

## **MEDIA RELEASE – 12 June 2017**

### **B.C.'S FIRST DINOSAUR SKULL DISCOVERED NEAR TUMBLER RIDGE**

#### **Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation**

A significant fossil discovery of B.C.'s first dinosaur skull has been made beside a creek near Tumbler Ridge. Weighing over 100 kg, it was recovered and transported to the Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Many hundreds of dinosaur bones have been identified in the Tumbler Ridge area since the first discovery in 2001, along with innumerable dinosaur footprints, but until now a skull bone had proved elusive.

The discovery was made by Dr. Rick Lambert, a chiropractor with degrees in geology and biology, currently living in East Sooke. He has previous fossil discoveries to his credit, which are stored in the Natural History Museum in London, England. When he visits a new area he tends to examine the rocks, and he and his wife Sonia were drawn to visit Tumbler Ridge because of the hiking trails and fossil discoveries for which the area has become famous. Because of the recent heavy rains and rising creek levels, he was examining the potential for flooding when he noticed the rocks which included the dinosaur skull. He saw "something interesting," and upon closer inspection soon realized that he was looking at theropod dinosaur teeth. He then did all the right things: he photographed the specimen, took a GPS reading, and called and e-mailed the museum.

Dr. Lambert commented: "It is always fun to find fossils and to make the past more real to people. This is many millions of years old – that's a lot of birthdays."

Dr. Richard McCrea, Museum Director at the Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre, commented: "This is the first theropod dinosaur skull to be found in B.C., and is therefore of great significance to the province. It is another wonderful specimen brought to our attention by a volunteer, and we are most grateful to Dr. Rick Lambert for reporting his discovery to us. We were fortunate that it was portable and reasonably accessible. Thanks to the great response from museum staff, volunteers and Councillor Kirby, we were able to start the recovery of this specimen minutes after it we were informed of it, and had it secured within our Research Centre within an hour."

Dr. McCrea continued: "The specimen provided us with a brief moment of mystery, as on first inspection it was easy to see that this was part of the skull of a large theropod. However, the geology of the immediate area the specimen was discovered contains rocks that are approximately 95 million years old and are not known to contain large theropods. The rock looked familiar to us from a formation where the rocks are nearly 20 million years younger. Upon closer inspection the skull, teeth and the serrations of the teeth support the identification of this material as being from one of the tyrannosaurids also

known from the younger rocks in the area. It is clear that the rock with the tyrannosaur skull and teeth was quarried elsewhere as part of a local engineering/landscaping project.”

Dr. Lisa Buckley, Curator and Collections Manager at the Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre, commented: “The exposed maxilla (upper jaw) and teeth are eroded, but their shape is perfectly preserved, including fine details of the delicate serrations that form the cutting edge of the teeth. The specimen has twelve teeth evident, with the potential to expose more. The tooth count and tooth shape make it likely that this is part of the skull of a tyrannosaurid like *Albertosaurus*, and is probably around 75 million years old. We aim to establish the point of origin of this rock.”

Councillor Joanne Kirby, Liaison between the District of Tumbler Ridge and the Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation, was on hand to assist with the specimen recovery. She commented: “Congratulations to Dr. Rick Lambert on this amazing find. Excellent work by our scientists and volunteers! This once again puts Tumbler Ridge in the limelight and at the forefront of scientific discoveries in B.C.”

Once the specimen has been examined and described in detail by Dr. Buckley and Dr. McCrea, an exhibit on B.C.’s first dinosaur skull will be developed in the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery in Tumbler Ridge.

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