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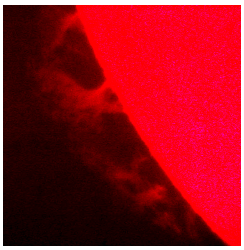
Winnicentrics

The Journal of the Winnipeg Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

STARS OVER MANITOBA

A report on Pi Kinewabum Anonguk: By Jeff Kerr

On Saturday, April 22, about 80 people attended Rolling River First Nation's 3rd annual Pi Kinewabum Anonguk (Come, Look at the Stars!) celebration of astronomy. The event was held in the Little Saskatchewan River Valley at the picturesque Valley Farm Picnic site. Guest astronomers in attendance were Wilfred Buck from the Manitoba First Nation Education Resource Centre, six members of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) - Winnipeg Centre and amateur astronomer Terry Smith from Brandon.



The first activity was a viewing of the sun by means of a hydrogen-alpha filter. Huge gas plumes called prominences, which are many times larger than the earth, could be seen. Student Doyle Wilson said the prominences looked like trees growing out the side of the sun. Viewing these solar storms was his favourite event.

Bannock burgers, potato salad, and smokies roasted over an open fire were enjoyed by everyone during a supper hour. Many guests toured the tipi on site that was raised by the youth under the guidance of Elder Wilfred Buck.

During the setting of the sun Standing Eagle drum group shared many songs. The Katimavik youth in attendance could not resist dancing with the children.

As darkness began to fall, Ron Berard from RASC Winnipeg presented "Cosmic Connections" a slide show portraying the beauty of our planet, the heavens and our fragile connection to it all.

At precisely 9:54 p.m. the International Space Station was observed to pass over to the south. Everyone waved to the American and Russian astronauts on board.

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Summertime Meetings Looking Good!

Summer brings short nights and not too dark skies, but astronomy never sleeps and here is what your council has lined up for you.

MEETINGS

Beginners Session 7:00pm
Regular Meeting 7:30pm

Friday July 14

It's a night out to visit our friends! We have been invited to the Planetarium at the Manitoba Museum. We start at 7 o'clock p.m. in the Planetarium Auditorium with the Beginners' Session on Telescope Basics and Club Telescopes. Then after a few announcements, including a heads up report on upcoming star parties, we go onto the Lunar Observing Certificate programme with Mike Stephens. Then Gail shares her "Constellation of the Month", and Jen with a combined What's Up and What's New. We shall have a "Pic' of the Month' by Josh Yamada and coffee break to meet friends. After the break we move to the planetarium where Scott will show us the newest show. Here is what he told us about it, " We have the auditorium for the "regular" meeting, followed by a showing of the new Planetarium show "Is Anybody Out There?", which is co-produced by us and 3 other planetaria in Canada. It's all about the search for life - both in space and in extreme locations on Earth. Attendees of the Ottawa GA will recognize Jaymie Matthews and a few others in the show." This is a real treat. Remember, there is 'on street' parking, but sometimes there is a bit of a walk betwixt car and Museum, and there is parking under the Concert Hall for six dollars. To park underground, go around to the back entrance off Lily Street.

Friday August 11

Back to our home turf, Room 118 in St. John's College starting at 7 o'clock p.m. This month's Beginners' Session is on Cosmology, so if you ever wondered from whence we came, this is the time to find the answer. Some announcements and then Lindsay will give us more targets for the "Explore the Universe" certificate, followed by Gail and another interesting "Constellation of the Month" for us to go out and observe. After Gail, Jen will tell us what is Up and New. We are expecting a volunteer from July to tell us about the "Pic' o' the Month" and then the ever popular coffee break. After which comes the 'Main Event' details for which are being confirmed at time of this writing, but you will not be disappointed!

Heads Up!

This is a warning to mark your calendars that the meeting for September is NOT in St. John's College, but will be in University College. Meeting notes will be in the next Winnicentrics, but do note the new location.

News in a minute . . .

CONGRATULATIONS TO SCOTT YOUNG AND JOCELYN CHORNEY ON THEIR ENGAGEMENT! HOPEFULLY THIS MEANS WE'LL SEE JOCELYN MORE OFTEN.

