



The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

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INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY COMMITTEE CREATED

Over the past few years, the RASC has signed up roughly 1,000 new members a year, a tribute to the outreach efforts of our many volunteers. The problem is, the same number of people leave the RASC every year. We have a retention problem. I've heard many members say, "If people are interested in astronomy, they will find us." They're right; they do find us. The problem is, many don't stay.

Centres have devoted a lot of time to creating excellent observing programs to motivate members get them involved. And still, 1,000 people walk out the door. What's going on? What are we missing?

One problem is that we are not seen as being as inclusive as we could be. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) organizations tend to have low numbers of women and minorities in their ranks, and the RASC is no exception, even though at public outreach events, we see that many of these people are interested in astronomy.

Organizational diversity makes good sense. Diversity drives innovation and will make our Society more creative overall, which can foster growth. Statistics prove that organizations with high gender diversity are 15 percent more likely to outperform their com-

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ROBOTIC TELESCOPE UPDATE

Having a remote telescope located far from our Canadian winters offers advantages in capturing unique celestial events. Last month, the founding team members of the Robotic Telescope Project astrophotography group set up the framing and imaging plan to capture Comet 46P/Wirtanen as it passed near the Pleiades (M45) on the early morning of December 15. Once the Moon set, we took a series of frames using the wide-field configuration with a modified Canon EOS 6D DSLR camera and a 200mm lens. The resulting image was processed by Daniel Meek of the Calgary Centre.

— Paul Mortfield, Robotic Telescope Project Manager

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CONTRIBUTORS

David Garner, Editor

Susan Dickinson, Copy Editor

Janice McLean, Design

with contributions from:

Charles Ennis, 2nd Vice President

Paul Mortfield, Robotic Telescope Project Manager

Randy Attwood
Executive Director, RASC

Allister Ling, Edmonton Centre

Curt Nason, Secretary
New Brunswick Centre

Dave Chapman, Chair, RASC
Observing Committee and Emeritus
Editor *Observer's Handbook* (2012-16)

Jim Hesser, Victoria Centre

CONTACT US

We invite all Centres to contribute articles about their latest activities. Have you had any public star parties, award ceremonies, special events or observatory activities? Photos are welcome. Please send articles and pictures to newsletter@rasc.ca.

PULL OUT NEWSLETTER TO VIEW SKYNEWS STAR CHART

RASC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PLAN TO BE AT THE 2019 GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN TORONTO IN JUNE

The 2019 General Assembly will be held in Toronto at York University from June 13 to 16. The theme will be Education, Public Outreach and Citizen Science in Astronomy. The General Assembly will be held jointly with members of the American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO).

Highlights of the 2019 General Assembly include:

- Two days of paper sessions by invited speakers and RASC and AAVSO members.
- A half day of workshops for members to discuss various outreach and astronomy activities: Education; Public Outreach; Citizen Science; Light Pollution Abatement; Member Retention; Running a Centre; and more.
- The Ruth Northcott lecture will be given by **James Hansen, author of *First Man: The Life of Neil A. Armstrong* (2005)**. It is a biography of the first man to walk on the Moon. A movie based on the book was released in 2018.
- Longtime RASC member David Levy's autobiography, *A Nightwatchman's Journey*, will be introduced.
- During the weekend, a program will be offered to members of the public. Families will be invited to attend hands-on astronomy activities and introductory lectures as part of a Father's Day Weekend Astronomy Adventure.
- Evening observing at York University's Allan I. Carswell Observatory.
- After the General Assembly, there will be tours to local sites, such as the David Dunlap Observatory.

Recently, two subway stations were opened at the north and south ends of the campus, making York University accessible from all over the city. This also means that downtown Toronto is a short subway ride from the campus.

Accommodation will be available in student residences on campus and at a hotel off-site on the Toronto subway line.

Look for registration information on the 2019 General Assembly website: <https://rasc.ca/ga2019>

See you in Toronto in June!

— Randy Attwood
Executive Director, RASC

Inclusivity and Diversity cont'd.

petition, and organizations with greater ethnic diversity are 35 percent more likely. A recent Glassdoor survey reveals that working for a diverse company is a priority for two-thirds of the respondents. Diversity helps ensure that there will be a wide spectrum of ideas, backgrounds and skill sets that can help organizations have more innovative ideas and less likelihood of the tunnel vision that comes from not having enough differing perspectives. Inclusivity will go a long way toward solving our retention problems.

In December 2018, the RASC Board of Directors decided to create an Inclusivity and Diversity Committee to address these issues for the first time in the Society's 150-year history. The committee's terms of reference state:

"It is the policy of the Society to provide equality and fairness to all persons and not to provide less favourable facilities or treatment to anyone on the grounds of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy, parental status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, religion or belief and other analogous characteristics...the Society opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination based on any protected characteristics."

The committee's mandate is to promote and carry out this policy. The committee is working to encourage diversity within the Society by advocating for historically disadvantaged persons and by acting as an information resource on diversity issues for these persons and other members.

