

Report to the CASCA Board on IYA Activities June-December, 2007

A great deal of progress has been made, but the amount of attention IYA deserves is far exceeding available time (especially Jayanne's and mine). To engage effectively in IYA requires someone able to commit essentially full time to leadership, co-ordination, fund raising, etc. An exploratory fund raising effort is starting next week, with the hope that we will soon have the critically needed full-time assistant for the volunteer SPoC (single point of contact). The following activities are roughly in chronological order.

1. Over the summer the Programme committee produced a report (provided separately as part of this report to the Board) recommending seven major themes for IYA in Canada and identifying the lead organizations:
 - a. **'GalileoMoment' Experiences: Telescopic Viewing for >1M Canadians**
 - b. **Official IYA2009 Student Astronomy Kit**
 - c. **Canadian First Nations and Inuit Peoples: Historical Knowledge of the Heavens**
 - d. **Dark-Sky Preserves and Reserves Across Canada**
 - e. **Planetarium and Science Centre Productions**
 - f. **Heavenly Arts and Entertainment IYA2009 Collaborations**
 - g. **Canadian Astronomers at the Research Frontiers**

Our Coordinating Committee (IYA CC) agreed with the recommendations at our late Sept. telecon. We are now trying to get the lead organizations identified for each theme to take them to a higher level of development by mid January.

2. Dr. Tania Miller, the music director, committed the Victoria Symphony to doing a series of special concerts for children that she will create based upon Galileo and astronomy. These will be played in Victoria, Vancouver and Toronto. As well she has committed to performing Holst's The Planets accompanied by astronomical imagery. Dr. J.F. Salgado (Adler Planetarium) has developed a stunning visual track for Holst's work, which it is hoped will become available for performances around the world. Tania Miller's commitment is the first of several that promise original artistic contributions connected with IYA in Canada. Another recent, exciting development: John Percy – a long-time supporter of Tafelmusik – has been discussing development of a new programme with them based upon music and texts of the period with astronomical connections. They are going to develop such a programme for 2009 which will be played in Toronto and, if they secure some additional funding, will become part of their (inter)national tours!
3. The volunteer working group led by Marc Jobin (Montreal Planetarium) produced a bilingual web site which became operational in early September,

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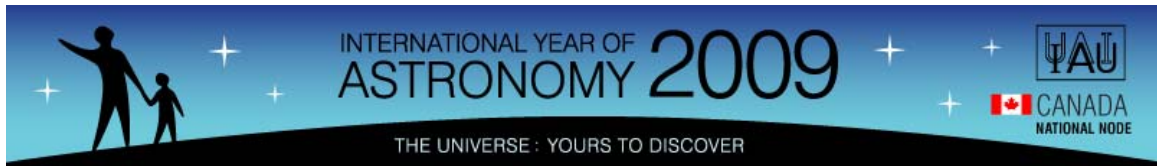
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- www.astronomy2009.ca. While there are aspirations for a livelier appearance for the site during 2009, we are fortunate to have a fully functional site now. Andy Woodsworth provides much of the web content, and posts new materials promptly, which is helping our effort enormously.
4. We presented an IYA poster at the early September ASP conference. A number of valuable interactions occurred, especially with the US IYA committee to which I serve as Canadian liaison (at their invitation).
 5. At the IAU's Symposium on Communicating Astronomy 2007 in Athens I (as SPoC) automatically had a 10 min oral presentation which immediately followed the US one; a PDF of that presentation accompanies this report. The goal was to highlight original aspects of Canadian efforts. To that end Prof. Cheryl Bartlett (CBU biologist co-chair of our First Nations and Inuit working group) and I split the time, providing international exposure for the Aboriginal component of Canadian plans growing out of the innovative integrative science programme at CBU. Judging from comments and subsequent discussions with groups of other participants, we both felt it went well. We led several discussions with participants from several other countries interested in IYA's potential to stimulate education among Aboriginal and/or disadvantaged youth through the universal attraction of astronomy.
 6. The IAU IYA team produced a fund raising brochure (which each Board member received in November). NSERC turned down the request that Ian Corbett (with a little help from me) submitted for one-time support of the international Secretariat, but did so after it had gone to press, so NSERC is listed on the IAU brochure as a sponsor. Their brief letter stated, "The proposal would have been strengthened had it been part of a coordinated submission with the Canadian contingent of the IAU (e.g. the IYACC), describing what activities Canadian astronomers were planning to undertake as part of the IYA. It was felt that the proposal, as presented, provided an incomplete picture of the overall event and, hence, could not be supported." I've had no time to follow up on the implied invitation to re-apply. After careful consideration, CSA deferred to NRC on the same request from the IAU, because of the NRC's designated role as liaison with ICSU (See 10, below for more on NRC involvement). CASCA appears as a sponsor on the IAU brochure, as a result of the modest contribution we made following the Kingston meeting of the Board.
 7. Throughout the Summer and Fall John Percy worked with an intern (with a little input from Jayanne and me) to create a Canadian document to support raising funds for the CASCA Education web site, AstronomyCanada.Ca and IYA. It is going to press now and promises to be a very useful tool in the coming months and years.
 8. Also in the Fall John adapted the Canada Post proposal (written last year) to a new one for Commemorative Coins which he submitted to the Canadian Mint.
 9. The RASC submitted a proposal to NSERC's PromoScience programme to develop a component of the proposed astronomy kit that could be distributed during Galileo Moment activities. Regrettably, it did not get past the first screening; apparently it

