

Archeologists are busy clearing paths for developers — digging up the past as they prepare for the future . . .

Unearthing treasures

DEREK SANKEY
CALGARY HERALD

A group whose specialty is the past is being kept busy as Calgary expands.

As land is cleared for residential and commercial development, more attention is being paid to historical treasures that might lie underneath.

This is where archeological service companies come into the picture.

Bison Historical Services is one of the companies whose business it is to visit development sites and study the areas for old bones, tools and other historical resources.

Buffalo kill sites and stone spears used by aboriginals that date back 1,400 years or more are routinely unearthed.

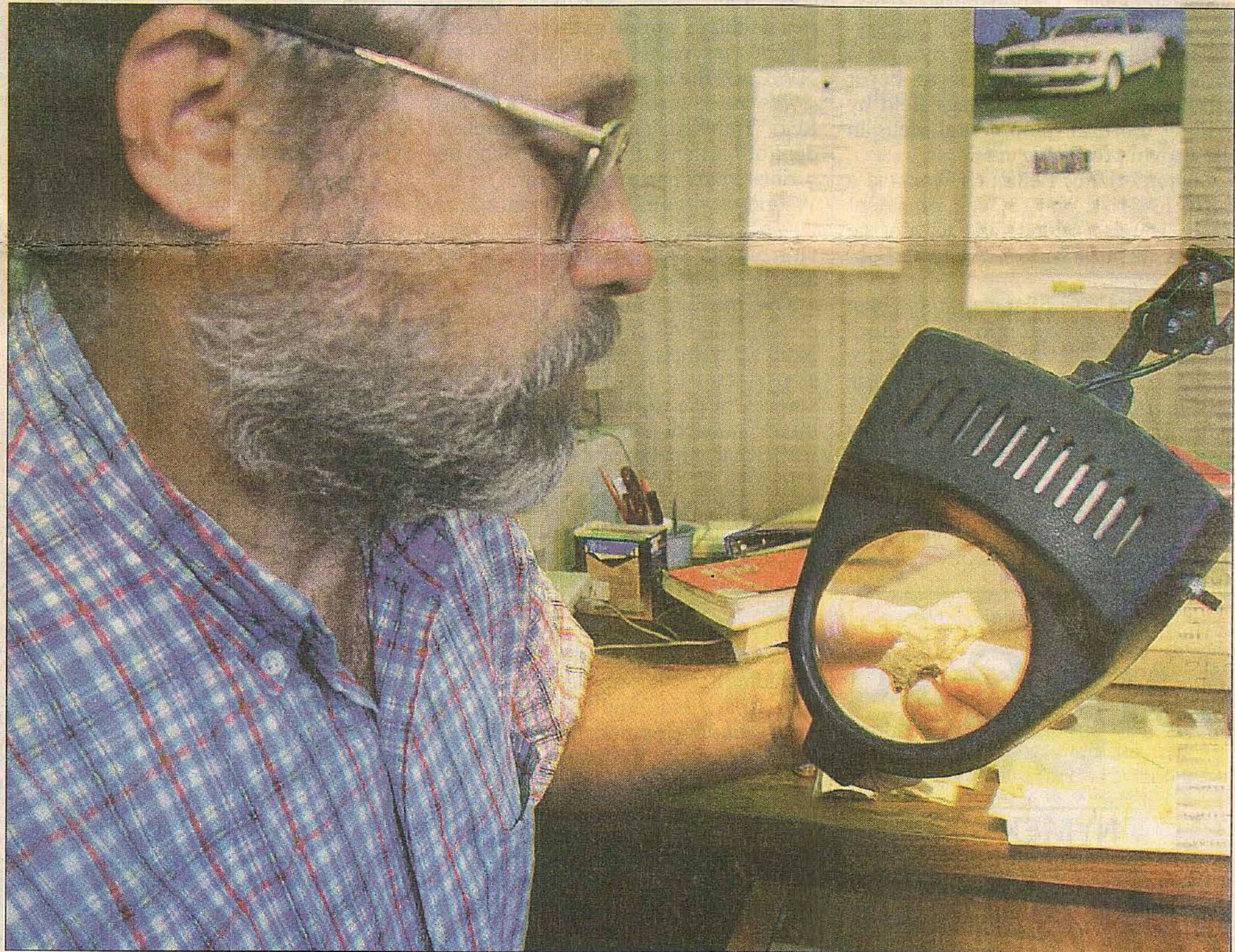
There are "in excess of 20,000" such historical sites in the province, with more than 180 excavations last year in Alberta, says Bison president Thomas Head.

Under the province's Historical Resources Act, developers may be required to conduct an impact assessment of historical resources if there are signs that such resources are present.

Another firm, Fedirchuk McCullough Associates Ltd., also based in Calgary, is working on more than 100 projects across Western Canada, says spokeswoman Gloria Fedirchuk.

She says the increasing demand in the industry can be attributed "to the size of the projects," citing the Alliance pipeline project as an example. The \$4-billion Alliance pipeline will transport natural gas from northeastern B.C. across Alberta to Chicago when it is completed next year.

Calgary-based Lifeways of Canada Ltd., like the other companies, uses summer students from university and college to complete their work in the busy season.



Senior archeologist Thomas Head of Bison Historical Services shows artifacts found just west of Calgary. Shannon Oatway, Calgary Herald

Costs to perform the research, undertake any excavations and follow it up rest on the shoulders of the developer or client.

While the average cost of these types of digs generally "comes in at less than \$10,000 . . . you can easily spend \$100,000" on a large-scale excavation, says Head.

