

# NOVA

NEWSLETTER OF THE VANCOUVER CENTRE RASC  
VOLUME 2021 ISSUE 6 NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2021



## Manning Park Dark Sky Weekend 2021

by Suzanna Nagy (et al)

October 15 to 17, 2021 was the 3rd annual Manning Park Dark Sky Weekend. The 2020 event had been cancelled due to COVID but 2021 was able to proceed albeit with COVID-19 precautions, vaccine passports, and reduced attendance.

Manning Park Resort hosted only a Beginners Weekend this year. As always, they were extremely generous with RASC volunteers. In exchange for RASC volunteers hosting lectures, assisting with activities, and bringing telescopes, the Resort offered us free accommodation, meal vouchers, and gas cards. A special shout-

out to Robyn and Emma from Manning Park Resort and to our own Hayley Miller, RASC Events Coordinator, for all their hard

work in the weeks of planning. I had the pleasure of attending all three days and let me say that it was such a great weekend. It had been almost two years since I had seen in person some of my fellow volunteers, of which there were twelve of us. It was wonder-

ful to re-connect and enjoy each other's company again. I met up with some of our regular volunteers and was introduced to some new ones as well—some I had only ever seen online. The enthusiasm from the attendees and volunteers was wonderful to share, and I felt completely re-energized with astronomy again.

In addition to my comments above, I would like to share thoughts from other RASC volunteers who attended:

Hayley Miller (Events Coordinator):

This event could not have

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Volunteers with the Jim Bernath meteorite collection

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photos by Andrew Krysa

**NOVEMBER 11** Zoom Vancouver Centre PR and Speakers coordinator Andrew Ferreira presents the history of robotic spaceflight. See Meetup for details.

**DECEMBER 9** Zoom Our AGM followed by a short presentation. Speaker TBD. See Meetup for details.

**JANUARY 13** Zoom Speaker TBD. See Meetup for details closer to the meeting date.

# Observatory Update

by Alan Jones

Imagine in a few months from now our Vancouver Centre's member observatory back in action. It will be a wonderful opportunity for members to access our own high-quality astrophotography telescope. The facility was built by member volunteers in the 1990s and is currently being brought back to life again through the effort of member volunteers. Our Centre's observatory was built as a member-run amateur research facility in the UBC Malcolm Knapp Research Forest in Maple Ridge. In the beginning, the operators and builders were interested in searching for and finding supernovas.

Running our club observatory requires dedicated support, funding, volunteer time and interested operators. The past operation model and future vision is that members contribute to the maintenance of the facility in order to receive training in the operation from more experienced, qualified operator members. Once an operator qualifies to run the observatory, they train the next operators that are giving time to maintain the facility. It is a great opportunity to give back to

the club, meet other members, and learn about running a large telescope. Observatory users contribute to maintenance in exchange for access to a fine facility with a large telescope: a win-win situation making this feasible for our organiza-



New dome awaits re-opening

tion.

What kind of maintenance are we talking about? Maintenance includes everything from keeping a log, writing instruction material, maintaining the telescope and mount, cleaning, light repairs, painting, tending to the grounds-maintenance, weeding, weed-eating, trimming brush, and other periodic maintenance. It is the kind of work that gives satisfaction and pride in completion and there are many ways to get involved.

Turning attention to the current work: since the Sept/Oct Nova up-

date, we have completed the installation of the new dome and tested our dome drive motors. The new dome is now proven waterproof in the recent rain. A shutter motor is on the way. We have dome controller hardware and software to implement. Work is underway to complete design and source fabrication of a new pier. We are also seeking quotes to replace the roof. As the winter weather moves in, we strive to complete tasks in the necessary work to re-open the observatory next year. Painting and interior work can still take place. We welcome more

member help with this interesting project. As we tackle each task, we research how other observatories deal with these design and operation issues then apply that knowledge to our situation.

