

the **niagara whirlpool**  
November/December 2006

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Volume 25 Issue 5

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Stan Sammy

The October elections are past and I have been given the reins of President. I am looking forward to working with the new Executive of the Niagara Centre. There were a few changes: Mike Panucci is now Vice-President, Andrew Beaton is Secretary, on the Board of Directors we have added Bill Macsween, and Mark Roberts is the new Members' Observing Coordinator.

My hat is off to Mike Panucci, he not only accepted the position of Vice President, but also the position of Public Observing Coordinator. Mike has already selected the dates for Public Observing Nights at Firemen's Park for the year 2007. You can find those in the Event Horizon.

To everyone on the executive of the Niagara Centre I would like to say thank you for standing for nomination and accepting your positions.

During the next two years I would like to see more of our members turn out to the monthly meetings and become involved with and participate in the many club events.

On October 28<sup>th</sup>, "Stargazing in the Vineyard" was held at Stonechurch. With cloudy skies and a fierce wind, the only stars to be seen were those projected on the screen by Brian Pihack. Even so, there were over 100 people in attendance. There are more "Stargazing in the Vineyard" nights planned for the new year.

Please visit our website for more information on all our public and members observing sessions.

The executive greatly appreciates all the support from the membership.



The new Niagara Centre executive, from left to right: Dave Stremlaw, Joe Otonicar, Joyce Sims, Darlene Sloggett, Michael Panucci, Stan Sammy, Andrew Beaton, Brian Pihack, Bill Macsween and Glen Pidsadnick.

On the cover, Rob Lenz took this picture of the North America Nebula from Powassan on the only clear night of the Frozen Banana Star Party.

## FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

Michael Panucci

I am very happy to serve the club as vice president this term. Additionally, I have happily accepted the position of public observing co-ordinator as well. I thank the last committee for volunteering their efforts.

I have been a club member for approximately 10 years. I have enjoyed our club activities and observing with members. I still remember the first time I visited our observatory in Wellandport. I remember John Nemy and John Fishleigh were observing with their scopes, and offering help and advice. I was very appreciative. I have observed at CCCA ever since with delight. I can attest that my best times as a member were out at CCCA accompanied by great skies and great company.

Again this term, I am certain that we have a great group of members on the executive, all with different strengths to bring to the table. I would like to see the

executive committee function fairly and effectively. Committee members should feel comfortable with each other. I plan to ask executive members to tell me what is essential for them to complete their executive responsibilities.

Great job on the website, Jim. Our website is looking very attractive with many details about our club and its happenings. I would like to determine why the member discussion area is not used by members? I really enjoyed the warnings about aurora, meteors, news or a planned observing night with the old website. I hope we can determine why.

I will conclude with congratulations to Stan Sammy. I have seen Stan in action at his beginners' classes. He is really committed to beginners. Great work! Stan will make an excellent club president. I hope to assist him in any way possible.

## MEMBERS' OBSERVING

Mark Roberts

Hello everyone, let me start by welcoming the new Executive. I hope your terms go smoothly.

I certainly hope that the next year brings more clear Members Nights—this past year was a bit disappointing. I know that I did not get out to the CCCA as much as I would have liked. I simply cannot remember so many cloudy or rainy days as this past summer, but the long crisp, clear nights of winter are upon us (I hope). I plan on spending some long nights observing with all the regulars, and I really hope to see some new faces at the observatory in the coming year.

Don't be shy about coming out. If you need directions, please contact me. Anybody in Niagara can

get there in an hour or less.

I think the CCCA is our club's best resource. Take advantage of it—you will be glad you did.

Members' nights will still be scheduled for the Saturday closest to the new moon, with a few exceptions. Rain dates will be the next day (Sunday). I urge all members to sign up to the email Alerts List, as I will be sending out reminders a couple of days in advance of all members nights. The next one will be on November 18. There will not be one in December, since it would fall too close to Christmas.

Let's have a great year.

I am very pleased to serve as public observing coordinator. I love watching the public appreciate astronomy.

I can say with certainty that the best payback for public nights is the kids. They all get excited at the eyepiece. My children love the public nights. It's fair to say adults are also fascinated with the same celestial sights. Lots of oohs and ahhs.

The next best part of public nights is attracting new members. Not everyone gets bitten by the astronomy bug. But if they join our club, we must inform them of beginners classes and share some dark sky observing with them.

