Circumpolar indigenous peoples hold their home hearths with special reverence. The hearth is a place where hunters and herders reciprocate the respect granted them by animals by feeding the fire with fat or spirits. This project will place the focal metaphors of hearth, home and household at the centre of a research agenda to understand northern ecological narrative, cultural resilience, and the use of space. Through uniting the efforts of indigenous people, museum researchers, archaeologists, anthropologists, and historical demographers, we aim to demonstrate the special dynamics of northern households, broadly defined, as well as contribute to the revival of cultural awareness now underway in indigenous societies across the North.

This BOREAS project is made up of five participating projects from Canada, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the United States. Our team will conduct primary research in Canada’s Northwest Territories, in Northern Sweden, Finland and Norway, in the Kola Peninsula, Taimyr, and Zabaikal’ë within Russia, and in the National Museum of the American Indian [NMAI] in the USA. We are including in our research programme the active participation of Tlicho (Dogrib) Dene, Inuvialuit, Dolgan, Evenki, and Sámi experts.

Our efforts will aim to elucidate the first BOREAS theme on how residential patterns in the North have a long-term time signature. We will narrow the theme by investigating how the use of portable lodges contributes to a uniquely northern narrative. Through the study of space, vernacular architecture, and household dynamics we will identify similarities and differences in the way that northerners interrelate with their landscape.

Although the themes of home, hearth and household have been central themes both in the lives of northern people and in each of our separate disciplines, the ‘state-of-these-arts’ have well documented lacuna in each area. It is widely acknowledged that despite a century of statesponsored surveys in the Arctic, that we have a poor understanding of the contemporary demographics of northern families (AHDR 2004). The study of homesites and of the hearths of northern aboriginal people has been one of the founding techniques in the history of archaeology, yet many scholars note that we have poor knowledge of the activity patterns and the architecture of these spaces (Kent 1984; Janes 1983; Oetelaar 2000). Finally, although the architecture of the conical skin lodge has become an almost a stereotypical symbol of northern peoples worldwide, craftspeople working with recent revitalisation projects have noted that we know very little of the craftsmanship and broader social relationships embedded in these complex structures (Anderson in prep. Sirina 2002; Sokolova 1998). This project aims to unite a team of northern scholars and craftsmen who have a demonstrated record in each of these three areas to create a set of resources that speak to the themes of Home, Hearth and Household internationally.
The aims and objectives of this project are:

1) To contextualise knowledge of circumpolar dwellings and households;
2) To understand hearths and households as arenas of learning, knowledge, memory and communication;
3) To interpret similarities and differences in house construction and the organisation of domestic environments throughout the circumpolar region;
4) To study processes of change and cultural contact through households;
5) To elaborate a participatory method of the repatriation of knowledge between museums and local communities;
6) To write ethnographies of the use of space and of ceremonial dynamics in homes across the circumpolar North;
7) To apply new techniques in environmental archaeology to the study of the use of space in ancient dwellings.

The project will have three research components:

a) Contextualising the vernacular architecture of portable skin lodges
b) Analysis of the use of space within contemporary and prehistoric dwellings
c) Analysis of the dynamics of contemporary and historic households

The Norwegian Project
This Norwegian individual project will contribute to all three research trajectories of the collaborative research proposal. The Centre for Sami Studies, University of Tromsø, will serve as the home for all members of the international team. Our aims and objectives are as follows:

1) to conduct basic primary research on the vernacular architecture, the use of space, and the dynamics of the households of circumpolar peoples;
2) to improve community access to knowledge and artefacts held in archives and museums;
3) to elaborate a research methodology which will connect historical, archaeological, ethnographic, and demographic researchers;
4) to guide research in Eastern Sápmi in a holistic way that transcends international boundaries;
5) to provide a Norwegian base for this BOREAS – ESF project.

Activity One – Contextualising Sami Mobile Architecture (lead by Ivar Bjørklund)
Within Sami reindeer pastoralism, the use of tents is a very important part of nomadic technology. Moving between inland areas and the coast, herders needed a tent which could accommodate an average household of 7-8 persons and which was light and portable. The tent they developed for this purpose, was the bealjigoahti – a light wooden frame which could be raised and taken apart within an hour. The tent was designed to function in severe cold and hot summers. In the summer the frame was covered with a canvas cover (a product introduced through trade relations in the 18th century). In the winter, the cover was made of radno – heavy wool blankets made by Sámi people living at the coast. In addition to the main living tent, herders used a smaller mobile tent – lavvu – in the summertime. It is also significant that the architecture of the bealjigoahti is similar to that of the darfegoahti - the circular turf houses which have been used by the coastal Sami for at least 1500 years.

