

Russian priest studies cultural treasures

by Mike Rostad
for the Tundra Times

A priest from Russia has discovered historical and cultural treasures in old, frayed books stacked in the archives of the St. Innocent Veniaminov Museum at St. Herman's Seminary in Kodiak.

Father Sergey Shirokov, who serves in the Church of the Icon of Donskoy Mother of God in Moscow, researched reams of material written in his native language for a book he is working on.

The book will show the connection between the old Valaamo Monastery near Leningrad, where missionary Father Herman resided before coming to Alaska in 1794, and the Russian Orthodox missionary activity in Alaska.

Father Sergey said that the monastery, closed for 70 years following the Russian Revolution of 1917, was returned to the Orthodox Church last year.

Currently, there are 20 monks in the monastery, he said. Shortly before



Father Sergey Shirokov

coming to Alaska, Father Sergey visited Valaamo with a group that traveled there from Leningrad.

Father Sergey is writing the book in anticipation of the 200th anniversary of Orthodoxy in America, which will

take place in 1994. He would like to see an exchange between Soviet and American scientists, anthropologists, historians, iconographers and theologians, who could give a greater insight into the activities which transpired during Russian occupation of Alaska.

Poring over original journals of St. Veniaminov, a Russian missionary who established parishes and schools in Alaska in the early 19th century, Father Sergey said, "We have no such material in Moscow. I am the first

Russian priest that has the possibility to work in these archives."

Before conducting research in Kodiak, Father Sergey studied material in the archives at Sitka. Father Sergey said he is grateful to Bishop Gregory of Alaska for "allowing me to come here."

He "feels a similarity" between Russia and Kodiak Island.

"It's very interesting to know the Russian culture is alive. I especially feel it at Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church," in Kodiak, he said.