



The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

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RASC 150 OPENING EVENT LAUNCHES OUR AMAZING CELEBRATORY YEAR!

150 years ago, as the autumn constellations wheeled in place, the founders of the RASC could look forward to prime viewing of the Saturn Nebula (NGC7009), the Perseus Double Cluster (NGC869 and NGC884) and the Garnet Star, among other seasonal highlights. When we admire the same objects and introduce them to others, we continue in that spirit of active engagement with the universe. Our sesquicentennial is an opportunity to celebrate what we do, while renewing the Society with an eye to tradition.

Our anniversary officially commences on January 27, 2018, with a special RASC 2018 National Star Party, bringing all Centres together in a cooperative event highlighting the unity of the RASC and the diversity of its individual Centres and members. The star party is scheduled for 3:00 to 8:00 p.m., local time, regardless of weather (all-weather venues are recommended, as is the provision of alternative activities should the local weather prove un festive). The beginning of the event will allow for solar viewing, while the brighter deep-sky objects should be visible in the evening from urban locations. Lunar observing can be done throughout. The event will be livestreamed from www.rasc.ca, hosted by Paul Delaney (York University observatory director and Toronto Centre member), with

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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.

TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE 2017

This ½-second exposure was taken at Victor, Idaho, using an 80mm Explore Scientific f/6 refractor at ISO 100. The star Regulus can be seen at the bottom left. An event report will appear in the next National

Newsletter. —Randy Attwood,
RASC Executive Director



PULL OUT NEWSLETTER TO VIEW SKYNEWS STAR CHART



President's Award



Simon Newcomb Award



Qilak Award



Service Awards

RASC 150 Opening Event cont'd. from p.1 spotlights on Centres and the broadcast of RASC 150th greetings from prominent members of the Canadian astronomical community (contact: pdelaney@yorku.ca).

Prior to the official opening event, the RASC 2018 podcasts will start in late 2017, with a preview of the planned season. The podcasts will delve into the fascinating (and sometimes unbelievable) stories of the RASC, based on surviving artifacts and the members who made and used them for citizen science. Images and explanations of the artifacts and of the people and places involved will feature on the associated website (part of www.rasc.ca/2018). The podcasts will appear monthly. Stay tuned for the schedule.

Canada Observes will mark our sesquicentennial with a graphic evocation of the Society. Images of Centres doing astronomy will be combined in a mosaic version of an RASC symbol to express the vitality of the Centres' astronomy education and public outreach (EPO) across the country and to illustrate that nationally, the RASC is an effective and diverse unity made up of all of us. This project also envisions creating a mosaic image of an astronomical object composed of RASC members' sketches and photographs of that celestial object (contact: jcdmacd@gmail.com).

Other nationwide activities include a living-history experience. *Viewing the Moon Across Time* will encourage a hands-on introduction to Victorian astronomical resources, techniques and views unfamiliar to most contemporary observers, with the potential to enrich one's personal choices when at the eyepiece or camera and to expand the ready repertoire of EPO material.

Reports on these and other RASC 2018 programs and events will be a regular feature of the National Newsletter in the coming year. So mark your calendar! We look forward to working with the RASC community to broaden awareness of the Society throughout Canada in 2018 (general contact: randall.rosenfeld@utoronto.ca).

—RASC 2018 Working Group

AWARD AND CERTIFICATE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dozens of active RASC members have distinguished themselves by earning observing certificates. For more details, see www.rasc.ca/certificate-programs.

EXPLORE THE UNIVERSE

Vance Petriew (Regina) and Tony Schellinck (Halifax). Vance distinguished himself by observing *all* the objects, not just the mandatory 50 percent.

EXPLORE THE MOON (BINOCULARS)

Judy Black (Halifax).

MESSIER CATALOGUE

Peter Schierle (Regina).

DEEP-SKY GEMS

Melody Hamilton (Halifax). This is Melody's fifth RASC observing certificate. She has also earned *Explore the Universe* (2012), *Messier Catalogue* (2014), *Finest NGC Objects* (2015) and *Explore the Moon, telescope* (2016).

RASC AWARDS PRESENTED AT THE 2017 GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN OTTAWA

PRESIDENT'S AWARD: Dave Garner (Kitchener-Waterloo). Outgoing President Craig Levine recognized Dave Garner's effective and untiring 15 years (and counting) on the editorial teams of the Society's publications, including the *Journal* (2002-2015), the *eBulletin* (2012-present) and the revived National Newsletter (bundled with *SkyNews*; 2016-present).

SIMON NEWCOMB AWARD: Ivan Semeniuk (Toronto). RASC Toronto Centre nominated well-known professional science journalist Ivan Semeniuk for his prodigious output since 1999 as a producer, columnist, reporter, freelance writer and broadcaster. He works in the multiple media of print, radio and television, specializing in astronomical topics.

