

# NEWS RELEASE

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## NASA astronauts inspire BCIT students

Pioneers of space flight, including one of the last men on the moon, to speak at BCIT's leading-edge Aerospace Technology Campus as the world prepares for a return to the moon

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**RICHMOND, BC:** It's been nearly 40 years since Neil Armstrong took one giant leap for mankind, stimulating the imagination of a generation. Now, with the Canadian Space Agency having just announced a plan to add at least two new space explorers to an exclusive group of astronauts, the challenges of space continue to push the boundaries of knowledge.

For many, it's a childhood dream to become an astronaut. But for three guest speakers coming to the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) on Saturday, April 19, space flight, driving on the moon, and even working with Carl Sagan became their realities.

*Return to the Moon*, co-hosted by BCIT, the Institute of Planetary Science at the University of British Columbia and the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada is an exciting opportunity to hear first-hand experiences from NASA astronaut Dr. Thomas D. Jones, NASA astronaut Dr. Harrison H. Schmitt, and Dr. Robert Richards, founder and CEO of Odyssey Moon Limited.

"Interest in the event has been overwhelming," says Randy Friesen, BCIT's director of marketing and communications. "All 400 tickets were allocated in a matter of hours."

There is more computing power in most cell phones today than there was on any of the Apollo spacecraft that took astronauts to the moon. "From robotics to technology, educating tomorrow's professionals is at the heart of BCIT. It is events like this that inspire our students, faculty and staff to look to the future, to exchange ideas and to meet new challenges with imagination," continues Friesen.

Thomas Jones began his career serving in the United States Air Force, before earning his Ph.D. at the University of Arizona. He became an astronaut in July, 1991, and in 1994 he flew as a mission specialist on successive flights of the space shuttle *Endeavour*. A veteran of four space flights, Dr. Jones has logged over 52 days (1,272 hours) in space, including three space walks totaling over 19 hours.

Harrison Schmitt is one of the last men to set foot on the moon, having been selected as a scientist-astronaut by NASA in 1965. On his first journey into space, Dr. Schmitt occupied the lunar module pilot seat for Apollo 17 – the last scheduled manned Apollo mission to the moon. He logged 301 hours and 51 minutes in space – of which 22 hours and 4 minutes were spent in extravehicular activity on the lunar surface.

Robert (Bob) Richards founded Odyssey Moon Limited, a commercial lunar enterprise based in the Isle of Man, and the first official registrant in the \$30 million Google Lunar X PRIZE competition, an international competition to safely land a robot on the surface of the moon, travel 500 meters over the lunar surface, and send images and data back to earth. Dr. Richards studied aerospace and industrial engineering at Ryerson University; physics and astronomy at the University of Toronto; and space science at Cornell University where he became special assistant to Carl Sagan.

Following the formal presentation, and weather permitting, the Royal Astronomical Society will host a *Star After Party*, with telescopes set up for guests to explore the night sky.

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