

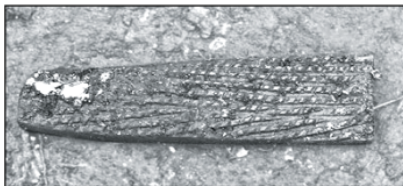
FIELD NOTES by Marianne Stopp

Old and new worlds combine

Our 300 year old sod house is revealing its horseshoe shape and its long entrance passage. The walls were once of thick peat sods while long pieces of unworked wood that have fallen inwards from the walls may have been support beams.

A few lengths of planking, now soft and easily breakable, are the remains of a comfortable bench. On one side of the house interior is a slightly collapsed stone platform, a typical feature of early Inuit homes on the Labrador coast that was used for sitting and sleeping. The floor is of carefully placed flat rocks, which must have taken considerable effort to haul up from the beach and to fit together. The roof style and height of this building remain a mystery and we'll have to rely on descriptions of sod houses from eighteenth and nineteenth century records to complete the picture.

Significant finds have added daily spice to this week's constant troweling and sifting of soil. A well-preserved whalebone sled runner is in the process of being carefully uncovered. Whalebone tools with precisely drilled holes have been found as have European iron fish hooks and a variety of ceramic sherds that appear to be French in origin. Highlights included a portion of a small tea bowl of white tin-glazed earthenware decorated with a blue handpainted design; many pieces of a large bowl of thick, coarse stoneware that fit together like a three-



An intricately carved bone knife handle uncovered by LJ Zinck, an archaeology student at Memorial University. Photo by E. Luther

dimensional puzzle; and a beautifully carved bone harpoon head with its iron point intact. This combination of Old and New World items shows that the Inuit in St. Michael's Bay were in contact with Europeans and by this time had already blended their traditional material culture with those of newcomers from across the Atlantic, probably at French fishermen at stations in the Strait of Belle Isle.

We've been enjoying some of the same local foods as these early residents of the coast once did. Grilled mussels, crab cakes, sea lettuce, steamed alexander, caribou stew, seal stew, trout, and partridgeberry crisp have been a welcome relief from freeze-dried meals and canned sardines. With only 10 days left we have a mountain of work still ahead us of including excavation, mapping of the site, and cataloguing of all artifacts.