I would like members to remember that our club has a variety of observing events. Members nights, public nights and the Stonechurch nights. I think Stonechurch is a good thing for our club, but I don't consider it to be a public night. I think we need to tweak the event a little to make sure that we do not lose track of astronomy for the public without the stigma of buying a product. Stonechurch is clearly operated as a business. It attracts a focused segment of adults, not children or family groups. I am sure a happy medium can be reached.

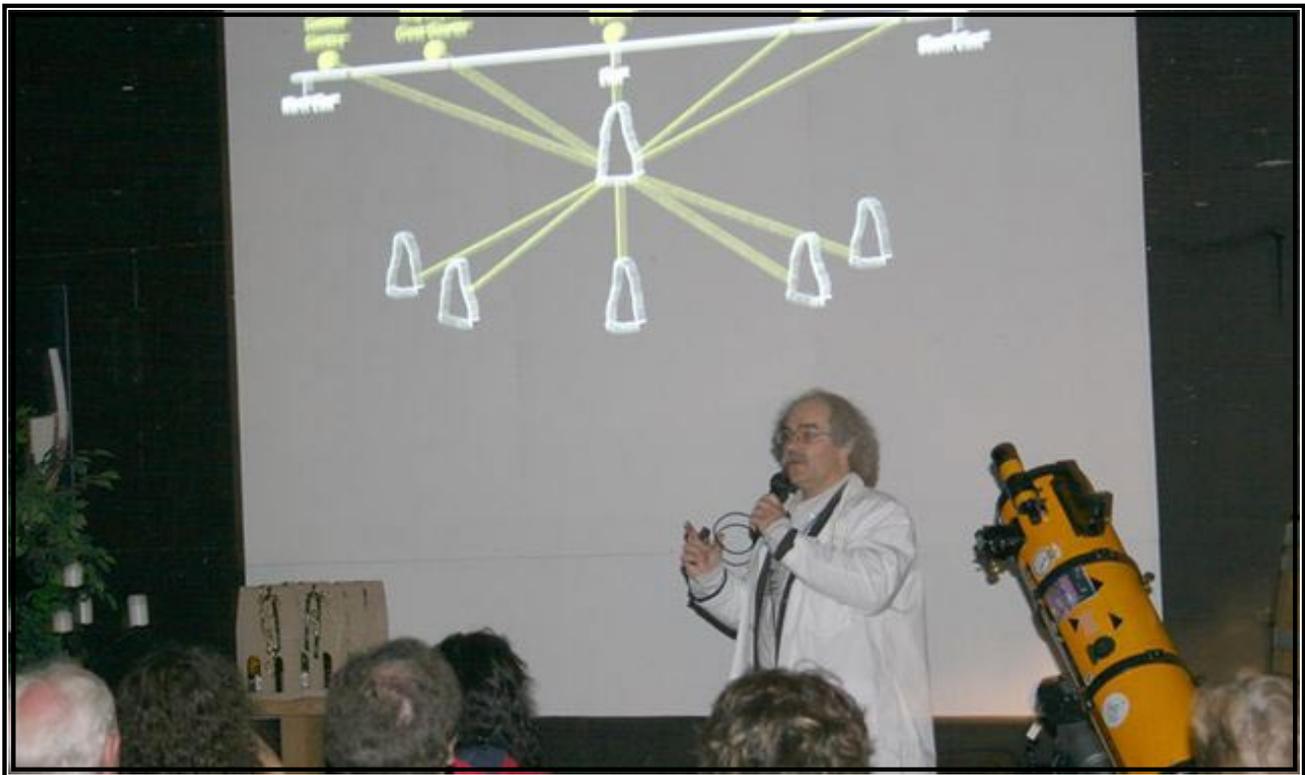
I plan to have at least three observing nights next year at CCCA. I want to increase our visibility in the park camping area. It shows our appreciation for the use of their land and fulfils our commitment.

Additionally, I plan to book at least one night at Rock Point Provincial Park in Dunnville. I have camped at this park and can attest that the southern skies are very good.

I will be asking fellow members to help out and contribute whenever possible. For example, Les Welgan made some public presentations in the past that were very educational and entertaining. I hope Les and Del can help me out some nights.

I would like to thank Wendy Kuhn for helping me take over the position. Much appreciated!

Public nights will continue sharing the event calendar with Stonechurch nights. I am planning several public nights at Firemen's Park for the winter. Please monitor our website for confirmations or club emails. We are scheduled to be there on November 25<sup>th</sup>, and January 27 and February 24, 2007, are tentative.



A packed house attended two talks by Brian "Albert Veinstein" Pihack at Stonechurch Winery on October 28.

