

# CASCA EPO Committee | December 2022 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 May 11 2021 to December 1 2022. The committee met (online) twice during this period of time: July 13th 2022 and October 26th 2022.

## 1. Current Membership

**Chair:** Nathalie Ouellette (2022-2025), Université de Montréal

Frédérique Baron (2022-2025), Université de Montréal

Terry Bridges (2022-2025), Okanagan College

Mike Chen (2020-2023), University of Victoria

Robert Cockcroft (2014-2023), University of Western Ontario, **Chair of Westar Subcommittee and Board Representative**

Steffani Grondin (2022-2023), University of Toronto, **GSC Representative**

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

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

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

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

**ex-officio:** Leslie Sage, CASCA Press Officer

**IAU National Outreach Coordinator:** Steven Pellarin, University of Windsor (not a formal member of the committee)

## 2. Changes to the membership

We welcomed Terry Bridges and Steffani Grondin as new members of the EPO Committee. Steffani is the Graduate Student Committee representative with us.

We also worked on finding a new IAU National Outreach Coordinator (NOC), after Sharon Morsink left the position earlier this year. We were very pleased to accept Steven Pellarin's application for the position. While the IAU NOC does not need to be a member of the EPO Committee now does the person holding this position automatically join the EPO Committee, they receive an invitation to each of our committee meetings and work closely with us on a number of initiatives.

After two years as the Chair of the CASCA EPO Committee, Nathalie Ouellette is planning on stepping down from this role in May 2023. She will remain on the Committee as a regular member until the end of her term in 2025. The rest of the Committee has been notified so that they may consider taking up the duties of the Chair.

## 3. Committee activities

### a. CASTOR EPO Activities

Nathalie has been helping coordinate EPO efforts for the CASTOR Telescope (<https://www.castormission.org/>) over the last few years, and put together a working plan in Spring 2022. Other members of the CASTOR collaboration have formed an EPO Task Force to help out, and they are looking for anyone interested in helping with *content creation* on this front, as

this is what truly needs work at the moment. Anyone interested in helping should contact Nathalie, Pat Côté ([patrick.cote@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca](mailto:patrick.cote@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca)) or Tyrone Woods ([tyrone.woods@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca](mailto:tyrone.woods@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca)) directly.

## **b. CASCA 2023 Teachers' Workshop**

Most years, Discover the Universe and partners organise a Teachers' Workshop during the CASCA AGM. There is a concern about teacher availability due to the workshop being later in the year (mid-June) in 2023. Evening or weekend events are being explored. It is also possible that this workshop would not take place at the same venue as the CASCA meeting, but it would not be too far either. The two events happening at the same place is usually a big draw for the teachers as it allows them to interact with astronomers and hear about their research. Discussions are ongoing to determine if the workshop is worth organising given the circumstances. Teachers are currently being consulted.

## **c. Recommendation for a CASCA National Outreach Coordinator**

Following previous general discussions and a LRP2020 recommendation, the EPO Committee is exploring the possibility of putting together a paid Outreach Coordinator for CASCA that would support national initiatives. This could be combined with the part-time position that would handle the Westar Program mentioned below in section 4.a. Nathalie is currently discussing the possibility of such a National Outreach Coordinator with key people in the astronomy outreach landscape in Canada to see what people would be looking for in such a position and what are some possible mechanisms by which this position could be funded. After this consultation phase, Nathalie is hoping to present her findings and the EPO Committee's subsequent recommendation to the CASCA Board. In the mean time, the EPO Committee determined a list of potential tasks such a position could include.

### **Potential Tasks for a CASCA Outreach Coordinator**

1. Manage CASCA's social media platforms and website
2. Support and amplify press releases from Canadian astronomers/institutions
3. Lead or support national-level outreach activities and events (IAU initiatives, RASC collaborations, large scale astronomical events like eclipses or meteor showers, dark sky initiatives, etc.)
4. Lead the Westar program activities
5. Assist for the EPO segments of the CASCA AGM, including the public lecture and the Teachers' Workshop
6. Be a resource for education or media requests from the general public (public or school talks), journalists (media interviews) and astronomers (science communication advice, slide decks, visuals for presentations)
7. Manage the EPO activities reporting form
8. Support the CASCA EPO committee and Discover the Universe in their other activities

