
For immediate release

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Two world-renowned scientists to offer free public lectures on extraterrestrial life

Sudbury (Ontario) - Selected scientists and students from around the world interested in the possibility of finding life on other planets will meet in Sudbury, from September 18 to 20, for a workshop entitled *Biosignatures in Ancient Rocks*.

Two world renowned scientists attending the workshop will **give free public lectures** on Monday, September 17, 2007, at 7:30 p.m., in the Inco Cavern at Science North. All are welcome to attend.

Dr. Bruce Runnegar, former director of the NASA Astrobiology Institute (2003 to 2006), will make a public presentation on “Why astrobiologists study ancient rocks in Ontario and how such studies are relevant to NASA’s search for life in the universe.” The discovery of “possible fossils of microbes” in a Martian meteorite by NASA scientists in 1996 generated a huge interest among the public, as well as in the scientific community, because, for the first time in history, we may have found “visible evidence” for the existence of life outside of our own planet. In 1998, NASA created the NASA Astrobiology Institute, a virtual institute that now includes more than 800 scientists and students around the world, including Ontario.

Dr. William Schopf of UCLA will pronounce a lecture entitled “CANADA: Cradle of Life’s Earliest History.” Until 40 years ago, most scientists had believed that life did not exist on Earth before about 500 million years ago. Since Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859), the known record of life’s history has been extended seven-fold, with hints of life’s existence known from rocks about 3,800 million years old. Dr. Schopf’s talk will summarize the breakthroughs that led to this progress, focusing on Canada’s prime role in the history of this science and mentioning the contributions of various luminaries ranging from Sir John William Dawson (1820-1899), former president of McGill University (1855) to Canada’s foremost leader in the field today, Hans J. Hofmann, professor emeritus, McGill University.

“These are very prominent scientists and such a gathering has not often taken place anywhere in the world,” says Dr. Balz Kamber, Canada Research Chair in Precambrian Geology at Laurentian and one of the leading lecturers at the workshop. “Discussing the conditions for life on other planets and elsewhere in the solar system is very exciting. I hope the public will take advantage of these two free world-class lectures.”

The *Biosignatures in Ancient Rocks* workshop is sponsored by the NASA Astrobiology Institute (NAI), the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR), the Agouron Institute (AGI), the Ontario Geological Survey (OGS) Laurentian University and the Centre for Excellence in Mining Innovation (CEMI). About 55 participants from around the world (USA, Canada, Japan, Australia, England, Denmark), including 16 leading scientists (the giants) who are carrying out the most exciting research in astrobiology today, will participate in the workshop.

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Source:

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