



**September 2016 - Volume 11, Number 9**

We welcome your comments on the *Bulletin*.  
Email them to the Editor, David Garner at  
[bulletin@rasc.ca](mailto:bulletin@rasc.ca)

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## News from the Society Office

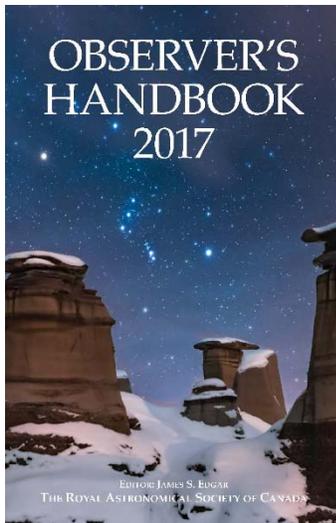
by [Randy Attwood](#), RASC Executive Director

**Society Office Closures:** Please note the Society Office will be closed on Monday, September 5<sup>th</sup> for Labour Day. Enjoy a safe long weekend!



**NEW** Item: **Observer's Calendar 2017**

A beautiful calendar showcasing RASC members' astro-images with information on what's up in the sky tonight. A perfect gift for the beginner and a must-have for the experienced observer. **Now available for purchase!**



**NEW** Item: **Observer's Handbook 2017**

The *Observer's Handbook*, a 352-page guide published annually by The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, has come to be regarded as the standard North American reference for data on the sky. The Handbook material is of interest to astronomers, scientists, teachers, students, science writers, campers, Scout and Guide leaders, and interested readers. The Handbook forms the basis of many secondary and university astronomy courses, and it should be in every library.

The 2017 Handbook is **available for Pre-Order**, and will be sent out to all RASC members at the end of October/early November.

**\*NOTE to Centres: Please place your OC 2017 orders with Julia Neeser**  
**[mempub@rasc.ca](mailto:mempub@rasc.ca)**\*

## **Response to Response to “Revisiting an Old Question: Where are the Women?”**

by **Mary Lou Whitehorne**, Halifax Centre and Past National President

I read with interest Luca Vanzella's recent and pertinent *Bulletin* article (August 2016 - Volume 11, Number 8), which was written in response to Charles Ennis' article in the July 2016 edition of the *Bulletin*.

I am delighted and heartened to read about all the positive things happening in the Edmonton Centre. Kudos to Edmonton Centre! I assume the situation is similar in the RASC's other Centres, especially as related to the RASC being a welcoming and inclusive Society. I believe firmly that things have improved considerably during my thirty years of RASC membership. This is good news. We have a Society of which we can all be justifiably proud. I am enormously proud of the RASC, its 148-year history of good works, and the continuing valuable contributions made by its dedicated, energetic and generous, community-minded volunteers. It is RASC members who make the RASC great.

But this is not to say that untoward things no longer happen in the RASC. Certainly, there have been some untoward events at recent General Assemblies. Our newly minted anti-harassment policy came about as a result of events a couple of years ago. While not everyone may agree with everything Charles Ennis has written, we should all be glad that he has so effectively drawn our attention to such an important matter. This is something that needs to be discussed openly throughout the Society so that we can further improve our beloved RASC, and ensure that it continues to be truly open and welcoming to all.

I will state here and now that I am biased. I am a woman in a predominantly male organization. I will also state that just because someone has not personally witnessed inappropriate behaviour, it does not mean it has not happened. Such behaviour can be subtle, covert, and passed off as a joke. But make no mistake: it has a cumulative and very negative effect on its target. Charles Ennis' article used some strong language. I believe this is precisely because Charles has witnessed, over his career as a police officer, the powerful negative impacts of inappropriate behaviour on the victims of such behaviour. It is marginalizing, demeaning, it undermines a person's self worth, and diminishes their perceived value as a person in society at large.

The following remarks are limited to my experiences in the RASC. I have also seen and experienced similar things outside of the RASC. Here is something that I have witnessed on many occasions. The female voice does not carry equal credibility

with the male voice. During meetings and presentations, women are often “talked over” by the men. This is a subtle form of disrespect, and it undermines a person’s confidence. Some years ago, there was an active female member of National Council who stepped back from this level of involvement for this very reason. She described it as “too much testosterone,” at the time. At almost the same time, another very competent female member declined to join the National Council because a male member had been acting inappropriately towards her, “creeping her out,” as she described it. In both cases, these women chose to “not rock the boat,” by taking a stand. Perhaps we should think about why they made that particular choice. Why would they not want to cause a fuss? How many members of national council at the time were even aware of their decisions, much less ask why these experienced and intelligent women declined to participate at the national level? Is there something we can learn from this?

