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Dino museum lands another design nod



By Alexa Huffman, Grande Prairie Daily Herald-Tribune
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A recent photo of the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum in Wembley, Alta. Supplied.

The Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum's use of wood in its construction has led to more accolades for the Wembley structure.

On March 17, the museum received three Prairie Wood Design Awards from Wood WORKS! Alberta.

Decided by a team of jurors, the awards recognize projects and organizations that advance the use of wood in construction.

"The jury instantly recognized that this was a unique method of construction," George Jacob, president and CEO of the museum.

"They also recognized that the aesthetics was akin to the skeletal form of a dinosaur being unearthed and the building actually goes down a level and a half into the ground and that is sort of metaphorical for a dinosaur dig," said Jacob.

Jacob accepted the awards in Edmonton along with Stephen Teeple, design principal at Teeple Architects, the company that designed the building.

The Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum received the Commercial/Industrial Wood Design award.

The Wood Advocate Award went to the River of Death & Discovery Dinosaur Museum Society with the museum being the project.

The Engineer Wood Advocate Award went to Fast + Epp and StructureCraft, also for the museum.

Inside the museum, there is a set of timber beams made from wood once affected by pine beetles.

The roof is made of triple-glazed zinc for energy efficiency and the timber beams are connected by wooden nodes to hold up the roof.

“There is an extensive use of lumber in the building but also, the way the asymmetrical nodes are created inside the building, there has been considerable innovative engineering thought that has gone into it,” said Jacob.

PCL Construction Management Inc., the company contracted to build the museum, also received a 2014 Alberta Construction Award from Alberta Construction Magazine for their work on the facility.

Jacob says he thinks all of these awards will help bring more attention to the museum.

“I think the museum is being recognized as a world class unique facility in the making,” said Jacob.

“The shell has a certain symbolic presence with long lines of sight in the sense that you can see the building from 10 miles away, given that we are in the Prairies, and not many museums have that luxury of that long line of sight.”

The construction method for the Philip J. Currie Museum is outlined on the museum’s website and Jacob said the museum is also creating a short documentary and a commemorative book on the making of the museum, which will be available once the museum opens its doors.

The facility is scheduled to open in September, with a barbecue on Sept. 2 and Sept. 3 when the Tour of Alberta bicycle race passes by the museum.

Installation of the exhibits into the seven galleries should start in June or July.

“It usually takes about 90 days to 100 days to do that,” said Jacob.

“We’re on a very accelerated path. This pace of work is quite unprecedented. It’s a very ambitious target, but we will see.”

The museum will also be hosting its annual Amber Ball on Sept. 26 at the ENTREC Centre at Evergreen Park.

Like last year, a Harley Davidson motorcycle ride to the museum will be held on the same day.


No special guests have been announced.

“Right now, we have nothing positively confirmed,” said Candice Popik, manager of marketing and communications at the Philip J. Currie Museum .

“Being that the Aykroyds have been involved, we’re hoping to have them back as well.”

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