

2016 Board of Directors Candidate Statements

The following Candidates, meeting all of the criteria stipulated in RASC Policy B3, are eligible for election to the Board.

Charles Ennis
Christopher Gainor
Craig Levine
Susan Yeo

Charles Ennis Candidate Statement



RASC Background:

I joined the Sunshine Coast Centre of the RASC in August of 2013. In December 2013 I was elected to the board of the Sunshine Coast Centre as a director at large and took on the position of media director. I created a system for notifying media outlets of our Centre's activities through press releases and wrote articles for the local newspapers. I created a new website for the Sunshine Coast Centre in July 2014. Interest in the new web site has built up to 1,832 views in August 2015 and 2251 views from 833 people in September 2015, and we have now had over 11,000 views since this new website was created, with visitors from 66 countries and territories. I revitalized the Centre's inactive Facebook page and created our Twitter, Google+, and Pinterest sites. We've 272 followers for our Twitter page now, including many RASC Centres.

I took over the Sunshine Coast Centre's speaker program using the national Public Speaker Program, bringing in speakers every month (except July and August when we were busy with outreach activities). I brought in speakers from UBC, the University of Victoria, the NRC/Herzberg Institute, and Western Washington University. Our Centre became the most active centre using the PSP. When the RASC National Secretary asked for a volunteer to assist with the Public Speaker Program at one of the on line National Council meetings in the spring of 2015, I volunteered, was subsequently made a trustee for that program, and am now serving as the National PSP Administrator.

I've only ever missed attending two outreach events since joining the RASC, one as I had to attend the 2015 GA in Halifax, and the other because of a death in my family. I have attended both General Assemblies that occurred since I joined the RASC.

I helped put together an astronomy television program in partnership with Coast Cable TV called Night Lights which ran its first season in 2014 and just finished shooting the second season in the fall of 2015.

This is a partnership where we write the scripts and narrate the segments and Coast Cable provides the studio at Elphinstone Secondary School with student videographers to do the filming at no cost to our Centre. I wrote scripts, narrated, and arranged video sessions in the field to make up the episodes. The Night Lights program disseminates basic astronomical information and promotes our RASC Centre. Telus subsequently became aware of our Night Lights TV program. Malcolm Oliver of Optik TV contacted me about our Sunshine Coast Centre doing a science program for their Optik TV on-demand network as well as their YouTube channel. Oliver is willing to grant up to \$75,000 for the program. I am now pursuing this initiative with the help of experienced Canadian film/TV producer Dodie Graham-McKay.

Construction on the SCC Observatory had started when I joined our Centre in 2013 and I put in many shifts working on our observatory. I became part of the SCC Observatory committee early in 2014. In December 2014, I was voted in as president of the Sunshine Coast Centre and immediately committed our members to finishing the observatory by mid-2015. Work on the observatory escalated and we had our grand opening and first light on 2015 June 27. Since the opening we've had many public viewing sessions at the observatory, including a special opening for the lunar eclipse on September 27. We pursued and received a \$3600 grant from the Sunshine Coast Community Foundation, which bought us a new CCD camera and screen for the telescope. I'm actively pursuing multiple funding grants and programs to expand the observatory by adding a "warm room"/classroom.

In June 2014, I volunteered to help Craig Levine and the Information Technology Committee choose and test a new system for on-line meetings, a process that resulted in the current WebEx system we use for meetings.

At the 2014 GA, I also volunteered to take on writing a Small Observatories Handbook for the RASC. This involved interviewing 139 observatory owners in 11 countries and writing the book (61,780 words, 35 photos), which is now in its final stages of editing and should be published soon to bring in revenue for the RASC. At the 2015 GA, in Halifax I presented the results of my research for the Small Observatories Handbook, and Peter Jedicke has invited me to do an update presentation on this topic at the 2016 GA.

In July 2015, I volunteered to assist Denis Grey's team for evaluating and testing the new RASC website.

Throughout early 2014 and into 2015 I have done presentations on light-pollution abatement for various community associations and organizations on the Sunshine Coast, building support for going to Sechelt council this winter to lobby them to commit to becoming a Dark Skies Community recognized by the IDA.

I volunteered to serve on the Fundraising Committee being formed at the National Council meeting in November 2015.

Previous Background:

I got my pilot's license at age 16 from a flying scholarship from 525 Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Cadets. From 1972, I attended Royal Roads Military College, Victoria, B.C., majoring in Physics and Physical Oceanography. I held a reserve commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Canadian Armed Forces. I was a training officer for this air cadet squadron from 1981 to 1985.