## **d. 2024 Solar Eclipse**

The Eclipse Quebec team has created a website ([www.eclipsequebec.ca](http://www.eclipsequebec.ca)) and is working on an application that will give people key info about the eclipse (timing, location, safety tips, etc.). They also hired a part-time Project Manager that will help move their efforts along. Discover the Universe recently learned that they have received a donation from the Trottier Family Foundation for 150 000 glasses, which is very exciting! Prince Edward Island has also started a new eclipse committee. It should only cost about \$10 000 to equip all students in that province with eclipse glasses. RASC has a National Committee with a few outside contributors (including Julie and Nathalie) run by Randy Atwood. Their last meeting was on October 27, 2022. One concern for amateur astronomer groups is that many of them will be out of Canada

to optimise their own viewing during the eclipse. Randy went to a AAS Eclipse Workshop and will hopefully be able to share some lessons learned there. The Ontario Taskforce has also been quite active looking to purchase their own eclipse glasses and planning events at different universities.

#### **e. EPO Activities Reporting Form**

Last year, the University of Calgary handled this again, but we knew this would not be a long term solution. Nathalie will be handling this through a Google Form that will serve the same purpose. Ideally, a link to this form would be left on the EPO Committee's page on the CASCA website. Regardless, Nathalie will send out the form in January 2023 to collect members' activities that took place in 2022.

### **4. Subcommittee reports**

#### **a. CASCA Westar Lectureship Subcommittee**

**Chair:** Rob Cockcroft

**Members:** Frédérique Baron, Christa Van Laerhoven, Terry Bridges

Individual consultation meetings have wrapped up and were summarised in an executive summary shared with the EPO Committee and with the CASCA Board. The Westar subcommittee met with the CASCA Board in September. We are now waiting for some clarifications on CASCA's budgetary constraints for a potential part-time employee who would handle the Westar Program and further discussion within the Board expected to happen in December.

#### **b. IAU Activities**

**Lead:** Steven Pellarin

The IAU NameExoWorlds Contest was launched in August during the IAU GA. This contest encourages people to submit suggestions for the names of 20 exoplanets that will be observed by the JWST in the next year or so. Steven created a committee to help with content creation, promotion, contest management and judging. A Canadian website has also been created: <http://www.nameexoworldscanada.com>. Julie Bolduc-Duval also made a promotion page (mostly for educators) on the Discover the Universe website. The initial deadline was November 10, but has now been moved to December 11. Submissions must be accompanied by an event organised by the team (potentially with the involvement of an astronomer). A Google form was created to try and recruit astronomers in Canada who could potentially be involved (6 or 7 people have filled it out). We are aware of at least half a dozen submissions that have been completed or are in the works.

#### **c. Discover the Universe**

**Lead:** Julie Bolduc-Duval

In the last few months, Discover the Universe (DU) has been active creating educational resources and taking a leadership role in education for the total solar eclipse 2024. An eclipse booth was created, and it was seen at three different teachers' conferences this Fall (in two provinces). In addition to all this, DU continues to offer online programs and is currently running the annual observational challenge with 175+ teachers from across the country.

#### **d. Social Media Subcommittee**

**Chair:** Jesse Rogerson

**Members:** Mike Chen, Christa Van Laerhoven

The SM team was waiting on a few key pieces to be in place (such as having an email address connected to the CASCA website social media form) before moving forward with their social media plans. Jesse sent out an email introducing the form and a call for volunteers for social media content creation to the CASCA exploder. He also built a Google Sheet to try and manage content. The committee is using the application Buffer to schedule posts on social media platforms. More posts have been coming out recently (a mix of JWST news and NameExoWorlds contest info). The Graduate Student Committee (through Steffani Grondin and Pamela Freeman) are looking to collaborate with the SM subcommittee, so the team is looking to make that connection soon.

#### **5. Institutional Reports**

##### **a. McMaster University**

McMaster now has a portable planetarium to supplement the bricks-and-mortar McCallion Planetarium. The portable one is being used specifically to help reach underserved and underrepresented communities. Both planetaria are operated by astronomy graduate students.

##### **b. Université de Montréal**

The Trottier Institute for Research on Exoplanets (iREx) recruited their first science communication summer intern as part of their vibrant summer internship program. The summer intern worked on videos about astronomy and exoplanets, gave presentations to groups of kids, hosted an astronomy booth and activity at a science festival and helped the team with social media and website content. This science communication internship will continue to be included in iREx's summer internship program in future years.