

Outreach Programme - Stargazing

During the Northern Cape educator workshop and school visit 3 star gazing sessions were held. Each of the sessions was held prior to the educator workshop and school visits. This was held in conjunction with the Sutherland Outreach Programme. The aim of the programme was to educate, stimulate and excite the mind of the both the children and adults. The event was organised by Karel Klein and the participating schools in the area.

Two of the star gazing sessions were held at the local schools and one in a public field. Every night at least 100 children attended the star gazing session and were rewarded for answering a question based on their observations. The community and educators from some of the participating schools also took the opportunity to learn about the night skies.

Willem Prins gave the public insightful information about the stars and the planets. He focused on relevant information of the Southern skies and at times drew a comparison with the Northern skies. He went on explain how seasons affect what we are able to observe in the night skies. He ended with, a demonstration that you can use astronomy to find direction ie the Southern Cross. All of the sessions lasted 2 hours and many of the people left wanting to know more about the night skies.

The impact of the stargazing was felt the next day during school visits, when the learners who were present spoke about what they observed. In order to continue the enthusiasm around stargazing the telescope was used as part of the school activities. This gave learners and educators who were not present at the stargazing an opportunity to look through the telescope and view the moon.

The stargazing programmes in each of the towns allowed the general public and children to experience the joys of astronomy, which allowed them, forget about their social and environmental conditions for a short while.