



Image: Courtesy of NASA

2018 Canada's Walk of Fame Inductee: Col. Chris Hadfield

FEARLESS ASTRONAUT

DEDICATION AND HARD WORK ON THE PATH TO BECOMING
THE FIRST CANADIAN TO WALK IN SPACE

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Growing up on an Ontario corn farm, reading science fiction books enabled Col. Chris Hadfield to picture what it would be like to fly in space. It was an improbable dream he kept to himself at first. "Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon the summer I turned 10, which turned what had been a fanciful imagining into a real opportunity," Hadfield recalls.

Although it would be many years before Canada had a space program, Hadfield started working towards becoming an astronaut in the hopes that someday he'd be trusted to fly a spaceship. He learned mechanics at home, enrolled in air cadets, joined the RCAF and became an experimental test pilot. He flew CF-18s as a fighter pilot.

In 1983, Canada started recruiting astronauts, including Marc Garneau and 2011 Canada's Walk of Fame Inductee Roberta Bondar. "Suddenly it was real. Canadians were going to fly in space," Hadfield says. He dedicated himself to doing everything necessary to get there.

Then tragedy struck in 1986 with the Challenger accident. "I was thinking, this is never going to happen, I should stop trying, but my wife pointed out giving up on your dreams doesn't come for free," he says, explaining that a "what if" regret becomes a permanent—and perilous—burr under your saddle.

Instead, he worked on continuing to align his life with his goal, and in 1992 he was accepted into the Canadian astronaut program. He served as an astronaut for 21 years, during which he flew in three space missions, installed Canadarm2, and was the first Canadian commander of the International Space Station.

He describes flying in space as a daunting amount of work, an enormous honour, and a magical experience. "You're going around the world every 92 minutes, so you see the entire planet," he says. "I've been around the world over 2,600 times and that shifts your perspective and understanding."

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A lifelong musician, he enjoyed playing guitar on board the space station every chance he got, and later released an album of the songs he wrote in orbit, called *Space Sessions*.

Back on earth Hadfield began to teach what he learned. He also published three books, including *An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth: What Going to Space Taught Me About Ingenuity, Determination and Being Prepared for Anything*. His recent projects include hosting a BBC series about what it takes to become an astronaut, and contributing to the National Geographic documentary series *One Strange Rock*.

One of his most popular talks is on fear. "I think the main reason that you're fearful is that you're not ready for the things that are happening, and therefore it becomes overwhelming," he says. "I try and never get myself in the position where all I have going for myself is fear. I'd much rather be competent, and then you're much more likely to do a good job."

Hadfield is the recipient of numerous awards and special honours, including appointment to the Order of Canada, the Queen's Golden Jubilee and Diamond Jubilee Medals and induction into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame.

"To be honoured by Canada's Walk of Fame, as someone who's pushed back the edges of human capability, is a lovely reflection of Canadian values. I'm immensely proud, as a Canadian, at how we treat each other," he says.



Photo credit: Max Rosenstein