

CASCA EPO Committee | May 2021 Report

Submitted by Nathalie Ouellette (Chair) on behalf of the EPO Committee

This report covers the activities of CASCA's Education and Public Outreach (EPO) Committee over the period from December 1 2020 to May 1 2021. The committee met (online) twice during this period of time: January 28th 2021 and April 23rd 2021.

1. Current Membership

Chair: Nathalie Ouellette (2019-2022), Université de Montréal

Frédérique Baron (2019-2022) Université de Montréal

Mike Chen (2020-2023) University of Victoria

Robert Cockcroft (2014-2023) University of Western Ontario, **Chair of Westar Lecture**

Subcommittee

Viraja Khatu (2020-2021) University of Western Ontario, **GSC Representative**

Phil Langill (2014-2023) Rothney Astrophysical Observatory/University of Calgary

Sharon Morsink (2016-2021) University of Alberta, **IAU OAO Coordinator**

Laura Parker (2020-2023) McMaster University, **Board Representative**

Jesse Rogerson (2020-2023) York University, **Chair of Social Media Subcommittee**

Nienke van der Marel (2019-2022) NRC-HAA

Christa Van Laerhoven (2020-2023) University of British Columbia

ex-officio: Julie Bolduc-Duval, Discover the Universe

ex-officio: Leslie Sage, CASCA Press Officer

2. Changes to the membership

The following committee member has a term that has come to an end and chose not to renew their membership: **Sharon Morsink**. Sharon was also the IAU OAO National Coordinator and will be stepping down from this position gradually in the next few months. Many thanks to Sharon for all her work on the committee for the last 5 years, we look forward to working with her on her new role as part of the LCRIC.

Committee member **Nienke van der Marel** will be leaving Canada to take up a faculty position in the Netherlands at Leiden University. Subsequently, she will also be leaving the EPO Committee. As she is a member of the Social Media subcommittee, she has expressed interest in continuing to collaborate on this project for the next few months as the social media strategy takes shape. We thank Nienke for her work on the committee and congratulate her on her new position!

Viraja Kathu, GSC Representative on the committee, will be leaving the committee as her one-year term comes to an end. She will be replaced by another graduate student designated by the GSC.

There will be two openings for new members in the next coming months. As the process surrounding membership to a committee is currently under review by the CASCA Board, we will wait before recruiting new members.

3. Committee activities

a. CASCA2021 AGM activities

The EPO committee undertook the planning of the Plenary EPO session during the 2021 CASCA AGM. Prof. Richard Hechter (U of Manitoba) accepted our invitation to be our plenary speaker. A subcommittee selected 4 submitted abstracts as contributed talks to fill out the rest of the EPO Plenary. The session will be co-chaired by EPO Chair Nathalie and GSC Rep Viraja.

Given the pandemic context, Julie and collaborators opted to not organise a Teachers' Workshop during this year's AGM. We hope to be back next year!

The EPO committee is also overseeing the Helen Sawyer Hogg Prize Lecture. This year's speaker is Nobel Laureate, Prof. Andrea Ghez (UCLA). The talk, taking place on May 11th at 7.30pm (EDT), will be live streamed on both Facebook (CASCA's page) and YouTube (RASC's channel). Nathalie will be hosting and several other committee members will be helping "backstage" with logistics and to moderate the chat. We are currently promoting the talk widely (and beyond Canada) in hopes of having a large and varied audience!

b. AstroComm 2021 Workshop

The Centre for Research in Astrophysics of Quebec is organising a science communication workshop for astronomers on June 16th from 1pm to 5pm (EDT). The workshop will be delivered by Nathalie Ouellette (Université de Montréal), Julie Bolduc-Duval (Discover the Universe) and other instructors (including many EPO Committee members). It will include mini lectures, interactive breakout groups and open discussion.

A pre-registration survey was sent out to gauge interest from the community in December 2020. 65 people responded positively. Registration for the workshop opened on April 21st 2021. Selected participants will be required to submit a scientific communication piece (e.g. article, video, presentation slideshow, etc.) prior to the workshop that will help the instructors better target the training content. Submitted pieces do not need to be created for the workshop; they can be from previous science communication activities. As of April 29th, 45 people have registered for the workshop.

For more information on AstroComm 2021, refer to the CRAQ website: <http://craq-astro.ca/activities/astrocomm-2021-workshop/>

c. 2021/2024 Solar Eclipses

A few initiatives are being headed by committee members for the upcoming annular solar eclipse taking place early on June 10th. Nathalie, Fred and their iREx colleagues have teamed up with the Rio Tinto Alcan Montreal Planetarium to distribute eclipse glasses and viewers in the Montreal region through the municipal library network. Julie and Discover the Universe have concentrated their efforts on Northern Canada where the path of annularity is located. For more information on this, refer to the DU report below.

