



# The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

MAY/JUNE 2017

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 6

## WHAT IS ASTRONOMY?

As a *SkyNews* reader, you have shown that you are interested in astronomy. You may be an “armchair astronomer,” devouring the latest exciting news about the cosmos, or a “recreational sky observer,” checking out what’s visible this month. Or a skilled astrophotographer, vying for a “Photo of the Week” award. Or one of those dedicated amateurs who participate in astronomical research by measuring variable stars or discovering comets or supernovas. Or one of those many readers who contribute in a significant and important way to public outreach in astronomy. There’s even a small chance that you are a professional astronomer, like me.

But there’s much more to astronomy than the technical stuff. The universe is part of nature, and we are part of it. Astronomy is obviously closely related to the other sciences, but it also raises deep philosophical and theological questions about time and space and about our own existence. It has been deeply rooted in culture since earliest times, so it’s reflected in the calendars and other rituals of the world’s many religions, including the spirituality of Canada’s indigenous people. Ancient structures, from Stonehenge to the pyramids of Egypt and Central America and the “medicine wheels” of western North America, were oriented on the sky because of the powerful belief that the “heavens” were the residence of the gods. Constellations and their names are culturally determined. Most of our Western ones come from ancient Greece (or earlier). The southern ones come from the Industrial Revolution. There is music of all genres with astronomical themes, ranging from the trivial to the profound, and

plays and operas about astronomy and astronomers. There are astronomical paintings, whether realistic or abstract, such as van Gogh’s *The Starry Night*. Astronomy pervades literature, from Shakespeare to science fiction to the wonderful books by Dava Sobel, which bring astronomy and astronomers to life: *Longitude*, *Galileo’s Daughter*, *A More Perfect Heaven*, *The Planets* and now *The Glass Universe*. This new book tells how, a century ago, two dozen women “computers” at the Harvard College Observatory laid the basis for our present understanding of the nature and evolution of the stars. It reminds us that women have had to overcome major obstacles in their quest to become explorers of the universe and many other things. And there is still a long way to go—not just in the Third World.

“Making connections” exercises the brain and promotes rational and creative thinking. So as you read this newsletter and this issue of *SkyNews*, take time to reflect on and celebrate how astronomy can connect with and enrich every part of your life.

—John Percy, Honorary President, RASC



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## CONTRIBUTORS

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RASC National Office  
Brian McCullough and Tim Cole,  
2017 GA Organizing Committee

## 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](mailto:newsletter@rasc.ca).

## ANDROMEDA GALAXY (M31)

This image was taken with a full (super) Moon and is a composite of Ha + RGB filters. Data acquisition was about 4½ hours using a Ceravolo scope at f/4.9 and a Moravian G4-16000 camera on an ME mount with an SOAG guider.

—Brian McGaffney, Kingston Centre



## A WARM WELCOME

The RASC welcomes the following new members to its Centres across Canada

Taras Andrichuk, Connor Antoine, Abdur Anwar, Emily Appleby, Tyler Arnold, Hughes Arseneau, Lian Arseneau, Nayla Awada, Rohak Bardalai, René Baril, Ezra Barrett, James Barrie, Roland Beaulieu, Bradley Beek, Gabriel Beiner, Chuck Bennett, Corey Bennett, Kevin Berglund, Ian Binmore, Brian Blak, Aaron Bourelle, Judith Bradley, Matthew Brannon, Clarence Briand, David Briscoe, Kyle Brisebois, Kayla Buttress, Stephen Cameron, Dan Campbell, Kim Campbell, Simon Cant, Daniel Clore, Darcy Conn, Michael Cordiez, Keith Cossey, Giacomo Costa, Philip Coulter, Christine Couturier, Vernon Crouch, Ulrike Cutire, Darcy Danilowich, Colin Davey, Ryan Dawe, Pamela De Los Santos, Steve De Paulo, Adam Di Prospero, Peter Dolan, Sheila Donahue, Chris Driedger, Don Duthie, Jeff Dutton, Matthew Dyer, Kim Earle, Laura Eley, Bob Elliott, Katryna Fast, Peter Faulkner, Clive Figueiredo, Kimberly Finch, Richard Fleming, Melissa Francis, Walter Gahler, Gilbert Gamache, Trevor Garrick, Dennis Gasparotto, Kate Giglio, Glen Golden, Donald Gordon, Allan Guty, Victoria Haines, Liza Hancock, William Harrison, Craig Hazle, John Henderson,



