



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

ROYAL BC MUSEUM HEADS FOR THE STARS WITH ASTRONOMY DAY

VICTORIA, BC — The Royal British Columbia Museum and the Victoria Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada have teamed up to present Astronomy Day, a full day of family-oriented space activities, on Saturday, May 10 at the museum. This year's theme is the Discoveries of Jurassic Light, which will tie in to the museum's latest exhibit, *Dragon Bones: When Dinosaurs Ruled China*.

"Events like Astronomy Day give us the opportunity to inform the public about the importance of astronomy and space," said Royal Astronomical Society of Canada Victoria Centre President Chris Gainor. "Thanks to astronomers and space explorers, we now know that a gigantic asteroid striking the Earth 65 million years ago wiped out the dinosaurs."

Astronomy Day activities range from lectures on the asteroids and current topics in astronomy, to telescope mirror-grinding demonstrations, telescope views of sunspot activity, displays of telescopes and real space meteorites, and a variety of children's programs. Visitors will also have the opportunity to talk to professional astronomers about the universe, and to learn how amateur astronomers can observe space objects with regular binoculars and telescopes. Multimedia presentations will take visitors on a journey through the solar system, and offer a special look at Canada's presence in space.

Public lectures will feature Scott Mair, director of the Centre of the Universe and formerly of Drumheller's Royal Tyrrell Museum, who will speak about how the end of the dinosaurs was written in the stars. Other speakers include Victoria astronomers Dr. J.J. Kavelaars, who will speak about the recent discovery of moons around the outer planets, and Dr. Gordon Walker, whose talk will cover the search for planets around stars other than the Sun. Astronomy Day events at the Royal BC Museum will be followed in the evening by a public observing at the Centre of the Universe at the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory in Saanich.

"To keep institutions like the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory going, people need to know about the importance of the work that is done there," said Gainor. "When we look at the stars, we are looking into our past, just as we are when we are looking at dinosaur bones. Astronomers and space explorers are helping to unlock the mysteries."

Astronomy Day activities run from 10 am to 4 pm. Admission to all events in the museum's Clifford Carl Hall, Newcombe Conference Hall, and outside courtyards are free. Regular admission applies to museum exhibits and IMAX. Astronomy Day at the Royal BC Museum is jointly produced by the museum and the Victoria Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, in partnership with the National Research Council of Canada, Pearson College of the Pacific, and the University of Victoria.

For more information on Astronomy Day, please phone the Royal BC Museum at 250-356-7226 or visit the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's website at <http://victoria.rasc.ca>.

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