

# CASCA Education and Public Outreach Committee Report

July – Dec., 2019

Submitted by Phil Langill, Chair

## 1. Committee Membership

The current committee members are;

- Frédérique Baron (2019-2022) Université de Montréal
- Julie Bolduc-Duval (2010-19), Discover the Universe / À la découverte de l'Univers
- Pierre Chastenay (2017-20), Université du Québec à Montréal / 2017 Qilak Award Recipient
- Mike Chen (2019-2020) University of Victoria
- Robert Cockcroft (2014-19), University of Western Ontario
- Kelly Lepo (2017-20), McGill University
- Sharon Morsink (2016-19), University of Alberta
- Nathalie Ouellette (2019-2022) Université de Montréal
- Nienke van der Marel (2019-2022) NRC-HAA

The EPO Committee's ex officio and Board Representative are Leslie Sage and Suresh Sivanandam, University of Toronto, respectively.

The CASCA Westar Lecture subcommittee is headed by Robert, with members Frédérique, Nienke, and myself (at arm's length). Kelly is our Social Media lead. Sharon is the IAU outreach liaison to Canada.

I would like to thank very much; Mike Reid (University of Toronto), Paul Delaney (York University), Lorne Nelson (Bishop's University), and Magdalen Normandeau (University of New Brunswick), for their excellent work on this committee over the past years. Their amazing passion for astronomy EPO in Canada is inspirational, and the energy and time they devoted to this committee was priceless. Perhaps they will consider rejoining the EPO committee again in the future.

## 2. EPO Committee contribution to the LRP2020 process

It took some time to get things ramped up, but the EPO committee came together and submitted our White Paper to the LRP2020 committee. The title of the WP is *PROPOSED NATIONAL EPO PROJECTS FOR CASCA*, and the main idea is to give this committee direction for future activity by committing to what we refer to as 'pillars' of National Outreach. The WP is being submitted to the Board along with this report. We sincerely hope that the WP contains ideas that will lead to fruitful discussion and positive steps forward for CASCA's EPO Committee.

I would like to thank all members of the epo committee for their contributions to the WP. And I especially recognize Julie and Kelly for their assistance in helping me navigate the LRP2020's WP gathering and submission process.

### 3. CWL update

Much work has been done on the CWL front, starting with the EPO Committee working together to form a new CWL subcommittee. There was also discussions with the Board around the CWL lecture format, specifically regarding school visits and teacher training workshops. A call went out to all members; to those wishing to join the CWL lecturer list anew, and to make sure those who were already on the list understood the newly clarified parameters regarding contact responsibility.

The revamped contact responsibilities are laid out clearly in the slightly reworded invitation, which for the record is given here in both official languages:

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La Société canadienne d'astronomie (CASCA) aimerait offrir à votre communauté ou à votre organisation la possibilité d'accueillir une conférence Westar. Dans le cadre de son engagement à partager la science avec le grand public, la CASCA s'engage à fournir le financement nécessaire afin 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 leur 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. La conférence Westar met en vedette nos incroyables chercheurs canadiens en astronomie afin de susciter l'enthousiasme et l'intérêt pour l'astronomie et la science, et d'offrir des possibilités d'éducation pour le grand public et les enseignants de sciences.

Si vous souhaitez qu'un conférencier Westar visite votre communauté, nous vous encourageons à visiter notre site web et à remplir le formulaire d'application. 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.

[https://casca.ca/?page\\_id=8806&lang=fr](https://casca.ca/?page_id=8806&lang=fr)

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The Canadian Astronomy 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 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. If you would like a Westar speaker to visit your community, we encourage you to visit our website and fill out the application form. 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.

[https://casca.ca/?page\\_id=7598](https://casca.ca/?page_id=7598)

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The call went out to the general CASCA membership to forward to their extended communities this invitation on Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>. A follow-up email soliciting CASCA members and reminding them of the upcoming Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> deadline was sent out on Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>. This deadline was about a month later than originally planned back in the Spring of this year given the delayed start this Fall due to all the membership changes, web tasks, and Board discussions. Additionally, there were some problems with the CWL application forms on the CASCA website, and that meant coordination with the new webmaster and a few iterations of debugging and francophone translations – on the fly while applications were potentially coming in.

Despite extending the deadline to Nov. 29<sup>th</sup>, the number of applications received was very low – only 3, the lowest number to date. The applications were reviewed, and a CWL to the interior of BC to underserved communities is being pursued for the Spring of 2020. The other two applications did not meet the CWL mandate, but those groups are being contacted to see what other EPO potential could be found. The CWL that was being planned for Inuvik / Tuktoyaktuk did not come to pass due to complications with the requested lecturer becoming unavailable. The hosting community is being contacted to see if that visit could still be revived for Spring 2020.

In our next e-meeting, the EPO committee will discuss what improvements could be made to the CWL solicitation process. Perhaps CASCA members could be more involved in the application process in the case that an underserved community could use assistance. One weak part of the current model is follow-up, and we will discuss the merit of organizing a second visit to a community to ensure some sort of continuity and sustained partnership. This will involve input from the Board, no doubt.

