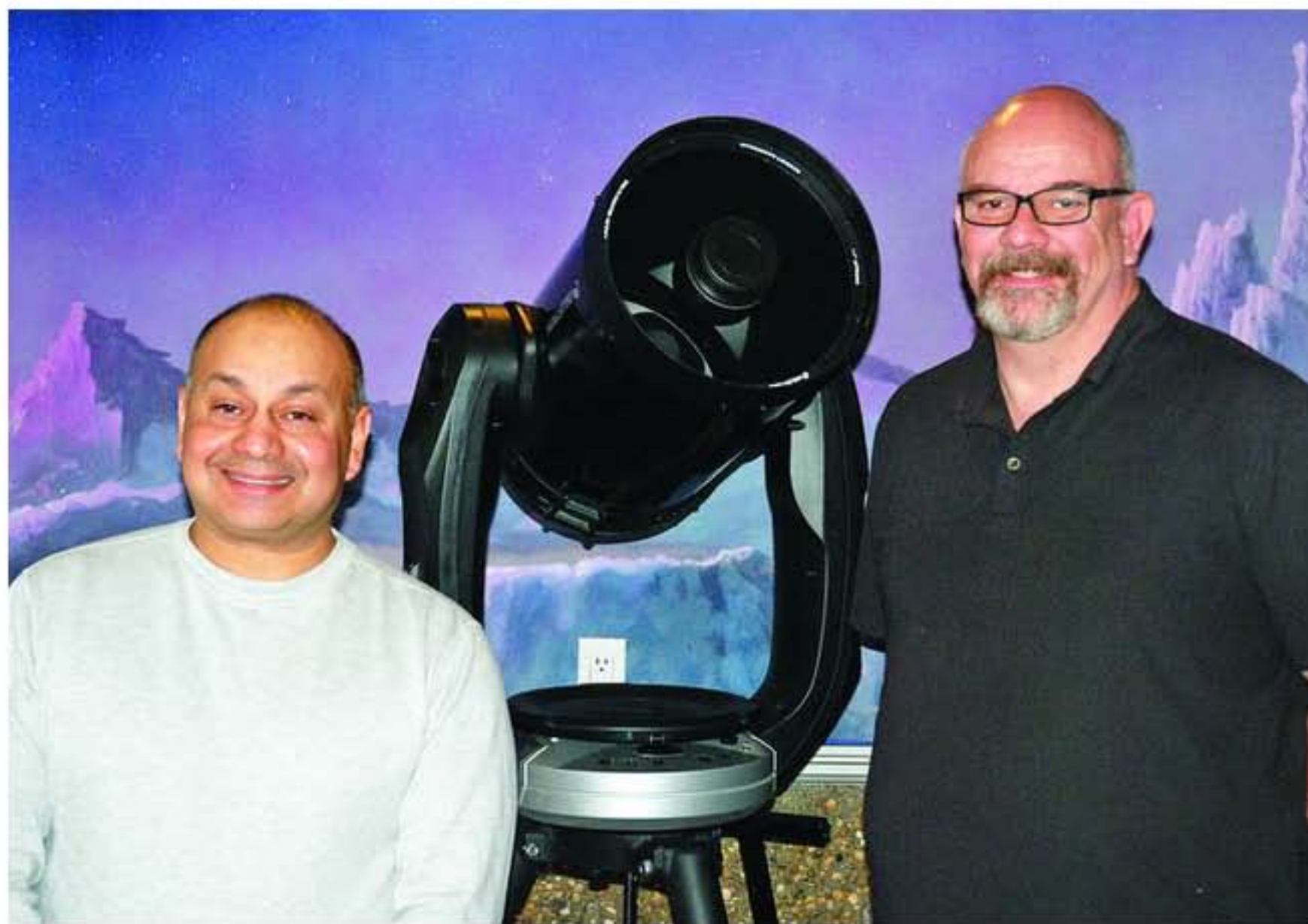


Celebrating two years of stargazing sessions

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Reporter

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Two years ago, a local astronomer decided hosting monthly stargazing sessions at the Vulcan Tourism and Trek Station would tie in nicely with the Town's brand.

Two years later, the monthly stargazing sessions are still going well, says Neel Roberts, a member of the Royal Astronomy Society of Canada, Calgary chapter, which helps put the sessions on.

In collaboration with the Vulcan Tourism and Trek Station, Roberts organizes the stargazing sessions for the second Friday of every month starting at 7:30 p.m. Helping Roberts with the sessions is Karl Iverson, a Champion-area astronomer.

A special stargazing session is lined up for Friday, Dec. 14 to celebrate the second anniversary. Like all the stargazing sessions, the evening will begin indoors at the Trek Station with an informational presentation, which is followed by an outdoor session with an 11-inch telescope.

Celebrating a second year of stargazing is "marvelous, to say the least," said Roberts.

"Every project you start, you have no idea how it's going to pan out," he said. "It might look good on paper, but unless people buy into it, it doesn't mean anything."

And it seems there has been no shortage of amateur astronomy enthusiasts wanting to get involved, some coming from out of the county to attend, said Roberts.

"People were gravitated to the idea," he said, no pun intended.

Devan Daniels, tourism administrator, wasn't around when the stargazing sessions began, but he said he "loved" the idea.

"We've incorporated the telescope into our walk-through tour that we do at the Trek Station," he said. Fascinated by the telescope, some people end up inquiring about its use, said Daniels.

"So then we can tell them about the stargazing event. It's fitting that the telescope is here in the Trek Station. It belongs here."

The first stargazing session took place Dec. 20, 2010 during a total lunar eclipse.

"It was a really good start" to the stargazing, said Roberts.

A personal interest in astronomy and staring at the night sky, along with a desire to share that experience with people who are interested, were his main motivational factors in starting up the sessions.

"I've always been interested in stargazing," he said, adding that it almost felt like a calling for him to start something in the community.

With continued support, the stargazing sessions aren't going anywhere any time soon.

"We're going to be here for a long time," said Roberts.

To find out more about the stargazing sessions visit www.calgary.rasc.ca/vulcan2012.htm.