

Indigenous Astronomy Scientific to Aussie Natives

Canadian's First Nations aren't the only ones who hold the heavens as methodical. CSIRO astrophysicist and Macquarie University's Professor Ray Norris spent 10 years studying Indigenous Astronomy claims of the 400 Native cultures in Australia as each of them has special mythology, ceremonies and art forms. *"One of my friends, who is an Aboriginal elder, he knows the name of almost every star you can see in the sky, and I don't think any present day astronomer could do that. He can tell stories about most of them as well"* he explains. Indigenous people also use their knowledge of the stars to navigate across the country and as a compass, a clock and a calendar. University of Western Sydney Astrophysicist, Dr Ragbir Bhathal teaches students about engineering physics. *"They used the stars for telling them the seasonal supply of food, when to plant and how is the crop, and for transmitting the morals of their society. In Victoria, the Southern Cross is identified with a ring-tail possum, while the long neck tortoise is identified with the star called Pollux. Similarly, the star Taurus showed them where to find the pupa of the wood ant. The Seven Sister star cluster informed the people in the western desert region that the annual dingo season was starting so they would descend to where the dogs stay and then catch their pups for a good feast. On the Torres Strait Islands, the appearance of the stars the Tagai told them that it was time to start preparing the land for planting."* While the parallels of navigation, farming and timekeeping are familiar to us in the West, the hunting for food is a brand new idea and needs to be explored from this our side of the planet!

Sky watch for the next month:

- 1 **Mars & Mercury set with Near New Moon & Sun-** on Tuesday, May 19th look NWW around 21:00 as the sun sets, the Moon has Mars next to it above the sun while Mercury is above. All are naked eye objects.
- 2 **Transit of Mercury-** On Monday, May 09th from Sun up, Mercury will star to cross the Sun and will last until about Noon. Peak is about 08:57 am and proper solar filters a must for binos and scopes.
- 3 **Mars closets to Earth-** On Monday, May 30th Mars will look as it normally does so forget all those internet rumours that it'll be as big as the Moon since it's the hoax that refuses to die!
- 4 **Eta Aquarids Meteor Shower-** caused by comet 1P Halley shoots 10-20 meteors per hour after Thursday evening May 05th and before dawn on Friday the 06th. The New Moon will eliminate light and prime viewing is SEE around 04:00 am.

Public Events for the next month:

Monthly Public Stargazing at the Trek Center- Mark down Friday, May 13th at 19:30 on your calendar and join us at the Trek Center for our monthly Star Gazing. Short indoor presentation

on “Summer stars and Constellations” and then we’ll check them out on our 11” telescope outside with much more. Take pictures with your smartphone through our scope and share with other participants. Refreshment provided, all welcome and no charge. Held the second Friday monthly at 19:30. For further information contact the Trek center at (403) 485-2994, www.vulcantourism.com.

Happy Victoria Long Weekend!

Neel Roberts is a member of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada-the nation’s leading astronomy club founded in 1849 with over 4,000 members and 28 centers across Canada. Neel welcomes your questions and comments at (403)560-6574, Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com. The members meet the second Friday monthly at the Trek Center at 19:30 and you find out about membership at <http://calgary.rasc.ca/vulcan2016.htm>.