"Costs do rise dramatically as you go

into mitigation," or preservation of artifacts, he says.

"Without the development, you wouldn't have to do this kind of work" and the historical resources would otherwise remain unnoticed less than one foot under the ground.

The major customers of these firms are pipeline, transportation and housing development companies, says Don

Hanna, an archeologist with Bison.

Head recently worked on one site in the Elbow Valley community near Highway 8, west of Calgary.

"It's a fairly common occurrence" to find sites like the one in Elbow Valley, says Head.

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FROM FI DIG

An interesting find was a compound tool made of volcanic glass, a material that came from either the Yellowstone or Idaho area.

Head's team also uncovered the stone head of a club used to tenderize meat, a hide-scraping tool, and a large stone knife.

There is a routine for handling such sites.

First, the teams provide an overview of the land, outlining known sites and details of the area.

Then, the government reviews the information and tells the client whether mitigation is required, followed by an excavation if resources are likely to need preservation.

Once all the studies have been completed, the archeological companies will submit another report to the government cataloguing their finds and for any future recommendations.

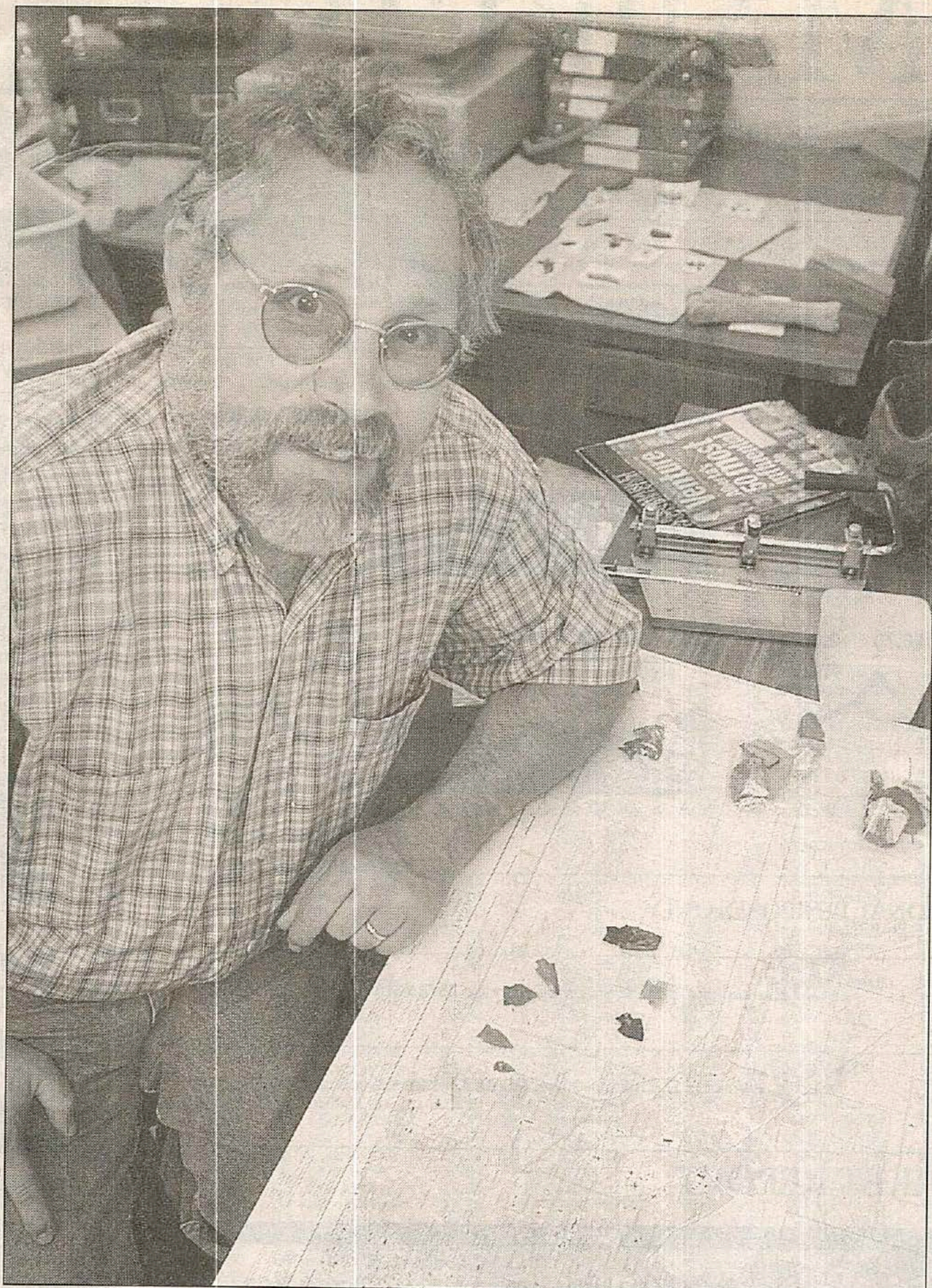
The artifacts are taken to the Provincial Museum of Alberta in Edmonton.

However, some developers are using the resources to improve the community and add value to the property.

Marion MacKenzie, marketing co-ordinator with Hopewell Residential Communities, says the project in Elbow Valley has been able to incorporate the kill site into the existing community layout.

"It was a feature of the community that we felt could have significance to the (residents)," says MacKenzie, explaining an interpretive centre will be built on the south side of the site.

"We've always believed history is part of the future."



Shannon Duncan, Calgary Herald
Archeologist Thomas Head shows arrow heads and spear tips found in areas around Calgary which are to be developed including Stonepine, just off High 8, near Glencoe Golf Course