**A ROSETTE BY ANY OTHER NAME...** This is the open cluster NGC2244 with the Rosette Nebula. It is a 6-hour image using a Tele Vue NP127is telescope and a QSI 583wsg CCD camera. I took the image over a couple of nights from my Stardust Observatory in my backyard in Calgary. —Dan Meek, Calgary Centre

Stephen Hodge, Kenneth Hodgson, Stephen Holmes, Scott Hookings, Hua Huang, Fahad Husain, Darren Hust, Robert Hydromako, Nevad Janzen, Martin Jensen, Roger Johnson, Chris Jones, Rebecca Jones, Tara Joyce, Jere Karam, Brent Keats, Michael Kehoe, Luke Kennedy, Muhammad Khan, Bryan Kirk, Peter Krebs, Raymond Kwong, Jean Labbe, Marcel Lacroix, Jeremy Lagadyn, Gil Lainey, Mike Laing, Rene Lalonde, Derrick LaRiviere, Peter Lenco, Ross Leonard, Tina Lillycrop, Triston Line, Hudson Lytle, Lisa Macfarlane-Vanderwal,

Brent Mackinnon, Amber Magnien, Carl Maguire, Robert Matricardi, Yvonne Mc Bool, Peter McCormick, Steven McCullough, Alexander McGrath, Laura McLaren, Duncan McLeod, Amber McNally, Patrick Meeds, Croft Michaelson, Jay Millard, Jody Moreau, David Morgestern, Sarah Murphy, Benjamin Nero, Anja Nessel, Dorian Neufeld, Ken Noble, William Nofall, Homan Nouri, Nirvan Nuckchedee, Dennis O'Brien, Vincent O'Brien, Harley Pallister, Frank Palmer, C.J. Parr, Jason Parsons, Nicole Patterson, Hiral Patwa, Brent Pavelich, Marcel Perry, Mitch Peters, Phil Porter, John Powell, Andrew Pritchard, Asaad Qaddori, Richard Radke, Mike Raposo, Dorian Rauschnig, Brian Reid, Denny Reis, Etienne Rollin, David Rootham, Robert Ross, Rick Rouse, Felix Russo, Minh Ryu, Patrick Sabourin, Konstantinos Sardelis, Sandeep Shetty, Roger Skirrow, John Smart, Kris Socha, Etham Solís Sánchez, Chris Sortland, Momar Sourang, William Spring, Yvon St-Cyr, Dale Stengel, Laura Stenhouse, Chuck Stoffle, Garry Stone, Rosemary Storms, Sharon Surowiec, Mark Terhorst, Shanna Terrey, Peter Theuerkauf, Blair Thiessen, Daryl Thomson, Todd Thorn, Sylvie Toulmond, Darrell Turcotte, Ken Umbach, Clayton Uyeda, Justinus Vander Maaten, Maanas madhav Vankalapati, Martin Viala, Peter von Gaza, Caleigh Wash, Don Wesenberg, Lorne Whittaker, Jessica Wigle, Nathan Wihnan, Wil Wittmer, Rob Woods, Daniel Wright, Jeff Wyton, Lin Yan, Sheila Young, Peter Yunker, Jack Zhu, Ivan Zuger —Julia Neeser

## BOARD NEWS

As reported in the previous National Newsletter, the Board selected three topics as its overall Strategic Plan for the next three to five years: Membership Retention, Sustainable Growth and Publications.

By the time this goes to press, the Board will have met in Calgary once more to finalize the plan under the continuing guidance of Dr. Wilma Slenders, the facilitator who led the meetings last October.

During several Board meetings over the past months, this topic has been foremost in our deliberations as we strive to formulate achievable goals while realistically remaining within fiscal responsibility. As we approach our Sesquicentennial in 2018, celebrating 150 years of astronomical excellence, we can see numerous ways to spend money but not so many ways to produce those necessary dollars.

