

# ★ ANSIPRA BULLETIN ★

Arctic Network for the Support of the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Arctic (ANSIPRA)  
Сеть Арктических Организаций в Поддержку Коренных Народов Российского Севера

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ANSIPRA Bulletin is politically independent. A special part of the English language edition, however, presents translations of articles from the newsletter "Мир коренных народов" (Indigenous Peoples' World), the official periodical of RAIPON (Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation), selected in cooperation with RAIPON.

**ANSIPRA (formerly NNSIPRA) is a communication network linking Russian Indigenous Peoples' Organisations (IPOs) with international institutions and organisations alarmed about the future of the indigenous peoples of the Russian North. ANSIPRA's main goal is to spread information, to mediate contacts, and to assist in project coordination and application for funding.**

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*This issue is an appendix of ANSIPRA Bulletin No. 5 (February 2001) and contains English translations of selected articles from the official periodical of RAIPON "Мир коренных народов – живая арктика" (Indigenous Peoples' World - Living Arctic) No. 5, 2001.*

*It is only distributed to recipients of the English language edition of ANSIPRA Bulletin.*

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## Translations from «Мир коренных народов – живая арктика» (Indigenous Peoples' World – Living Arctic)

According to an agreement between ANSIPRA and RAIPON (Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North), we present translations of selected articles of the newsletter «Мир коренных народов» (Indigenous Peoples' World), the official periodical of RAIPON. The following part of this issue presents translated articles from Indigenous Peoples' World No. 5, 2001.

In addition to the articles below, the article «**On the Meeting of the Coordination Council of the Association of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East**», prepared by A. Mikhaylov, has been translated, but not edited for publication. Interested readers may request a copy by e-mail from the ANSIPRA Secretariat (e-mail: [ansipra@npolar.no](mailto:ansipra@npolar.no)).

### From the editor

Dear readers, we have entered a new age, a new millennium, and this sensation of novelty obliges us to take a fresh look at our problems.

Shortly after you receive this issue of the magazine, Moscow will host the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East. Like ten years back, discussions of the critical and tragic situation of the Northerners will give rise to acrimonious debate. A variety of problems and methods for their solution, further plans of our movement, the future of our organization and prospects for the development of indigenous peoples will be discussed heatedly.

Unfortunately, discussions of our issues fall into a usual groove: first we complain and then beg for or demand that President, Government, General Assembly, regional administrations, local administration bodies should do the impossible: find a solution to our problems for us. Actually, we employ this approach when we write project proposals for administrative bodies and this is one of the reasons why our requirements and requests remain unanswered. We are not yet aware that the time of complaints and requests is gone.

Hence, we call upon the future delegates of the Congress and their electors to think about the issues the Congress is to address. The Congress should not only be an accounting-elective meeting. The most important thing is progress in the awareness by all the regional public organizations of their goals and the objectives of our entire movement.

We must realize that the situation has changed now that indigenous peoples have federal and regional laws protecting their rights and at the same time they have strong opponents challenging or neglecting those rights. Hence, the strategy of our movement ought to change. We should not beg or complain, but rather learn to stand by our interests expertly and efficiently. Our magazine will supply some examples of this new attitude, but those are only some individual cases rather than an overarching strategy.

The Congress will address a program of action for ourselves, for the Association, and for other public organizations of indigenous minorities of the North. We must address our basic issues: allocation of traditional subsistence lands, development of self-administration, and the protection of the natural environment and traditional economy of indigenous peoples of the North. The authorities do not resolve these problems for various reasons. We must develop our own approach to their solution, our own action plan, our strategy of relations with administrative bodies, and our response to their action or inaction when our rights are violated.

Still another problem is our legal ignorance, and, hence, vulnerability. We should learn to apply the relevant laws and to express articles of the law in the various regulatory documents to be issued by executive bodies.

And, finally, comes the problem of the implementation of the national program for socio-economic development of indigenous minorities of the North and the «Children of the North» program. To date, these programs have failed to ensure development and support of indigenous minorities of the North, but are instead used as stoppers for local budget holes. Moreover, the ideology of those programs has a strong paternalist flavor. Those programs make indigenous people feel like inferior beggars, grateful to the state and to all those who distribute charity, while these same alms-givers plunder our natural resources and destroy the environment that supplied nourishment to numerous generations of our ancestors and provided food for our children. Violations of the law are implicated in these programs, which is neglected by the authorities. We regret that our reproaches are so bitter, and hope that authorities will understand us properly.