Efforts have already begun for the total solar eclipse cutting through Eastern Canada on April 8th 2024. Initial contacts have already been made with the RASC National

Eclipse Taskforce through Nathalie and Julie. A Quebec-centric consortium has also been formed (with key members from iREx, the Laval Cosmodome, the Montreal Planetarium, Discover the Universe, CASCA, the Mont-Mégantic ASTROLab and Observatory, and others) and is meeting monthly in preparation for the 2024 eclipse. Many members of this consortium attended a workshop organized by the AAS Eclipse Taskforce on April 9-10.

4. Subcommittee reports

a. CASCA Westar Lectureship Subcommittee

Chair: Rob Cockcroft

Members: Frédérique Baron, Nienke van der Marel

Doug Johnstone gave a (virtual) talk in Whitehorse and another talk is planned for May in Nuvik. Tukoyaktuk has expressed continuous interest in getting a Westar Lecture, but would prefer waiting for an in-person visit by an astronomer once things open up more.

Discussions trying to prevent a one-and-done approach to these lectures are ongoing. Christa will soon be starting a position as a substitute teacher in northern regions which will give us another path to better connecting with these communities.

Questions have been raised on whether the CASCA Westar Funds can be used for something other than the Westar Lecture Series (training, student grants to hire outreach/communications interns, etc.). Rob will be working with CASCA Past President Rob Thacker to explore the possibilities.

b. IAU activities

Lead: Sharon Morsink

The telescope sent by the IAU for the “Telescopes for All” program has finally arrived to its final destination, Tuktoyaktuk.

As Sharon is leaving the EPO Committee in the next few months, she will be stepping down from her role as the IAU Office of Astronomy for Outreach National Coordinator. She recommends that both a National Coordinator (a senior member) and co-Coordinator (a more junior member) replace her. We will be looking for her replacement(s) in the coming months, either through current committee members or new members we will be recruiting.

c. Discover the Universe

Lead: Julie Bolduc-Duval

The first quarter of 2021 was extremely busy for Discover the Universe. Our expertise is being recognised by outside partners which lead to new contracts to develop content related to astronomy education. We also ran our own regular webinars and workshops for teachers and continued developing educational resources in the background. A main project which is keeping us busy is the solar eclipse of June 10, 2021. As we write this report, we are in the process of shipping 20,000 eclipse glasses and educational material to 100+ schools in many remote communities, mostly in the path

of annularity (northern Ontario, northern Quebec, eastern Nunavut). This project allowed us to develop new partnerships with many schools in Indigenous communities and we were glad to translate some of our material in Indigenous languages for the first time.

d. Social Media Subcommittee

Chair: Jesse Rogerson

Members: Mike Chen, Nienke van der Marel, Christa Van Laerhoven

CASCA's social media channels have shared the initiatives of CASCA members over the last 6 months, but we hope to grow our activities and audience more in the coming year. Obtaining some funds for a grant for a social media or communications intern would facilitate running these social media platforms on a more reliable basis. The subcommittee has been working on a Social Media Strategy for CASCA. Please find a draft of this plan at the end of this document.

Social Media Strategy

CASCA

Abstract: Using its social media accounts, the Canadian Astronomical Society (CASCA) can take a leading role in promoting the success of astrophysical research in Canada, both historically and at present. Social media outreach by CASCA can be grouped into 3 broad categories: building the Canadian astronomy brand, informing the public, and increasing science capital in Canada. The Social Media sub-committee will utilise available resources, such as: press releases involving Canadian research, coordination with other groups (Discovery the Universe, RASC, FAAQ, etc.), the CASCA email exploder, and others to collect astronomy content that is relevant to our audiences. These will be disseminated via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other accounts deemed relevant. It is recommended that the sub-committee recruit a team of 5 to 8 people that would assist in carrying out these goals, and to meet frequently in order to maintain continuity and vision.

Social Media Team [Slack](#)

Our goals

- Build the Brand
- Inform the public
- Increase Science Capital in Canadians (Public trust in science, how much science someone interacts with, science literacy, awareness, interaction, conversation)

Build the Brand

Canadian Astronomy has a long history that includes many big discoveries built on a history of large and continued investments in institutions, observatories, infrastructure, and people. Yet, non-astronomers in Canada are unaware of these accomplishments. Social media will help to increase awareness, knowledge, and pride in Canadian astronomers. As the national organization for professional astronomers, CASCA can take a leading role in promoting that history and the present success of astronomy and astrophysics in Canada.

