



CAL MILLAR/TORONTO STAR

ANCESTOR: Lea French, curator of ice age exhibit, holds photo of Lucy's skeleton while Peter May, left, and Paul deCourcy display casting of Lucy's footprint.

Lucy's ancient footprints main attraction at exhibit

By CAL MILLAR
PEEL/HALTON BUREAU

A series of castings of footprints belonging to Lucy, a distant ancestor of modern humans, are on display for the first time in Canada at Bronte Creek Provincial Park.

It is part of the Ice Age Exhibit put together by Research Castings International, the Ontario-based company that constructed the giant dinosaurs for the *Jurassic Park* movies.

Peter May, who worked as a sculptor with the Royal Ontario Museum before forming the company in 1987, said his firm has produced replica castings for almost every major museum in the world.

OPENED IN JULY

The exhibit opened in July, but Lucy's footprints arrived this weekend.

The Lucy footprints were discovered in 1978 by a team of scientists led by paleontologist Mary Leakey in Leatoli, Tanzania. They are believed the earli-

est evidence of *Australopithecus afarensis*, a distant ancestor of modern humans, and among the first of the lineage to have walked fully upright.

Leakey found a series of footprints in volcanic ash, believed to be made 3.5 million years ago, of an adult and child walking together.

Arriving with Lucy were the castings of Turkana boy, a skeleton believed to be 1.7 million years old, discovered in Kenya in 1984.

The \$2 million exhibit also includes a number of skulls showing human evolution, as well as artefacts, artwork and tools associated with prehistoric man.

The plan to launch the exhibit was made after May learned park superintendent Paul deCourcy was looking for innovative ways to attract visitors to the 625-hectare park, which is located on the Oakville-Burlington border.

May said the display is being

moved to the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville, Va., when it ends its run at Bronte Creek on Oct. 17.

The valley around Bronte Creek Provincial Park can be tied in with the exhibit, May said, because quite a few early Indian artefacts have been discovered nearby.

HORNLESS RHINO

The exhibit also includes replica castings of extinct hornless rhino bones owned by the China's Beijing Museum and a baby mammoth, which is on loan from the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa.

Until now, the Beijing Museum has never allowed the hornless rhino, which roamed areas of Europe and Asia 15,000 years ago, to be shown in North America.

The exhibit has had a real impact on the park's business.

"Our attendance is up 46 per cent," said deCourcy, noting that the park normally attracts about 400,000 visitors a year.