Once the Strategic Plan is established, the Fundraising Committee will develop a plan to finance the goals. It will be the Executive Director's job to go forward with the plan and create the necessary environment to achieve the goals. But bear in mind, all of this requires a buy-in from National Council reps and Centre executives, because this isn't a one-person show—we're all in this together.

On a different topic, we welcome and appreciate the strong volunteerism of Colin Haig, who has stepped up to fill the role of Society Treasurer, as Susan Yeo had to back away from her previous commitment for personal reasons.

—James Edgar, Past President, RASC





## FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS AND CERTIFICATES

### NEW! ASTROIMAGING CERTIFICATES EARNED TO DATE

This new program, instituted in late 2016, celebrates the wealth of astroimaging talent in the RASC. There are three subcategories: Wide Field, Solar System and Deep Sky. For information on how to qualify, see [www.rasc.ca/astro-imaging-certificate](http://www.rasc.ca/astro-imaging-certificate). For a spectacular gallery of images by most recipients, see [rascastroimaging.zenfolio.com/](http://rascastroimaging.zenfolio.com/).

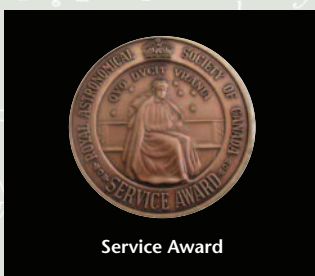
**WIDE FIELD:** Scott Barrie (Hamilton), Dave Chapman (Halifax), James Edgar (Regina), Michael Gatto (Halifax), Mervin W. Graff (Osoyoos, British Columbia), Bruce Hamilton (Halifax), W. Ken Jackson (Vancouver), John Mirtle (Calgary), Tenho Tuomi (Saskatoon) and Luca Vanzella (Edmonton).

**SOLAR SYSTEM:** Art Cole (Halifax), Robert Lewis (Niagara) and Tony Schellinck (Halifax).

**DEEP SKY:** Jeff Donaldson (Halifax), Blair MacDonald (Halifax), Stuart Heggie (Toronto), John Mirtle (Calgary) and Dave Newbury (St. John's).



Terence Dickinson receives the President's Award from James Edgar, Past President, RASC



Service Award

### FELLOWSHIPS, MEDALS, AWARDS AND OBSERVING CERTIFICATES OF THE RASC IN 2016

The RASC has dozens of creative and hardworking members who contribute to the Society, their Centres, astronomy outreach and science, plus active members who have distinguished themselves by earning observing certificates. In this issue, we bring readers up to date on the distinctions earned in 2016. Stay tuned for the 2017 distinctions in an upcoming issue.

### FELLOWS OF THE RASC HONoured IN 2016

Fellowship in the RASC is the highest honour the Society can pay to a member. A Fellow's service and contributions to the Society have had a significant positive impact on the work of the Society over an extended period and have contributed to the Society's success in attaining its stated objectives, mission and vision.

#### THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS WERE SO HONOURED IN 2016:

Jay Anderson (Winnipeg)  
Alan Batten (Victoria)  
Doug Hube (Edmonton)  
Patrick Kelly (Halifax)  
Franklin Loehde (Edmonton)

### RASC MEDALS AND AWARDS PRESENTED IN 2016

**PLASKETT MEDAL:** Dr. Jonathan Gagné (Université de Montréal). This award is made annually to the Ph.D. graduate from a Canadian university who is judged to have submitted the most outstanding doctoral thesis in astronomy or astrophysics in the preceding two calendar years.

**PRESIDENT'S AWARD:** Terence Dickinson (Toronto). This award is made at the President's discretion to a member who has made an important contribution to the Society

**QILAK AWARD:** Doug Cunningham (Toronto). Qilak is an Inuit word meaning "the entire sky."

This award recognizes individual Canadian residents, or teams of residents, who have made an outstanding contribution either to the public understanding and appreciation of astronomy in Canada or to informal astronomy education in Canada.

**SERVICE AWARD:** Gary Bennett (Hamilton), Andy Blanchard (Hamilton), Paul Gray (Halifax), Hugh Pett (Okanagan) and Chris Teron (Ottawa).