Thirty years ago I was a young, and some would say vibrant, woman, and I experienced a number of inappropriate remarks and actions. I received comments about my body, and about my clothing. I was accused of “using my feminine wiles” to gain access to the university observatory. Are men ever accused of “using their male wiles” to gain access to any resource? I was asked why I “bothered my *pretty little head* about astronomy.” I was told I should be home, baking cookies and knitting baby booties. Further to this, I was told that women who didn’t know their proper place should be stoned. I had my behind grabbed by a well-respected member of this Society. Did I do something to deserve all this? Not that I know of. But hey, I’m a woman, so maybe I did. I dressed conservatively—a lesson I learned very early, for to not do so seemed to invite such inappropriate overtures. It was much later that I learned, unless I was very sure of the people around me, to modify my behaviour and refrain from engaging in repartee. Joking with the guys seemed to somehow also invite unwanted advances. Why? Can anybody tell me?

To everyone reading this I ask: how would you feel if you were told publicly that you “left a greasy mark wherever you sat?” I was the only woman in the room. The entire room of men laughed at this remark made at my expense. I failed to

see the joke. How is this funny? Why did nobody but me see this as inappropriate?

As a woman running for Centre president, how could I ever forget the public pronouncement, made at a Centre meeting, that “no matter her competence or intelligence, no woman could ever effectively lead an organization?” Really? Needless to say, these things stick with a person. Even when that person (me) becomes the RASC national president, such comments linger.

OK. That’s the end of my rant. I’m older now than I was then. I’ve taken my lumps. I’ve been outspoken and assertive. There’s no point in stopping now. It is my belief that there is much less unacceptable behaviour in the RASC compared to thirty years ago. That said, “much less” does not mean none.

I write this simply to make the point that disrespectful, inappropriate, exclusionary, marginalizing and demeaning behaviour does not have to be overt and glaringly obvious. More often it is subtle and covert. But it still happens. It is hurtful and can be very damaging—and not only to the victim. We need to be aware of it, and on guard against it. And when it happens, we must act on it. We owe it to ourselves and everyone else. Anything less than this can only lessen us, and our Society.

## Thinking about Diversity

by [Janet Tulloch](#), RASC, Ottawa Centre

In rereading the article by Charles Ennis, “Where are the Women?” in the July 2016 *Bulletin* and the response by some members of the Edmonton centre in the August 2016 *Bulletin*, it seems to me that Ennis makes the stronger argument. In 2016, more than 4 out of 5 members are still male. *Point* as the French would say. Why? Many of the guys in my centre have been super in helping me learn more about telescope use, observing, and astrophotography methods. But what happens when women and minorities from the larger community, excited by something they’ve seen at a star party arrive at a monthly meeting? First, they

rarely see people like themselves up at the podium or even in the room. Second, they are sometimes greeted with an agenda that includes complex mini lectures and graphs suitable for first year university science students. This type of presentation is due to the history of RASC as both a club for amateurs and a society which includes members who are science professionals – an identity issue that is not unrelated to the diversity issue. And third, because women are still so outnumbered, meetings can often feel like an evening at a guys' science club. I will return to this last point below.

Let's look at the first problem from the point of view of the terms "club" and "society" as two different models of RASC. From what I can tell from reading the history of RASC, our forefathers never intended to create two different models. Rather they kept the term "society" in the RASC name. However, people within RASC use the terms interchangeably but they are not the same. There are other meanings associated with these terms that will help us to understand why there is a lack of diversity within RASC. The term "club" suggests like-minded people. In fact, I've heard this phrase used around our Centre. The term society has a broader, more inclusive reach, something more representational of the larger Canadian community outside of the RASC membership.

