

# CASCA Education and Public Outreach Committee Report

Jan. – May 2018

Submitted by Phil Langill, Chair

## 1. Brief Overview

In a nutshell, the major achievement for the first third of 2018 is related to the CASCA Westar Lecture Series. Below is a chronology of events, and an update of where the three CWL's sit at the moment.

Additionally, the EPO committee was also involved in the planning of the EPO session coming up at this year's CASCA AGM in Victoria, to some degree. LOC member David Bohlender contacted me to invite this committee to assist in this endeavour, as protocol dictates. David forwarded to me, and I to the EPO committee members, the abstracts which were submitted related to oral presentations.

I asked my committee if someone would like to champion the task of vetting the abstracts and making recommendations to the LOC, and Robert Cockcroft chimed in. But things got delayed a bit on the LOC side as they began to consider making space in the program for a second EPO session. While that deliberation went on, pretty much everyone on the EPO committee critiqued the abstracts, and Robert was ready to give the LOC our recommendations.

But in the end, a second session was approved, and that made room for all oral presenter requests to be granted. It sounds like a really fantastic outreach engagement program is in the works for Victoria. I am fortunate to be able to attend this year's AGM, and look forward to participating and helping in any way possible.

## 2. CASCA Westar Lecture update

A CWLS subcommittee was struck headed by Julie Bolduc-Duval, with members Paul Delaney, Lorne Nelson, Rob Cockcroft, and myself as an arms-length member.

After receiving the official go-ahead from the Board in Jan. of this year, the subcommittee set out to disseminate broadly to Canada's astronomically underserved communities, the invitation crafted before Christmas last year. This was accomplished with the great assistance of the general CASCA membership. Some initial inquiries in response to this invite resulted in an improved invitation, which was sent out again via CASCA membership channels.

Because so much effort went into creating the best possible invite, I feel it needs to be immortalized by being included in this report. In both official languages:

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La Société canadienne d'astronomie (CASCA) aimerait offrir à votre communauté ou organisation la possibilité d'accueillir une conférence Westar. Suivant ses engagements pour partager la science

avec le public, la CASCA s'engage à fournir le financement nécessaire pour qu'un(e) astronome canadien(ne) distingué(e) se rende dans votre communauté pour un séjour de deux jours où il/elle donnera une conférence publique gratuite et interagira avec les membres de votre communauté. De plus, en fonction de vos besoins et de son expertise, le/la conférencier(ère) pourrait également offrir d'autres activités gratuites telles que l'observation au télescope, des visites en classe ou une formation en astronomie pour les enseignants et les enseignantes.

La conférence Westar met en vedette nos incroyables chercheurs canadiens en astronomie, suscite l'enthousiasme et l'intérêt pour l'astronomie et la science, et offre des possibilités d'éducation pour le grand public et les enseignants et les enseignantes de sciences. Les conférences Westar permettent également à la CASCA d'en apprendre davantage sur ce que l'organisation peut faire pour vous aider à promouvoir l'enseignement de l'astronomie dans votre région, et aussi d'en apprendre davantage à propos de vos activités, votre histoire et vos traditions liées à l'astronomie, que nous pourrions ensuite partager avec le reste de la communauté astronomique au Canada.

Si vous souhaitez qu'un conférencier ou une conférencière Westar visite votre communauté, nous vous encourageons à [visiter notre site web](#) et à compléter le formulaire de demande avant le 31 mars 2018. Les candidats retenus seront avisés le plus rapidement possible. Veuillez répondre aux questions aussi précisément que possible, car elles sont conçues pour nous aider à optimiser le processus de planification. Pour aider à réduire les frais liés à la visite d'un astronome dans votre communauté ou votre organisation, la CASCA défraiera les coûts du transport, de l'hébergement, des repas et des autres frais accessoires liés à son déplacement et son séjour, ainsi que les frais de livraison de biens et de matériel utilisés à des fins éducatives lors de sa visite.

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The Canadian Astronomical Society (CASCA) would like to offer your community or organization the opportunity to host a Westar Lecture. As part of its commitment to share science with the public, CASCA will provide the necessary funding for a distinguished Canadian astronomer to visit your community for a two-day stay. He or she will give a free public lecture and interact with members of your community. In addition, depending on your needs and their expertise, the speaker may also offer other free activities such as telescope observation, classroom visits, or astronomy training for teachers.

The Westar Lecture showcases our incredible Canadian astronomers, inspires enthusiasm and interest in astronomy and science, and provides educational opportunities for the general public and science teachers. The Westar Lecture is also an opportunity for CASCA to find out what it can do, on an ongoing basis, to assist with the advancement of astronomy education in your area, as well as to learn about your local astronomical endeavors, history, and traditions, that we can share with the rest of Canada's astronomical community.