I encourage interested members to get involved with making our observatory operational. I would like to thank council for their support and the nine people that have given their time since July to make this happen: Carl Bandura, Rick Schneider, Rick Gregory, Mark Eburne, Dale Wilkie, Wayne Ly-

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# President's Message

by Gordon Farrell

When I became Vancouver Centre President back in December of 2019, I anticipated the following two years would be rather routine. I've been on council long enough to see how the job played out for my various predecessors, so I had a pretty good idea of what to expect. I even bought the needed adaptor to connect my tablet to the AV equip-

ment in the SFU lecture hall, along with a combination laser pointer and remote control for the traditional slide show at the start of the monthly lectures. I was ready. I used those devices all of twice during my tenure. World events had other plans, and I had to adjust my expectations along with everyone else as we all learned to adapt to the new

normal.

But adapt we did, and I'm proud of how well everyone on Council, and all our volunteers, have handled the past two years of virtual events and online lectures. It's a strange way to interact with our fellow humans, and I, like many others, will admit to feeling some Zoom fatigue

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## About RASC

The RASC Vancouver Centre meets at 7:30 PM on the second Thursday of every month at SFU's Burnaby campus (see map on page 4). Guests are always welcome. In addition, the Centre has an observing site where star parties are regularly scheduled.

Membership is currently \$89.00 per year (\$52.00 for persons under 21 years of age; family memberships also available) and can be obtained online, at a meeting, or by writing

to the Treasurer at the address below. Annual membership includes the invaluable Observer's Handbook, six issues of the RASC Journal, and, of course, access to all of the club events and projects.

For more information regarding the Centre and its activities, please contact our P.R. Director.

NOVA, the newsletter of the Vancouver Centre, RASC, is published on odd-numbered months. Opinions expressed herein are not nec-

essarily those of the Vancouver Centre.

Material on any aspect of astronomy should be e-mailed to the editor or mailed to the address below.

Remember, you are always welcome to attend meetings of Council, held on the first Thursday of every month at 7:30pm in the Trotter Studio in the Chemistry wing of the Shrum Science Centre at SFU. Please contact a council member for directions.

## 2021 Vancouver Centre Officers

**President** Gordon Farrell  
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**At Large** Bill Burnyeat, Rob Lyons,  
Douglas Filipenko, Shay Pomeroy, Michael Levy  
**Honourary President** J. Karl Miller

## Library

The centre has a large library of books, magazines and old NOVAs for your enjoyment. Please take advantage of this club service and visit often to check out the new purchases. Suggestions for future library acquisitions are appreciated.

## On the Internet

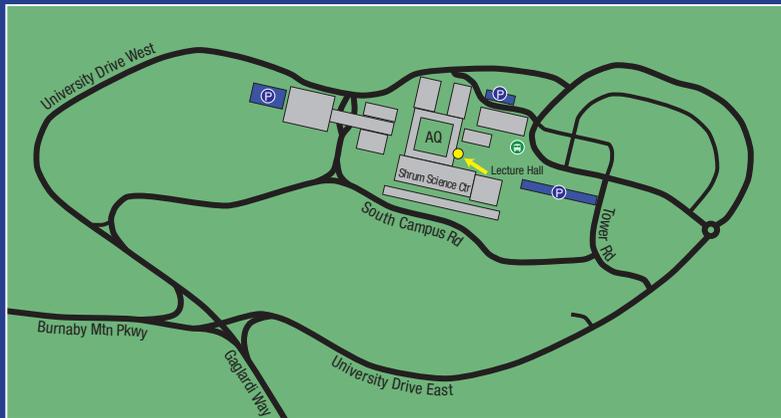
rasc-vancouver.com  
astronomy.meetup.com/131/  
www.facebook.com/RASC.Van  
www.instagram.com/rascvancouver/

 @RASCvancouver

## Mailing Address

RASC Vancouver Centre  
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V5A 4Y0

## Map to Meeting Site



### IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Our lectures have moved online until further notice due to COVID-19 and SFU having shut down most on-campus activities.

We will resume our physical lectures at SFU once it is deemed safe to do so.

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after spending so much of my professional and personal time staring at a *Brady Bunch*-style collection of heads for countless hours (and weeks, and months). And I'm sure I'm not alone in looking forward to some sort of return to normal activities sooner rather than later.

