

Graduate Student Opportunity
Department of Archaeology and Anthropology
University of Saskatchewan

Graduate Program: MA, two years of funding at \$18,000/year, plus field expenses

Project Title: Small places of large importance: a bioarchaeological exploration of small prehistoric mortuary sites in the Lake Baikal Region of Siberia, Russia.

Project Description: Previous research suggests that between 6000-2000 BC, the Lake Baikal region of Siberia witnessed an unusual pattern of culture change in which two periods of cemetery use were separated by a 700 year gap during which mortuary sites were not used. This same research found that the hunter-gatherer populations on either side of this gap exhibited differences in their mobility across the landscape, demographic trends, activity patterns, diet, health, mortuary rituals, and social relations. Although we are confident that we have attained a reasonable description of the broad contours of this unique pattern of culture change, a more detailed understanding of the mechanisms responsible remain unclear, in part because of: (1) the overreliance of prior research (including our own) on the investigation of *large* cemeteries at the expense of the region's smaller and more typical mortuary sites; and, (2) a tendency for archaeology to inappropriately interpret hunter-gatherer mortuary practices through the lens of ethnographic descriptions of sedentary agriculturalist societies. It is becoming clear, however, that such interpretive models are insufficient to explain the enormous diversity of hunter-gatherer mortuary practices around the world. Therefore, our aim is to investigate the nature of *small* mortuary sites in the Baikal region to complement and extend our previous work on large sites. This new project will not only enrich our understanding of prehistoric Siberian lifeways in particular, but it will also add to the broader field of forager studies by helping to develop new theoretical models that are appropriate for the interpretation of hunter-gatherer mortuary practices generally. We see a particular need for this theoretical shift to help interpret the archaeological record from other boreal and sub-boreal areas of the globe (including the Canadian north) where prehistoric foragers typically interred their dead in small sites rather than large formal burial grounds. We are seeking one MA student to join our team (A. Lieverse, University of Saskatchewan, and H. McKenzie, MacEwan University). Students must have an undergraduate background in archaeology and/or biological anthropology, preferably with previous fieldwork experience.

Inquiries can be sent to:

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*** Please note: the deadline for application is February 1, 2014. ***