Thanks to Stan Runge for forwarding the article by former 1st V-P Robin Woods who is now a member of the Ottawa Centre. While at the GA, a few of them visited Robin and Bobby. They received a local paper that had Robin's Astronomy Column in it and have sent it to us.

And also on the subject of former members, I received a phone call from Carey Deschamps who is serving in Afghanistan, where he says it is 54°C. He was hoping to be back in time for SSSP but it looks like he will be there until September. He is well and happy and says to say "Hi" to everyone in the Winnipeg Centre and wishes us all lots of clear skies this summer.

Volunteers Wanted!

Bring your scope, binoculars,
or just plain old enthusiasm to our
Whiteshell Public Observing Event.

Date: Sunday August 6th 2006
Time: 10:00PM - 11:00PM

Location: Near the Amphitheatre,
by Nutimik Campground, Whiteshell
Provincial Park (follow the signs).

A number of complementary campsites are available to those interested in staying the night. Contact Marlene (999-7423) for more information.

The Winnipeg Centre Executive Council
President
Lindsay Price 227-4684
flprice@mts.net
1st Vice-President
Ron Berard 668-6551
rcberard@mts.net
2nd Vice-President
Jennifer West 284-6548
westjl@cc.umanitoba
Past-President
Gail Wise 794-2624
wgail@mts.net
Secretary
Jay Anderson 474-1485
jander@cc.umanitoba.ca
Treasurer
Mike Stephens 832-0485
mikestephens@shaw.ca
Councilors
Kevin Black 224-0182
cblack@shaw.ca
Marlene Wallace 999-7423
mtlwallace@hotmail.com
Stephen Smyth 837-3579
weatherwisetentrentals@hotmail.com
Ralph Croning 885-4326
rcroning@mts.net
Nicole Choptain 255-5682
nicolewpg@shaw.ca
Ken Metcalfe 857-9843
metcalfe@cips.ca
Appointed Positions
Librarian
Fred Wood 774-3238
fred_wood@shaw.ca
Observatory Director
Ray Andrejowich 667-6896
saturn3@shaw.ca
Observatory Bookings
Kevin Black 224-0182
cblack@shaw.ca
Webmaster
Gord Tulloch
gtulloch@shaw.ca
Winnicentrics Editor
Gail Wise 794-2624
wgail@mts.net

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Stars over Manitoba *continued from page 1*

As more stars revealed themselves, Elder Wilfred Buck used a green laser to point out the star constellations as the aboriginal people saw them. He then sang and hand drummed a Cree song to the tune of Amazing Grace. It was a concert worthy of a Carnegie Hall setting, but the natural setting of the valley with the multitude of stars floating overhead was just fine.

Sean Ceaser of RASC Winnipeg followed with a star tour of the Greek constellations. The two sky tours following one another demonstrated the rich cultural diversity that our country of Canada enjoys.

As complete darkness settled in everyone was treated to views through the many telescopes present. Planet Saturn with it gorgeous ring system was one of the favourites. It evoked many exclamations of "Cool!" Also viewed were star clusters, double stars, the planet Jupiter and its moons, Comet Schwassmann-Wachmann, lots of meteors and the Aurora Borealis.

"Awesome!" was the way student Al Gaywish summed up his feeling about the 3rd Annual Pi Kinewabum Anonguk celebration.

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Mr. Bud . . . does astronomy *by Murray Toews*

Members' Observing

The following members are working towards their:

Messier Certificates:

Eugene d'Auteuil	41
Murray Rennie	19
Lindsay Price	37
Kris Keller	68

Finest NGC's:

Sean Ceaser	70
Mike Stephens	109
Ray Andrejowich	107

Herschel 400's:

Stan Runge	153
Sean Ceaser	136
Mike Stephens	134

Explore the Universe:

Terra Jentsch	55
Stan Runge	13
Tim Kennedy	58
Judy Starr	22
Ray Starr	21
Eugene d'Auteuil	12
Murray Rennie	6
Sandy Shewchuk	47
Peter Toth	13

Isabel Williamson Lunar:

Mike Stephens	83

If you are interested in using the Warm Room please contact Lindsay Price for a key ($10.00 deposit required). If you would like training on the LX200 Lindsay will be running training sessions, but not on Members Observing Nights. You can contact him at 227-4684 or flprice@mts.net or talk to Lindsay at a meeting.

