

QILAK Award

Mike Moghadam has been an RASC member since 2003, most of it with the Ottawa Centre. During that time Mike has served as Outreach Coordinator (2009 to 2011), Meeting Chair (2014-2015) and currently as Vice President (2017- 2018). Through this entire period there has not been a time when Mike was not actively involved in trying to promote the RASC and educate as many people as possible about the night sky. In his roles as Meeting Chair and Vice President, Mike's focus and motivation is outreach.

During his time as Outreach Coordinator, Mike organized and promoted our monthly public star parties that run from May through October. He worked with the City to secure an easily accessible, secure, relatively dark site to host the events. He publicized them and built them to the point where we routinely had 250 people attending regularly. For a while he even tried to have a second event running in the opposite (East) end of the City to accommodate those who were not prepared to make the longer drive to the outreaches of the west end.

Responding to the numerous requests from various community groups for Astronomy events was something Mike seemed to particularly enjoy. Girl Guide and Brownie groups, Boy Scout and Cub groups were a regular with Mike. Events that he could not personally lead, he would delegate to a team of volunteers he had trained.

Mike developed and ran a school program where we would send volunteers into the area schools to encourage an awareness and appreciation of the night sky.

From 2009 onward, Mike has been organizing our Astronomy Day events, which draw 1000 to 2500 people depending on the weather. Ottawa Centre currently holds its meeting at the Aviation and Space Museum. Previously they were held at the Museum of Science and Technology. These institutions regular host events that have an astronomy connection and we are called on to support them. Mike always finds new and fresh ways to provide that support.

As Meeting Chair Mike worked very hard at bringing in speakers that would draw the general public to our meetings. He would usually pair this speaker with one of the many excellent speakers from the Ottawa Centre to demonstrate to value we have to offer to these "guests". In an auditorium with seating for about 300, and a typical attendance of 125, we would have standing room only at these events. It resulted in a marked increase in our membership.

Mike has always had an eye for spotting potential volunteers and a manner that encourages them. During his term as Meeting Chair he spotted a young teenager in our midst. She had created an Astronomy themed cook book (with things like Asteroid Chunk cookies). Mike helped her with a presentation and she sold the cook book to raise money for a local charity. With Mike's continued support and encouragement, she went on to be our Meeting Chair in 2017 at the age of 17! Her involvement led to an upsurge in young people joining our greying group and becoming actively involve. We now have another teenager (15) who has given a presentation at the meeting, published an article in our newsletter and is now our Outreach co-chair.

The result of all this is that Mike's efforts have reached and influenced thousands of people a year. This alone would qualify Mike Moghadam to receive this award but the above only scratches the surface of the many things he has done and continues to do to promote our beloved pastime. Mike has worked at least as hard during the times he was not "officially" responsible for Outreach. After stepping down as our Outreach Coordinator, since nobody immediately stepped forward, Mike continued to organize our summer star parties and thanks to his efforts these now **average**

300 to 400 people at each event. He was heavily involved in our Solar Eclipse event last summer which drew 8,000 to 10,000 people. We had 2,000 solar glasses to hand out to the public and at one set per family they were gone half an hour before we officially started. The traffic was so bad the RCMP had to close the roads leading to our event.

Mike created telescope clinics for anyone needing help with any issue with their equipment. These have been well attended by new members and non-members alike. In the lead up to the recent Ottawa GA he led several outreach events for the Kanata region of Ottawa in exchange for their support for the GA. As well he acted as volunteer coordinator for the GA. He is also actively guiding our new Outreach team.

An event that really stands out for me is the Mercury Transit event on Parliament Hill. I know how much work went into this event alone because I worked with Mike on organizing it. Over a period of several months we worked with Minister Kirsty Duncan's office to host an event on the front lawn of Parliament Hill. We had National and Local news coverage of the event that was attended by everyone from Members of Parliament, including Science Minister Duncan and Transport Minister Garneau, to tourists just visiting the Hill. We had between 3,500 and 5,000 people attend. From the time Mike joined us, he has been the person we think of for any Outreach event. Outreach is in his blood. No matter what role Mike is "officially" undertaking for the Centre, his direction is always outreach. Even by conservative estimates, Mike's efforts over the past 9 years have reached over 40,000 people. We feel that Mike embodies all the values and requirements of the Qilak Award and that if any other centre has anyone who works half as tirelessly as Mike, they are indeed blessed

Submitted by:
Gordon Webster
Tim Cole
Chris Teron
Oscar Echeverri
Carmen Rush
Gerry Shewan
Jim Sofia
Robert Dick
Karen Finstad