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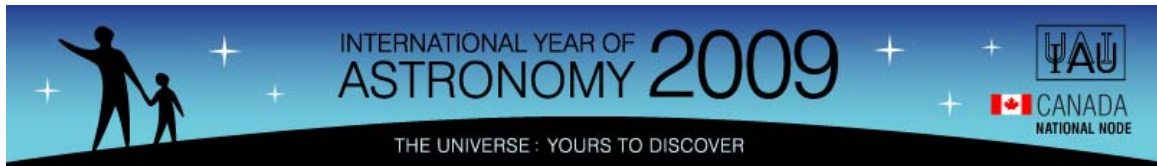
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- was perceived as a single piece of a larger project, while they prefer to act in the context of the larger picture (as in 6, above). It is likely that a renewed approach meeting their criteria will be made next year and developed jointly by the partners.
10. Jayanne English developed a contract for CASCA's engagement of a part-time fund raiser to focus on one theme, the *Galileo Moment* (observations through a telescope by Canadians), plus raising funds for a full-time person to work closely with the SPoC to ensure that the day-to-day tasks are expeditiously dealt with. Kim Breland will begin to focus on this after 9 Dec. There is a similar aspiration to have a person experienced in assessing projects and providing metrics useful to both the implementers and those soliciting funds to demonstrate how success will be measured. See Jayanne's EPO report.
 11. The UN proclamation of the IYA2009 came a large step closer in late November when the Plenary of the UN General Assembly's Second Committee adopted the Resolution text that had been submitted by the IAU. UN GA adoption is viewed as very important in some regions, e.g., Africa. Furthermore, it *de facto* authorizes UNESCO to play the roles identified for them, which again may be most relevant for activities in less developed countries. The IAU expects formal adoption of the Resolution by the GA somewhere between early and mid-December. A bi-lingual press release is being readied. This will not represent "the big launch" of IYA in Canada (which we believe should occur when we have significant news about one of the Canadian activities). However, it may drive some traffic towards our web site, thereby stimulating interest. NRC President Coulombe has supported efforts to be able to provide one-time financial support for the IYA IAU Secretariat, from which news is expected soon. As well, he authorized NRC's International Relations Office to work towards Canadian approval of the UN IYA resolution. As a result, NRC's David Stevenson and colleagues worked hard to secure Canadian support at the UN, and they appear to have been successful.
 12. In Athens the possibility of organizing outdoor (or indoor) astronomy image exhibits around the world appeared to gain momentum again. The basic idea is to provide stunning images with captions that could be locally printed and displayed. Ian McLennan, a senior Canadian consultant to major museums & science centres, was present in Athens. He expressed interest in volunteering for IYA, with particular interest in this project. My impression at the time that was that the 'platinum' version of this (a major outdoor exhibit costing ~\$0.5M) could likely only be mounted in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. This would need a local advocate; **would CASCA Board members have opinions on the value of pursuing this or have high-level contacts in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver mayor's offices?**
 13. In October Robert Lamontagne had an opportunity to speak face to face with some senior people in the *Cirque du Soleil* organization. Contrary to two earlier approaches made by others from a distance, this one holds a glimmer of hope. The information was shared with the IAU IYA committee. They endorse and encourage our efforts, but are unable to add development of a *Cirque* astronomy-related

