

## Lecture Report:

# SHEILA GREAVES - HOUSE HUNTING IN THE HIGH COUNTRY

At the May 9 public meeting of the ASBC, we welcomed a distinguished guest, Sheila Greaves from Athabaska University, Alberta, to talk about her recent research in the Banff region. Sheila's talk "House Hunting in the High Country: the west meets the east in Banff National Park" related her ongoing investigation of pit house villages throughout Banff National Park.

The region is specifically interesting because it represents the area between two distinct First Nation cultures, that of the Plains First Nations on the Prairies and the Shuswap First Nations from the Interior of BC. Despite the region's apparent inhospitality, people have been using the area for the past 3000 years.

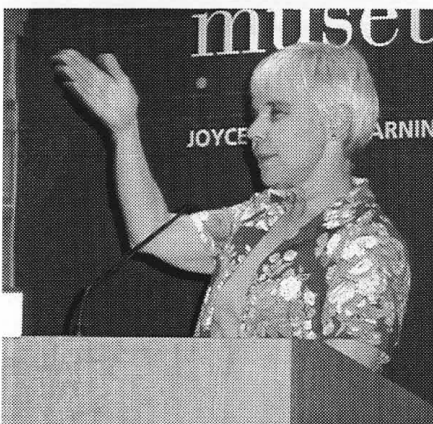
Archaeological interest in the area has existed since the first pit house village was excavated in 1912. Since then seven more villages have been discovered in Banff Park.

Each village was made up of a group of pit houses each approximately 10-15 feet in diameter. In many villages the pit houses overlap on each other showing the separate periods that the people lived in the villages. The villages weren't used for year round living; instead the pit houses were only used during the winter and fall months. During the spring the people would leave the villages, leaving only a number of young and elderly, and go off to gather food. After the summer was over the people would return to their villages.

The remains of these villages show large amounts of charcoal and, in some cases, roasting ovens dug into the ground. Mixed with these layers of charcoal are cooked bison and elk bones and occasionally roasted pinecones. In some villages, excavators recovered large quantities of points, blades, and scrapers made from local chert as well as other projectile points made from foreign quartz and a foreign type of chert. The

foreign quartz and chert points suggest a lively trade between the villages and other outside peoples.

The different types of points and pit house styles at the site show a mix of two cultures: the Plains First Nations and the Shuswap First Nations. The pit houses that the people lived in are similar to those of the Shuswap in the interior of BC but had a few specific differences that were more influenced by the Plains First Nations. Shuswap pit houses have a large, permanent wooden superstructure overtop of the pit but the pit houses of the people living in the area near Banff



*Sheila Greaves, Athabaska University, Alberta speaking at the Vancouver Museum's Joyce Walley Learning Centre.*

have a more teepee-like, more temporary, structure over top of the pit.

The exact origin of these people and their reasons for living in such a high altitude, cold environment during the winter is still uncertain. What is certain is the importance of this data in showing the various ways that peoples are affected by living in a contact area between two groups.

Thank you, Sheila for such an interesting and informative talk.

**By Haeden Stewart**

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Haeden Stewart is a Grade 11 International Baccalaureate student at Sir Winston Secondary School and his major interests and passions are in history and archaeology. Haeden joined the ASBC to engage in areas that weren't covered by his school's curriculum and to have further experiences with archaeology and archaeologists. When he graduates next year he hopes to attend university and obtain a degree in Archaeology. Sometime in the future Haeden would like to be an archaeologist working out in the field somewhere exotic and mysterious.

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## FIRST CALL FOR SESSION PROPOSALS - CAA 2005

The Canadian Archaeological Association (CAA) will meet in Nanaimo, BC, 11-14 May 2005. Sessions will be held at both the Best Western Dorchester Hotel and The Coast Bastion Inn.

All presenters must be members of the CAA. This is the first call for session proposals. A website will go online later in the summer with additional details.

Blocks of rooms have been reserved at the Best Western Dorchester Hotel (Group #309), The Coast Bastion Inn, and Howard Johnson Harbourside Hotel for CAA 2005 delegates. Please support the Association by making your reservations at these hotels. Special rates have been negotiated for the conference.

*For additional information, contact:*

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