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Summer-session archaeology

field school offered in Orillia

wilfrid Laurier University's archaeology department will offer courses in archaeological field and laboratory methods at an Indian village site near Orillia once again this summer.

There will be two courses, one in archaeological laboratory methods and a second in archaeological field methods. They will be taught from July 4 to August 16 as part of Laurier's off-campus summer session.

Dean Knight, the archaeologist in charge of the dig, said nine previous summer's work have resulted in the excavation of half the site. Laurier students have uncovered the remains of a 17th-century Huron Indian village, one of the largest ever found. Large sections of a pallisade (a fence surrounding the village) have been discovered which determine the limits of the village.

The remains of 44 longhouses have also been uncovered and explored. Each longhouse is thought to have housed anywhere from four to eight families (related on a matrilineal line) with a total village population estimated at about 2,000.

The area in which the site is located was once the centre of the Huron nation.

In previous years, grant funding has allowed experienced, full-time excavators to work alongside students participating in the field school.

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Unfortunately, the project did not receive grant funding this year so only students in the field school and their instructors will participate this summer.

Course activities begin with the construction of a grid system, dividing the nine-acre site into two-metre squares. Dr. Knight says two students generally work within each section allowing many areas to be covered each day.

Dr. Knight expects between 20 and 25 students will register in the course. Many are expected to be teachers living in the Orillia area.

Archaeology students from Laurier can also fulfill their field study requirements during these summer courses.

Assisting Dr. Knight in the course instruction and actual excavation will be two students, Sally Cameron, in charge of laboratory analysis, and Isabel Ball, Dr. Knight's teaching assistant in the field.

Without full-time excavators, Dr. Knight expects operations will slow down somewhat from last summer. He is presently applying for further grant funding to continue with the dig.