



## **Press Release - USA and Canada Triumph at International Linguistics Olympiad**

2012 International Linguistics Olympiad

Hosted by the Association for Technical Culture of Slovenia

Held at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering of the University of Ljubljana

July 29 - August 4, 2012, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Team USA Red: Allan Sadun (Austin, TX), Anderson Wang (Ambler, PA), Darryl Wu (Bellevue, WA), and Sam Zbarsky (Rockville, MD)

Team USA Blue: Erik Andersen (Sunnyvale, CA), Aidan Kaplan (Montclair, NJ), Aaron Klein (Brookline, MA), and Alexander Wade (Reno, NV)

Team Canada: Pen Long (Toronto, ON), Harry Go (Langley, BC), Simon Huang (Toronto, ON), and David Penco (Burnaby, BC)

Coaches: Dragomir Radev and Lori Levin (USA); Pat Littell (Canada)

On July 29, eight Americans and four Canadians traveled to Ljubljana, Slovenia, to join over 30 teams from around the world at the 2012 International Linguistics Olympiad (IOL). The North Americans, who all trained together, performed extremely well. In the team contest, USA Blue-Erik Andersen, Aidan Kaplan, Aaron Klein, and Alexander Wade-won first place. The Netherlands won second place in the team contest, and Poland Team 2 came in third. In the individual round, the USA won six medals and one honorable mention, and Canada won one honorable mention. Alexander Wade and Anderson Wang of USA won gold medals; Aaron Klein, Allan Sadun, and Darryl Wu of USA won silver medals; Erik Andersen of USA won a bronze medal; and Sam Zbarsky of USA and Harry Go of Canada won honorable mention awards. Second place by medals was Russia with two gold, one silver, and two bronze medals, and the UK and Estonia tied for third place with one silver and three bronze medals each. Bulgaria had two golds and a bronze.

The IOL, one of twelve international science olympiads, consists of two events. The first is the individual contest, a six-hour test, which this year had problems about the languages Dyrbal, Umbu-Ungu, Basque, Teop, and Rotuman. Darryl Wu won a prize for writing the best solution to the Dyrbal problem, Alexander Wade won prizes for the best solutions to the Basque and Rotuman problems, and Anderson Wang won for the best solution of the Teop problem. The second event is the team contest, which this year asked contestants to decipher a list of 57 countries written in Lao. To solve these problems, contestants must apply knowledge about the way languages work as well as logic and reasoning skills to decipher unfamiliar languages and writing systems.

The teams were selected through the North American Computational Linguistics Olympiad (NACLO). This competition has two rounds, which are held at universities and high schools throughout the USA and Canada. This year over 1,500 students took the open round, a three-hour test. The top students from the open round were invited to the next round, a more difficult, five-hour test. The top four from the invitational round-Allan Sadun, Anderson Wang, Darryl Wu, and Sam Zbarsky-were chosen to be Team USA Red, and

the top four Canadians-Pen Long, Harry Go, Simon Huang, and David Pencowere chosen for Team Canada. The next fourteen Americans were all invited to the joint American-Canadian practices, which were conducted via Skype by the USA coaches Dragomir Radev, a professor at the University of Michigan, and Lori Levin, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University, the Canadian coach Pat Littell, a doctoral student at the University of British Columbia, and Adam Hesterberg, an IOL veteran and Fulbright scholar in mathematics. The coaches used the practices and one final playoff to select USA Team Blue, named above.

In addition to competing, the students at the IOL also explored Slovenia and made friends from all over the world. Twenty-seven countries were represented this year-the most ever since the Olympiad began in 2003 when six countries competed in Borovets, Bulgaria. Next year's IOL will be held in Manchester, England.

More info:

NACLO : [www.naclo.cs.cmu.edu](http://www.naclo.cs.cmu.edu)

IOL : [ioling.org](http://ioling.org)

Contact:

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Dr. Lori Levin, Carnegie Mellon University. NACLO chair, local organizing chair for the IOL ([ls1@cs.cmu.edu](mailto:ls1@cs.cmu.edu))

Patrick Littell, University of British Columbia, Canadian team leader for the IOL, ([littell@alumni.ubc.ca](mailto:littell@alumni.ubc.ca))

