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THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER of the PHILIP J. CURRIE DINOSAUR MUSEUM

ISSUE 37

Sept. 2014

PUBLISHED BY
the Pipestone Creek
Dinosaur Initiative
on behalf of the

PHILIP J. CURRIE
DINOSAUR MUSEUM

- proudly in print -
SINCE 2011

What a weekend, what a ball!

Celebrities, dinosaurs, fundraisers: Amber Weekend 2014 was a big success



Top: Cutting the ribbon at the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum building, including Dan Aykroyd, Donna Dixon Aykroyd, Dr. Philip Currie, Grande Prairie Mayor Bill Given and Ross Sutherland, chair of the River of Death and Discovery Dinosaur Museum Society. Photo: Prairie Ranger Photography. Bottom left: Dan Aykroyd rocks the stage during a blues number. Photo: J.D. Robert Wiebe Photography. Bottom right: Celebrities and guests excavating fossils at the *Pachyrhinosaurus lakustai* dinosaur bonebed. Photo: Prairie Ranger Photography.



Executive Director's Note

Greetings from all of us at the GDino project. I am sad to say that this will be my final report. August was a tremendous month. We hosted 37 celebrities, including Dan Aykroyd and his family and friends as well as the regional and national media that came to Grande Prairie to cover their visit. We co-hosted the inaugural Mighty Peace Harley-Davidson Aykroyd Family Ride, which attracted 652 registrants, we had between 3,700-4,200 guests at a museum ribbon-cutting ceremony and we had 1,000 guests at the Amber Ball. It was a very successful weekend and \$387,000 was netted for the museum operating fund.

I am also pleased to announce that we have completed our search for our first President and CEO. George Jacob is a Canadian museum professional with a past in the museum field that spans 11 countries and 26 years. He has been the founding Director of three museums including the NASA Astronomy & Cultural Heritage Center in Hawaii and the Moshe Safdie-designed Khalsa Living Heritage & Learning Complex in the Himalayan foothills.

His latest assignment was as head of an art museum and performing arts center in the Permian Basin, Texas. He also led the Cultural Leadership Executive Program at the University of Texas (PB).

I will be handing on the post to Mr. Jacob on September 15 and then will be moving on shortly thereafter to seek the next adventure. Thank you for your outstanding support during my tenure and I ask that you give the same level of support to the new leader. Bonne chance to all and please have a great Dino day.

Brian Brake
Executive Director
Pipestone Creek Dinosaur Initiative

Museum passes tour test

By Karla Horcica,
PCL Construction



top photo: J.D. Robert Wiebe Photography, bottom photo: PCL Construction

Not an easy task, getting a construction zone ready for a public excited to see inside the building.

With the cooperation of the weather and the long days of sunshine, we pushed hard and were able to have all of the concrete sidewalks, pads, and curbs and the asphalt parking lot and roads completed in time for the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on August 9th. This was important to us to help ensure the safety of all the people coming to the site on that day. It is a unique request to allow thousands of people onto a site and into a building that is under construction. While the County of Grande Prairie dealt with the logistics of the event,

PCL's main priority and concern was the safety of the public at the event. The first order of business was to review the site for any hazards that would have the potential to cause injury and either eliminate the hazard or control it. For example, on the main floor overlooking the Exhibition Hall will be a glass guardrail, however the glass is not yet installed. Instead, carpenters fully covered the guardrails with plywood. OH&S requirements for a guardrail on a construction site are a top rail (at just above 1 meter from

the floor), a midrail and a toeboard. Taking the extra step of fully sheeting the opening in plywood ensured there would be no chance of people or objects falling through the guardrail. A walkway for the tour through the building and access to site was identified and, with the help of the County, barriers and fencing was set up to keep the public out of restricted areas and away from potential tripping hazards. At the end of the day, there were no safety incidents on the site and hopefully everyone enjoyed their tour of the building!

Excellent field season concluded

Palaeontologists from around the globe found hundreds of fossils in GP area

By Dr. Matthew Vavrek
Head Palaeontologist, PCDI

This past summer has seen a flurry of work in the area around Grande Prairie. Since the beginning of May, we have been busy visiting sites along all of the major rivers and creeks within 100 km, and have brought back literally hundreds of new specimens.

These specimens ranged in size from teeth smaller than a fingernail, to large blocks weighing several hundred pounds. Not only was there a huge range in the sizes, but the types of fossils we found were incredibly varied, yet another demonstration of the diversity of ancient life that lived in the area.

We found remains of several turtles, fish, small dinosaurs and crocodilians at one site, new localities that are producing plant fossils, and sites that may contain large portions of a hadrosaur skeleton.

A large part of this collecting was done while several international researchers were here as part of the Northern Alberta Dinosaur Project, an initiative we have started to encourage even more research in the area. At one point, there were field crews working at three different localities simultaneously, a feat that the area had never seen before (but hopefully will see again).

This field season could not have gone as successfully as it did without the help of a large number of



Clockwise from upper left, Drs. Currie and Koppelhus excavating at Pipestone, the palaeos used quads, jetboats and canoes to hunt for fossils, members of the NADP team: Left to right, Robin Sissons, Dr. Matthew Vavrek, Dr. Nicolas Campione, Dr. Phil Bell and Dr. Federico Fanti, a hadrosaur footprint found at Pinto Creek.

people. The Grande Prairie Regional College provided funding that helped support several researchers' work, as well as hosting a public lecture series on dinosaurs and fossils. Volunteers, like Gary Purves, Tim Neilsen, Jeff

Brewster, Roy Bickell and Sheldon Graber all donated time and equipment such as boats and quads to the work. We had external funding from the Dinosaur Research Institute to bring international researchers in to the proj-

ect. And the University of Alberta again brought a huge crew up to excavate two bonebeds in the area. Without all of this support, we could not have accomplished nearly the amount of work we did.

photos by Nicolas Campione and Federico Fanti

DINOSAUR OF THE MONTH

Animantarx

Animantarx was an armoured dinosaur, related to animals like *Ankylosaurus*. However, it was a member of the nodosaurids, and as such, did not have a large, clubbed tail.

It did have extensive bone plates all over its body, including giant spikes over its shoulders. Its name even means “living fortress”!



graphic from Dinosaur Facts



How long does it take to dig up a dinosaur bone?

The length of time it takes to dig up a dinosaur depends on so many things, and can vary from a few days to decades. For smaller skeletons in soft sediments, the skeleton can often be taken out in just a couple of weeks. However, some dinosaurs are much harder to excavate. For example, *Cryolophosaurus*, a dinosaur from Antarctica, was first found in 1991, and scientists are still returning to continue digging out the only known skeleton.

It is taking so long because the area is so hard to access and is often too cold to get to, and the fossils themselves are in rocks that are harder than concrete. Also, digging up a dinosaur is only the first step. After the dinosaur is dug up, it still needs to be fully cleaned and prepared in a lab, a process that can take years as well.



photo by Sean Trostem

Ask a Paleo! by Dr. Matthew Vavrek.
Have a question for a palaeo?
Visit curriemuseum.ca

Thank you to our funding partners, donors and sponsors!



Ken and Teresa Sargent
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