The Inclusivity and Diversity Committee is here to provide a safe place for members to share their concerns so that we can work toward solutions. If you've got a story to tell or would like to help us, don't hesitate to contact us. The members of our committee are:

- Charles Ennis, 2nd Vice President, Chair (Sunshine Coast Centre)
- Heather Laird, Director (Calgary Centre)
- Nicole Mortillaro, *Journal* Editor (unattached)
- Vikki Zsohar, Yukon Centre President
- Simon Poole, Calgary Centre Vice President
- Bill Weir, Observing Committee (Victoria Centre)
- Judy Sterner, Calgary Centre National Representative
- Paul Heath (Halifax Centre)

We need to give new members a reason to stay by devoting time and effort to being inclusive, making all individuals feel cherished and equal. Since the first few weeks can be the most difficult time for new members, it's important to show them that they have a future in the Society. Finding mentors who share personal interests can foster new friendships. We need to provide resources to help our greeters and mentors and the minorities they assist.

Multiculturalism in Canada is setting an example for the rest of the world. Canada has one of the largest immigrant populations in the world: One in every five Canadians was born outside of Canada. Every year, 300,000 immigrants come to our country.

The RASC should strive to reflect the diversity of Canada by developing a welcoming culture. We need an RASC that looks like Canada, including today's ethnic, cultural and gender realities.

— Charles Ennis, 2nd Vice President

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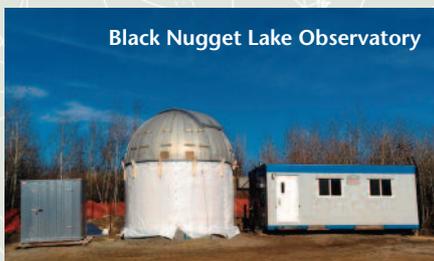
CENTRE NEWS

EDMONTON CENTRE

The Edmonton Centre will be bursting with pride this September at the first-light ceremony of the Black Nugget Lake Observatory (BNLO) during the annual Northern Prairie Star Party. The facility will feature a 32-inch (81 cm) folded Newtonian on an alt-az mount. While the instrument's primary purpose is visual observation, its design has been carefully crafted to allow for imaging upgrades in the future.

This ambitious project has been moving forward in leaps and bounds thanks to the leadership of Warren Finlay and the hard-working BNLO Committee, who have donated countless hours of time and muscle. None of it could have happened without the outstanding investment of design, engineering and machining of Roman Unyk and the generous donation of a superb mirror by Bob Drew and an Ash-Dome from the University of Alberta. The project has also benefited from contributions of time, trucking and hardware by contractors in the nearby town of Tofield, Beaver County, and farther afield and from cash donations by the Edmonton Centre itself.

One component of BNLO activities will be public outreach, reflecting the financial support we have received from our casino revenue, the Government of Alberta Community Facility Enhancement Program, a Beaver County Community Support Grant and the RASC Special Projects Program. The warm-up trailer will also be outfitted as a small classroom/presentation room for public education and outreach. While considerable work still remains to achieve first light, the BNLO Committee and the Edmon-



Black Nugget Lake Observatory

OBSERVING NEWS

RASC Observing Certificates Earned in October-November 2018

Over 600 RASC members have distinguished themselves by earning observing certificates. In the first 11 months of 2018, 24 observing certificates were issued.

Thanks to all the local RASC volunteers who promote observing and mentor new observers. See www.rasc.ca/certificate-programs for more details.



Explore the Moon: Rod DeVries (Calgary)

Explore the Universe: Karol Alin Socander (Kitchener-Waterloo)

New to Astronomy? Explore the Universe is an "entry level" observing program that is open to all (even nonmembers) and can be completed using only a pair of binoculars. Most RASC Centres are Local Certification Centres, which means it's easy to participate and there are mentors who can guide your observing. The program documents have been recently translated into French. For those who like a written guide to get started, the RASC has published the *Explore the Universe Guide* (2nd edition). For more information, see www.rasc.ca/explore-universe.

Follow Observing News via @RASC on Twitter

Using the @RASC account, the RASC Observing Committee now announces observing certificates as they are earned, as well as noteworthy observing opportunities, with the hashtag #RASCobserving.

— Dave Chapman, Chair, RASC Observing Committee and Emeritus Editor Observer's Handbook (2012-16)

ton Centre look forward to unveiling this unique telescope.

— Allister Ling, Edmonton Centre

NEW BRUNSWICK CENTRE

The New Brunswick Centre was formed in 2000 with 26 members. Throughout 2018, we had approximately 110 members, including 12 youth. The bulk of our members reside within the urban and suburban areas of Fredericton, Moncton and Saint John, and our nine monthly meetings alternate among these cities. Between June and September, we support five star parties at four provincial or federal parks within the province, three of which have Dark-Sky Preserve status. At these events in 2018, an estimated 2,500 people were treated to pre-

sentations, workshops, solar observing and night observing.

