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New dig should reveal more about life locally as it was 500 years ago

By **KAREN SMITH**
The Champion

A 15-year excavation of a former Iroquoian village — expected to provide researchers with valuable information about the area's first people — will begin next month.

"This will make a major contribution to our findings of Native people," said Dr. Bill Finlayson, director-general of the London Museum of Archaeology, which is conducting the dig.

The six-acre Second Line site was an Iroquoian village occupied by 'proto-Huron' Middleport people between 1444 and 1474, said Dr. Finlayson, who is known for the discovery and reconstruction of an Indian village at Crawford Lake.

To help raise \$600,000 needed for the dig and proposed construction of lodging facilities, the museum will host archaeological field expeditions for the public.

Several two to 20-day programs that provide students and adults with the opportunity to help with the dig and learn about the history of Native people in the area will be offered throughout the summer.

"Basically, it's an experience for people who want to do something different," Dr. Finlayson said.

For now, participants will stay overnight at the Mohawk Inn and surrounding campgrounds, but plans are in the works to build cabins on the property.

About 30 people are expected to be on site at any one time, Dr. Finlayson said.

The site, discovered through Dr. Finlayson's research program in 1973, is approximately two hectares in size and was probably occupied by about 1,080 people who lived in about 20 longhouses.

The location of the village next to a steep slope suggests that defence was a concern and that the village was surrounded by multiple rows of palisade.

The land was purchased by the museum four years ago from the estate of the late Peter Rife, a longtime resident of the property.

It's now occupied by Mel Brown, an avocational archaeologist who has worked as a volunteer with Dr. Finlayson for the past 31 years.

Mr. Brown is the custodian of the Rife site and has worked part-time for the museum doing archaeological surveys and test excavations in the Crawford Lake area.

Test excavations were conducted at the Rife site between 1974 and 1976. Field work focused on the excavation of a test trench and the investigation of one undisturbed longhouse, one complete midden (refuse heap) and two partial middens.

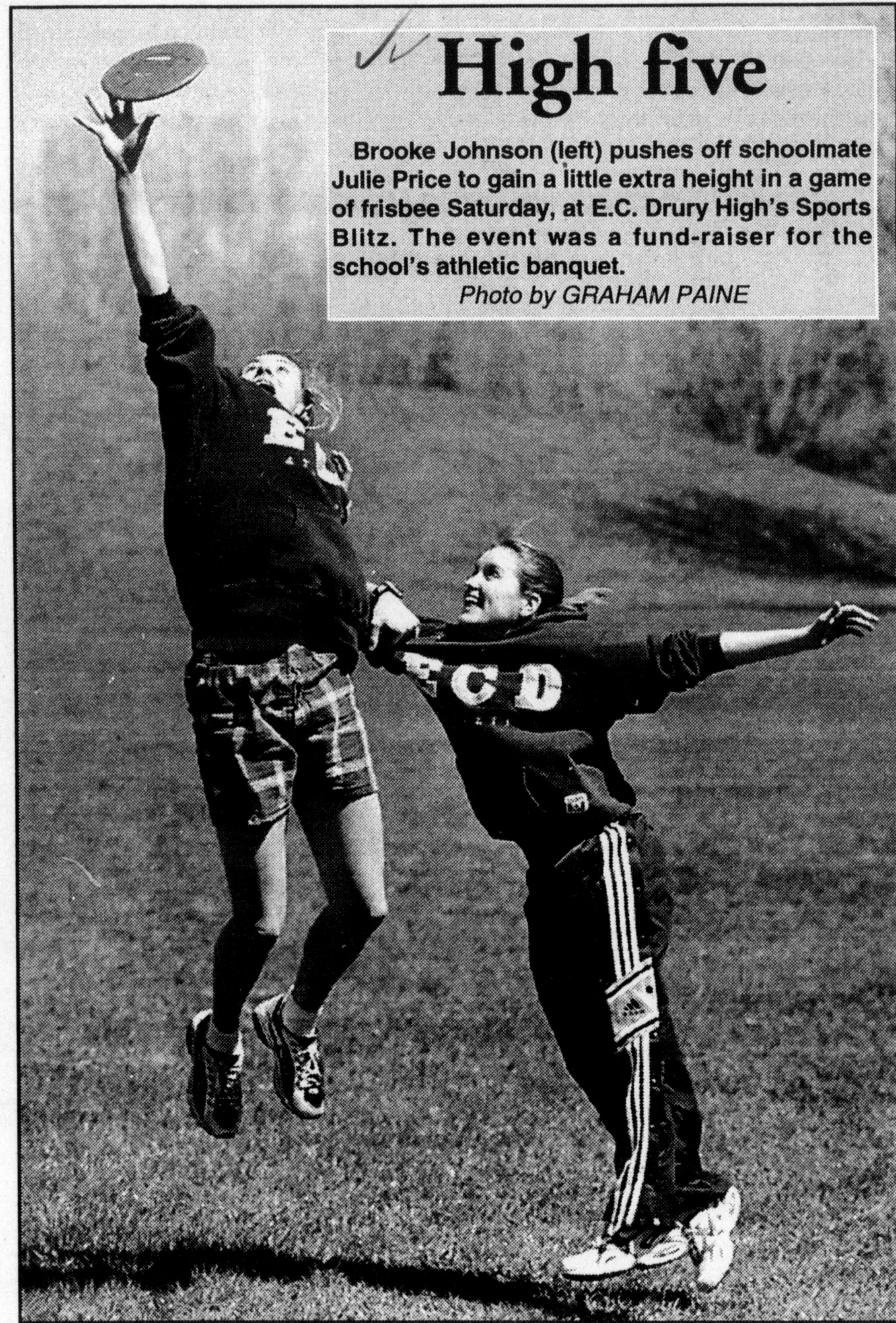
About 23,150 artifacts were found.

