The earliest pioneer settlement in Eastern Finland
The Sarvinki-project and the Jokivarsi 1 site

First pioneers in Eastern Finland
The earliest postglacial sites in eastern Finland have been discovered in the Sarvinki area in Eastern Finland. So far, the earliest radiocarbon evidence comes from Jokivarsi 1 and Rahakangas 1 settlement sites, which were excavated by the Sarvinki-project team in 2009-2012. These sites are crucial for understanding the colonization of Finland and North Europe in postglacial times.

A short-term hunting camp
The find distribution forms an almost oval pattern indicating a limited use of space. Most probably there were walls surrounding this space, and it can be interpreted as a hut. The exact nature of the structure is not possible to reconstruct due to lack of actual remains of the dwelling.

With a limited amount of find material and a weak cultural layer, the most viable interpretation for the site is a short-term hunting camp.

Imported flint and local quartz
Quartz flakes and tool fragments dominate the find material. However, other lithic raw materials have also been used. Flint, probably deriving from a carboniferous formation in Northwest Russia and a black lidite-like raw material, probably from the Lake Onega region, also in Northwest Russia, are exotic to the area. The flint blade technology and the raw materials refer to Late Preboreal hunter-gatherer groups in Northwest Russia.

Excavations at Jokivarsi 1
The Jokivarsi 1 settlement site is located in a sheltered position between two low hills by an ancient lake. Only a modest c. 50 m² area was excavated, still revealing most of the activity area. The find material consists of quartz, flint, stone, burnt bone and pieces of birch bark tar used for hafting blades.

Radiocarbon dates
There are four radiocarbon dates from the Jokivarsi 1 site. The dates are consistent with each other and have an average of 8836±124 calBC.

Moose hunters in the pioneer landscape
The osteological collection from the Jokivarsi 1 excavation is rather homogenous. All the identified bone fragments belong to moose (Alces alces) or large ruminants. This perhaps implies a specialized moose hunting trip in the newly emerged postglacial area which provided high-quality nourishment for moose.

Moose is the largest land mammal in eastern Fennoscandia and has always been a desired prey for its high nutrition and raw material value. Photo: Bold Stock.