

## Provincial Junior C cup going to final series

**By Brian Lockhart**

It has been a long road, and the two Ontario Junior C hockey teams still remaining will now play for the top prize ? the Schmalz Cup.

After seven months of regular season and playoffs, the Lakefield Chiefs will square off against the Essex 73s in an epic battle to claim the title of top Junior C team in the province.

At the local level, the Georgian Mid-Ontario League ended the season with the Penetang Kings coming out on top after a series that went six games and ended with a win over the Alliston Hornets March 16.

The Kings went on to face the Wingham Ironmen of the Western Junior C League in the provincial playoffs, but bowed out after loosing the series in six games.

The Lakefield squad, hailing from the Central Ontario League, have had a stellar season, winning their league championship before knocking out the defending Schmalz Cup champion Picton Pirates in a quarter-final series that went the full distance and ended with a 3-2 win for the Chiefs March 30.

In the semifinal round, Lakefield pulled off a huge coup de grace with a 4-0 sweep over the power-house Grimsby Peach Kings to earn the right to go to the Schmalz Cup final.

On the other side, Essex won their quarter-final round over the Dorchester Dolphins in seven games, then eliminated Wingham after five games during the semifinal round.

The final series will be the first time Essex and Lakefield have met on the ice.

The Chiefs have two Schmalz Cup wins behind them ? one way back in 1987, and they were the successful provincial champions in 2000.

The Essex team has been a very strong organization for the past decade going to the Schmalz Cup final round seven times in 10 years and coming out with the title in three of those years.

The final series game dates have not yet been announced.