Research over the past 25 years suggests that the Rife site was occupied by people who had previously resided at the Unick Village, less than 1 km to the south, and the nearby Crawford Lake site, Dr. Finlayson said.

After its occupation, most of the residents moved less than 1 km to the northeast to the Van Eden village, while the remainder moved back to the Crawford Lake village.

Changes in artifacts provide many clues for researchers, Dr. Finlayson said.

At the Rife site, researchers have noted increases in the quantities of ceramic pipes, chipped stone and bone artifacts as well as changes in the methods of fabrication and decoration.



High five

Brooke Johnson (left) pushes off schoolmate Julie Price to gain a little extra height in a game of frisbee Saturday, at E.C. Drury High's Sports Blitz. The event was a fund-raiser for the school's athletic banquet.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Neighbour is annoyed over approach to the dig

By **KAREN SMITH**
The Champion

A public invitation on the Internet to a Second Line archaeological dig and proposed construction of cabins on the site aren't sitting well with some area residents.

Norma Moffat of Second Line told *The Champion* she and several other neighbours are "foaming at the mouth" because they weren't notified that the London Museum of Archaeology is offering field expeditions to the public on the site and has applied to the municipal committee of adjustment to eventually build lodging facilities.

The field programs, expected to begin in May, are outlined on the home page of the London Museum of Archaeology, which is conducting the excavation at the former site of a historic Iroquoian village.

"A museum archaeological dig is one thing," Ms Moffat said. "Advertising on the world-wide web for a commercial project not approved by council is another."

"Traffic concerns, RV and camper parking with necessary toilet facilities are real concerns in a rural residential and agricultural area on a two-lane dirt road."

However, museum director-general Dr. Bill Finlayson said participants in the field expedi-

tions — being held as a fundraiser — will stay overnight off the property and only about 30 people will be on the site at any one time.

He added that, if approved, the cabins will be placed far back from the road to so there's "as little noise as possible."

"Until we raise the money (\$600,000) we can't do anything," he said.

The museum has applied to the committee of adjustment for a zoning variation so the definition of school accommodates an archaeological facility.

It is also requesting that the variation address construction of seasonal, short-term overnight accommodations in the form of cabins.

A hearing on the issue will be held at Town Hall this Thursday (Apr. 29).

Ms Moffat said she understands the project is important, but it bothered her that she didn't know about it until she recently talked to a neighbour.

She said she believes the feelings of all nearby residents should be sought, not just the few in the immediate area who were notified by the Town of Milton about the committee of adjustment application.

"There has been no sign posted and no notification of (less than immediate) neighbours," she said.

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