

Protecting cultural heritage



## Treading **carefully**

Dinosaur bones may seem a far cry from community relations but Rio Tinto manages such palaeontological remains as carefully as archaeological sites or places and objects with sacred significance.



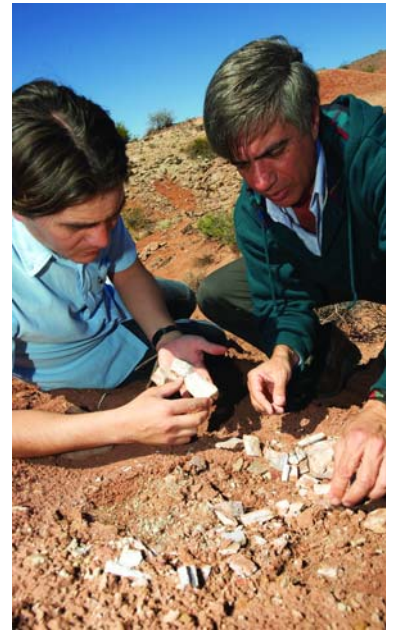
At the Río Colorado Potash (PRC) project site in Argentina, scientists discovered a fossilised Titanosaur sauropod dinosaur femur and a number of stone tools. Dinosaur bones may seem a far cry from community relations but Rio Tinto manages such palaeontological remains as carefully as archaeological sites or places and objects with sacred significance.

The discoveries were made in May 2004 during a standard palaeontological and archaeological ground examination at the project's gas pipeline excavation. These studies were funded by PRC and implemented by local and regional scientists. PRC donated tools to the museum so the bones and soil could be separated without damage. Follow up campaigns in 2005 provided opportunities for more targeted sampling.

Although such finds are fairly common in the vicinity, special care was taken to ensure their safe delivery to the regional museum in the nearest large town of Malargüe, Mendoza Province. To prevent damage in transit the fossilised bone was wrapped in plaster jackets, which were made on site. After cleaning and preparation the bone is now displayed in the local museum as part of an exhibition of local heritage items. The bone's display case was also donated by PRC.

Reconstruction of the dinosaur fossil suggests that the bone is the femur of a Cretaceous age (85 million years ago) herbaceous Sauropod. The animal is estimated to have weighed 50 tonnes and to have measured in height between seven and ten metres. The bone is as popular with school children as it is with tourists.

As consequence of the Sauropod discovery, the municipal government is considering opening a regional centre for palaeontological research in Malargüe.



Above: Examining some of the Titanosaurus dinosaur remains found on the Potasio Río Colorado mining lease site.

Left: Río Colorado Potash provides support to the museum's palaeontological research and displays.

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