We indigenous people must come to the realization that the time for expert and well-judged actions has come. And the time cannot be lost, because the 21<sup>st</sup> century may become the last for many of our peoples.

We believe in the wisdom of indigenous minorities, and their natural stamina and we hope for cooperation on equal terms of indigenous minorities and their organizations. We believe that the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia and Far East should become an important step in the progress of indigenous peoples to a worthy life in Russia, our common home.

## **Coordination Council of the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East in Salekhard**

*Sergey Kharyuchi, President of RAIPON / Chairman of the State Duma of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonom. Okrug*

From 24 to 25 November 2000, Salekhard hosted the regular conference of the Coordination Council of the Russian Association of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East. In his interview for our magazine, S.N. Kharyuchi spoke about the significance of that Coordination Council.

«The most characteristic feature of the present Coordination Council lies in the fact that it was held for the first time in the region of residence of indigenous minorities. The holding of the Coordination Council in Salekhard marks a new initiative: Coordination Councils being held in the regions in which indigenous peoples are concentrated. Different northern regions have their specific situations, and every regional leader has a lot to say and to discuss with his colleagues regarding progress made.

Over the last years, the Yamalo-Nenets Autonom. Okrug has accumulated extensive experience solving the problems of indigenous minorities with respect to legislation and the practical problems of the organization of socio-economic life of indigenous peoples.

The members of the Coordination Council heard the presentations by E.L. Kerpelman (Deputy Chairman of the State Duma of the YaNAO) and V.S. Sondykov (Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug) and could familiarize themselves with the attitude of legislative and executive bodies toward the problems of indigenous peoples of the regions concerned. Meetings with municipal leaders of those regions were organized. The Council members learned about the life of an ethnic fishing community in Gornoknyazevsk. The community leader Nikon Kuigin told about the experience of self-administration and self-support of the community and the village, about their methods of coping with unemployment. Hopefully, the meeting was of interest to everybody.

There are grounds to hope that the traditions of Coordination Councils being held in the regions will go on and be useful to all the leaders of regional associations.

Another feature of the November 2000 Coordination Council was its importance for the forthcoming Congress. The Coordination Council concerned addressed not only organizational problems, but also the Congress ideology. We have seen members of the Council become real politicians and are ready to conduct constructive discussions. It was nice to hear that members of the administration were surprised at the highly professional level of our meeting.

We don't want the Congress to be associated with elective activities, which are also of great importance. The most important thing is that the Congress should take a step forward in the understanding by the re-

gional associations of their new state. Today indigenous peoples have federal and regional legislation protecting their rights. Hence, their circumstances have changed. The time of complaining, begging, unsubstantiated claims and searches for the guilty is gone. The associations should not only document their problems but also try to find the ways for their solution under the new legal conditions.

In the present-day socio-economic state of the country, the indigenous minorities of the North – being its citizens – must elaborate a new concept of the development of indigenous peoples and their associations, a new strategy for joint actions. That is what I would like to call to the attention of the members of the Coordination Council in Salekhard. That is what the Coordination Council should discuss.

It is important that the issues of training of young specialists should be addressed as well as assistance to our students, the issues of legal education so needed by indigenous peoples in order to expertly defend their rights, and the also problems of environmental protection. Everything depends on ourselves, on the work of regional associations.

Where the regional associations work efficiently, they achieve success. For instance, two years ago Gazprom had a drilling rig constructed in the mouth of the Tazovskaya Guba – without land allotment authorization and without ecological impact assessment. The regional association «Yamal to Descendants» launched an active campaign against the rig and made sure that the rig was removed.