The following members have completed their:

Explore the Universe	Messier Certificates	Finest NGC's
Gail Wise	Kevin Black	Kevin Black
Janet Pollock	Alan Sherlock	Stan Runge
Janice Low	Mike Stephens	Gail Wise
Mike Stephens	Rick Turenne	
Lindsay Price	Gail Wise	
Ralph Croning	Ray Andrejowich	
	Stan Runge	
	Bernie Plett	
	Sean Ceaser	
	Mike Karakas	

DRIVEWAY ASTRONOMY

Robin A. Woods
8 rue de Biscay
Gatineau QC J9J 1C4

When we moved from Scotia Street in Winnipeg to Champlain Park in Gatineau in October 2004 I knew that the area of the sky that I could see would be much the same. But instead of the rooftops shutting off the view, here there would be trees. Now I can see the Pole Star in the winter but not after the leaves have come out in the Spring! I thought that the sky would be darker at night, which it is, and I can certainly see more stars. In Winnipeg I had to contend with passing cars, buses and streetlights. Here there are few streetlights, the houses are far apart, and when a car drives by I close my eyes until it has passed to avoid losing my night vision. What I had not thought about was the difference between setting up my telescope on my driveway in Champlain Park as opposed to my backyard in Winnipeg. Backyard astronomy was essentially a solitary activity. I had the occasional cat or raccoon for company and would fetch my wife out of the house for anything really spectacular. In Champlain Park the most important difference I have found is that observing from my driveway is more of a community affair!

On Thursday April 6th at 8.30 p.m. the sky was clear and I set up a telescope on my driveway. The Moon was high in the sky to the south and Saturn was just a few degrees below it. I focused on the Moon and looked at the spectacular craters along the edge - a good subject for astrophotography! I had been taking photos for about 15 minutes when I noticed a man walking his dog up past the end of the driveway. I called out, asking him if he would like to have a look at the Moon through my telescope. He said he would, and introduced himself as Alan Bent. I said that I had read "Alan's Astronomy" in *The Park Explorer*, the local community newsletter, and had been meaning to call him since we moved to Champlain Park, but just hadn't got around to it. He told me that he had been too busy too write his column in the recent editions of

The Park Explorer and, after talking for a while, asked me if I would like to write an article. I said that I would - and here it is!

I generally set up my telescope on the drive in front of the garage - in full view of anyone walking or driving up or down Biscay/Port Royal. I have a chair and table out there as well as a telescope and I wear a red lamp on my head, which makes me very visible! Whenever someone stops and asks me what I am doing, I am only too happy to tell them and show them the Moon, planets or stars. To others, like Alan, I call out, and ask if they want to look at whatever I have in telescope's field of view. Some just keep walking, but most come over, have a look, and then talk for a while.

Sometimes I observe during the day. I look at sunspots and the waning moon and have seen Venus, Jupiter and Saturn. The views of the Moon in daylight may not be as good as against a dark night sky but it is more convenient than staying up into the small hours! One morning in November 2004 I was hoping to see Moon pass in front of Jupiter but unfortunately it started to snow. Before the snow had completely shut out the view, a couple of walkers stopped and asked what I was doing. We struck up a conversation and I soon discovered that one of them had been a student at the University of Winnipeg and knew some of my colleagues who had taught there! They still stop for a chat if I am out in the yard when they pass by.

So, if you are walking by during the day and see me my driveway with a big red and black telescope, or at night with a red lamp on my head, stop by and have a look! Not only is "Driveway Astronomy" fun, it's a great way to meet neighbours!

Spruce Woods Star Party 2006

Preparations are well underway for this year's Spruce Woods Star Party. Scheduled for the Labor Day Long Weekend, the SWSP offers everything you would expect from an all out Star Party; dark skies, informative workshops, guest speakers, a catered Barbeque, daylight activities and much, much more. We'll have Jayanne English talk to us about Image Processing Techniques like those used on Hubble Heritage images, Jay Anderson will provide a Keynote address, and we'll have practical sessions to help you get your scope collimated. Ron Berard will show you how to build a Barn Door Tracker, then how to use it under the stars. Don't miss out on the event of the year! Visit our Web Site for detailed information and register early to get in on the fun!

http://www.mts.net/~rcberard/html/spruce_woods_star_party.html

Welcome to our new members!

