



ENTERTAINMENT LOCAL

Museum Matters

Regional strength, national presence



By George Jacob, Museum Matters
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The Pipestone Creek bone-bed is an international resource for discovery and research, that speaks to the premise of becoming a geo-park akin to what Tumbler Ridge has successfully embarked upon with UNESCO.

Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum is an international institute for experiential learning dedicated to Canada's palaeontological heritage, through research, collection, preservation, exhibition, public programming, publications and innovative outreach. While much has been written about its local history and regional impact, it is time to realize its potential on three fronts.

First, given that it is the densest bone-bed sites for horned dinosaurs in the world, its impact and implications on palaeontological research are unquestionably immense. Field work over the last three decades has merely scratched the surface, literally speaking. Community leaders such as Al Lakusta and the late Roy Bickell have contributed much to this cause. The baton is being carried forward by quietly, but surely, by Tim Powell who serves on the board of the River of Death and Discovery Dinosaur Museum Society and has volunteered to create proper access to the bone-bed site by widening the approach, adding a protective fence leading up to the excavation site as part of on-going work under the guidance of Philip Currie.

Second, the creation of the world-class museum minutes from the Pipestone Creek has added a destination to the map of northern Alberta, as no other. The unique, award-winning LEED Gold standard architecture, the singularly unique, cutting edge exhibit design treatment and rapid collaborations that I have been able to forge in relatively short order with local, regional, national and

international organizations, ensure that the museum is on sound fundamentals that would contribute tremendously to its long term sustenance.

Third is its tourism and economic impact potential. Not only will the museum blossom into the biggest attraction in northern Alberta, it will brand the surrounding cities and counties visually as a progressive symbol of pride, resolve and collective foresight. Continued support from various governments, corporations and individuals will all go towards operations, endowments and any future capital enhancements.

The transformation of the sleepy town of Wembley, is inevitable. It is only a matter of time, before the significant number of vehicular traffic en route to Alaska on Highway 43 swerves to stop at the museum, shop at its gift shop, enjoy the exhibit experience, a National Geographic film with friends and family, or even venture taking a helicopter ride over Pipestone Creek. Other attractions and businesses are bound to pick up on the cue and potential of augmenting business and allied support services.

What is also inevitable is the strengthening of ties between city of Grande Prairie museums, airport and local talent through joint programs and synergistic partnerships with resource pooling and talent scouting. Social media, blogs and Facebook traffic is already gathering momentum in the virtual realm with increasing circulation of our Newsosaur monthly bulletin and punctuated presence on airwaves and in print media.

Tourism will become one of the largest beneficiaries in the region. Travel Alberta is actively considering partnership possibilities on various levels as is the Canadian Tourism Commission. With GP Regional Airport and the Edmonton International Airport taking active interest providing the museum with opportunities to project the prowess of the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum, time has come to absorb this transformative growth as it unfolds rapidly in the coming eight weeks leading up to the completion of the fastest museum project implementation in Canadian history - right at our doorstep!

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