The Service Award recognizes the contributions

of members who, at either the National or Centre levels, have made a significant contribution to the life and vitality of the Society.

### OBSERVING CERTIFICATES EARNED IN 2016

**EXPLORE THE UNIVERSE:** Eric Beresford (Toronto), Adriana Billings (Prince George), Jean-Bruno Desrosiers (Sherbrooke, Québec), Rod DeVries (Medicine Hat, Alberta), Deann Hunt (Prince George), Dave McKenzie (Prince George), John Peddle (St. John's), Jason Todoroff (Melancthon, Ontario) and Mary Lou Whitehorne (Halifax).

**EXPLORE THE MOON (Telescope):** Adriana Billings (Prince George), Paul Evans (Halifax), Melody Hamilton (Halifax) and Jim Millar (Halifax).

**EXPLORE THE MOON (Binoculars):** Paul Evans (Halifax).

**MESSIER CATALOGUE:** Luc Bolard (Garson, Ontario), Emile Cormier (New Brunswick), Alan Duffy (Saskatoon), Norma Jensen (Saskatoon), Tony Schellinck (Halifax) and Jo VandenDool (Mississauga, Ontario).

**FINEST NGC OBJECTS:** Darnell Ogrodnick (Regina) and Ted Wang (Taiwan).

**ISABEL WILLIAMSON LUNAR OBSERVING PROGRAM:** Norma Jensen (Saskatoon) and Richard Weigand (Kingston).

—Dave Chapman, Assistant Editor



# RASC NEWSLETTER

## 2017 RASC OTTAWA GENERAL ASSEMBLY, JUNE 29 TO JULY 3



The RASC Ottawa Centre is pleased to offer an outstanding lineup of activities for delegates and spouses taking part in the 2017 General Assembly, and we look forward to seeing you here in Ottawa. Is there really any other place to be than the nation's capital on our 150th birthday?

The following schedule of activities and more information can be found at [ottawa.rasc.ca/content/2017-general-assembly-ottawa](http://ottawa.rasc.ca/content/2017-general-assembly-ottawa).

### SCHEDULE HIGHLIGHTS

#### THURSDAY, JUNE 29

- ★ 3:00 p.m.: Residence check-in and GA registrations desk open
- ★ Evening: Hospitality suite open

#### FRIDAY, JUNE 30

- ★ Welcome
- ★ Keynote Address: Ken Hewitt-White
- ★ National Council Meeting (concurrent all day)
- ★ Algonquin Radio Observatory: Brendan Quine
- ★ Moving Clusters: Glenn LeDrew
- ★ Astronomy Workshop
- ★ Downtown in the Afternoon: Tours
- ★ BBQ on Campus
- ★ Evening Star Party & Diefenbunker Tour

#### SATURDAY, JULY 1: CANADA 150 DAY!

- ★ Meteor Workshop: Pierre Martin
- ★ The Solar System, a Geological Perspective on Current Controversies: Simon Hanmer
- ★ Moon Sketching (lunchtime group activity)
- ★ Ruth Northcott Lecture and Reception with Dr. Eric Steinbring
- ★ Public Outreach Event

#### SATURDAY, JULY 1 (continued)

- ★ Starry Night: Documentary video with Charles Ennis
- ★ Panel Discussion
- ★ CANADA DAY Celebrations on Parliament Hill
- ★ Quiet Canada Day on Campus with Carmen Rush

#### SUNDAY, JULY 2

- ★ Annual General Meeting/ Spouses' Tour (concurrent)
- ★ Speakers Corner
- ★ Talk TBD: Carmen Rush
- ★ Talk TBD: Rick Wagner
- ★ Astro-Desserts, Recipes for Astronomy-Themed Goodies: Kelly Jordan
- ★ August 21, 2017, Solar Eclipse: Alan Scott
- ★ History of Predicting Solar Eclipses: Ron Macnaughton
- ★ Group Photo and RASC Awards Banquet with Speaker Dr. Nadine Manset

#### MONDAY, JULY 3

- ★ 11:00 a.m.: Residence checkout
- ★ Holleford Crater Tour with Chuck O'Dale

—Brian McCullough and Tim Cole, 2017 GA Organizing Committee

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