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Louie Rosella Mar 20, 2010 - 3:15 PM
Fossilized remains discovered

Rick Brzakala, owner of Applewood Acres Gardening and Landscaping, knows his industry well. So, when the married father of two from Mississauga and his employees were sorting through his company's inventory of flagstone shale in Applewood Acres last summer, he instantly recognized something that didn't belong.



Show and tell. Mississauga landscaper Rick Brzakala holds fossil of a pre-historic creature that he found here last summer which dates back 50 million years. Supplied photo

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It was not until a few weeks ago, that Brzakala relocated it while conducting a routine inventory review. While he is still waiting to hear back from University of Toronto's Paleontology department, Earth Sciences experts at the Natural History Museum in London, England confirmed Brzakala's find to be the fossilized remains of a orthocone nautiloid, a type of mollusc, that dates back 50 million years. "We can identify your specimen as either the shell (phragmocone) of an orthocone nautiloid or a belemnite...both are molluscs, looking squid-like but with long straight shells," said Luanne Faulknaill, the museum's Earth Sciences Identification and Advisory Officer, in an email to Brzakala. During the Paleozoic Era, the straight-shelled nautiloid ruled the seas, according to experts. It was considered to be the great white shark of its time as it was a merciless killer feared by all. This perfectly designed killing machine was up to 20 feet long — 15 feet of shell plus 5 feet of head and tentacles — and had an insatiable hunger. A chambered, gas-filled shell kept this 300-pound beast buoyant some 50 million years ago. Brzakala's instinct to hold onto it last summer paid off. Although the fossil's monetary value remains uncertain, Brzakala believes that from a purely historical perspective, the find is valuable in the form of a great keepsake. "My kids can't wait to take it into their next school show and tell. There's the real value....helping kids discover and learn from the past," said Brzakala. rosella@mississauga.net

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