



A photo of the pictorial lunar eclipse from Jan. 28 courtesy of Neel Roberts.

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Darkness: Ask yourself if it is matter or supernatural?

Darkness is a mysterious phenomena that makes up about 85% of the universe.

The question many scientists and astronomers ask, is it a substance with space and weight like the air or unexplainable beyond our understanding. Depending on whom or what you believe, no one seems to be able to pin it down.

It is only visible in the absence or contrast of light and cannot be captured.

Recent data results made with NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory, ESA's XMM-Newton and Hitomi, a Japanese-led X-ray telescope may hopefully bring knowledge in the near future.

If confirmed, this may represent a major step forward in understanding the nature of darkness. This is very much like trying to understand the spiritual world; while we know it exists, we can't grasp it like the earth or human body.



Neel ROBERTS
YOUR UNIVERSE

This Easter, Christians worldwide will celebrate one of the greatest mysteries; the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Whether you believe the Easter story or not, it's the cornerstone of the Christian faith and what our modern calendar is named after.

One story which gets little press is during Calvary on April 3rd, 33 AD. (Luke 23:44) the sky went pitch black from noon to 3 p.m.

No one can explain this unusual darkness or even when it acts normal after

sunset.

My only conclusion from both a scientific and theological view is, it's both created and paranormal.

Specifically, a "revealed supernatural matter" which is "shown, but not known."

Like the human spirit, we instinctively know it's there but it neither locatable or comprehensible.

SKY WATCH FOR THE NEXT MONTH:

1. Thin Crescent Moon sets with Venus: On Sunday March 18, look west at dusk around 7:30 p.m. and watch these set into the horizon with Mercury just above them.

2. Spring Equinox: On Tuesday, March 20 at 10:15 a.m. and the days are getting noticeably longer.

3. Daylight Savings here: Set your clock ahead at 2 a.m. Sunday, March 11.

4. Zodiacal Lights: Did you catch this last month? It's a faint, roughly triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extended up from the vicinity of the sun along the ecliptic or zodiac. Best time is from Monday, March 05th for 2 weeks in the West after evening twilight.

Public Events for the next month:

Monthly Open House at Calgary's Rothney Observatory near Priddis: St Patrick's dark spring night: Look for the constellation O'Ryan and more.

There will be an array of scopes operated by University of Calgary astronomers and members of the RASC Calgary.

You will have the opportunity to look through the telescopes, indoor

presentation and astronomers will be on hand to answer questions on Saturday March 17th 8 to 11 p.m.

The entrance fee \$30 per car. Contact Jennifer Howse at jhowse@phas.ucalgary.ca, (403) 931-2366. Website is at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/rao/> and it is updated regularly.

Happy spring and longer days!

Neel Roberts is a member of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) - the nation's leading astronomy club founded in 1849 with over 5,000 members and 29 centers across Canada. Neel welcomes your questions and comments at (403)560-6574, Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com. The members meet once a month on weekends at Calgary's Rothney Observatory near Priddis and you can check out times at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/rao/calendar>. Like them at Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/272037680377/>, Twitter <https://twitter.com/CalgaryRASC> & YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/RASC Calgary>.

Southern Alberta

Astronomy professionals reach the stars with RASC Awards

By DEMI KNIGHT

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The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) Calgary division honoured three southern Albertans with prestigious awards this year for their long-standing service and public outreach at the Vulcan Trek Centre.

On Feb. 15 during the RASC general meeting in Calgary, *Prairie Post West* columnist Neel Roberts, Roland Dechesne and Karl Ivarson were selected as winners of the Peter Sim Public Education awards for their years of dedication and service they each gave to the Trek Centre from 2010 until 2017.

"It is a wonderful recognition from the RASC Calgary on the work myself, Karl Ivarson and Roland Dechesne did since 2010," says Roberts of the award.

"We were not looking for this, but it nice when we get acknowledgement from a reputable organization."

The RASC which is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year, is the largest astronomy club in Canada with over five thousand national members and twenty centers across the country since 1868.

The Calgary division however, was established at a later date on Jan. 29, 1958 and works to connect members with the help of other divisions in western Canada to likeminded

individuals interested in the complex world that is astronomy.

The Vulcan Trek Centre is just one more place that's connected to the stars, and a perfect middle ground for the recipients to lend their service to with the recognition of the RASC.

With the three spending over seven years at the Vulcan Trek Centre, working to coordinate, operate the telescopes and conduct indoor presentations, the recipients of this year's Peter Sim Public Education awards have dedicated their time offering their knowledge to interested participants like the work of many RASC divisions across the country.

"The Star Trek theme (at the Vulcan Trek Centre) fits nicely with what the RASC does and we had an all-around, harmonious relationship for seven years with thousands of happy visitors," says Roberts of the noticeable work he and others did with the centre over the years that earned him this award.

The Peter Sim awards which are regarded as one of the highest recognitions offered by the RASC are given each year to outstanding public educators who pass along their knowledge in interactive, and fascinating manners just as the man they're named after did.

Sim, who was one of Calgary's most active educators through drama, school



Photo courtesy Neel Roberts

From left: Neel Roberts, Karl Ivarson, Roland Dechesne and RASC Calgary President Steve Donaldson.

sciences and for the RASC Calgary centre passed away in August of 1999, however his name and memory lives on through these awards which are given to many like himself every year.

With these three southern Albertans being a select few of many that work to spread the knowledge of Astronomy across the nation, the RASC works to recognize these teachers from different locations, backgrounds and facilities and highlight the importance of their work with these annual recognitions. The RASC also work throughout the year to host meetings across the entire country as well as partnering with

other facilities to help continue the reach and demand of astronomy education across Canada.

In a Facebook statement, Roberts summed it up this way: "The RASC Calgary awarded myself, Karl Ivarson and Roland Dechesne the Peter Sim Public Education Award for the seven years, we did monthly observing meetings and special events at the Vulcan Tourism Trek Center from 2010 to 2017. We can be proud of all the work we did to show the Universe to the thousands that stopped by from all over the world. A big thank you to all the volunteers over the years who