Inform the Public

Groups of people beyond the professional and amateur astronomy groups have demonstrated that they are interested in reading about and engaging with astronomy content (e.g., Discovery the Universe, RASC, FAAQ, media stories). CASCA is tapped directly into hundreds of experts in the many fields of astronomy and space sciences, and can help funnel information beyond our organization.

This also included event marketing as a major sub-category. Public events are the backbone of astronomy outreach: star parties, public talks, solar and lunar eclipses, etc. The social media accounts of CASCA can be used to amplify and engage with those advertising and engaging with these events.

Topics here can include general astronomy news, Canadian astronomical press releases, International press releases (for things that are really big), LRP communications, etc.

Increase Science Capital of Canadians

Science Capital is defined as all the knowledge, feelings, attitudes, interactions, and interest a person has related to science. Overall, this social media strategy aims to increase an individual's science capital in Canada. Thus, in general, we aim to provide information, to increase science literacy, to connect non-astronomers with professional astronomers and generate conversation, to create an overall positive attitude towards astronomy and science in general, and to increase public trust in science.

Audiences

What audiences do we want to talk to:

- CASCA Members who are involved in outreach
- The Amateur astronomy community (RASC, FAAQ, AAVSO)
- Parents and Teachers
- Journalists/Bloggers/Social media influencers
- Science enthusiasts

A Social Media Scan

CASCA's current social media presence:

Facebook	CASCA.Canada	Public talk announcements (CASCA, RASC), general outreach, posts about CASCA, Discover the Universe, ExoBites
Twitter	AstroCanada	Retweets, job postings, public talk announcements, Discover the Universe, ExoBites, Call for proposals
	CASCAPress	Last tweet 2014 - suggest this gets closed
	LRP2020	Long range planning, what to do with it now?

Instagram	CASCA.Canada	Perseverance, Black Lives Matter, CASCA AGM, Exoplanet contest
LinkedIn	Astro CASCA	No posts, who owns this?
YouTube	CASCA	

Additionally, the Graduate Student Committee has the following:

Facebook	cascagsc	Seminars, monthly coffee hour, public talks, CASCA grad student workshop
Twitter	casca_gsc	Black lives matter, coffee hour, public talks, telescope seminars
Instagram	casca_gsc	Seminars, monthly coffee hour, public talks, CASCA grad student workshop

Big Questions

1. Should we change all our social media accounts to have the same name? E.g. AstroCanada
2. How do we deal with French/English translations? We need someone on the social media committee to help us with this
3. What social media accounts should we have? What's missing from the list above?
4. Do we need social media management software?
5. Overarching strategy: how many of each type of post do we need per week (build brand, inform the public, internal communications)

Workflow and Coordination

The Social Media subcommittee will be in charge of collecting and disseminating information that align with the goals and audiences above via the social media accounts we have. Content will be collected in the following ways:

1. **Gathering other posts/events/news:** from press offices, local universities and social media accounts. Searching for content and posting/reposting
2. **CASCA email exploder:** When a CASCA member submits an item to the CASCA email exploder, there can be a check box that indicates they want it posted to social media. This will flag the social media team, who can schedule it to be posted. This will allow the Social Media team to have notice beforehand.

3. **Google Form:** We can set up a simple google form and send it to anyone from the CASCA member group that wants to post something. A member of the Social Media team will schedule their content, if it fits with this strategy including word count, pictures, hashtags, accounts to tag,
4. **Communication with press officers at local institutes:** whenever a publication by a Canadian astronomer results in a press release (either through the journal - Nature/Science/Nature Astronomy, or through the institute), this needs to be communicated to the Social Media Team for sharing this news.
5. **Communication with graduate school directors or the Graduate Student committee:** for publishing when someone graduates with their MSc or PhD whenever a PhD student graduates, a news item should be posted with information about the new doctor and the topic of their thesis. Is this too much? Let's ask the GSC.
6. **Communication with NSERC:** prize winners, fellowship/scholarship winners and large grant winners in astronomy should be announced through our media.
7. **Coordination with EPO committee:** large/virtual outreach events and astronomical phenomena should be announced
8. **Coordination with CASCA board:** summary AGM, CASCA prize winners, CASCA public lectures.
9. **Coordination with Canadian-funded observatories:** announcements of proposal deadlines and general time allocation results, posts specifically meant to communicate to the public that Canadians utilize these observatories
10. Perhaps as random fill up items (maybe once a month): "Did you know" items with information about Canadian institutes, their history, Canadian astronomers, etc.