The bealjigoahti presents us with a 2000-year-old continuity of design and spatial arrangement, which is reflected also in Sami social organization and cosmology. However this ancient design is no longer in use today. The last bealjigoahti disappeared a generation ago in Finnmark. Today, only the lavvu is widely used serving both as a shelter and a symbol in cultural revitalisation.
The heart of this activity will be to commission a winter bealjigoahti by an elderly couple in the Sami village of Kautokeino. The structure will be built over two seasons, and the process of its creation will be documented by a graduate student. The new bealjigoahti will form a centrepiece in an international seminar on mobile architecture to be held in Tromsø as part of activity number 5.

As part of this project we are also asking for travel money to allow one senior researcher and one graduate student to study the way that Sámi reindeer herders structure their domestic spaces today. Here we will map all aspects of permanent, portable, and semi-permanent arrangements that go towards supporting was is still a mobile livelihood. This work will include both the traditional lavvu but also the modern canvas lavvu. The intention of this research project will be to document the contemporary social ecology of life in Eastern Sápmi. This research project will overlap closely with the work conducted in Sweden by Prof. Beach, in Russia by Drs. Anderson and Ziker, and in Canada by Drs. Andrews and Arnold. The BOREAS project will provide an excellent research environment for this student.

Activity Two – Hearths and Space in Eastern Sápmi (lead by Bjørnar Olsen)

House grounds, tent rings and hearths represent the most common material signatures of past Sámi households and siidas. Apart from the circular form and the centrally placed hearth, the most conspicuous spatial feature of the turf house (goathi) and tent (lavvu) is the axial feature creating an internal partition of the floor plan. This feature consists of two rows of stone (or wood) that runs from the front entrance to the hearth, sometimes crossing all the way to the “back door”. Recent archaeological studies suggest an astonishing continuity in this design and spatial arrangement extending close to 2000 years beyond their inscription in the ethnographic record (Westerdahl 2002, Hansen and Olsen 2004).

Despite Ränk’s (1949) fascinating social archaeology of dwellings as an integrated part of the Sámi habitus, little is known about their historical dynamics. Although the continuity in structural arrangements suggests persistency also in the social organisation of space, there is ample reason to believe that the impression of a frozen structural pattern needs to be modified. Our main objective in this activity to explore the historical dynamics of Sámi dwellings and social organisation of space. Research will be based partly on existing archaeological records from Sápmi, but substantial new fieldwork need to be carried out. Surveys and test excavation will be carried out the first season in the easternmost part of Norwegian Finnmark (the Varanger-Pasvik area) and selected areas of the Kola Peninsula (Lake Lovozero, Varzina, Umba and Varzuga river basins). Together this research area covers the eastern Sámi groups (the Skolt, the Kildin and the Ter) as well as the border area towards the north. It includes all major Sámi ecological niches and is also ideal for studying the differences in Sámi interfaces with the outside world (covering both the “eastern” Novgorodian/Karelian/Russian interface, as well as the “western” Norse/Hanseatic/Norwegian one).

Sites will be selected for excavation on the basis of the quality of their preservation as well by chronological and regional/environmental parameters. The fieldwork will be carried out in close collaboration with Finnish and Russian archaeologists, and also with the ethnographic work in Activity 1. Fieldwork will be conducted in remote areas and the logistics are necessarily expensive. The budget includes the cost of boat and helicopter hire (to be shared with the Finnish IP). Activity areas and the social organisation of space will be studied through standard archaeological methods of documenting house and site layout. Due to favourable environmental conditions the outline of prehistoric houses are often well visible at the surface and these “imprints” provide a unique potential for surface based site studies. Excavations, however, are essential for obtaining more detailed information especially regarding composition and distributions of artefacts and faunal material, aspects critical also for evaluating inter-site connections. Macro fossil analyses and soil sciences will be applied to improve information about activity areas and use of floor space. Especially at sites with poor preservation condition, chemical analyses are indispensable (cf. the Finnish IP).
The archaeological work on the social ecology of space in the past will overlap closely with contemporary ethnographic work and historical demographic work conducted as part of the other activities. The fact that research is planned across all of Sámi will overlap with the holistic regional perspective of the other activities.