#### **4. Discover the Universe**

The 6<sup>th</sup> annual teacher-training workshops held at CASCA AGM at McGill, and the first one offered in French, was very successful. Despite the bad timing of the workshop for teachers (very last week of school in Quebec), it was the first time we reached capacity more than a week in advance.

Under Julie's direction EPO Committee members Mike (Reid), Pierre, Frédérique, and Nathalie, along with the most appreciated assistance of Mary-Beth Laychak (CFHT), Marie-Lou Gendron-Marsolais (ALMA) and Paula Boubel (McGill), all helped deliver outstanding presentations. Feedback from teachers was unanimously positive.

The CASCA Board provided some financial assistance to deliver this year's AGM DU workshops for teachers. This was greatly appreciated, and undoubtedly contributed the great success of this valuable learning opportunity.

Please also see the sections of the EPO Committee's LRP2020 WP which speak about the potential we see for DU and the pursuit of the four pillars of National Outreach.

#### **5. Utilizing Social Media**

No news on this front. As was reported last time, we know that the CASCA Facebook page is underused, and Instagram is probably the more popular platform today. The one platform that is being used,

although not to peak potential, is the @AstroCanada-CASCA Twitter account. Kelly is championing these tweets following best-practice protocol (discussed in the last report, but is yet to be officially approved by the Board).

It is the hope of this committee that serious resources be put into CASCA's social media presence. This is also discussed in the EPO Committee's LRP2020 WP.

## 6. IAU100

As mentioned in previous reports, we have struggled in bringing the IAU100's international outreach initiatives into Canada, primarily because of the available time and energy of the members of this committee, which is already stretched to the max. However, the most recent initiative, NameExoWorlds described here <http://www.nameexoworlds.iau.org/> got some excellent traction. Sharon put up her hand and organized a committee, and pulled off an amazing National-scale activity to excite and engage the public. Here is Sharon's update on the activity:

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### Report on the Canadian Exoplanet/Star Naming Contest - December 5, 2019

The year 2019 is the 100-year anniversary of the IAU, and to celebrate they created the NameExoWorlds contest. Each country was assigned a star with a known exoplanet and then asked to name the pair. CASCA was asked to organize a Canadian contest, and a group composed of some of the EPO Committee organized the contest.

During the first part of the contest (Aug 1 - Sept 21, 2019) we invited Canadians to propose a pair of names for the star HD 136418 and its exoplanet. We received 520 entries. Approximately 30% of the entries came from Ontario, 25% from Quebec, 22% from Alberta, 12% from BC, and the remaining from the remainder coming from the rest of Canada. We had 3 entries from the Yukon, but no entries from Nunavut nor the Northwest Territories.

During this first phase of the contest, many members of the CASCA EPO Committee helped with publicizing the contest, creating promotional material, translating text into French, and contacting different organizations to ask for donations of prizes. The committee was composed of Pierre Chastenay, Julie Bolduc-Duval, Mary Beth Laychak, Phil Langill, Frédérique Baron, Nathalie Oullette, Nienke van der Marel, and Henry Ngo.

After the first part of the contest closed, we did a quick check of the entries and removed approximately 200 entries that violated one or more of the IAU's rules for naming astronomical objects. This left around 300 entries that our panel of experts perused and discussed. The panel, composed of Hilding Nielson, Nicole Mortillaro, Pierre Lacombe, Laurie Rousseau-Nepton, and Christian Marois. Originally Wilfred Buck, a Cree Knowledge Keeper who is an expert on star stories, was a member of this panel, but he had to withdraw from the main part of the process due to health issues.

The panel's top choices drew from Indigenous languages. Hilding Nielson gave us some excellent guidance about the fine line between honouring a culture and cultural appropriation which helped us choose a short list. Two of the top entries were in the Cree language, so I contacted Wilfred Buck and

asked if could comment on those entries. He was happy to do this and gave us corrections. One of the entries was changed enough that I felt it appropriate to just simply say that he was the author of the entry.

Canadians were invited to vote on the top 4 entries (which can be viewed at [casca.ca/exoplanet](http://casca.ca/exoplanet)). We received 833 votes, and we sent the results to the IAU. I am happy that they have accepted the top Canadian choice. On December 17, the IAU will make an announcement giving the new names for the stars and exoplanets assigned to all of the countries. This week, we are putting together prize packages to be mailed to the people who proposed the top entries.

Sharon Morsink, University of Alberta  
Chair of the Exoplanet Contest Committee

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Extremely successful on all levels, and a shining example of what CASCA's EPO Committee can achieve in bringing IAU initiated activities to Canadians. As discussed in our LRP2020 white paper, we hope this activity will become a 'pillar' of this committee's work.

## **7. The National EPO Activity reporting form**

The call for CASCA members to report their EPO activity in 2019 just went out. The data collected will be included in the next report for the Board.

As mentioned in the last Board report, the Canadian EPO Activity reporting form is currently being hosted by the University of Calgary's Physics and Astronomy Dept.'s servers. The PHAS IT folks are still requesting that this be moved to a CASCA platform. Hopefully this can be done in the new year.