port Colborne Museum—AV presentation and
Stargazing
- July 25/26 Rock Point Provincial Park
- July 26 Long Beach Conservation Park
- Aug 17 to 23 Starfest

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



RASC Niagara News

- We welcome and encourage all members to assist in making the upcoming IYA2009 events a great success!
- Please forward your submissions for the May/June 2009 “Whirlpool” to the Editor no later than April 15th. Suggestions for the “Whirlpool” are always welcome.



Les Marzi sent us these two shots. The upper one is a shot that he took of Comet Lulin on the 15th of February. He used his Canon 40-D(w/IDAS LPS filter) on the comet, Takahashi Sky 90II refractor @ f/4.5, 25 min.exp. @ 1000 ISO. It should be noted that there was a very bright moon on the night that he took this shot. Below, M-42(and the Running Man) was taken with a Canon Rebel Hutech modified(w/IDAS LPS filter), Takahashi Sky 90II @ f/4.5, ISO 800 total exp. time 2 1/2 hours.



Buy, Sell and Trade

Wanted—Modified Canon Rebel (any recent digital model) for astrophotography. Please contact Dave Perry at 905-682-9680 or david42@live.ca. Will consider buying accessories as well. If you know of anyone with said camera, please give them my info.

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



Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. Niagara Centre

Did You Know.?

According to Norse mythology, their Gods made the Universe out of the bodies of their enemies. They stuck a spike through the universe around which the stars revolve. Polaris is the jewel on the end of the spike.

Arabs Called the North Star Al Kiblah, meaning closest to the pole. Their myth claims this evil star killed the “Great Sky Worrier”, whose body lies in a coffin within the Big Dipper. All other stars mourn the worrier’s passing by following a circular funeral procession in the sky. Al Kiblah is the only star that fails to participate.

On January evenings we can watch the mother Bear Ursa Major standing on her hind legs as she prepares to climb above the NNE horizon. The bear cub, Ursa Minor, keeps in step with her as it circles her tail. The tail of Draco the Dragon keeps the two bears apart.

In Greek myth, Ursa Major represented Callisto who was seduced by the god Zeus. Hera, wife of Zeus, learned of the affair and transformed Callisto into a bear. When Callisto son Arcas, prepared to shoot the bear, Zeus turned him into a bear cub and place both into the heavens as the Ursa Major and Ursa Minor constellations.

In ancient England, Ursa Major Constellation was King Arthur’s home. Its seven biggest stars formed his chariot. The Irish called it King David’s Chariot.

The sinuous constellation of stars near Ursa Minor is called Draco the Dragon. It contains the North Ecliptic pole an imaginary point representing the axis of Earth’s revolution around the Sun. If you look down on the Solar System from this position you could watch all the planets move counter clockwise around the sun.

On February evenings, Orion, the Celestial Hunter takes a stroll across the southern skies in search of Monoceros, The Unicorn, and Lepus the Hare, He is accompanied by his dogs Canis Major and Canis Minor. At the bank of the Eridanus River he prepares to face the bull Taurus, the Bull.

Ancient Sumerians assigned the name URU AN-NA to what we now call Orion Constellation. They imagined that it portrayed their hero Gilgamesh, who fought the bull of heaven which they called GUD AN- NA and we now know as Taurus Constellation.

According to Greek myth, Orion was a tall hunter who was born in the Greek province of Boetia. He was the son of the sea god Poseidon an Euryale, daughter of King Minos of Crete, His father gave him the power to walk on water.

Monoceros Constellation depicts a Unicorn, the mythical one horned horse that hid in forests. Its horn was suppose to have magical powers, and it became the ultimate quarry for hunters such as Orion. The constellation of faint stars first appeared on the celestial globe created by Dutch theologian Petrus Plancius in 1612.

Quiz:

Why are the hottest days of summer called “the Dog Days”?

Do Stars have points?

How many Stars can you see on a clear bright night?

Which is the brightest Star in the night sky?

Which Star is closest to Earth?

Why is the North Star important?

Is the Big Dipper a constellation?



RASC NIAGARA CENTRE

P.O. Box 4040
St. Catharines, Ontario
L2R 7S3

We're on the web!
www.astronomyniagara.com



RASC NIAGARA CENTRE—EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

PRESIDENT Brian Pihack 905-356-1212 drbgpdc@on.aibn.com
VICE-PRESIDENT Stan Sammy 905-937-6820 stansam@niagara.com
SECRETARY Philip Downey 905-934-8372 philip.downey.1998@alum.bu.edu
TREASURER Dave StremLaw (magazine subscriptions) 905-892-2767 dstremla@iaw.com
NATIONAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE Joe Otonicar 905-935-2526 jotonicar@look.ca

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
 Darlene Sloggett 905-354-6612 desleo_56@cogeco.ca
 Darlene Marano 289-296-8971 dsgm13@cogeco.ca
 Joyce Sims 905-262-5276
 Glen Pidsadnick 905-468-7419 glenp@artistsgarden.com


PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL To be determined
BEGINNER'S WORKSHOP CO-ORDINATOR AND LOANER SCOPES Stan Sammy
PUBLIC RELATIONS (Observatory Keys) Stan Sammy, Brian Pihack
IYA CO-ORDINATOR Stan Sammy
DARK SKIES CHAIRMAN Wayne Liebau 905-892-4531 wliebau@becon.org
LIBRARIAN Darlene Sloggett 905-354-6612 desleo_56@cogeco.ca
OBSERVATORY DIRECTOR Les Marczy 905-734-3447 lmarczy@cogeco.ca
MEMBERS' OBSERVING COORDINATOR Mark Roberts 905-735-0977 str1701ncc@cogeco.ca
PUBLIC OBSERVING COORDINATOR Stan Sammy
AMATEUR TELESCOPE MAKERS GROUP Glen Pidsadnick
ANNUAL BANQUET TICKET SALES Joyce Sims
CCD CAMERA DIRECTOR Glen Pidsadnick
WEBSITE COORDINATOR Bill Macsween 905-468-1548 macsween@niagara.com
WHIRLPOOL EDITOR & PUBLISHER Darlene Marano 289-296-8971 dsgm13@cogeco.ca
HOSPITALITY Pat Sammy 905-935-6820 patricia.sammy@hotmail.com

**Moon Phases
For March and April 2009**

New Moon
March 26
April 25




First Quarter
March 4
April 2



Full Moon
March 11
April 9



Last Quarter
March 18
April 17



Copyright

The Niagara Whirlpool is an official publication of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, Niagara Centre. It is published bimonthly, except for July and August and is distributed free to all Centre members. The subscription

rate for non-members is \$12 per annum. Original articles on astronomy and related subjects, observation reports, book reviews, letters, images and other items are needed. Please submit them at the meetings,

mail them to RASC Niagara Centre, P.O. Box 4040, St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 7S3, or e-mail them to the editor at dsgm13@cogeco.ca. Classified advertising is free for Niagara Centre members.

Material in this publication may not be reproduced without permission. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the RASC or the RASC, Niagara Centre.