

Students search for artifacts

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scattered, from a vintage called Late Archaic, about 2500 BC.

This was merely a trans-location zone, where people dropped things over the years, Berger concluded.

On the other side of the fence, there were three concentrations of material. "Where that truck is going, we found one again that dates to that Paleo-Indian period," he said. There were 2,000 to 4,000 artifacts in clusters, with every cluster probably once a habitation.

'Lake St. George and Lake Wilcox were really grocery stores for people.'



BOB BERGER: Dig director has found more than one million items since 1983 on various archeological digs.

There were two buried caches of chert, a material similar to flint used to make stone tools. "It flakes very much like glass. So you can make something like this," Berger said as a student handed him a Middle Woodland arrowhead and then an end-scraping tool.

Here, around Lake Wilcox, caribou migrated and massed during the ice age and small bands of people followed. "Lake St. George and Lake Wilcox were really grocery stores for people," Berger said.

"There's probably sites all the way around the lake like that."

Margie Kenedy, a York undergraduate who has worked with Berger before,

was using measuring tape to plot out random squares for digging. She held a hand-drawn map of the squares and a list of what came out of them.

Matthew Perlanski, a York student from Aurora, found an unusual chert tool. It was a backed knife, a tool for cutting things like ligaments or hide, "basically like a regular paring knife."

The knife, like everything else, was put into a paper bag with notes inside a red metal box marked "artifacts." All the artifacts will go to the Royal Ontario Museum for study.

Since 1983, Berger has found more than one million items, "flakes and pottery and bones" at a Kleinburg-area site

called Seed-Barker.

In two decades, about half of the remaining Late Iroquoian (1520-1570 AD) village site has been excavated. (About two-thirds of the original village was destroyed by gravel extraction in the 1950s.)

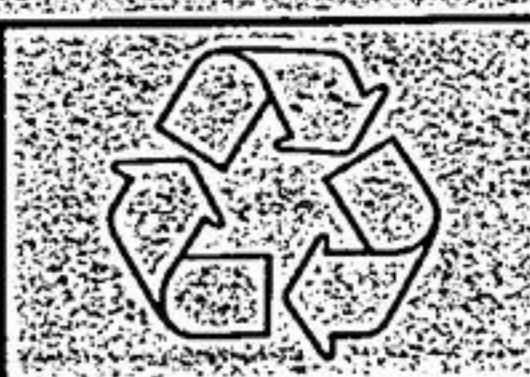
Student Michelle Graham of Barrie said artifacts suggest that two cultural groups who were traditional enemies, the Huron and Seneca, were there together. "Don't ask us who lived there because we're still trying to figure it out."

Most people in Ontario have no idea of its rich history before Europeans settled here, said Berger, who remembers feeling inspired when he found a projectile point at age eight. Later, his history teacher at Aurora High School insisted Ontario's history, as far as lessons were concerned, began in 1650.

"I took it up as a cause," Berger said, and was lucky enough to get work in the field ever since.

Being an archeologist means finding out how "the everyday Joe" lived in the past, he said.

And despite occupational hazards like blisters, sunburn and poisoning, he's certain such stories are worth telling.



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