Despite best efforts, it is not easy to balance the club and society aspects of RASC at monthly meetings – especially if organizers draw only from their own constituency (what we might call the club model where members sign up to present a topic of their interest to other members). In recent years, my Centre's meetings frequently drew speakers from outside the membership (the society model where members mix with the larger community), and brought more female professionals as well as indigenous speakers to the podium. These individuals were not always scientists but as professionals in their own fields, they typically had something fascinating to contribute to the cultural aspects of astronomy. Unfortunately, some members complained that bringing in "outsiders" was not what they were looking for from the meetings. This strategy of diversification, as well as broadening the membership's understanding of astronomy, created a more varied meeting, not only in allowing female and

minority members to see themselves more frequently reflected at the podium but also in the type of presentations that were offered. The strategy also had another important impact. Many of these “outsider” presentations were advertised widely in the larger community setting record levels for meeting attendance, thereby drawing a more heterogeneous crowd.

Second, presentations that are essentially mini lectures with graphs suitable for first year university science students do fulfil the society aspect of our organization as traditionally understood as an association that includes professional scientists. As an academic who is a member of academic societies within my own field, I would argue that these types of presentations are still part of the “club” or like-minded model. There is a certain amount of background knowledge assumed by the speaker and there is a specialized vocabulary associated with the discipline. Only those who are part of the profession and follow the various conversations within the discipline can appreciate the discussion. Further, without meaning any disrespect to my learned colleagues, I note that many of these scientific presentations tend to be given by older white males (and sometimes younger white guys). These presentations can draw a large audience, but it is not a heterogeneous one due to some of the stats we read in Ennis’ article concerning female graduates in STEM programs. As “discovery through the scientific method” is one of RASC’s stated core values, perhaps more can be done to advertise the scientific presentations to students in local university science courses, thus engaging the broader society to fulfil another of RASC’s core values, “enrichment of our community through diversity”.

Third, in my experience with non-profit organizations and academic institutions, diversity does not just happen. The organization must be committed to this goal through policy changes, existing stakeholder buy-in, and in some cases, financial or in-kind incentives. In other words, there must be an active promotion of this goal throughout the organization, especially by the leadership. The argument advanced by Edmonton centre members that “positions of leadership [are filled by] those whose talents and personalities have identified them as leaders regardless of gender” is, quite frankly, disingenuous because it relies on a passive

solution to the problem. Hiring committees within universities used this exact argument to consistently hire white, abled, male colleagues despite the large pool of available, qualified, female academics pouring out of Humanities and Social Sciences graduate schools in the 1980s and beyond. It wasn't until governments "strongly encouraged" or subsidized Canadian universities to set up Equity departments to collect and share hard numbers regarding new hires for core faculty that hiring committees began to suddenly find female and minority candidates as qualified as their white, male colleagues.

One of the toughest problems faced by female scholars, and this point is relevant to RASC or any organization with a history that goes back more than 100 years, was that the lack of women in the history of scholarship had created a cultural environment within universities whereby male scholars felt an intense personal ownership not only of specialized knowledge areas but also the methods by which that knowledge was acquired. In a similar way, I wonder if the lack of women in the history of RASC has created a cultural environment within our Centres that prevents the full participation of women and minorities?

I recently asked a retired friend who has her own observatory what RASC might offer in order for her to join? She replied that she was mostly interested in the wonder of the night sky, that she was not so interested in being able to name all the constellations (never mind the Messier catalogue), but that she was interested in our ancestors' relationship to the night sky. Most of all, she said she wanted to feel a relationship or a connection with the night sky that she thought many people (including herself) who live in urban centres had lost. When I contacted a former member from our Centre who is a member of a minority to ask why he had left, he stated something similar: "There is too much emphasis on judging/quantifying/labelling and not enough emphasis on the human experience; indeed, I found there was almost a lack of self-awareness of what we actually do when we observe."

In conclusion, if we expect to fulfil the value of "enrichment of our community through diversity" perhaps one of the first things we can do is to create a bilingual website on our home page. We need to ask ourselves how in 2016 does

unilingualism, indeed uniformity, serve our stated vision: “To be Canada’s premiere organization of amateur and professional astronomers, promoting astronomy to all?” [<http://rasc.ca/society>]. At this point in our history, as a majority of English-speaking, white males, we are simply a club.

