



ROYAL TYRRELL MUSEUM

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In the Royal Tyrrell Museum's 2021 – 2026 Strategic Plan, we outlined our organizational priorities and major goals. We set out to strengthen the Museum's position in six key areas: delivering scientific excellence; enhancing public value through relevant exhibits and programs; building mutually beneficial relationships; providing welcoming experiences and an exemplary level of service; expanding financial resiliency; and advancing strategic growth.



In 2025, we celebrated a remarkable milestone: the Royal Tyrrell Museum's 40th anniversary. Four decades ago, the seeds of our success were planted by visionary scientists, community leaders, and Albertans who believed that our province's extraordinary palaeontological heritage deserved a world-class home. We continue to honour that legacy while positioning the Museum for the future.

We kicked off anniversary celebrations with the opening of *Breakthroughs*, a dynamic exhibition featuring five extraordinary specimens that reshaped our understanding of ancient life. These fossils—the best-preserved, most complete, or only known of their kind—highlight the Museum's ongoing role as a leader in palaeontological research and storytelling.

On the Museum's anniversary date, September 25, we hosted a special event for local supporters. Our community celebration welcomed residents from across the Drumheller Valley for an evening of science, exploration, and friendship. The gathering reinforced how deeply the Museum is woven into the cultural fabric of the region.

Then we did something completely different: we hosted a 1980s-themed Silent Disco in our galleries. Visitors donned their best 80s outfits to mark the decade that gave rise to the Museum—and to have some fun along the way.

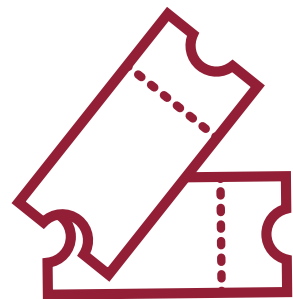
We also launched a series of pop-up displays, taking Alberta's palaeontological story beyond the Museum's walls to libraries in communities large and small. Sharing Alberta's fossil heritage remains at the core of our mandate. We were proud to provide new opportunities for discovery and wonder throughout the province.

We reached the final year of our five-year strategic plan in 2025. As we reflect on our progress—strengthening research, expanding access, deepening community engagement, and modernizing the visitor experience—we are engaged in planning for what comes next. We look ahead with confidence, guided by the same curiosity and commitment that shaped the Museum 40 years ago.

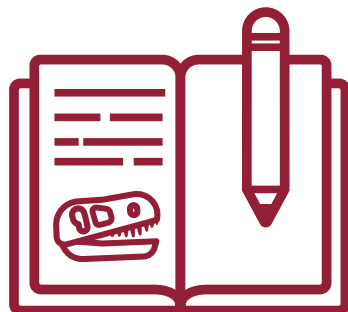
I extend my sincere thanks to the Museum's staff, volunteers, partners, and visitors. Together, we are building a future rooted in discovery, relevance, and the enduring power of ancient life.

Lisa Making, Executive Director
Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology

2025 IN NUMBERS



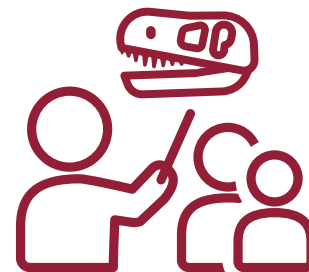
Welcomed
566,656
visitors



Published
23
peer-reviewed
scientific papers



Delivered public programs to
31,100+
onsite participants



Reached
9,300+
participants in
259
Distance Learning
programs




Social media engagement:
1.17 million
actions
6.1 million
video views



Social media reach:
13.9 million

2025 PROGRESS ON OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

A woman with curly hair is looking at a fossil specimen in a museum display case. The fossil is a large, light-colored, irregularly shaped object, possibly a dinosaur skull or skeleton, resting on a dark surface. A small sign in front of the fossil reads "PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH". In the background, there is a large screen displaying a blue and white illustration of a dinosaur skeleton. The scene is lit with warm, focused lights.

