

# CASCA EPO Committee | May 2023 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 2022 to May 31 2023. The committee met (online) twice during this period of time: January 31st 2023 and May 3rd 2023.

## 1. Current Membership

**Chair:** Nathalie Ouellette (2019-2025), Université de Montréal

Frédérique Baron (2019-2025), 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

**Jesse Rogerson** has left the EPO Committee and his role as the Chair of the Social Media Subcommittee. We thank him for his great work, especially in helping kick off CASCA's social media efforts since 2020.

Many members have terms coming to an end this year: Mike Chen, Robert Cockcroft, Steffani Grondin (a new GSC Representative should be named after the CASCA AGM), Phi Langill, and Christa Van Laerhoven. We will be checking with them in the coming weeks if they would like to renew their terms or not. Regardless, **there will be a few vacancies to fill in the committee**, and we look forward to recruiting new members soon.

**After three years as the Chair of the CASCA EPO Committee, Nathalie Ouellette is stepping down from this role.** She will remain on the Committee as a regular member until the end of her term in 2025. The rest of the EPO Committee is considering the best option to replace her moving forward and will inform the CASCA Board of their recommendation.

## 3. Committee activities

### a. CASCA 2023 Teachers' Workshop

#### (i) Teachers' Workshop

After gauging the interest of the local teaching community in British Columbia, Julie Bolduc-Duval put together an organizing committee for a Teachers' Workshop in Penticton

that will take place on June 12th 2023, right before the CASCA AGM. The registration page can be found here: <https://www.discovertheuniverse.ca/events/full-day-teachers-workshop-casca-2023>. Nearly 30 participants have already signed up. Many members of the EPO Committee will be on site and presenting during the workshop, along with other astronomers. Logistical organisation has been quite easy, thanks to Okanagan College's help! The day's program is now settled, and the different sections will be led by specific people with others supporting and will include both presentations and hands-on activities.

## **(ii) EPO Session**

Five abstracts were submitted for the 90 minute EPO session (in parallel with the ISM session) during the CASCA AGM. The Westar committee will have a 30 minute slot to discuss the restructuring of the program. The other four talks will have 12+3 minutes for both their talk and questions.

## **b. Discussion about a CASCA National Outreach and/or Westar Coordinator**

Nathalie reached out to several different outreach professionals/enthusiasts and organisation representatives to gauge the community's thoughts on the creation of such a position and if they would be willing to contribute some funding for it. Responses could be put into roughly three categories: 1) Larger organisations that were willing to put an amount on the order of \$5000 to a pot to help fund this position, 2) smaller organisations that saw the merit of the position, but didn't have the financial bandwidth to contribute, and 3) smaller organisations or individuals who imagined a buy-in or subscription model where they would put a smaller amount in (a few \$100) in exchange for being able to use the NOC more directly as a resource for event planning. It was pointed out that many of these institutions have their own Boards who will want to see a direct benefit for their institution if they were to contribute money to this role. A way to structure this position that was also mentioned was to have them working part time at an institution or university already who would write up an MoU with CASCA so that this person could spend part of their time on CASCA duties. This would have the advantage of having the person covered by the benefits of the institution as an employee and being in a more collaborative work environment with colleagues.

The subject of what this person's profile might be was also discussed. Located in Western Canada? Bilingual (English/French)? Indigenous? With an astronomy background? It may be hard to find someone that fits all these characteristics. Nathalie also discussed previous efforts for having a NOC around 2009 for the IYA with Jayanne English, but confirms that that position looked quite different. Julie also mentioned that science communication as a field has also changed immensely since then. The committee agrees that it is worthwhile to continue exploring this initiative. +

Parallel discussions for a Westar Coordinator took place within the Westar subcommittee, the EPO committee, with partners and the CASCA Board. \$30k from the Board is to be allocated to this position; over what time period this money will be used is to be decided by the Westar subcommittee. A job listing is being written up, in the hopes of the position being filled by August. The subcommittee is looking for a 3 year position, with hours front-loaded and fundraising as one of the tasks to try and increase hours over time and perhaps extend the position beyond 3 years. The EPO Committee mentioned concerns about the small number of hours for the position, both for recruitment and impact, but knows that the CASCA Board is well aware of these issues. All involved parties will endeavour to make the most out of this pilot position and show the value of paid outreach/community engagement employees within CASCA.