QILAK AWARD: Paul Heath (Halifax). RASC Halifax Centre nominated Paul for his long-time dedication to astronomy outreach, both in the Boy Scouts (1989-2004) and in the RASC (1999-present). He has energetically and tirelessly engaged thousands of people every year on all topics of astronomy in a wide assortment of venues, including the school bus he drives!

SERVICE AWARDS: Eric Briggs (Toronto), Simon Hanmer (Ottawa), Katrina Ince-Lum (Toronto), Michael Moghadam (Ottawa), Charles O'Dale (Ottawa), Brian Pihak (Niagara), Betty Robinson (Mississauga), Randall Rosenfeld (unattached), Stan Sammy (Niagara), Gerry Smerchanski (Winnipeg) and Donald Town (Belleville). RASC members who receive Service Awards form the backbone of the Society. They give above and beyond the call of duty and create memorable experiences for members of the Society and for the general public.

—Dave Chapman



SEXISM IN THE RASC

"You look pretty."

"Are you waiting for your husband?" (AstroCATS, vendor table)

"Isn't it nice to see a lady astronomer here." (NEAF, vendor)

"You know you can be emotional and scary."

"I wish you weren't married. I'd so like to..."

"Can you get some cookies for the meeting?"

"Which one is your tent?"

Actual words said to me over the years. If you've ever said them, was it to a woman? Would you say them to a man?

I was particularly interested to read "John Percy's Universe" on page 85 of the April 2017 edition of the *Journal*—"Women in Astronomy (or not)"—and agree that we need to improve the number of women in the club. More than that, when the current club members see inappropriate behaviour, they need to speak up, which does not always happen. Perhaps they do not identify inappropriate behaviour when it occurs or do not care because it does not affect them directly, or perhaps they do not know what to say. Or they like the club the way it is. Or they turn it into a left-versus-right, political-correctness agenda item.

Like the thousands of other members in the club, I'm interested in astronomy. I've been an RASC member for a long time. I joined many years ago at the urging of John Percy, after doing a continuing education course with him at the University of Toronto. My goal in joining was to continue to learn about astronomy, and over the years, I've been lucky to make many friends in my club who are interested in the same thing. We learn from each other, and at the observatory, we share the chores. We enable one another's purchases when we finally buy that telescope, share eyepieces, organize astro-adventures and make observing plans. We all look through the telescopes, open and close the observatory, clean the toilet, wash the dishes and have fun. Gender is not an issue.

Until someone comes along who reintroduces a traditional gender disparity or behaves in an arrogant manner. That member wants to look through the telescope, for example, but not wash the dishes or otherwise help out in a communal area. However, through education and positive reinforcement from members who see behaviours like this (kindly, no finger pointing; humour helps) and by speaking up when we notice inequality, we will send a message that such conduct is unacceptable. That's the benign end of the sexism spectrum. There is a malignant side too, which has recently led to the expulsion of one member. I've now rehearsed verbal replies so that I don't have to think of exactly what to say at the time—until it happens again, and I find myself at a loss for words!

Please, let's share our love of the night sky and do everything equally, including how we speak and act. I refuse to let this kind of sexism drive me away from the RASC. Fortunately, it's rare, but each instance is harmful and can drive a (typically female) member away.

—Katrina Ince-Lum, Toronto RASC

12,000 YEARS OF ASTRONOMY IN CANADA

As Canada 150 draws to a close, we should remember that Canada's Aboriginal peoples have probably been doing astronomy by using the sky as a clock, calendar and compass for millennia—perhaps even before they arrived in North America, 12,000 years ago. They have connected the sky to their understanding and appreciation of nature in general and have incorporated it into their spirituality and ceremonies, as they and many other cultures still do today.

Storytelling is an important part of Aboriginal culture, both as a way of transmitting knowledge and as a way of remembering that science is done by people, for people. Storytelling can be an effective tool for school education, as I learned many years ago from my educator colleague Mindy Kalchman. In fact, people of all ages respond more positively to storytelling than to a dry lecture. Unfortunately, many Aboriginal languages are being lost—and their cultures along with them.

For decades, Glen Aikenhead of the University of Saskatchewan was Canada's leader in the field of Aboriginal science education. During International Year of Astronomy 2009, Canadian astronomers made a very useful and important connection with Cape Breton University's Institute for Integrative Science & Health, developed by Cheryl Bartlett and her colleagues at Unama'ki College. Integrative science brings together indigenous and Western scientific knowledge and ways of knowing. It incorporates "two-eyed seeing," which emphasizes the strengths of both of these. Prune Harris compiled a very useful *Resource Guide for Canadian Aboriginal Astronomy*, which you can easily find on the Internet. It includes resources for astronomy, astronomy education and integrative science and two-eyed seeing, including many Aboriginal sky stories. Frank Dempsey, an atmospheric scientist, amateur astronomer, RASC member and Ojibway, has published several articles on Aboriginal sky lore in the *RASC Journal*. There are also stories compiled by Manitoba Aboriginal educator Wilfred Buck, who gave a remarkable presentation at Toronto's "One World, One Sky" festival on October 16, 2010. Several authoritative and useful resources on multicultural astronomy can be found on the website of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (astro.society.org).

