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# Diamond Shines for Northern Sky Heritage

## *Shuttle Will Launch Legendary Project Into NWT Classrooms*

(YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES) The nature and culture of Canada's northern sky will be front and centre this Saturday when The Legendary Sky Diamond launches into history aboard Space Shuttle *Endeavour* (Mission STS-127, scheduled for liftoff on June 13) with Canadian Space Agency Astronaut Julie Payette.

"The Legendary Sky Diamond will be an educational treasure for the children of the Northwest Territories," says James Pugsley, President of Astronomy North. "Using an ancient stone from the centre of our planet students in northern communities will have exciting new opportunities to learn about the natural history of Earth and the proud heritage of Canada's northern peoples."

The Legendary Sky Diamond is part of The Legendary Sky Project, a multi-year education and outreach initiative dedicated to collecting and preserving northern sky knowledge and heritage. In 2008 Astronomy North identified a significant northern sky information gap in the current curriculum, which inspired the society to launch on this important educational endeavour.

"Our young people have limited access to information about the northern sky because most of the textbooks in northern classrooms are written for students in southern Canada," says Pugsley. "Through the development of new community-specific resources for teachers and students we can help northern children develop a lifelong connection to the sky they see every day and night."

Pugsley says it has never been more important to recognize and protect the proud heritage of the people who have lived under this magnificent sky for over 1,000 years.

"Long before the arrival of Europeans in the North, the Inuit, Athabaskan and Algonquian peoples lived beneath the same majestic sky we see in the Northwest Territories today," says Pugsley. "We need to ensure that local knowledge of the sky, as told by Dene and Inuit elders, is being shared in northern classrooms and isn't overshadowed by European astronomy or textbooks that do not include the perspectives of Canada's northern peoples."

Beginning in 2009, The Legendary Sky Project will serve as a platform for Astronomy North to work with northern and national partners to collect and preserve northern sky knowledge and heritage in a meaningful way.

"It has never been more important to listen and learn from the elders who live in the Northwest Territories," says Pugsley. "We live in a multi-cultural territory, and our children should have the opportunity to learn about a multi-cultural sky."

Upon completion of the mission, the diamond will be donated by Astronomy North to the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife, where it will begin its educational legacy as part of The Legendary Sky Exhibit, scheduled to open later this year.

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