BE A CENTRE OF SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE

Head Technician Joe Sanchez demonstrated fossil preparation at the Museum's 40th anniversary community appreciation event in September.

We will strengthen our position as a centre of excellence for palaeontology, and a leader in advancing research, knowledge, and palaeontological stewardship.

We added more than 2,300 specimens to our Collections this year. An Early Cretaceous (110-million-year-old) plesiosaur from the banks of the Smoky River near Peace River is just one of many incredible fossils collected by Royal Tyrrell Museum crews in 2025. Noteworthy discoveries from Dinosaur Provincial Park included additional material of the holotype skeleton of the pterosaur *Cryodrakon*, and two crocodilian skulls—one fragmentary, the other nearly complete. Collections staff catalogued more than 60 specimens from industry-related excavations, including three mostly complete mosasaur skeletons.

A remarkable specimen of the meat-eating dinosaur *Gorgosaurus libratus*, collected from Dinosaur Provincial Park, went on display for the first time. It's featured in the Museum's *Breakthroughs* exhibit, opened in spring 2025. The specimen is the first tyrannosaur found with remains of its prey preserved in place in its stomach cavity. It contains the hind limbs of two young dinosaurs that the gorgosaur dismembered and ate.

In the Preparation Lab, technicians prepared nearly 300 specimens. Work continues on two mosasaur skeletons, a disarticulated tyrannosaur, two hadrosaur skulls, a disarticulated champsosaur, a newly collected crocodile skull, and an ankylosaur skull.

Research and publication highlights included the description of a new tyrannosaur (meat-eating dinosaur) from the Late Cretaceous of Mongolia (Dr. Francois Therrien and co-authors); the earliest evidence of bird nesting behaviour at polar latitudes, based on fossils found in Late Cretaceous deposits in Alaska (Dr. Caleb Brown, Dr. Don Brinkman, and co-authors); the description of an important herpetofauna (amphibians, lizards, etc.) from the late Eocene of France (postdoctoral fellow Dr. Alfred Lemierre and co-authors); and a study reporting that therian mammals (marsupials and placentals) became more adapted to living on the ground several million years before the end of the Cretaceous, likely due to environmental changes (Dr. Craig Scott and co-authors).

A photograph of a museum gallery with warm orange lighting. Several visitors, including a man in a dark hoodie, a young girl in a blue shirt, and a boy in a dark jacket, are looking at a large, detailed fossil exhibit mounted on a wall. The exhibit appears to be a large dinosaur skeleton or fossilized tracks. A large, semi-transparent orange triangle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text 'STRENGTHEN PUBLIC VALUE'.

STRENGTHEN PUBLIC VALUE

Visitors marvel at the world's most complete *Ornithomimus* ('ostrich-mimic' dinosaur) specimen in our *Breakthroughs* exhibit.

We will continuously enhance the Museum's public value by ensuring our exhibits and programs are widely accessible, regularly evaluated, and updated with new content to reflect recent scientific research.

The May opening of the *Breakthroughs* exhibit kicked off a year of celebrations of the Museum's 40th anniversary. *Breakthroughs* tells the stories of five specimens that changed our understanding of ancient animals—by supporting new research on feeding, nesting, and evolutionary relationships. The redeveloped gallery space includes all-new illustrations, animations, and music.

The *Royal Tyrrell Museum Pop-Ups* project launched in September, delivering temporary exhibits of Alberta's incredible fossils to public libraries in 10 communities across the province. Each unique display features fossils from the host community and the region. Collaboration with the libraries enabled us to offer complimentary learning materials and programming resources related to the pop-ups. We gratefully acknowledge the libraries for their participation, and the Royal Tyrrell Museum Cooperating Society for supporting the pop-up exhibits.

