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The Royal BC Museum keeps grounded but looks to the stars

VICTORIA, BC– May the 4th be with you! Today is dedicated to life in a galaxy far, far away, but the inclination to search the stars for meaning has been an historical preoccupation in every culture and in every era.

Searching the stars for scientific information and collecting hard data about our universe, on the other hand, is a relatively new approach, and a story the Royal BC Museum, in partnership with the National Research Council of Canada (NRC), tells in a new travelling exhibition: *The Dominion Astrophysical Observatory: The First 100 Years*.

This bilingual exhibition, accessible to the public for free on **the museum's** ground floor, in Clifford Carl Hall, will be on display from May 4 until June 28, 2018 (excluding May 14–18).

“Since 1886, Royal BC Museum scientists have turned their microscopes towards the miniscule and peered down into cold marine depths, but now we shift our perspective up, to the infinite cosmos,” said Prof. Jack Lohman, CEO of the Royal BC Museum. “This is a national story that explores a wonderful moment, the dawn of the era of ‘big science’ in Canada.”

The exhibition aims its lens upon the fascinating story of the development of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory (DAO), starting with the herculean task of building the giant telescope at this Victoria-region observatory.

The exhibition explores how the site was chosen and how the DAO became a starlit must-see tourist stop. Not light on scientific content, the exhibition also **chronicles the DAO's role in examining interstellar space and managing Canada's participation in some of the world's most powerful telescopes.**

“100 years ago, the Plaskett Telescope put Canada on the world stage of astrophysics, allowing Canadians to measure the size of Milky Way for the first time, and today, the Observatory continues work on the frontiers of astronomy with partners across Canada and around the world,” said Dr. Dennis Crabtree, Director of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory at the National Research Council of Canada. “The exhibit connects Canada's renowned astronomy community today to its origins right here in Victoria.”

The exhibition features multiple panels with text and images, plus objects on loan from the National Research Council of Canada and the University of Victoria. One object is a one-tenth-scale model of the observatory, built to help the designers test all possible positions and motions of the telescope and dome.

From the Royal BC Museum's own archival collection are a Prime Minister's letter of praise to the DAO's first director, John Stanley Plaskett, and medals



given for his work in determining the shape of our galaxy. These have not been seen by the public in over seventy years. From **the museum's** audio visual collection comes rare film from 1919 and television footage of **Canada's** contributions in the 1970s.

The **travelling exhibition's next stop is the** DAO itself, which will play host from July 2 to August 31, 2018.

About the Royal BC Museum

The Royal BC Museum explores the province's human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. The museum and archives celebrate culture and history, telling the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. Located in Victoria on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen (Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations), we are a hub of community connections in BC—onsite, offsite and online—taking pride in our collective histories.

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