Frank Bittner, Winnipeg
Brent Wright, Portage la Prairie
Michael Litwin, Winnipeg

Observing in Thunder Bay

by Peter A. Toth

Well, I decided late in my work project this winter out in Thunder Bay, to take my telescope with me and take advantage of the complete and total darkness available 30 minutes out of the city. Why I hadn't considered this earlier is a matter for latter conversation, over a beer or two (three). But when I did set up my little ETX-125, I was amazed! The seeing conditions were so good the weekend I was observing, that I played around with magnification possibilities after sketching Saturn, and found that I could go right up to 316X (1900mm/6mm) and still have a very solid image that brought out super detail and only the smallest hint of image movement.

When I moved over to view the Orion nebula, I must have scared some of the wildlife when I exclaimed WOW out loud. I had no idea it was so bright and vast! Even with my f15 scope, it was full of wispy bright strands of the nebula, and rich with detail. The trapezium cluster were 4 very bright and distinct stars inside the heart of the nebula and with the perfect seeing conditions I had, I was picking out detail I had never seen or imagined. I kept dropping the magnification, and every time I widened the field of view, I kept on getting more and more nebula to look at.

After trying to sketch the Orion nebula, which I freely admit is a poor representation of what I saw, as I am just starting to learn this skill, I moved over to the Pleiades that was getting low on the horizon, and was once again amazed at how much rich detail I was picking out this night, after another attempt at putting this image on paper, I picked up my binoculars and relaxed with some hot coffee and a snack only to be interrupted by a strange sighting. No not a UFO or Sasquatch, but after a little searching on my laptop I found that I had discovered the Beehive cluster right next to Saturn! I completely missed this little gem when I was using my telescope and gained a whole new appreciation for the seemingly seldom-used Binoculars.

I spent both Friday and Saturday nights out under the stars in near total darkness, and I can say with complete satisfaction, that it was not only productive in how many observing opportunities it presented me with, but that it gave me a real boost in excitement. I found myself saying, "This is what it's all about" on the drive back into Thunder Bay and my waiting hotel room. I hope to have seeing conditions like this again soon, as the experience is quite simply "out of this world".

Dark Suckers

by Guy Westcott

For years it has been believed that electric bulbs emit light, but recent information has proved otherwise.

Electric bulbs don't emit light; they suck dark.

Thus, we call these bulbs Dark Suckers. The Dark Sucker Theory and the existence of dark suckers prove that dark has mass and is heavier than light.

First, the basis of the Dark Sucker Theory is that electric bulbs suck dark. For example, take the dark sucker in the room you are in. there is much less dark right next to it than there is elsewhere. The larger the Dark Sucker, the greater its capacity to suck dark. Dark Suckers in the parking lot have much greater capacity to suck than the ones in this room.

As with all things, Dark Suckers don't last forever. Once they are full of dark, they can no longer suck. This is proven by the dark spot on a full Dark Sucker.

A candle is a primitive Dark Sucker. A new candle has a white wick. You can see that after the first use, the wick turns black, representing all the dark that has been sucked into it. If you put a pencil next to the wick of an operating candle, it will turn black. This is because it got in the way of the dark flowing into the candle. One of the disadvantages of these primitive Dark Suckers is their limited range.

There are also portable Dark Suckers. In these, the bulbs can't handle all the dark by themselves and must be aided by a Dark Storage Unit. When the Dark Storage Unit is full, it must be either emptied or replaced before the portable Dark Sucker can operate again.

Dark has mass. When dark goes into a Dark Sucker, friction from the mass generates heat. Thus, it is not wise to touch an operating Dark Sucker. Candles present a special problem, as the mass must travel into a solid wick instead of through clear glass. This generates a great amount of heat and therefore it's not wise to touch an operating candle.

Also, dark is heavier than light. If you were to swim just below the surface of the lake, you would see a lot of light. If you were to slowly swim deeper and deeper, you would notice it getting darker and darker. When you get really deep, you would be in total darkness. This is because the heavier dark sinks to the bottom of the lake and the lighter light floats at the top. That is why it is called light.