Activity Three – Ethnohistorical research in Zabaikal’e (lead by David Anderson and Anna Sirina)

Building upon earlier pilot research in 2002 and 2003, this activity provides for partial travel money for two ethnohistorical expeditions to the Vitim river valley of Eastern Siberia. This work will document and analyse the use of space among Evenki reindeer herders in the recent past and present (Anderson 2006; Sirina 2002). The activity is designed to fit alongside the Vitim expedition funded by the US NSF, which provides for the travel funds for the Russian ethnoarchaeolgocial team of Vetrov and Ineshin. The activity will also overlap with the comparative study of conical skin lodges with the Canadian funded IP.

Using the same methodologies used in Eastern Sápmi, the team will investigate the social ecology of dwellings among hunters and reindeer herders. Activity areas in contemporary camps will be mapped. Elders will be interviewed about historic use. Our goal will be to build an account of land use and mobile architecture of 5 extended families from before the start of the Soviet period to the post-Soviet period. We will pay special attention to caribou, moose skin as well as canvas portable structures in use today. In order to build a complex picture, the investigators will use the archives of the Sibirakov expedition (1895-97), the records of the 1926/27 polar census, territorial formation records from 1930-1960, and living memory of reindeer herders. The study of the use of forest reindeer herding and portable dwellings will provide an important comparative dimension to the work conducted in Sápmi.

The major cost of this activity is a payment to the Russian ethnohistorian Anna Sirina who will take several months to catalogue and digitize the documents of Sibiriakov expedition, the goals of which were to study the continuity of Evenki and Yakut tradition in what is today the southern part of the Yakut/Sakha Republic and the Northern Part of Irkutsk Oblast'.

The combination of ethnographic, historical, and archaeological methods will yield a rich comparative frame for the other activities in the IP and across the CRP.

Activity Four - The Demography of Circumpolar Households (lead by Gunnar Thorvaldsen)

The aim of this activity is to create an aggregate statistical overview of the social and demographic characteristics of the identity groups in Northern Norway. The dataset – an encoded version of the 1865, 1875 and 1900 censuses – has been digitised by previous research grants. For the first time these individual level microdata are available to be linked to similar Sápmi datasets in Russia and Sweden (both of which were also digitised using earlier grants). This newly accessible data will be used to generate a longitudinal picture of Sami and Kvæn households for all of Sápmi (including the Kola peninsula).

The energy of our collaborators will go into statistically transforming and clarifying census variables on identity in order to make Sami and mixed Sami households visible. Further statistical work will be done to make these datasets comparable to the work done in Sweden, Russian and the international standards developed by the NAPP association in the United States [http://www.nappdata.org/]. A great part of the standardization work will also involve a graduate student in the United States funded by the NSF. We expect that these techniques will yield new insights into household and family composition and the fertility transition in Northern Norway. A major part of our work will be to make these aggregate datasets publicly accessible to researchers on the internet, and to conduct queries of the data to provide longitudinal pictures of household composition. This statistical work will support the work of our ethnographic and archaeological colleagues in Russia, Sweden, and the United States.

The comparative work will be launched during a CRP network international seminar held in Sweden (which is the subject of the Swedish IP).
Activity Five – An International Seminar on Circumpolar Mobile Architecture (All participants)

The five activities in this IP will be drawn together during an international seminar on mobile architecture to be held in Tromso in the autumn of 2007. This seminar will also serve as an occasion for all members of the CRP to meet and review results.

The seminar will be build around the work of craftspeople who have built or rebuilt traditional portable dwellings such as the Inuvialuit igluyuarua, the Sami bealjigoahti, the Tlicho caribou skin lodge, Nenets caribou skin lodges that were the subject of previous work by the Tromsø museum, and the craftspeople of Evenki and Dolgan d’iu which are the subject of ethnographic work of the Canadian and American IPs. In addition, we will invite representatives of the several regional factories which are producing modern canvas versions of these traditional dwellings in Sápmi and in Canada. The international seminar will provide an opportunity for craftspeople to exchange knowledge and for museums and university scholars to carry out comparative research with the people who build them.

References