



Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre

Terms of Reference: Elizabeth (Betsy) Nicholls Award for Outstanding Contributions to Palaeontology

Mandate:

The Elizabeth (Betsy) L. Nicholls Award for Outstanding Contributions to Palaeontology is to be conferred annually by the Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre (CFDC) to an individual who has been deemed by the Selection Committee to have made an indelible contribution to the study of prehistoric life and/or ancient environments. These contributions may range from a single influential monograph or a series of publications, to the development of pioneering methodologies/analyses, to the long-term establishment and study of outstanding research collections; outreach and teaching contributions may be a component of this consideration, but should not be the sole factor in determining the award winner. The award recipient will be invited to present on a topic of their choosing at the annual Nicholls Award gala event where they will be formally presented with this honour. CFDC staff and affiliates are not eligible for this award.

The award is named after Elizabeth (Betsy) L. Nicholls, an internationally recognized palaeontologist who contributed to our understanding of prehistoric life through her study and collection of fossils in western Canada, and around the world. Her work and collaborations led to the creation and expansion of palaeontological museums and displays in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia and Morden, Manitoba. Upon completion of her Ph.D. – the subject matter of which helped bring the CFDC collection into the international spotlight – she joined the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller, Alberta, where she was Curator of Marine Reptiles.

Selection Committee:

The Selection Committee shall be composed of an odd number of members and include the Committee Chair (voting position; appointed by the CFDC Board), the CFDC Curator (or similar position), and one or more non-board members selected by the Committee Chair in consultation with the Curator (or similar position). These external members shall have specific expertise and extensive background in aspects of palaeontology/geology bearing on the award objectives (i.e., an Adjunct Curator of the CFDC, a renowned Canadian palaeontologist, or a past Nicholls award winner). Committee terms for the Committee Chair and non-board member(s) will usually be for two (2) years, and are renewable; attempts should be made to stagger appointments to ensure continuity. If it is necessary to replace a non-board member, the Committee Chair shall, in consultation with the Curator (or similar position), fill the position as needed.

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Meetings:

Meetings need not be conducted in person. Any means of communication (e.g. email, telephone, Skype) agreed upon by the Selection Committee will be deemed acceptable.

Responsibilities:

The Selection Committee is tasked with identifying a slate of candidates for consideration based on criteria dictated by the board (i.e., geographic and financial limits), and advising the Board on a suitable awardee for the Elizabeth (Betsy) L. Nicholls Award for Outstanding Contributions to Palaeontology ideally nine (9) months ahead of the next planned gala event (which are typically held in May of each year). Deliberations of the committee should be initiated about 1 year in advance of the next gala event, and be carried out in such a way that the initial slate, after due deliberation, is reduced to a short list (ideally no more than two candidates) and then a vote taken on the short listed candidates. The selected awardee shall be decided by a majority vote of the Selection Committee members. Should the awardee decline the award, or should the board not accept the committee's recommendation, the Selection Committee is charged with selecting an alternate awardee and presenting that outcome to the Board.

Each member of the Selection Committee will:

1. identify and bring forth up to three (3) names to the committee for consideration, together with documentation in support of each nominee's merit for the award;
2. declare any conflicts of interest regarding nominees (such as being a supervisor of, a professional colleague, or a co-author within the past 5 years).
3. will act with fair and impartial judgment, and in confidentiality;
4. cooperatively participate to review and discuss the credentials of the candidates under consideration (letters of support may be solicited if deemed necessary);
5. provide the Committee Chair with their vote in confidence no later than one (1) week prior to deadline outlined above.

The Committee Chair will:

1. be the formal liaison between the Selection Committee and CFDC Board;
2. strive to reach consensus by the Selection Committee on the nomination of a single suitable awardee;
3. ensure that deliberations and vote(s) by the committee are concluded within the timeline outlined above;
4. be responsible for maintaining the slate of candidates forwarded for nomination by the Selection Committee. This list is to be provided in confidence to the subsequent Selection Committee as a starting point to assist in their initial deliberations.

Adopted: April 13, 2017.

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