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Canadian math team to train at Laurier for international Olympiad

WATERLOO – Six of the brightest math minds from high schools across Canada will be at Laurier June 27 to July 3 to attend the Canadian Mathematical Society summer training camp for the 51st International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO).

The IMO — the most prestigious math competition for high school students in the world — will be held this year in Astana, Kazakhstan, from July 3 to July 14. The six Canadian team members, who were selected from among more than 200,000 students in Grades 7 to 12, will be pitting their skills against the world's best students from more than 100 countries.

“These problems are incredibly challenging,” said Laurier math professor Edward Wang, who is the training camp's local organizer. “I have brought back questions from IMO tests in previous years to show my colleagues, and even they have great difficulty solving them.”

Wang will work with team leader Adrian Tang from the University of Calgary, deputy leader Victoria Krakovna and deputy leader observer Alex Remorov from the University of Toronto, and Canadian IMO committee chair Christopher Small from the University of Waterloo. The training consists of three daily lectures on problem-solving techniques in algebra, geometry, number theory, functional equations, combinatorics and probability. The students will take mock tests that mirror the complexity of problems they will face during the Olympiad, where they are given four-and-a-half hours to solve three problems each day.

Wang has been actively involved in various national and international mathematics competitions for 30 years. He chaired the Canadian Math Olympiad (CMO) committee for three years, organized the summer training camp at Laurier in 2008 and accompanied previous teams to IMO competitions in Taiwan, the United States and Greece. This will be Wang's last involvement with IMO before he retires at the end of this month from a 37-year career at Laurier.

“Hosting the IMO summer training camp for the second time shows that Laurier is supportive of math competitions at the highest level and math education in general,” said Wang. “We hope we'll be inviting the next generation of math wizards back to Laurier again.”

The six “athletes” on Canada's national team are: Alex Song, Yuqi Zhu, Jonathan Zung, and three silver medalists from last year's IMO, Robin Cheng, Hunter Spink and Chen Sun.

The IMO began in 1959 in Romania with six countries. Since Canada began participating in 1981, the country has accumulated 17 gold, 40 silver and 68 bronze medals.

An evening send-off and media event for the students will be held June 27 in Laurier's Science Building courtyard. For details and interview requests, please contact Edward Wang, 519-884-0710 ext. 2305 or ewang@wlu.ca.