If you would like a Westar speaker to visit your community, we encourage you to [visit our website](#) and fill out the application form by March 31, 2018. Successful applicants will be notified as soon as possible. Please answer questions as specifically as possible as they are designed to help us optimize the planning process. To help reduce costs to your community or organization, CASCA will pay for the visiting astronomer's transportation, accommodation, meals, and other incidentals they incur related to the delivery of goods and materials for educational purposes.

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This invite was emailed to all CASCA members, with this request for their assistance in getting the invite out to as far as possible;

Dear fellow astronomy education enthusiasts,

The EPO committee of the Canadian Astronomical Society has been working hard to reinvigorate the CASCA Westar Lecture (CWL). Well things have progressed to the point where we are ready to inform the world, and ask those who want to host a Westar Lecture to go ahead and apply. This is where we need your help.

Below is the message we would like you to send out to those in your realm that you think would be interested in, and would benefit from, hosting a Westar Lecture. But before you do, please keep in mind this essential point: The audiences that we intend to bring CASCA Westar Lectures to are not those who already have an abundance of astronomical public education avenues and opportunities. The catch phrase we have been using is 'underserved communities'.

We want to build a dialogue with communities that rarely get a chance to host a 'big event', by sending some of Canada's most knowledgeable and engaging astronomers to those areas. While first and foremost the visited community will get a fabulous public lecture, it also provides our organization with a chance to engage and learn about different views of the night sky. At the same time visiting astronomers will also be able to provide a little teacher training or some-such more intimate specialized learning opportunity over at most two days. CASCA covers the costs incurred by the lecturer, so the financial impact to the underserved community is minimized. And of course the CWL event happens in French or English. We are aiming at having two CWLs in 2018.

Maybe you have an interesting idea as to what constitutes an 'underserved community'. Some examples we have come up with include schools and libraries in smaller towns and villages. We also would very much like to see CWLs in Indigenous communities too, so maybe you have a connection directly to an Indigenous Leader or perhaps to an Indigenous Studies organization on your campus.

So please spread this message to your underserved community connections, and ask them to pass it along to their connections, and hopefully we will reach the far corners of this great land. The invitation is below in both languages, and links to pertinent pages on the CASCA website is within.

Our CASCA colleagues came through because eight applications were received from quite a wide geographical spread; Bonaparte/Cache Creek, BC., Dease Lake and Telegraph Creek, BC., Nitinaht Lake, BC., Lac La Biche, AB., Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, SK., Town of The Pas, MB., Central Quebec School Board, QC., and Halifax, NS. The deadline for applications was the end of March, 2018.

The subcommittee went to work right away with each member ranking the applications. A short Skype meeting was all that was required to select the communities of Nitinaht Lake, Bonaparte Indian Band, and The Pas. Although the goal was to select two CWLs for 2018, the application from The Pas was very strong and was requested for early 2019, so we happily have an early start to 2019.

One of the subcommittee members, Lorne Nelson, then brought up a question of protocol and the oversight (or not) of the general EPO committee over the subcommittee. It was a valid question that was informally discussed when the subcommittee was struck, but it was never fully examined. So we took a little pause and the full EPO committee took some time to weigh the pros and cons. There was no clear consensus in the first go-round of discussion, but after a second gathering of the minds the following decision was made;

Because these community / lecturer partnerships are being forged on timescales that are inherently tight, the added layer of oversight that was contemplated is simply impractical.

Therefore, the way forward will be that the subcommittee can work diligently to connect lecturer with community, all the way to the final 'handshake' where the lecturer and community move forward together to build and deliver the CWL.

The greater EPO committee will be given frequent updates, and occasionally as need arises, a subcommittee member might encounter a situation and will seek the advice of all.

With this clear direction the Westar subcommittee forged ahead. Not much time was lost, as it is being learned that there are challenges and complications when it comes to connecting communities to lecturers. Some applications came without a specific choice of lecturer, and some lecturers were a good fit for more than one community. Then lecturers go on holiday, then some community point-of-contacts go on holiday.

So, to date, we have aligned;

Dr. Christian Marois with Mr. Darrel Cole in The Pas

Dr. Doug Johnson with Mr. Steve Beier in Nitinaht Lake

Dr. Jon Willis with Ms. Jenn Casorso in Bonaparte/Cache Creek

The timelines on these proposed CWLs are early 2019, late summer 2018, and early June 2018, respectively. Because various players are currently out of touch, we are only able to assume that lecturers and POC's are shaking hands and getting on with organizing the details of the event. We hope to have confirmation on this early next week.

With careful planning, open discussion amongst the EPO committee and Westar subcommittee members, help from all of CASCA's membership, and excellent guidance from the Board, we seem to be very close to attaining our goal of reinvigorating CASCA's Westar Lectureship in Canada, specifically aimed at our astronomically underserved communities.

There is more I could add to this report, but given the lateness of its submission, I will leave these lesser points for the next installment.

For CASCA's EPO Committee

Phil Langill