Together, these resources may help to address the under-participation of Aboriginal youth in science-related school programs and careers. More generally, they celebrate the multicultural nature of our country in 2017. They can add interest and richness to any astronomy educational or outreach activity.

—John Percy, University of Toronto



RASC NEWSLETTER

NOVA EAST 2017

The 31st Nova East, the longest consecutively run star party in the Maritimes, was held at Smileys Provincial Park on the weekend of July 28-30, 2017. The 52 registrants, of which 10 were new to astronomy and 2 were last-minute drop-ins from North Carolina, had a great time reconnecting with friends and sharing the brief but beautiful views of the nighttime skies. Judy Black and Melody Hamilton (co-chairs) were joined on the Nova East Planning Committee by Roy Bishop, Chris Young, Irene Moore, Paul Gray, Jim Millar, Dave Chapman and John Read.

Several very interesting topics were addressed by our members, and based on input from last year's Nova East, some were aimed at those new to astronomy:

- Pat Kelly, keynote speaker: "Natural Satellites of Jupiter"
- Kathy Walker: "Observing the Night Sky With a Telescope"
- Dave Chapman: "Beginner's Talk—Wide-Field Night-Sky Photography"
- Andrea Misner: "From Trekkie to Teacher—My Celestial Journey"
- Matt Paine: "Amateur Radio Astronomy"
- Tony Schellinck: "Observing the Night Sky With Binoculars"
- Field representatives: Paul Heath conducted an evening sky tour and the afternoon youth activity, attended by young people as well as adults; and Tony Schellinck introduced members and park campers to the wonders of the night sky with binoculars.

Although there was a brief, heavy shower on Friday afternoon, it remained dry for the remainder of the weekend. Friday was still quite cloudy in the early evening, but skies partially cleared to allow some observing for a couple of hours. Saturday evening clouded over, so the field events and observing were cancelled. However, the skies cleared Sunday morning for takedown and departures.

Chris Young, Paul Gray and Bruce Hamilton did a great job of preparing the Saturday-morning Astronomers' Breakfast of pancakes and sausages. With muffins, fresh fruit and coffee as well, no one went away hungry. The annual BBQ potluck supper's roast beef and sausage links were prepared and served by Paul Gray, and astronomers brought a variety of salads and desserts to round out the meal.

Congratulations to the 30 door-prize winners this year, especially David Hoskin, who won the 130mm tabletop Newtonian telescope donated by Sky-Watcher and Atlantic Photo Supply. RASC observing certificates were also presented to deserving recipients. The astrophotography contest winner was Jerry Black, for his photo of the Milky Way taken at the Turret Arch in Arches National Park, Utah.

Because the night skies were not cooperative on Saturday, the contingency plan was a quiz entitled "Name the Astronomer." Photos of the usual suspects were there (Messier, Galileo, Newton, David Levy), but the truly fun part was when photos of some Halifax Centre members were shown. This would not have been possible without the help (in secrecy) of the families of those members.

It was a great weekend to reconnect with fellow astronomers, and we hope that RASC members from the Halifax Centre and beyond will join us at the 32nd Nova East, slated for the new Moon weekend of August 10-12, 2018.

—Judy Black and Melody Hamilton
Co-Chairs, 2017 Nova East Planning Committee, RASC Halifax Centre

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RASC AWARDS: CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The deadline for the RASC's national awards program is rapidly approaching (December 31). If you believe a fellow RASCer is deserving, please take the time to submit a nomination. Here's an outline of the awards and their criteria:

CHANT MEDAL is awarded based on a significant body of work of lasting value to the astronomical community. It is named after C.A. Chant, a noted astronomer at the University of Toronto who helped to found the David Dunlap Observatory.

KEN CHILTON PRIZE, established in memory of Ken Chilton, is awarded for a specific piece of astronomical research or work carried out or published recently.

SERVICE AWARD, established in 1959, is awarded to RASC members who have made significant contributions at the national and/or Centre levels.

SIMON NEWCOMB AWARD was established in 1979 for excellence in astronomical writing by an RASC member.

QILAK AWARD, established in 2011, is intended to recognize individual Canadian residents or teams of residents who have made an outstanding contribution during a particular time period either to the public understanding and appreciation of astronomy in Canada or to informal astronomy education in Canada and to promote such activities among the members of the sponsoring organizations.

FELLOWSHIP AWARD, established in 2013, is given to recognize long-term commitment to the Society.

Nominations for awards should be sent to the Awards Committee at awards20000@rasc.ca. For more information on the awards nominations, see www.rasc.ca/rasc-awards.

—Craig Levine, Past President, RASC