In 1977, I left the Canadian Armed Forces to pursue a 28-year career as a member of the Vancouver Police Department, and was awarded the Governor General's Exemplary Service Medal. In my police

career, I served on the Emergency Response Team (Tactical Unit) as a Hostage Negotiator and as a Child Abuse Investigator. I was one of the founding members of the Gang Crime Unit. I finished my police career working with the Mental Health Emergency Services unit, working with a psych nurse dealing with mentally disturbed people in the community. I was a safety trainer for the BC Ministry for Children and Family Development and Coast Health Authority. In 2005, I retired from the VPD and became a civilian police dispatcher at ECOMM for southwestern B.C. for the Vancouver Police Department, finally retiring from law enforcement in July 2013.

I am a published author with 21 books in various genres to my name, including the aforementioned Small Observatories Handbook.

My goals and intentions:

I support the RASC initiative to create a fundraising committee to bring in additional revenue. We've relied on our investments to bail us out of deficits in the past and this year that didn't go so well due to the state of the Canadian economy. Of course, most NGOs have such committees with members actively lobbying for donations and support, and the RASC can benefit from such a committee.

We need to defend and expand our remaining dark skies. More than half of the observatory owners I spoke to in creating the Small Observatories handbook said they'd found relatively dark skies in which to place their observatories, but 21% of them said that their sky conditions had worsened since they'd opened their observatories. Dark skies are our heritage and ensure our health and safety: We need to defend our dark skies by promoting abatement of artificial light at night.

I want to promote better use of the Public Speaker Program and build up a speakers list that Centres can use as a resource.

It seems to me from my experience at the 2015 GA in Halifax that all RASC Centres are reporting similar experiences as my Sunshine Coast Centre, with regards to having a relatively small core group of volunteers who do everything compared to their total membership. Several Centres are reporting that this situation has resulted in "burn out" issues. I'd like to help come up with perks for volunteers. We need to balance public outreach with "inreach": that is to say, doing things specifically for club members. I also support revising the award system to a system with pins for 5, 10, 15, and 20 year's service and retaining the existing Service Award as a high-level national award.

I also heard reports from delegates from many other Centres concerning difficulties trying to recruit people to volunteer to serve on their governing board. Many Centres have executive members who repeatedly cycle through executive positions as no new members coming in are willing to commit to serving on the governing board. Looking at the lists of past members of the national executive as well as several Centres, you will find that this "recycling" of executives is a phenomenon that has been with the Society for some time. I'd like to look at measures that may help to solve this problem. Multiple Centres reported aging membership and challenges engaging youth. We need to better utilize social-networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ to engage youth.

In short, I intend to serve the RASC to the best of my ability.

Sincerely, Charles Ennis
President, Sunshine Coast Centre RASC

Christopher Gainor Candidate Statement



Background

I have been active in RASC for many years, starting as a member of the Edmonton Centre as a youth, and more recently in the Vancouver Centre. For the past two decades, I have been an active member of the Victoria Centre, where I served as president for two years and won the Newton-Ball Service Award.

At the national level, I served as National Representative for the Victoria Centre from 2007 to 2012, when I became 2nd Vice-President. In three years in that position, I chaired the Nominating Committee, where I helped organize the first Board elections under the RASC's new constitution.

Last year, I became 1st Vice-President, and I currently chair the Publications Committee and the Constitution Committee. At present, the Publications Committee is busy with new publications coming up, including the Explore the Universe Guide and a new book on small observatories. I am a member of the History Committee and have served on the Finance Committee. I served on the RASC transitional board in 2013-2014, and then was elected to a two-year term on the board in 2014.

As an author and historian, I have written three books on the history of space exploration, and one on the history of aeronautics. I have a fifth book in production, and at present I am writing a history of the *Hubble Space Telescope* under a contract with NASA. I am a Ph.D. historian, and in my career I have also worked in public relations and as a journalist. The experience I gained in that work helps me in my work on the RASC Board of Directors, particularly the Publications Committee and the History Committee.

I am running for a second term on the board this year in hopes of continuing my work there, and as a member of the executive. I hope to continue serving as 1st Vice-President and then as President. I meet the requirements for membership of the RASC Board of Directors, and if elected I will abide by the RASC Directors and Officers Code of Conduct.

Upcoming Challenges

The past few years have been a time of growth and change for the RASC. In spite of economic and other challenges, our membership has grown to exceed 5,000 members, and the RASC is now welcoming *Skynews* to our stable of publications. Our new governance structure, with a Board of Directors and an

Executive Director, is providing good strategic direction for the Society, but the work of fine-tuning our new structure continues.

Along with other members of the board, I have been striving to provide forward-looking direction to the Society, while continuing to make sure that voices of the members and the Centres are heard at all times. I want to make sure that the services we all value continue to be delivered in ways that are both relevant and cost effective.