Additional examples of well-attended 2025 programming events included *Bones and Brews: Ask an Expert* in January, with a talk and Q&A session with palaeontologist Dr. Caleb Brown; a special presentation to members of the Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society in March; and a sold-out guided hike to the *Albertosaurus* bonebed at Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park in September, led by palaeontologist Dr. François Therrien.

Our educators staffed several display booths as part of the Museum's public outreach activities in 2025, sharing fossils and casts, and answering questions. Staff engaged with over 4,000 visitors at events such as the local premiere of the latest *Jurassic World* movie at the Napier Theatre, the popular Alberta Day event at Heritage Park in Calgary, and Drumheller's Festival of Lights.

About 24,000 students participated in curriculum-based programs at the Museum in 2025. Our Education team developed two new programs for elementary school-aged students, covering topics in geology, palaeontology, and ecosystem ecology.



BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Palaeontologist Dr. François Therrien led a hike to the *Albertosaurus* bonebed at Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park.

We will connect palaeontology to relevant scientific and cultural matters. Our relationships and partnerships will bolster our efforts to achieve mutually beneficial strategic goals.

The Museum's 40th anniversary celebrations began in spring and continued through most of 2025. Over 500 people attended our successful community appreciation event on September 25. We hosted the *Back in Time* silent disco on October 18. Nearly 300 guests danced the night away in *Dinosaur Hall* to 1980s music from three DJs broadcasting live to private channels accessed via headphones.

Coverage of our *Breakthroughs* exhibit by major media outlets resulted in 59 earned media mentions, and an online reach of 166 million people. Other media highlights included the release of two studies co-authored by our palaeontologist Dr. Caleb Brown—research on a bite mark on a pterosaur neck vertebra (January 2025; 1.58 billion online impressions), and evidence of herding behaviour in ceratopsians from a tracksite in Dinosaur Provincial Park (July 2025; 452 million online impressions).

Strong relationships with tourism organizations enable the Museum to better serve our audiences and expand our reach. We collaborated on several marketing opportunities in 2025,

and hosted Travel Alberta for a visit to create new images and video that will be used to promote Alberta and the badlands. Our participation with Travel Drumheller in the *Rendez-Vous Canada* travel trade show led to new connections and new initiatives with Destination Canada partners.

The Museum is a hub for students and emerging professionals. This year we hosted two local high school students through Travel Drumheller's work experience program. One of the students gained experience in information technology, while the other was mentored by staff in exhibit services and fabrication. The Museum's Education department hosted two summer internships with university graduate students focussed on science communication and how visitors interact with fossil specimens.

Museum educators continued to expand our offerings for seniors in 2025. They gave interactive presentations to patients at the Drumheller Health Centre's Continuing Care Home in the spring, and delivered special Seniors' Week programming at the Museum in June.



BE DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, ACCESSIBLE, AND INCLUSIVE

We surpassed attendance records in 2025 while continuing to pursue projects that improve the Museum's accessibility.

Image © Travel Alberta / Mike Hopkins

We will provide an exemplary level of service and experience to ensure all feel welcome.

The Museum welcomed 566,656 visitors in 2025—setting a new all-time high annual attendance record!

Alberta's Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women offers free admission to all provincial heritage sites and museums for Family Day and the Alberta Culture Days weekend. Admission fees were waived for nearly 7,000 visitors to the Royal Tyrrell Museum on these days in 2025. Through the Canada Strong program in 2025, more than 12,500 young adults received a 50% discount on their admission fees, and 55,150 youth aged 7 – 17 visited the Museum free of charge. Funding through the Royal Tyrrell Museum Cooperating Society's Fee Assistance Program enabled an additional 77 people to visit the Museum this year.

The Museum hosted a special admission evening for immunocompromised and COVID-conscious families on April 20, 2025. The event was designed to provide a safe and inclusive environment for visitors to enjoy the Museum experience. More than 100 guests attended.