Public outreach is the primary focus of our Centre's activities. Last year, we reported 180 outreach events on the RASC database. In addition to the star parties, observing events were held in support of an Urban Star Park in Saint John and the Moncton High School Observatory. Other events included presentations to various groups, astronomy courses and visits to school classes and youth groups. More than 45,000 members of the public took part in our events, including 38,000 who visited one member's Facebook page (astrobythebay) to view one of 36 live feeds of the Moon and planets through a telescope.

— Curt Nason, Secretary
New Brunswick Centre

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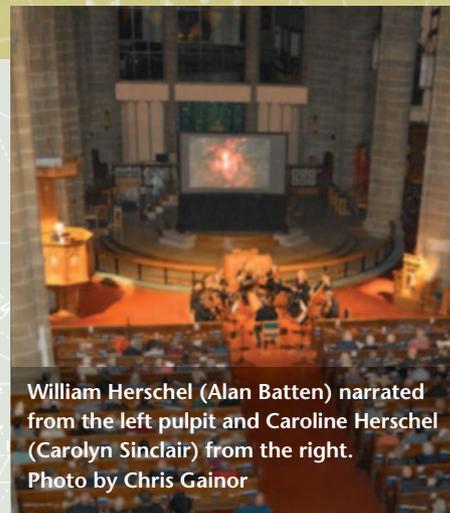
MUSIC OF WILLIAM HERSCHEL: A SPECIAL 150TH ANNIVERSARY PROJECT

On November 16, 2018, more than 250 people attended a multimedia concert at Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria, British Columbia, that they will not soon forget. The program consisted of three lively short symphonies and two concerti written by musician/composer-turned-astronomer William Herschel (1738-1822), who discovered Uranus and infrared radiation. Herschel's astronomical work benefited enormously from collaboration with his musician sister, Caroline Herschel (1750-1848), who earned numerous honours for her astronomical discoveries.

Harpichord virtuoso Michael Jarvis, along with his violinist partner Paul Luchkow (The Luchkow-Jarvis Duo), has long envisioned reviving Herschel's music for modern audiences. Jarvis and Luchkow were joined by eight talented musicians, all playing period instruments. The music was accompanied by a beautiful high-definition video created by RASC Victoria Centre members David Lee and John McDonald, using images and sketches by 13 Victoria Centre members. The CineVic Society of Independent Filmmakers lent its professional video projector and screen, displaying the imagery to great effect.

Lee and McDonald both participated in a preconcert talk led by the concert's producer, Ian Alexander (cochair of the cathedral's music committee), which also featured Jarvis and retired Dominion Astrophysical Observatory astronomer Alan Batten, a Fellow of the RASC. The audience learned about the origin, many years ago, of this presentation concept for Herschel's music and what to look for in the accompanying images. Dramatic narration throughout the concert by Batten (as William Herschel) and Carolyn Sinclair (as Caroline Herschel) was based on the Herschels' original writings, as extensively researched by Batten and scripted by Alexander.

The performance highlighted the RASC's sesquicentennial, while also noting the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory's centennial, both in 2018. Fittingly, the concert was sandwiched between William Herschel's 280th birthday (November 15) and the 153rd birthday of John Stanley Plaskett (November 17), who was the founding director of the observatory. The program organizers were extremely grateful for critical financial support to the Victoria Centre through the RASC's Special Projects Program and are exploring future concerts



William Herschel (Alan Batten) narrated from the left pulpit and Caroline Herschel (Carolyn Sinclair) from the right. Photo by Chris Gainor

elsewhere in Canada in partnership with local RASC Centres.

— Jim Hesser, Victoria Centre

ELECTIONS 2019

Three RASC Board of Director positions, each being a three-year term, are open for election at the 2019 General Assembly. We encourage all members in good standing to consider a role on the Board.

Nominations for the Board of Directors are open through April 7. The three members of the current Board are eligible for reelection, and others are invited to submit their names. The 2019 Board of Directors will be announced at this year's General Assembly in Toronto.

For candidates' requirements, see "Policy G9: Society Nominations and Elections" in the Policy Manual, which is available in the members-only section of the RASC website (www.rasc.ca/rasc-policy-manual).

Board members typically meet monthly on Webex and a couple of times a year face-to-face. Travel expenses for Board business are covered as outlined in "Policy G19: Travel Policy General." Once elected as a Director, you can run for one of the officer's positions on the Board. The Secretary is responsible for agendas, minutes and correspondence. The 2nd Vice President is chair of the Nominations Committee. The 1st Vice President is chair of the Publications Committee. Other Board members act as liaisons to various other committees.

For more insight into the effort and commitment expected of Board members, contact Charles Ennis, the Nominating Committee Chair, at cuhulain@telus.net or 778-839-4702.

— Charles Ennis, 2nd Vice President

NATIONAL OFFICE

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
203-4920 Dundas Street West, Toronto, ON M9A 1B7
Telephone: 416-924-7973 • Toll-free: 1-888-924-7272
Web: www.rasc.ca • E-mail: mempub@rasc.ca