## **d. 2023/2024 Solar Eclipses**

Nathalie was invited to give an overview of the Canadian activities around the 2024 solar

eclipse at the AAS's special Eclipse Session. This includes activities happening at the Université de Montréal (purchase of 70k eclipse glasses, launch of an ambassadors training program to empower UdeM students to lead their own events, a first event on October 14th during the partial/annular eclipse) and in Quebec ([www.eclipsequebe.ca](http://www.eclipsequebe.ca), a free application) to. The Committee found out that the person in charge of the eclipse in PEI unfortunately had to step back from the project in late 2022, but activities have picked back up in the Maritimes since then. Julie, Discover the Universe (whose main current activities are around the eclipse) and the Dunlap Institute have received funding from the Trottier Foundation for 250k eclipse glasses. She is also continuing to lead educational efforts on the national education working group for the eclipse. Rob mentioned hitting a bit of a wall at McMaster to get more support for eclipse events, but he has secured funding for about 5k glasses for the McMaster community. Julie also organised a webinar on the eclipse for CASCA members that took place on June 2, 2023. More webinars will likely follow to engage the CASCA community. Different organisations across Canada are exploring potential corporate sponsorships for large quantities of glasses, but none have come to fruition yet, to the Committee's knowledge.

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

Nathalie sent out the form in mid-January as a Google Form. It contained all the same questions as last year's except the section about the impact of the pandemic, given that things are starting to get back to normal and hybrid/virtual events are just a part of our reality now. 27 responses were collected through the Google Form, and one person submitted their response via email. Some people commented on how the Google Form was not well suited for all types of outreach activities. This is true, but it would also take quite a bit of time and effort to create a form that worked optimally for all outreach events. The committee may want to think about if they wish to modify the form, what they do with the collected response, how useful these responses are, and how much time should be put into this effort giving its usefulness.

### **4. Subcommittee reports**

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

**Chair:** Terry Bridges

**Members:** Frédérique Baron, Christa Van Laerhoven, Rob Cockcroft

Terry has taken over as Chair for the time being. The sub-committee submitted the executive summary and report for the new Westar Program to the CASCA Board. The CASCA Board responding and agreed to make available \$30k for a Westar Coordinator position (see point 3.b. above), Otherwise, the subcommittee is not currently planning to organise any Westar Visits/Lectures this year. They would rather wait for a deployment of the new Westar Program, but they are already thinking about what that would look like. They will be presenting this new program during a 30 minute talk at the next CASCA AGM EPO session.

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

**Lead:** Steven Pellarin

About 580 entries were received internationally by the IAU for the NameExoWorlds Contest by the December 11th deadline. Canada received 16 admissible entries, placing it in the Top 7 for most entries internationally. The judging panel which was composed of Nathalie Ouellette, Sharon Morsink (U of Alberta) and Mary Beth Laychak (CFHT), but not Steven Pellarin (the IAU NOC) since he was part of a proposal, went over the Canadian entries and met in mid-January to select the Canadian winning proposals. They selected one winner and two back-ups, or honourable mentions, by the deadline of January 22nd. The IAU international judging panel is

currently finalising its winner selection and should announce them very soon. It must be noted that several different countries may have a proposal for the same exoplanet, and only one will be selected, so not all countries will have a winning proposal. The international organising committee is also planning to distribute certificates of participations to all submitting teams to congratulate them for their involvement.

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

**Lead:** Julie Bolduc-Duval

In addition to eclipse initiatives (leadership in everything Toronto eastward, especially educational programs), Discovery the Universe is working on resource development in the background. This includes the Climate App (in collaboration with Nick Cowan, McGill) and “Des exoplanètes à l’école” (in collaboration with iREx with QC provincial funding, now available in French with English incoming). Unfortunately, a submitted proposal with the AESTQ (teachers’ association) for the 2024 Eclipse to the QC government did not receive funding.

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

**Chair:** Jesse Rogerson

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

Nothing to report.