Janet Tulloch. PhD  
RASC Ottawa Centre

## **Volunteers Wanted – Information Technology**

by **Denis Grey**, RASC, Toronto Centre

The Information Technology is looking for volunteers to help out with a number of support and development projects that we have underway. We are looking for skilled individuals with a command of PHP and web technologies to assist with a number of projects including:

- Centre website support
- Society website support
- Upgrades and testing of our eCommerce platform
- Maintenance and extension of our main site at [www.rasc.ca](http://www.rasc.ca)
- Training and orientation of members and staff

If you have some background and six or more hours a month to share and would like to help out, please contact the IT Committee Chair, Denis Grey at [dgrey@rasc.ca](mailto:dgrey@rasc.ca).

## Yukon Centre Highlights for September

by [Anthony Gucciardo](#), RASC, Yukon Centre



- Monday 2016 September 05:

Guest Speaker Christa Van Laerhoven: Planetary Scientist and Orbital Dynamicist from the [Canadian Institute for Theoretical Astrophysics](#) will cover the **TOPIC:** **“What does OSIRIS-REx hope to find on asteroid Benu?”**



- Monday 2016 September 19:

Guest Speaker Charles Ennis, National Secretary of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada will speak to the Society members and cover the **TOPICS: *Measuring Light Pollution / How can the RASC: Yukon Centre have an impact on the Yukon? / Small Observatories: How can the Society get the most out of its new observatory?***



- Tuesday 2016 September 20:

Guest Speaker Charles Ennis will give a public talk at the Burnt Toast Café in downtown Whitehorse and cover the **TOPICS: “Light Pollution: Preserving Yukon’s Natural Environment”**

A brown-bag session with ATCO, YEC, City of Whitehorse, Yukon Gov’t Property Management, Dep’t of Education, Yukon Gov’t Community Services, YCS, TIAY, and a few of the aurora viewing tourism operators will be held at the City of Whitehorse boardroom.

- Friday & Saturday 2016 September 23 & 24:

The Yukon Centre is invited to participate in a public outreach event, at the Kluane National Park and Reserve, for Parks Canada. The Society is contracted to offer two night-sky presentations (star gazing with telescopes) along with a workshop: a 90 minute Powerpoint presentation/Activity during the day related to the following topics: The Northern Lights, Observing the Stars, and The Challenges in Astronomy North of 60.

Our new observatory site will be laying gravel and pouring concrete in the coming weeks. We anticipate the site will be fully operational by mid-September 2016! Thanks to the help of 60 cadets and officers from the Whitehorse Cadet Training Centre and the Takhini Hot Springs Ltd. Please watch the following link to know more: <https://www.facebook.com/WhitehorseCTC/videos/1166974906707309/>

## **Asteroids with a Canadian Connection**

by **Eric Briggs**, RASC, Toronto Centre

The following have been added to the list of asteroids with Canadian connections:

(129973) Michaeldaly = 1999 UW25

Discovered at Catalina on 1999-10-30 by CSS.

Michael Daly (b. 1965) is a professor of planetary science at York University and is the lead scientist for the OSIRIS-REx Laser Altimeter. Prior to this, he was the lead engineer for the development of Phoenix MET, Canada's first instruments to operate on the surface of Mars. [Ref: Minor Planet Circ. 10121]

<http://rasc.ca/asteroids/129973>

(22378) Gaherty = 1994 AY10 = 1998 HG81

Discovered at Kitt Peak on 1994-01-08 by Spacewatch.

Geoff Gaherty (1941-2016) was an amateur astronomer who wrote about observing and won the Chant Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada in 2008. Name suggested by R. and P. Jedicke. [Ref: Minor Planet Circ. 10120]

<http://rasc.ca/asteroids/22378>

## Thank You to our Sponsors!

by **Julia Neeser**, RASC Marketing Coordinator

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada has a unique partnership with our friends in the astronomy industry. We are offering companies the distinction of becoming a charter sponsor of the RASC, Canada's pre-eminent amateur astronomy organization. This offer is available only to those industry leaders who recognize the value in being associated with the amateur astronomy community.

<http://www.rasc.ca/rasc-sponsors>.



## What's New in the Sky

Members are encouraged to check out the **Northern Skies** section of the RASC website. Thanks to Gary Boyle for keeping us all in the know. Julia Neeser creates "The Solar System" monthly with data from James Edgar's "Skies" newspaper articles at <http://www.rasc.ca/observing>.



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