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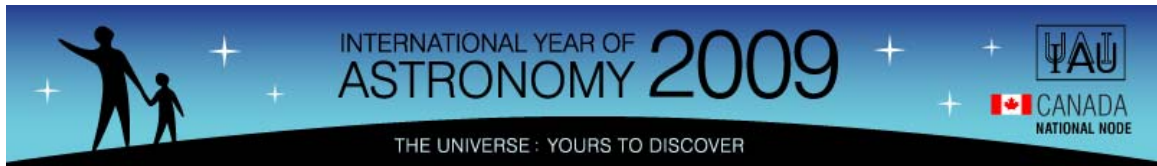
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- programme to the list of large international fund raising priorities they are pursuing. Within Canada further action will require a champion and a small team enthused about pursuing this unique opportunity.
14. Canada's major planetaria have proposed to Heritage Canada for funds to develop *Galileo Live!* for presentation during 2009, a production that would involve live actors. Letters of support were provided and/or solicited from community leaders.
 15. The EPO Committee is proposing a focus on public outreach for the Victoria CASCA AGM, and recommending that Peter Calamai be invited to address CASCA in a plenary session, which is an excellent idea. Please see Jayanne's detailed EPO report for a proposal intended to strengthen further the IYA partnership of FAAQ, RASC and CASCA.
 16. The AAS and ASP, who will meet jointly in St Louis in the Spring, are running a two-day symposium on IYA with training workshops as part of that meeting. I would encourage departments across Canada to enable their lead EPO person to attend what promises to be a major networking and planning activity for astronomy in general, and IYA in particular.
 17. At their recent Council meeting, the RASC set aside \$20K (from a generous bequest they received) as seed money for projects related to IYA; they anticipate being able to allocate a further \$20K or so in 2009. They are defining the criteria that proposals from their Centres will be judged against prior to announcing (soon) the competition. This is a powerful development that will not only stimulate even more effective RASC contributions to IYA, but should be most helpful in fund raising by all IYA partners.
 18. Returning to the first point of this report (and in Jayanne's EPO one), of the 7 themes we recommend be implemented, I call the Board's attention to **Canadian Astronomers at the Research Frontiers** (theme 7, page 8, of the identified IYA activities in the accompanying PDF file). This is *the* theme CASCA must lead if it is to be implemented. A Board volunteer or suggestions for someone to chair a small implementation team to carry this to the next stage are welcome.

In summary, progress is being made. The potential of IYA to raise the profile of astronomy in Canada is increasingly evident. The partnership between CASCA, FAAQ and RASC is functioning well and growing stronger. The amateurs are well organized and enthusiastic about engaging the public through viewing sessions during IYA. Early efforts on unique Canadian elements involving Aboriginal and classical musical are showing high promise. The need for full-time effort in liaison, planning, communication and fund raising to complement the volunteer SPoC is acute.

Jim Hesser
4 December 2007

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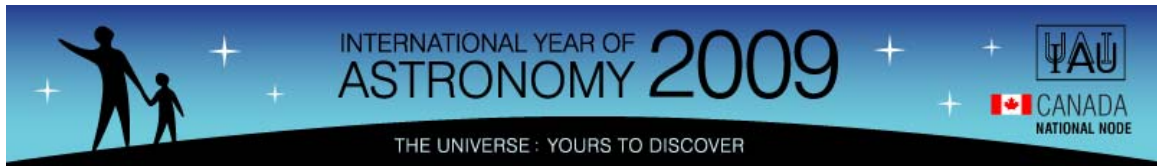
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