

# CASCA EPO Committee Report

May 2024

Submitted by Julie Bolduc-Duval (Chair) on behalf of the committee

## 1. Membership

Julie Bolduc-Duval	Discover the Universe	2009-	Chair
Frédérique Baron	Université de Montréal	2019-2025	
Terry Bridges	Okanagan College	2022-2025	Chair of Westar subcommittee
Robert Cockcroft	McMaster University	2014-2024	Board representative
Veronika Dornan	McMaster University	2023-2024	Grad student committee representative
Daryl Janzen	University of Saskatchewan	2023-2026	
Viraja Khatu	CFHT	2023-2026	
Nathalie Ouellette	Université de Montréal	2019-2025	
Christa Van Laerhoven	Yukon Astronomical Society	2020-2026	

## 2. Committee activities in the last six months

### a. Westar sub-committee

Chair: Terry Bridges

Coordinator: Daniella Morrone (paid part-time employee)

Members: Christa Van Laerhoven, Rob Cockcroft and Frédérique Baron

Over the past two years we have been revamping the previous CASCA-Westar Lectureship program to better engage remote and underserved communities in a spirit of respect and reciprocity, and prepare CASCA lecturers for their visits to these communities. In the short term, we are focusing on remote Indigenous communities. Our new program is called the Westar Program.

Highlights of our work in the past year:

- We hired Daniella Morrone as the Westar Coordinator on a part-time basis for three years. Daniella is based in Toronto and has done a wonderful job developing the new Westar Program.
- The Westar Program website can be found here: [https://casca.ca/?page\\_id=7598](https://casca.ca/?page_id=7598)
- Earlier this year, we emailed the CASCA membership, past Westar visitors, Canadian physics and astronomy departments, and Canadian science/outreach organizations to let them know about the Westar Program.
- This year, we also put out a call to the CASCA membership for Westar visitors. We have received six applications to date and will be meeting with them this spring. We hope to connect astronomers and communities in the Fall of 2024.
- We have been preparing EDI and Indigenous training resources for future Westar visitors, as well as hands-on activities that Westar visitors can use during their visits.
- We are meeting with Canadian organizations that do similar outreach work, such as Visions of Science, Connected North, and Discover the Universe, to share resources and connections that these organizations have with remote communities.
- We will be giving a presentation at the 2024 CASCA AGM, to update the CASCA community about our work.

**b. Discover the Universe**

Lead: Julie Bolduc-Duval

Discover the Universe worked very hard to prepare schools in Eastern and Atlantic Canada for the total solar eclipse of 2024. This work was done on many fronts: distributing 300,000 eclipse glasses, training 1000s of teachers, creating educational content in both languages, helping with the logistics of getting ready for the eclipse with many partners... It was by far the biggest project ever for Discover the Universe. The next few years look promising with a PromoScience grant which was accepted for 2024-2026.

**c. Total Solar Eclipse 2024**

Many committee members were actively involved in preparation for the total solar eclipse in their own institution. We all agreed it was not worth spending time creating something new as CASCA, but Julie started a Community of Practice in the spring of 2023. We met twice in the last 6 months, including one session with eclipse media training by Nathalie Ouellette. This training was fantastic and we all agreed a more general media training should be offered again to all CASCA members in different settings.

As a committee, we discussed the lessons learned from the eclipse. While it was a success in many regions, there were definitely many places where fear took over and prevented schools from fully engaging with the eclipse. Some schools refused certified eclipse glasses from astronomy institutions and prevented teachers from teaching about it. This is very upsetting. Also, we agreed it would be worth keeping our expertise and information together for the next eclipses, even though a total solar eclipse will not happen again over Canada for 20 years.

**d. Social media**

For now, the social media for CASCA are inactive and no one is interested in taking on this project. Does CASCA even need to be active on social media? The goal for now is to keep the information from the previous social media sub-committee and leave it as is until the Board wants this as a priority or someone is interested in pushing this project forward.

**3. Future projects**

Now that the eclipse is past and there will be more time available for many committee members, the focus of the committee will be the launch of the Westar Program in the fall, and the creation of science communication training for all CASCA members. The exact format of this training is to be determined.