This dark sky report asks for your assistance in finding sources of dark sky-friendly fixtures in local stores.

Residential and business lighting contributes significantly to light pollution, so encouraging home and business owners to practice responsible lighting can lead to darker skies. When people are motivated to modify lighting practices, they often want to replace existing light fixtures. Although a wide variety of dark sky-friendly fixtures can be found on the Web, most of us buy from local stores. Thus it's crucial that suitable fixtures be available locally if we expect people to actually buy and install them.

If you've ever looked for outdoor lighting fixtures, you know that it can be very difficult to find any that are dark sky-friendly. A few stores are beginning to stock a few suitable items, but a much wider variety in many more stores is necessary if we hope to turn the tide.

You can help in two ways. When shopping for outdoor lighting, always ask for dark sky-friendly

fixtures. Even if the store doesn't have anything suitable in stock, it may be able to find some. More important, managers will get the message that people are interested; if there's a market for a product, you can bet that the product will be made available. Every inquiry is a message to sales staff. Just like pushing a stalled car, once a little movement starts it becomes easier to gain momentum.

If you find dark sky-friendly fixtures, we'd like to know what and where you found them. We can then advise people where to shop; the store has an incentive to stock appropriate fixtures, and more good lighting gets installed.

Remember that good luminaires don't necessarily have to be full cutoff (FCO), which has a specific meaning about light distribution, but they do need to be appropriately shielded. If in doubt, check resources such as <http://darksky.org>.

Please send any information you find to me at [wliebau@becon.org](mailto:wliebau@becon.org).

## BOOK REVIEW: SUE FRENCH'S CELESTIAL SAMPLER Philip Downey

I purchased Sue French's Celestial Sampler while attending the Black Forest Star Party in August this year. French was a guest speaker and was also signing books, so I had her inscribe one for me.

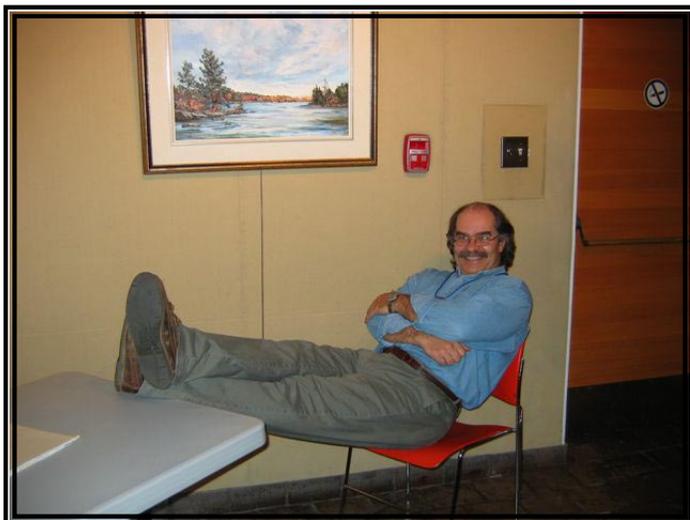
French wrote the Small Scope Sampler column for Sky & Telescope, and has since graduated to writing the Deep Sky Wonders column. This book compiles 60 of those columns from 1999-2004. Each one is a two-page starhop with her essay, finder charts, a table of objects to hunt, and pictures of selected objects. If you have all those issues, you have all the starhops, but you don't have them in an easy to use format.

Don't let the small scope label fool you. These objects are excellent for any size scope, and a few are actually easier to find in smaller scopes. And I guarantee you haven't seen them all. She includes and shows you how to find deep sky objects from the Messier, NGC, and IC catalogues, as well as more obscure sources.

I've been able to use it a few times under dark skies. I find the book is easy to keep on my lap as I sit at my telescope, and the charts are pretty good.

With all the cloudy nights we've had this fall, I've been thumbing through it a lot. Even if I can't be under dark skies myself, I can enjoy someone else's experiences, and look forward to my own.

## PHOTO GALLERY



Brian Pihack had no problems adjusting to the post of Past President.



Joe Otonicar, with a brand new 6" Celestron that was donated to the club.



Denis Maheu's homemade 29.25" Dobsonian saw first light recently. Everything fits together and works properly, so only small things are left: varnishing, powder coating on the poles, and a very large shroud.



Les Marczi took this picture of Comet Swan on October 30 from the CCCA in Wellandport. Comet Swan brightened unexpectedly at the end of October and was visible to the naked eye for more than a week, making it the best comet of the year. It was easy to find with binoculars as it sped through the constellation Hercules, and was obviously bigger and brighter than globular cluster M13.