The Royal Tyrrell Museum is proud to be part of the Canoo program, offered through the Institute for Canadian Citizenship. The Canoo App provides free entry to over 2,000 partner experiences for new citizens, as well as permanent residents in their first five years of residency. This summer, the Museum ranked fifth for most Canoo member admissions in Canada, and was the most visited site in Alberta. From July – September 2025, we hosted nearly 3,600 Canoo member visits. We were visited by Canoo members from more than 60 countries of origin; the top three countries were India, the Philippines, and China. The Museum has a 4.9 out of 5 rating from Canoo members who have visited the facility this year.

EXPAND FINANCIAL RESILIENCY

Revenue from the Museum Shop supports scientific, educational, exhibit, and community initiatives.

We will ensure a robust, diversified, and high-performing portfolio of income streams.

The Royal Tyrrell Museum Cooperating Society is a non-profit, charitable organization that plays a key role in helping the Museum achieve its mandate. Through proceeds from the management of the Museum Shop, memberships, and donations, the Cooperating Society provides essential ongoing support for the Museum's research, exhibits, and educational programming.

On the individual giving front, the Cooperating Society collected donations totalling nearly \$25,000 in 2025. A bequest of \$100,000 was received from the Estate of John Lissau. We are deeply grateful to John Lissau, and all dedicated supporters who choose to secure the Museum's future in such a meaningful way.

The Royal Tyrrell Museum Shop generated sales of \$4.4 million in 2025, selling about 317,600 individual items. Museum Shop products were donated to 10 community initiatives for silent auctions and other fundraising efforts.

The hiring of the Royal Tyrrell Museum Cooperating Society's new membership coordinator, Erika Cornelius, was a major highlight of the year. Erika has been working with us to plan improvements to the membership program, member engagement and communications, and increased marketing. We look forward to further enhancements to our program in 2026!

Examples of the valuable support the Cooperating Society provided to the Museum in 2025 included funding for: the *Royal Tyrrell Museum Pop-Ups* project; the 40th anniversary community event; Seniors' Week programming; public talks; visiting researchers; the Dr. Elizabeth Nicholls Postdoctoral Fellowship; Badlands Science Camp; and Museum playground maintenance. The Cooperating Society is also working with the Museum to investigate and develop new ways of supporting exhibits and programs through public engagement in the galleries.

Work continues on execution of the Cooperating Society Strategic Plan. Initial efforts targeted strengthening alignment with the Museum's priorities, and advancing board leadership and development. Goal-setting and implementation of new strategic communications initiatives has been our focus in 2025.



GROW STRATEGICALLY

The Museum has been bringing
the prehistoric past to life since 1985.

Image © Travel Alberta / ROAM Creative

We will work to ensure our physical, organizational, and technological capacities are aligned with our strategic plan, to enhance visitor experience, and advance core museological and research priorities.

For 40 years, the Royal Tyrrell Museum has captured imaginations, sparked curiosity, and introduced the world to Alberta's amazing fossil heritage. In that time, we've also welcomed more than 16.5 million visitors from around the globe—an achievement that would even surprise our founders. As we celebrate this remarkable milestone and all our successes, it is crucial that we continue to look forward.

Over the past four decades, our fossil collection has grown exponentially, transforming the Museum into a world-leading centre for palaeontological research and discovery. We must prepare for the future to ensure we can continue to care for this expanding collection, while sharing its stories in new, engaging ways.

This year, the Museum initiated an in-depth evaluation of our current physical, organizational, and technical capacity so we can better understand what our needs might be going forward. Our goal is not only to further improve on the year-round visitor experience, but also to ensure we meet our core museological and research responsibilities.

As we evaluate progress on our current five-year strategic plan, and begin the process of confirming our next strategic priorities, the Royal Tyrrell Museum stands on strong foundations, confident in how far we've come, and energized by what lies ahead. We aim to ensure that future generations of visitors, researchers, and learners will continue to experience the awe, discovery, and inspiration that have defined the Museum for four decades. Through strategic growth, we will boldly carry this legacy into the future.

ROYAL TYRRELL MUSEUM

Alberta