The first signs of such a return have happened only recently. There was the Manning Park Dark Sky Weekend on October 15-17 (see the report on that event elsewhere in this issue) and the recent switch of Starry Nights at SFU back to an in-person event starting on October 29. Both events are more limited in scope than before the pandemic, but they're still a hopeful sign that

our high vaccination rates are finally starting to bear fruit. Our lectures will continue to be online for the time being (at the advice of SFU, who aren't quite ready for indoor events to resume) but I know I'm not alone in looking forward to retiring my dining room "office" and returning not only to normal RASC activities, but also to a proper office with my fellow coworkers in the new year. We've all been cooped up for far too long.

And in the midst of all this, an important date nearly slipped by without our noticing it. November 10<sup>th</sup> marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vancouver Centre. Such an occasion would normally be met with celebratory cake and drinks after the

monthly lecture but this year we can instead offer a short article on our Centre's founding by our Librarian (and unofficial historian), William Fearon. But don't let our mutual isolation prevent any of you from having your own private celebration of this anniversary (cake is encouraged, but not required).

I'd like to close by thanking everyone on Council for their help and support during my tenure as President. I'll still be sticking around in my other capacity as Nova editor, and I look forward to reading the words of our incoming President, Alan Jones, here in the new year. Until then, I wish you all clear skies (or as clear as we can hope for in a Vancouver winter). ✨

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ons, Wendy Bandura, Preston Thompson and Leigh Cummings. I offer my continuing appreciation to Howard Trottier for his advice, continued support, and encouragement for the project.

We have offers from other members to help and invite you to find time to reach out and support your observatory through this exciting renewal project. We can use your help researching observatory solutions, painting, cleaning, grounds

maintenance, calling vendors, light construction, and light renovation. Are you a member with these skills or would you like to help bring our observatory back to life in any other way? Contact Alan Jones; aomo@rasc-vancouver.com. ✨

# RASC Vancouver at 90!

by William Fearon

In 1917, the Canadian Government opened the Dominion Observatory at Saanich, near Victoria. Local amateur astronomers formed a new centre of the RASC which included a few members from Vancouver and the Lower Mainland.

As membership grew, despite the distance to Victoria and the onset of the Great Depression, by 1930 the astronomers (which by then included a few professional astronomers from UBC) had decided there were sufficient numbers to form a centre in Vancouver. By fall of 1931, the details had been finalized to create a new Centre of the RASC.

On the 2nd Tuesday of November in 1931, the first meeting of the Vancouver Centre was held at UBC in the now long-gone original Astronomy building. The Centre would meet there (and later in the new Astronomy and

Geophysics building) until 1969. The Centre then moved to the H. R. MacMillan Planetarium and stayed there until 2011. The Centre moved around temporarily to various locations such as BCIT and Douglas College (now Kwantlen University) and SFU, and a few years later decided to make the move permanently to SFU.

From the beginning, public outreach has been a big part of Vancouver Centre's mandate. The monthly meetings have always been open to the public, and star parties were frequently held. Originally these would be held on various members' properties. However, by the beginning of the 1950s, the number of people grew too large to be held on private property in the Lower Mainland. Thus, our star parties were moved to various public spaces where access to the sky could be had and that the public could reach. (The

author encountered the RASC Vancouver Centre at the Brockton Oval Track in Stanley Park in 1977.)

Additionally, visits would be arranged for members to go to various scientific institutions and facilities that would allow visitors. Members have trekked to Vancouver Island to visit the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory, to UBC to visit their telescopes and later to visit the Tri-University Meson Facility (TRIUMF). And now we have access to the Trottier Observatory at SFU as well.

So it has been an interesting 90 years so far with comets, planetary conjunctions, eclipses and other interesting things in the sky to bring us together and look at. And in 10 years (in 2031) we will celebrate 100 years of the Vancouver Centre, so make your plans now to be here to help us celebrate that happy date. ★

## Membership has its Privileges!

Are you tired of looking at the same objects again and again (planets, moon, etc.)? Is your telescope collecting dust because it's hard to locate deep sky objects? Would you like to bring your observing to a stellar level? Robert Conrad, our new observing director, revived the Vancouver RASC observing group and invites you to join by sending him an email at [observing@rasc-vancouver.com](mailto:observing@rasc-vancouver.com). Some of the benefits of belonging to this group include:

- Hands on training on how to operate the SFU Trottier observatory
- Weekly observing sessions at the observatory or at dark sky locations
- One-one-one coaching on how to locate thousands of objects in the night sky
- Attend small interactive seminars delivered by Robert on a range of topics including failsafe star-hopping, charting challenging objects and understanding the motions of the cosmos
- Learn to make your telescope dance by locating objects such as asteroids, nova, and supernovae
- Spectroscopy and imaging training from Howard Trottier and an opportunity to collaborate on observatory research projects
- Updates on observable sky events happening during the week like asteroid/comet/deep sky conjunctions
- Access to observing guides and lists that Robert created that took hundreds of hours to create and will help with planning observing sessions
- Knowledge and expertise from other observing group members
- Learn how to quickly and efficiently find and star-hop to deep sky objects using a range of binoculars and telescopes

# Upcoming Events

December  
9 – AGM

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been as successful without the expertise, generosity and dedication of our volunteers, and the outstanding service of the Manning Park Resort staff. It was a memorable weekend connecting with new friends and reconnecting with old ones. I'm looking

scope and see the Moon up close, or especially Jupiter and Saturn, is very rewarding. I was nervous at first because I do not consider myself overly knowledgeable about astronomy, but I found that people are not necessarily looking for hard facts as much as shared experiences. One partici-

volunteers was wonderful, too.

**Rob Lyons (Councillor At Large):**

I was delighted to meet so many astronomy enthusiasts, especially in person! I joined the RASC one year ago and the entire experience has been virtual so far. Not only did I get to meet many

interesting and like-minded people, but we got to set up our scopes and have a mini star party in the parking lot. Some of the highlights from the weekend were having dinner with Ted and hearing some very funny stories about Moon landing conspiracy theorists he has encountered over the years. The Jim Bernath Meteor-



Renuka giving her lecture on the life cycle of stars

forward to planning the next one!

**Marla Daskis (Membership Director):**

This was my first time volunteering at the Manning Park event, and the second time that I've attended. I think it was more fun volunteering. The opportunity to share the wonder when you first look through a tele-

scope had questions about alignment on a go-to scope—turned out I have the exact same model so we were able to compare and share experience with it, and I was able to advise what worked for me and what didn't. I encourage more RASC members to consider volunteering for events like this. The Resort was very generous towards the volunteers, and the opportunity to talk to other

ite Collection is truly astounding. I have never had the experience of interacting with objects from space in such a tangible way, from holding meteorites to using microscopic cameras to inspect the beautiful details of various types of meteorites, it is a truly unique hands-on experience. Meeting Milan in the parking lot during our observing session was incredible. I had my laptop

connected to my camera and telescope to do some electronically-assisted viewing, when I ran out of batteries. Milan offered up the power supply off his own scope and we got up and running and managed to get a nice close-up view of Jupiter and the Galilean moons up on the screen. It was a wonderful moment and



Ted Stroman presents his Moon talk

really made my night. He gave me some tips and encouraged me to make the attempt of photographing the planets, this event made that possible. The following morning, we got clouded out and our solar viewing session was a bit lacklustre, but I remembered that I had solar photos on my computer so I showed those to the group of families gathered at my telescope. I ended up giving them a full power-point presentation on astrophotography in the parking lot and I'm actually still in touch with them as they live 3 blocks away from me.

Renuka Pampana (Webmaster):

I attended my first dark-sky event at Manning Park and got the opportunity to give a talk on "Life Cycle of Stars." Overall, the experience was great with the outstanding support and arrangements from the Man-

There were around 50 attendees with all demographics. Sessions ended up being very interactive with lots of interesting questions from both adults and children. It was a fun and engaging session which encouraged me to participate in future talks. Although the night stargazing event got cancelled due to weather conditions, we still enjoyed sky gazing in the parking lot which was a very appreciative attempt to engage attendees. I also participated in astronomy trivia



Our volunteers about to enjoy a well-earned dinner

ning Park Resort staff. I had two one-hour sessions for the talk on Saturday October 16th.

which was exciting. I am already looking forward to attending next year's dark sky weekend. \*

## Members' Gallery



### **The Northern Lights** by Robert G. Lyons

This is a single exposure captured from a mirrorless camera on a tripod from my roof on October 11th at 11:45pm.