

CANADA - Making Good Progress

The International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE, www.yearofplanetearth.org) 2007-2009 provides an unprecedented opportunity for citizens of the Earth to learn more about how our planet functions and to celebrate the contributions made by earth sciences to our society. About 70 nations are ready to celebrate the year under the tag line Earth Science for Society. A Canadian National Committee (CNC) was established in late 2006 under the Chairmanship of John Boyd (see www.iypecanada.org) with former Canadian astronaut, Dr. Roberta Bondar, as the Honorary Patron of IYPE in Canada. A youth committee has also been established to ensure that young Canadians will be actively involved in IYPE.

The theme adopted for IYPE celebrations in Canada is: *WHERE on Earth, WHERE in Canada* in which WHERE is the acronym for Water, Hazards, Energy, Resources and Environment. Canadian earth scientists will focus their effort on increasing public awareness of earth sciences in Canada. To that end, projects have been solicited from across the country and fund raising has been in progress to support the projects. Some projects have already been completed and others are now poised to take the stage in 2008.

Completed Projects

Among the completed projects is co-sponsorship of a new Canadian Broadcasting Corporation five-part television series called *A Geologic Journey* (www.cbc.ca/geologic), which was aired in September and October 2007. An advertisement for IYPE, shown twice during each telecast, served to draw the attention of Canadians to IYPE. This advertisement is available for viewing at www.iypecanada.org.

Also released in 2007 were a series of thirty-two fact sheets on Mineral and Energy resources in Canada, which are available for free download at www.gac.ca/popular-geoscience. These are a source of simple information on resource topics including gas hydrates, uranium, oil sands, gemstones, mineral deposits and industrial minerals.



The fact sheets were put together by a team of authors based at the Geological Survey of Canada, with contributions from specialists.

A poster on the mineral and energy resources required to build and run a snowmobile was released in late 2007 by Mining Matters, an outreach program of the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada in association with staff from the Geological Survey of Canada. It provides information on the minerals required to build a snowmobile and where they can be found. It is currently being formatted for web release.

Another recent release is the Northern British Columbia Geological Landscapes Highway Map a joint project of the B.C. Geological Survey and the Geological Survey of Canada (see www.geoscape.nrcan.gc.ca). This is a basic geological map with descriptions of key geological regions and a compendium of sixty-eight photographs of a variety of geological localities along the highways of northern British Columbia.

Plans for 2008 and beyond

Among the exciting projects planned for 2008 is a major national, web-based challenge for students in grades 6-8 to be developed on the WHERE theme for the 2008-09

academic year. Students will learn about the importance of earth resources for human society and have an opportunity for creative responses to a variety of challenges. Exciting prizes will be awarded and it is hoped that participation will be high. This project is currently being developed by the Canadian National Committee in partnership with Teck-Cominco, a major mining company and EnCana, a major oil company.

Another of the projects for IYPE is the GeoTime Trail. The prototype has been partially completed in the Waterloo region of Ontario. The GeoTime Trail is 4.5 km long, corresponding to 4.5 billion years of Earth history, with each metre representing one million years of geological time. Interpretive signs elucidate local geology in the context of major planetary events.

One of the major projects to be completed in 2008 is a new popular book on the geology of Canada entitled *Four Billion Years and Counting: Canada's Geological Heritage*. Lavishly illustrated, the book will be in three parts: one on fundamental concepts in earth sciences, a second telling the story of the geological development of Canada and a third describing the many societal issues that geology embraces, focusing on health and wealth. The iconic new illustrations developed for the book will be available for free download from a web site that is being developed as a major legacy of IYPE.

For young people who want to know more about the many and varied jobs in earth sciences, there will a segment of the IYPE web site dedicated to careers. This will be the place for Canadians to go for up-to-date information on careers in earth sciences.

A partnership with National Parks will see development of GeoVistas: site specific information sheets that will provide new insights into the earth science behind the beautiful vistas in some of Canada's parks.

With all this activity, supported by donations from the private sector, Canada will be a major centre for celebration of IYPE and it is hoped that the legacy of the products will last far into the future.