Finally, we must prove that dark is faster than light. If you were to stand in a lit room in front of a closed, dark closet, and slowly opened the closet door, you would see the light slowly enter the closet. But since dark is so fast you would not be able to see the

dark leave the closet. Next time you see an electric bulb, remember that it is a Dark Sucker.

TELESCOPES

DON'T HAVE ONE? BORROW ONE!

The Winnipeg RASC owns a number of telescopes which are available for loan. They consist of:

- a 75mm f16 polarex(unitron) refractor with an alt/az tripod
- a 4.5"f8 newtonian on a dobsonian mount
- a 6" f8 criterion on an equatorial mount
- a 8"f6 newtonian on a dobsonian mount
- a Celestron C8 8"f10 schmidt cassegrain with equatorial wedge/tripod.

All of these telescopes come with eyepieces and finder scopes. They are available on a first come-first served basis, and can be booked for 1 month at a time. The Celestron requires a 1 year WPG RASC membership to book. The telescopes can be had by calling Ray Andrejowich at 667-6896, or Ralph Croning at 885-4326, and can be picked up at Ray's house or at the astronomy club meetings. Picking up and dropping off at the astronomy club meetings is the preferred method of acquiring, but alternative arrangements can be made with Ray.

SELLING
ORION MAKSUTOV-CASSEGRAIN TELESCOPE

90 mm, f = 1250 mm WITH EQUATORIAL MOUNT EQ-1
25 mm eyepiece, red dot finder and drive. $150 or best offer
Phone Bhagwan at 275-1598 or E-mail – bthad@hotmail.com

Astronomy Day In Portage la Prairie

by Sandy Shewchuk

With the approach of International Astronomy Day 2006, many members of the Winnipeg Centre sought to be involved in the public events and to help out in one way or another. The main Club-organized event took place in Winnipeg, as usual, with great success. Recently, however, some satellite events have been established, one of these being in Portage la Prairie, where Ken Metcalfe for the past several years has organized local Astronomy Day activities on behalf of the RASC Winnipeg Centre.

Brent Wright, Tim Kennedy, and I were fortunate to be able to offer Ken our assistance this year. Regrettably, Ken learned late in the calendar that he would be unable to make it due to unexpected professional obligations. Brent, Tim, and I were a bit apprehensive at the prospect of going it alone, but we carried on boldly, encouraged by Ken's past success and assurances that Portage folks are an easy-going lot.

Our day began when Tim and I, accompanied by the enthusiastic, twelve year-old Brianna Kennedy, pulled into the Portage Mall at 8:30 A.M. After a bit of breakfast, we met up with Brent at around 9:00 and discussed where to best set up our booth. (The Portage Mall regulations are somewhat less stringent than those of Polo Park, so we were able to decide on this issue at the last minute.) We set up inside at the junction of the Safeway and Mall entrances, with an observing site just outside the mall doors facing south. With Brent's folding tables together with tablecloths, backdrop, and framed photos provided by Tim, we ended up with a truly smart looking display! Our solar observing repertoire consisted of Ken's ETX and Tim's 80mm, Antares refractor (both equipped with appropriate filters).

The day was surprisingly busy, somewhat more so at the telescopes than the booth. Tim and I traded shifts outside and afterwards estimated we each had about thirty Sun viewers. The weather was fine--clear for solar observing (except for an obscuring cloud bank that lasted over a twenty minute period) and hot. The people who stopped by were interested and inquisitive, and we faced all the standard questions: "How big is it?", "How far away?", and "What are sun spots, anyway?". Several hours under the hot sun found Tim and I having our usual discussion of which of us was hallucinating the most sunspots in the eyepiece.

Indoors, the atmosphere was very friendly at the booth, with what seemed a steady stream of Brent's neighbours and acquaintances stopping by to chat. We met some interesting people, among them the gentleman who commissioned the famous Portage Grey Owl sculpture, who was pleased and impressed when Brent and Tim researched and showed him where to locate the Owl Nebula on the sky chart. Several past members of the defunct Portage astronomy club dropped by to reminisce and chat, and Tim also met a friend of the gentleman who donated the brass telescope now owned by the Winnipeg Centre.

With no provisions for evening observing, we concluded at 5 o'clock on what we deemed a very successful day. All of us look forward to repeating this event next year!