The RASC's new role with *Skynews* means that we will have to put a lot of work into maintaining its quality and profitability, and the Board and Publications Committee will also have to make sure that our other publications meet the future needs of our members. The *Journal of the RASC* and the *Observer's Handbook* have new editors who are providing fresh perspectives for these publications.

I am excited to see this year's General Assembly take place in conjunction with AstroCATS, and I hope this will lead to new ideas to rejuvenate future General Assemblies as our annual gathering.

Members of the RASC have in common our love of astronomy. The growth of the field and the creation of new technologies mean that our hobby will become more exciting than ever. I want everyone in the RASC to get the most that they can out of the Society so we can all enjoy our explorations of the heavens more than ever. It is also critical that we make the RASC attractive to Canadian astronomers who are not RASC members, and that we bring the heavens to people who haven't yet learned to love the Universe as we do.

Christopher Gainor, Ph.D.

1st Vice-President, RASC

Craig Levine Candidate Statement



I am passionate about astronomy and all areas of science, and have been for as far back as I can remember. Sharing that passion is a source of joy in my life, and my joy was amplified 10-fold over 17 years ago when I discovered a like-minded group of people in the RASC. I have always been a "roll up the sleeves and pitch in" type of person, and have held many roles locally and nationally for the past 15

years, including President of the Halifax Centre.

When I moved to London in 2006, I found a welcoming Centre and several familiar names and faces. When I saw that there was an opening for the role of Representative on the National Council, I put my name forward and held that role for three terms. As a former National Council member and current Board member, I am on the Publications Committee, I Chair the IT Committee, and am a trustee for the Public Speaker Program. I have previously been Chair of the Property Committee (where we divested ourselves of an ageing and increasingly run-down building), and a member of the former Executive Advisory Committee.

Through the Board, I want to continue to serve the membership and channel my energy and passion for the RASC towards tackling the challenges that we face as a membership organization, a charity, and a publications business. I intend to focus on helping to build the RASC into a more inclusive organization by looking at how we can grow by becoming more attractive for historically under-represented groups: families, females, and youth; delivering meaningful programs and services for the Centres; growing RASC revenues through innovative products, publications, and fundraising. Developing a long-term strategic plan is a priority. Above all, I am committed to being a good steward of the RASC and its values.

Craig Levine, Director – RASC

Susan Yeo Candidate Statement



The Calgary Centre has been putting up with me since the early '90s, when I commenced my membership with an immediate appointment as Centre Secretary; a position I enjoyed and held for a number of years. I cemented my enthusiasm for all of the RASC when I attended my first General Assembly in Edmonton and realized what a dynamic and valuable organization I belong to.

I was proud to represent my Centre as National Representative at a number of GAs, and assisted in the planning and execution of the Calgary GA in 2007; albeit with a background role due to personal and professional commitments, which continued to keep me out of the limelight until recently. I am comfortable in an online environment and have attended RASC WebEx meetings as required over the past year. I also have family in Ontario, which may facilitate face-to-face Finance meetings between GAs.

I spearheaded a successful grant application to develop and improve our dark-sky site, Eccles Ranch in Caroline, Alberta, and acted as General Contractor to complete the road building portion of the project, as well as a left-handed labourer during construction and subsequent maintenance of the site.

As the entire Library Committee, I created the catalogue that is still in use today, as well as cleaned and organized our WCO collection.

I was a founding volunteer organizer for The Great Alberta Star-B-Q. held annually in July at Eccles; and have been an enthusiastic participant in many public outreach events over the years, including a regular Celestron 14" scope operator for Wilson Coulee Observatory tour groups. This last is a particular favourite for me as one of my greatest pleasures is showing newcomers and curious public around the cosmos. I built my own 10" Jig Johnson Dobsonian telescope, which I don't drag out very often these days, but love nonetheless.

Since 1999 I've owned and operated a small but profitable Alberta corporation in the aerospace sector. One of my major (self-taught) functions is the care and maintenance of our finances, including all banking, bookkeeping, forecasting, reconciliation, remittance, and year-end processes. Before that, one of my duties as interim Administrator of the Small Claims Division of the Provincial Court of Alberta was to project and manage a multi-million-dollar budget. I've managed to avoid serious financial calamities in both my personal and professional lives, and believe I bring a positive outlook along with my accounting and business skills to the Finance Committee.

With the acquisition of *SkyNews*, I see some challenging and rewarding times ahead for our Society and in particular the Finance Committee as we learn to balance our non-profit status and responsibilities to our membership; and the magazine as one of the Society's major investments.

Thanks to the Board, the Nominating Committee, and the Membership for your kind consideration.

Susan F. Yeo, Calgary Centre