

# Southern Alberta astronomy expert will talk about Pluto at Telus Spark Center July 16

Written by Neel Roberts

**With the news the last two days about the New Horizons probe reaching Pluto and sending back images of the celestial object, it seemed like a good time to share more information about Pluto at an upcoming presentation.**

Southern Alberta astronomy expert Alan Dyer will be speaking about Pluto and New Horizons at a free presentation at the Telus Spark Center (near the zoo) in Calgary Thursday, July 16 starting at 4 p.m.

When NASA launched the New Horizons probe more than nine years ago in the winter of 2006, hopes were high on what they would find on the icy planet Pluto with its near twin moon Charon. Discovered on Feb. 18, 1930 by then 23-year-old Clyde W. Tombaugh (the probe was launched on his 100th birthday), an assistant at the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona, the 7.5 plus kilometre celestial object has mystified astrophysicists for decades. The temperature on Pluto ranges from minus 387 to minus 369 Fahrenheit compared to the coldest place on earth, which can reach minus 126 Fahrenheit. That makes us look tropical.

Named after the Greek God Plouton the ruler of the underworld in classical mythology, it's not very visible through the Hubble telescope other than a vague, yellowish mist.

Today, vivid pixel represents four kilometres making it one thousand times the resolution of anything from Hubble. Pluto has a more complex surface than we could have imagined being it's more reddish like Mars and the heart shape object has become more obvious than even a few weeks ago.

Moving at a speed of 49,570 kilometers per hour, New Horizons is the fastest spacecraft ever launched. One of the tributes to its discoverer was carrying Tombaugh's ashes on board. The canister inscription from Alan Stern, the head of the New Horizons mission states: "Interned herein are remains of American Clyde W. Tombaugh, discoverer of Pluto and the solar system's 'third zone.' Adelle and Muron's boy, Patricia's husband, Annette and Alden's father, astronomer, teacher, punster, and friend: Clyde W. Tombaugh (1906-1997)."

For more information see, <http://www.sparkscience.ca/events/special-events-2/live-from-pluto/> or phone 403-817-6800 and find out how yesterday's scientific hopes became today's reality.