

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bon Accord, Alberta, Named First International Dark Sky Community In Canada

August 12, 2015 - BON ACCORD, AB and TUCSON, AZ – In the shadow of Alberta’s capital city, the Town of Bon Accord has seen its role in the province change from a center of local agriculture to other sectors such as support for nearby Canadian Forces Base Edmonton. In recent years the town has also embraced the principles of dark skies preservation to expand the reach of its brand and its appeal as a destination for tourists and new residents alike. In recognition of the town’s actions to protect its dark night skies, the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) has designated Bon Accord as an International Dark Sky Community.

Bon Accord is the first Canadian community to receive IDA status, and only the eleventh Dark Sky Community in the world. It is also the first location from the province of Alberta welcomed into the International Dark Sky Places Program. The Town’s new IDA status is separate from, but complimentary to, the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada’s Dark Sky Site designation program.

“We are pleased to honor the efforts of Bon Accord in setting a laudable example for other cities in the Canadian West,” IDA Executive Director J. Scott Feierabend said. “We hope other municipalities throughout Canada will follow the town’s lead.”

Despite its location only 40 kilometers north of downtown Edmonton, the quality of Bon Accord’s night skies is comparable to some of IDA’s Dark Sky Parks. Residents have demonstrated their commitment to maintaining these conditions while allowing the town to grow responsibly and sustainably.

“This is truly a new beginning for Bon Accord as a leader in community wellbeing relating to our nighttime environment and as a tourism destination for the Alberta Capital Region and beyond,” stated Mayor Randolph Boyd. “Looking at this long term initiative helps provide Bon Accord the ability to develop sustainable, responsible guidelines for growth while maintaining our existing quality of life goals for a community such as ours within a rural area. We hope to be a blueprint for other communities as well, looking for ways to become or maintain their own dark sky.”

As part of its bid for IDA status, Bon Accord enacted one of the most progressive and comprehensive outdoor lighting policies in Canada. The Light Efficient Community Standards Bylaw 2015-07, based largely on the Model Lighting Ordinance developed jointly between the IDA and the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America, calls for fully shielded light fixtures and limits on the total amount of light allowable on public and private properties. It also establishes a series of lighting “zones” throughout the town where allowable light levels are based on expected ambient light conditions.

Planning and Development Coordinator Kyle Miller observes, “This innovative bylaw has potential to become a model for other communities looking to enhance nighttime enjoyment of public spaces while limiting light glow and trespass created by neighbours, businesses and other infrastructure.”

To show support for the bylaw, the town brought nearly all its municipally owned lighting into compliance with the bylaw’s requirements. Further efforts to support dark skies in Bon Accord involved ramping up messaging to the community about dark skies through local media, and public outreach and in local school curricula.

“Residents throughout Bon Accord value their ability to view the night sky and acknowledge its importance to our community,” Bon Accord Economic Development Manager Patrick Earl explained. “The overall brand message of the community has incorporated an education and environmental message of Bon Accord being a dark sky community and reasons why.”

News of the IDA Dark Sky Community designation comes in time for the September celebration of Bon Accord’s annual Equinox event, showcasing the Town’s pride and appreciation of the global environment and connecting the scientific and artistic components of society.

Future plans include construction of Bon Accord Observatory Park, a public observatory intended as a base for future dark skies and astronomy-themed event programming to further expand the tourism opportunities and resident quality of life for Bon Accord.

Image



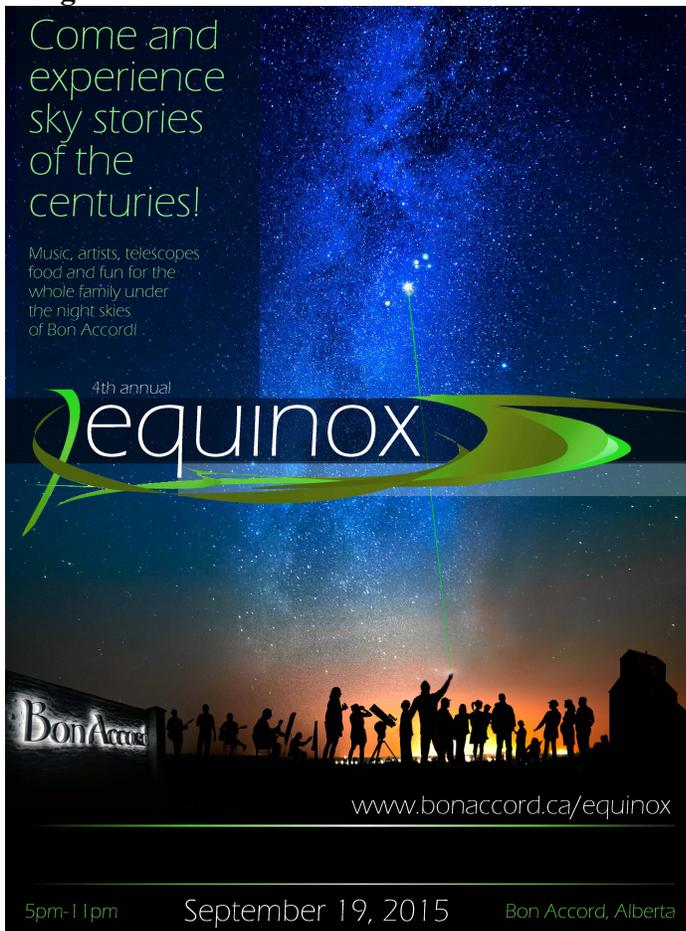
West sign entrance sign 2015 (Credit: Patrick Earl)

Image



Equinox 2014 (Credit: Patrick Earl)

Image



Equinox 2015 promotion (Credit: Patrick Earl)

URL: www.bonaccord.ca

About the IDA Dark Sky Places Program

IDA established the International Dark Sky Places conservation program in 2001 to recognize excellent stewardship of the night sky. Designations are based on stringent outdoor lighting standards and innovative community outreach. Since the program began, 11 Communities, 26 Parks, nine Reserves and one Sanctuary have received International Dark Sky designations. For more information about the International Dark Sky Places Program, visit <http://darksky.org/night-sky-conservation/dark-sky-places>.

About IDA

The International Dark Sky Association, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Tucson, Arizona, advocates for the protection of the nighttime environment and dark night skies by educating policymakers and the public about night sky conservation and promoting environmentally responsible outdoor lighting. More information about IDA and its mission may be found at <http://www.darksky.org>.

About Town of Bon Accord

Bon Accord is situated along Highway 28, a major route to destinations in northeast Alberta including the province's oil sands. The Town is approximately 20 minutes north of Edmonton, the provincial capital of approximately one million people, and 15 minutes north of the Edmonton Garrison, a large Canadian military base. Centrally located in Sturgeon County, residents enjoy affordable rural living within a short commute to the vast amenities offered in Alberta's Capital Region.

Media Inquiries

International Dark-Sky Association

Dr. John Barentine
(Dark Sky Places Program
Manager)
john@darksky.org
+1 520-293-3198

Town of Bon Accord

Mr. Randolph Boyd
(Mayor)
rboyd@bonaccord.ca
+1 780 921 3550

Town of Bon Accord

Mr. Patrick Earl
(Economic Development
Manager)
pkearl@bonaccord.ca
+1 780 921 3550

END

###