## PHOTO GALLERY



Taking advantage of fall's cloudy skies and wet weather, John Dean caught this rainbow near the Thruway in Buffalo



Stan Sammy, Ed Archambault, Mark Roberts and others waited in vain for clear skies at Fairview Mall to see the transit of Mercury on November 8. The next one won't occur until May 9, 2016. See you then!

### NIAGARA CENTRE WEB SITE: E-MAIL DISCUSSION LIST & MEMBERS ONLY AREA

The Niagara Centre has an email discussion list and a member's area on the website. By subscribing to the e-mail list you will be able to post messages and carry on discussions about astronomy and activities with other Niagara Centre members. This is a great way to interact and get to know other members, or enhance your knowledge of astronomy. Please note that a log-in procedure is required to initially join the Discussion List. Complete instructions are available on the discussion list page on the website. A member's only area of the website is also available. This area contains Niagara Centre information for the use of its members only. The member's area contains astrophotography by Niagara members, the Niagara library book list and lots of other Centre-related information. To receive the log-ins and passwords for the e-mail discussion list and member's area, contact Jim Holiko and he will send you the needed information by e-mail.

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## EVENT HORIZON

- November 16 General meeting, Niagara Falls Public Library, 7:30 p.m. Beginners class at 6:45 p.m.  
 November 18 Member's night, CCCA Observatory. Leonid meteor shower peaks.  
 November 25 Public starnight, Firemens Park, Niagara Falls. Begins at dusk.  
 December 2 Beginners class at A.N. Myer, 7 p.m.  
 December 10 Mercury, Jupiter and Mars form tight grouping.  
 December 16 Member's night, CCCA Observatory. Geminid meteor shower.  
 December 21 General meeting, Niagara Falls Public Library, 7:30 p.m. Beginners class at 6:45 p.m.  
 January 18 General meeting, Niagara Falls Public Library, 7:30 p.m. Beginners class at 6:45 p.m.  
 January 20 Member's night, CCCA Observatory.  
 February 1 Beginners class at A.N. Myer, 7 p.m.

## M A S T H E A D

### Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

PRESIDENT

Stan Sammy 905-937-6820  
 stansam@niagara.com

VICE-PRESIDENT

Michael Panucci 905-356-8986  
 michaelpanucci@hotmail.com

SECRETARY

Andrew Beaton 905-933-6555  
 andrew.beaton@international.gc.ca

TREASURER

Dave Stremlaw 905-892-2767  
 dstremla@iaw.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bill Macsween (Loaner Scopes) 905-228-3445  
 macsween@niagara.com

Darlene Marano 905-468-7419  
 dsgm13@cogeco.ca

Glen Pidsadnick 905-262-5276  
 glenp@artistsgarden.com

Joyce Sims 905-935-9355  
 jvanderbrugge@cogeco.ca

PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL

John Vanderbrugge 905-641-2568  
 rjevoy@hotmail.com

Ray Evoy 905-935-1999  
 maheu@vaxxine.com

Denis Maheu 905-358-6067  
 dfrigo@computan.on.ca

NATIONAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

Joe Otonicar 905-935-2526  
 jotonicar@look.ca

### Niagara Centre

BEGINNERS WORKSHOP COMMITTEE

Stan Sammy 905-937-6820  
 stansam@niagara.com

Brian Pihack 905-356-1212  
 drbgpdc@on.aibn.com

PUBLIC RELATIONS (Observatory Keys)

Brian Pihack 905-356-1212  
 drbgpdc@on.aibn.com

DARK SKIES CHAIRMAN

Wayne Liebau 905-892-4531  
 wliebau@becon.org

LIBRARIAN

Darlene Sloggett 905-354-6612  
 desleo\_56@cogeco.ca

OBSERVATORY DIRECTOR

Les Marczi 905-734-3447  
 lmarczi@cogeco.ca

MEMBERS OBSERVING COORDINATOR

Mark Roberts 905-735-0977  
 str1701ncc@cogeco.ca

PUBLIC OBSERVING COORDINATOR

Michael Panucci 905-356-8986  
 michaelpanucci@hotmail.com

WEBSITE COORDINATOR

Jim Holiko 905-228-3484  
 draven@cogeco.ca

WHIRLPOOL EDITOR & PUBLISHER

Philip Downey 905-934-8372  
 philip.downey.1998@alum.bu.edu

HOSPITALITY

Pat Sammy 905-935-6820  
 patricia.sammy@hotmail.com

### Executive Council