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NEWS LOCAL

Memorandum of understanding focused on education

Dino museum, GPRC to work together



By Alexa Huffman, Grande Prairie Daily Herald-Tribune
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Supplied The Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum is expected to open this fall.

The Grande Prairie Regional College and Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum signed a memorandum of understanding on Wednesday for co-operation in the development of new education programs. The MOU was signed after approximately eight months of deliberation. The agreement focuses on collaboration between the college and the museum to create joint programs, e-learning certification and grant writing initiatives.

“We’re interested in the whole research and education side of the museum,” said Don Gnatiuk, president and CEO of GPRC.

“It’s a feel-good for the college that we’re able to integrate something that is so important to the community and important from academic study to research.”

According to Gnatiuk, the programs could include one-off type training, such as seminars.

Eventually, the courses could be used for diploma and certificate credits for GPRC students at the Grande Prairie and Fairview campuses. The programs would cover basic paleontology, tourism and museum activities.

There is also an opportunity to explore research options between the museum, GPRC and the University of Alberta.

Right now, GPRC is working with the museum to examine which programs are essential, how the programs will be developed and how to deliver the programs, whether it is at the museum, the college, online or at the Pipestone Creek bone bed.

“Anything related to that, we want to be involved in creating programming,” said Gnatiuk.

Funding for future programs, certificates and grant writing is still be worked out between the museum, GPRC and the County of Grande Prairie, which has provided significant funding for the museum.

“Some of this will be handled through grants,” said Gnatiuk.

“Some of this will be one-time contracts, some of it will be simple continuing education. Maybe, eventually, when it becomes a bona fide program, it will be core funded.”

GPRC has also been involved with the River of Death and Discovery Dinosaur Museum Society (RDDDM), a non-profit society formed by the County of Grande Prairie do develop the bone beds in the region and to create a dinosaur museum.

“One of our focuses out there is on education at the museum, not only for junior people but also for continuing education,” said Ross Sutherland, chairman of the RDDM.

The society is also affiliated with the University of Alberta in paleontology.

“We view the Grande Prairie Regional College as an extension of that,” said Sutherland.

“And we have an agreement coming on stream with the University of Alberta with their professorship, so it ties everything together and hopefully we can start issuing some certificates as far as learning goes between the two centres,” said Sutherland.

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