

# Canada's International Polar Year executive director stresses the importance of building a global 'legacy' of arctic research

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Last year, the launch of the International Polar Year (IPY) drew global media attention, with climate change making headlines daily. However, while the initial limelight on IPY may have faded, Dr David Hik stresses that its significance continues to grow.

Hik, the executive director of the Canadian IPY Secretariat (2007/08), gave a talk last Friday in the Biological Sciences Building on "a multidimensional analysis of the International Polar Year and some thoughts about the future of Arctic research."

**"No country independently can understand the changes in the polar region"**

DAVID HICK  
CANADIAN IPY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"There was a real burst of activity around the launch about a year ago, but since then, largely, people have just gone on with their programs," Hik explained, adding that the two-year investigation is only halfway through and that Canadians should understand how these years work to establish a legacy.

He noted that Canadians can no longer only think of the border we share with the United States as our only salient frontier.

"If you look at a map of the world and turn it so that the north pole is at the middle, you see our neighbourhood in Canada from a perspective

that we sometimes forget," he said, continuing that as climate change continues to alter the geography of the polar region, any sense of isolation that exists between Canada and Russia will soon melt away.

"No country independently can understand the changes in the polar region," he said, noting that IPY is the largest international program of coordinated research, involving more than 60 countries and about 50 000 researchers.

Hik also stressed the fact that about 60 per cent of global IPY projects involve Canadian participants, and that polar years are the "granddaddy" of international scientific collaboration, with the first polar year taking place in 1882/83. Since then, he said, with every new internationally coordinated effort, new technologies are developed, and a new generation of scientists is trained.

According to Hik, climate change is a significant issue that needs to be dealt with on an international level. He added that even though the several degrees of warming that are projected to occur, may not seem like a lot, in fact it's more than is generally seen in several millennia.

"There doesn't really seem to be any trajectory other than increased warming," he said. "The warmest years are in the last decade, and the projections [...] there's some uncertainty, but they all suggest that things will continue to get warmer."

The challenge, he said, was to use IPY as a building block for future research and collaboration. Hik explained that IPY has drawn about \$1 billion in new funding internationally to support activity over the next few years, but he warned that more thought needs to be put into what will happen when that funding is exhausted.



LAUREN STIEGLITZ

**ARCTIC AMBITION** David Hick wants to make sure that Canadian research leaves its mark on the northern reaches of the world.

"One objective of polar years is to leave a legacy. They can be a pulsive activity, but really, they are building blocks for then determining what will drive the agenda for the next decades," he said, adding that in Canada, there isn't any national organization responsible for polar sciences.

"Even within the federal government, there are 21 different departments and agencies that are responsible for some aspect of delivery of northern science," he said. "It's fragmented across the whole system, and it's uncoordinated, and it's a bit of a mess."

Hik said that if the U of A hadn't stepped up to host the Secretariat for IPY in Canada, he's not sure the current coordination effort would have been possible. But he stressed that universities aren't set up to run

large-scale scientific "observation networks."

"That's a responsibility of government, and government has done a pretty poor job of that," he said. "Previous prime ministers have asked what's our place in the world, and I think you just need to look at a map and realize that there are some priorities associated with our geography."

What's needed now, according to Hik, is to harness the efforts, resources, and momentum of IPY to ensure its impact is substantive and long-lasting so that the numerous projects it's created don't expire at the end of IPY.

"In a couple years, when funding runs out, these efforts cannot be orphaned," he said. However, he noted that no government alone can fund the needed arctic research projects,

because without international engagement, there will be a huge gap in the data that becomes available. For example, he noted that without Russia's collaboration, an enormous part of the arctic becomes a black hole.

Hik noted that it's always "much more comfortable" to do things the same way that they've always been done in the past, but added that the best way to achieve global engagement in polar research is to be forceful and vocal.

"In the context of IPY legacies, we need to think about what we realistically can achieve but also not be afraid to push the boundaries," he said. "It just might be a good idea to think a little differently about how to accomplish what we need to do in the long term by thinking outside the box."

## CAMPUS CRIME BEAT

Compiled by Cody Civiero

### CERTAINLY NOT TALLAGEDA NIGHTS

On 30 January at 1:30am, a Campus Security peace officer observed a suspicious vehicle driving through campus at high speed. The vehicle was stopped for numerous traffic violations. Both the driver and the passenger were well known to Campus Security and the EPS and had criminal records that included trafficking drugs. The vehicle, which was from out of province, wasn't registered or insured. As well, both the driver and the passenger had several warrants for their arrest. The occupants

were arrested, and the vehicle was to be towed. However, while the tow truck was hooking up the vehicle, a CSS officer observed a large bag stuffed inside the vehicle's steering column. It turned out that the bag was filled with narcotics. The driver and the passenger were turned over to the EPS and charged with drug trafficking, as well as numerous traffic offences.

### BYEBYEBAGBLUES

At 5:20pm on 31 January, CSS received a report of a stolen backpack from SUB. The student had been sitting in the food court area with her bag behind her. An unidentified male came up behind her, covered the backpack with his jacket, and then proceeded to walk away with the bag, which included a laptop. The male was dressed in dark clothing with a greenish jacket and was carrying his

own backpack. Anyone who sees someone with two backpacks is asked to hold them for questioning.

### ONE-ALARM FIRE

At 12:20am on 2 February, Campus 5-0 responded to a fire alarm in Mackenzie Hall. It appears that persons unknown lit some paper on fire in a common area and then pulled the fire alarm. Damage to the facility was minimal, as the fire had been quickly extinguished. If Floor Coordinators were appointed and not elected, this probably would have never happened.

### TILL WE MEET AGAIN, YOUTUBE SUPERSTAR

On 3 February at 8:45am, a resident in HUBMall contacted Campus Security to report that a break-in had just occurred in a shop in HUB. According to the

resident, a male had gained access to the locked establishment and proceeded to rummage through the till and steal food. The male also attempted to hide when someone walked past the shop. The male left the area, but not before being captured on a cell phone video. The male is described as dark, in his early 20s, wearing all dark clothing, and with short hair. A large amount of money was taken from the till, and the Edmonton Police Services is investigating.

### IBELIEVE YOU HAVE MY STAPLER

On 29 January at 6:50pm, CSS received a report of an unaffiliated male entering the office of a female staff member in St Joseph's College. The male entered the office, closed the door, and tried to walk behind the staff member's desk. The staff member asked him to leave and

told the male she was calling Campus Security. The male then fled the area on a bus. The male later called CSS concerned about his reputation, at which time he was advised not to return.

### CALLER ID'

At 7:30pm on 7 February, a staff member in Phys Ed contacted CSS to report the theft of a laptop and cell phone from his office in the Van Vliet Centre. Later that night, the staff member was able to contact his cell phone provider, who identified several telephone numbers his cell phone was used to contact. The staff member then contacted one of the numbers and convinced the person on the other end to help turn in his property to EPS. The property was recovered by EPS, who are now investigating the theft further.



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