

tusks produced by local ivory carvers. Armaergen continues his observations in Uelen during the second IPY winter 2007/2008.

**Igor Zagrebin** at the Russian 'Beringia' Park office in Provideniya contributed his decadal observations of ice conditions in Provideniya Bay to the *SIKU* ice database. The Park office in Provideniya has a small ongoing program of monthly environmental reports by local village rangers from Chukotka communities that it pledges as a contribution to the *SIKU* project. Bogoslovskaya summarized her extensive field interviews with local elders on their knowledge of weather, wind, and sea ice phenomena, ice hunting and navigation skills collected since the 1970s. These data will be used in the new Russian 'sourcebook' on indigenous marine hunting practices in Chukotka currently in preparation. Vdovin analyzed historical climate records from several dozen weather stations in Chukotka; the data indicate strong warming trend in the region over the past decades, particularly in spring and fall months. The early instrumental records (often coming from the 1930s and 1940s) will be matched with indigenous observations. The Russian *SIKU* team also produced three papers that will be published in 2008 in the bilingual volume of the Alaska-Chukotka 'Beringia Days 2007' conference proceedings.

Russian *SIKU* partners are also actively documenting indigenous sea ice terminologies. A joint team from the Russian Institute of Cultural Heritage (Bogoslovskaya and **Petr Aleinikov**) and the 'Yupik' Society of Chukotka (**Lyudmila Ainana**) produced a large dictionary of traditional subsistence terminology in the Chaplinski Yupik language. It includes several hundred Yupik terms associated with weather, ice, snow, and other environmental phenomena. Three local sea ice 'dictionaries' are currently in progress: in the Naukanski Yupik language (about 80 terms collected by **Boris Alpergen** and **Elizaveta Dobrieva** in Lavrentiya); in the Chaplinski or Central Siberian Yupik (about 60 terms; compiled by **Aron Nutawyi** in Sireniki); and in the Uelen Chukchi language (a joint effort by Armaergen and Golbtseva). The Naukanski Yupik dictionary is illustrated by pencil drawings by local Native artists. These dictionaries will be published as bilingual educational booklets in 2008–2009. No effort should be spared to make the *SIKU* project materials available to local indigenous residents, polar scientists, educators, agency, and museum workers.

### SKIN BOATS IN SIBERIA

By *Harri Luukkanen and Nicki Bertsch*

While exploring a photographic collection based on the Russian 1926-1927 Turukhansk Polar Census Expedition, **Harri Luukkanen** recently stumbled upon a rather fascinating find. The Turukhansk Polar Census Expedition was an effort to count West Siberian people and describe them in pictures, and in the process produced unique and rare photos of deerskin canoes along Yenesei River tributaries. The resulting photographs were released in 2004 by the British Academy and Krasnojarsk Museum.

The photographs are the first to show the presence of deerskin canoes on inland waterways in the region, and will greatly contribute to the current understanding of northern Eurasian bark



Photo titled "On vetkakh [small skin-covered boats] near u. Uchami." June 1927. Photo: **N.P. Naumov**.

and skin canoes and their use. These photographs are detailed enough to allow the informed viewer to see the construction of the deerskin canoes, including details of the skeleton (i.e. ribs and stringers inside), which were not previously documented. These deer skin boats are about 5m long and .7m in beam, and are half-decked semi-kayaks, or canoe-kayaks. The semi-kayaks look surprisingly similar to the decked 'Eskimo-type' canoes found in the Bering Strait. The design of these semi-kayaks may have originally allowed for speedy

pursuit of reindeer when they were swimming across rivers.

These deerskin canoes were recorded east of Yenisei River, along both the North and South Tunguska Rivers, in the Evenki Tungus region. This area is mainly Samoyed territory, so it seems likely they also used similar boats. This territory is well connected to the western Lena River and its tributaries, where similar canoes have been found. We could also say with some confidence that that this skin canoe type was in use along the Ob River, which is well connected to the Yenisei by many waterways, and where earlier travelers recorded skin canoes and kayaks. **Bill Fitzhugh** also observed their remarkable similarity to Athapaskan birch-bark canoes from interior Alaska and Canada. Despite no concrete link between the two regions, many scholars have thought that the western Athapaskans are the most recent Siberian immigrants to North America, and have pointed out other similarities in the material culture of the two groups.

The photos can be viewed by following this link: [http://www.abdn.ac.uk/polarcensus/index\\_engl.htm](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/polarcensus/index_engl.htm)



*Neil Price*

### ABERDEEN INITIATES NORTHERN STUDIES

By *William Fitzhugh*

Following a visit by **Neil Price**, newly-appointed Chair of the University of Aberdeen's Department of Archaeology, the ASC and Aberdeen signed an agreement for a five-year program of circumpolar research and scholarly studies. The Aberdeen program comes with several new archaeology positions to be

filled in the next few years. The circumpolar studies program will feature ethnology, archaeology, ecology, history, literature, religion, folklore and mythology of circumpolar regions and will include geographic areas of northern North America, Russia, Scandinavia, Scotland and northern Britain. Aberdeen's long history of Arctic and Subarctic whaling provide an obvious focus for northern studies, and its museum and archives house important collections from these regions. The program may begin with conferences to identify prospective research topics and themes, followed by joint research programs and scholarly exchanges.