But there are also some other examples. Not all the regional association presidents attended the Coordination Council despite the fact that the central office managed to obtain the funds so that everybody could come. This demonstrates that some regional leaders are not aware of their roles and duty. In fact, the Congress does not only consist of the report of the President and his office. In addition, we are involved in the elaboration of federal legislation and development of international projects thanks to which we sent a number of people for internship, to seminars and conferences and our own magazine is published. Every president of the regional association is to report to the Congress. Hence, only through a balanced work where everybody contributes, can we constructively discuss the concept of the development of indigenous minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East and develop a joint strategy for cooperating with the legal and executive powers of the Russian Federation and the regions, international organizations and our regional organizations. This is necessary for the successful solution to the problems of indigenous minorities of the North in future. »

## **Native American experience demonstrates that we ourselves should protect our rights**

*G.M. Volkova, President of the RAIPON Branch of the Khabarovskiy Kray*

During December 2000, five representatives of Russian indigenous peoples visited the United States. The initiative was that of the Association of Indigenous peoples of the North of the Khabarovskiy Kray and David Gordon, Associate Director of the Pacific Environment and Resources Center (PERC) and it was discussed in February, 2000.

From 1 to 28 December 2000, the Pacific Environment and Resources Center organized a trip for five representatives of indigenous minorities of the North of Russia – from the Kamchatka Region, the Krasnoyarsk, Khabarovsk and Primorye territories (Lyudmila Ognatenko, Arkadiy Kaza, Nadezhda Novik, Ekaterina Semkevich; Galina Volkova) – to the states of Washington and Oregon. The aim was for Native Americans and representatives of indigenous peoples of the Far East of Russia to exchange experiences with regard to protection of our rights to land and natural resources.

For me, the word «reservation» has always been associated with something humiliating. But after I visited reservations during this trip I concluded that this is an appropriate solution to indigenous peoples' problems in America. We visited eight reservations and found out that 550 Indian tribes have been recognized to date, and about 200 of these have been struggling for their rights. They gained rights to lands and natural resources on the basis of agreements (the first was concluded in 1850 as a result of the Bolt trial) on the basis of the US Constitution.

A reservation is a state within a state. It has a constitution of its own, its administrative body (the Council) and executive bodies. The reservation has lands administered by indigenous people themselves – they decide how many fish are to be caught and where, how much forest is to be felled, and where the forest is to be replanted without detriment to the environment. These matters are determined by the environmental protection department of each reservation's council. Federal lands and those belonging to private

owners are co-managed. The main directions of their activity are fishing, fish farming, lumbering, forest regeneration, and cultural development.

In addition to profits earned from fish, timber and casinos, funds are annually allocated from the federal budget for economic, social and cultural programs.

In Seattle (Washington) and Portland (Oregon) we met lawyers who repeatedly won cases in favor of Native Americans. The majority of Native Americans won their cases in court.

Despite the articles of the Russian Constitution, federal and regional laws, we indigenous peoples have no real rights to land and natural resources in Russia. For instance, in the 1990s in the Khabarovskiy Kray traditional subsistence areas of indigenous minorities of the North were defined by the decision of the head of the administration of the Territory. But we are not masters there since the forest, wildlife, and water resources are on federal property. We attempted, jointly with the Duma, to modify regional laws regarding traditional subsistence areas and the Forest Code of the Territory in favor of the indigenous peoples. Instead, the regional law «On the Indigenous Peoples' Community of the Khabarovskiy Kray» was repealed. The representatives of indigenous minorities of the North living in cities and villages were deprived of their rights when the regional law on «Traditional Subsistence Areas of the Khabarovskiy Kray» was reconciled to the federal law «On Guarantees of Indigenous Minorities of Russia». This is a violation of Article 69 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Any attempt to amend bylaws at the regional level fails.

The national policy of the President, the Government and the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation does not envisage any positive changes in relation to the indigenous minorities of the North. We should base our actions on the Canadian experience and file a charge against the state. If we rely on state bodies for miracles, our peoples will become extinct.

## History and culture of the Bikin Udege

N. Pionka

The Udege are a people of the Manchurian language group. The settlements of the Bikin Udege in the Primorskiy Krai are situated in the Pozharsk District (Krasnyy Yar, Verkhnyy Pereval, and Olon).

In the domestic ethnographic literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Udege are known by the ethnonyms *Kyakla*, *Oroch*, *Orochon*, and, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Udikhe*, *Udige*. The neighboring peoples knew the Udege by various names. The Chinese referred to them as *Yui-Pkhi-Da-Tzyn* or *Tazy*, which means «fish-skinned strangers», or «people wearing clothes of fish skin»; Koreans, *Uchika*; Manchurians, *Kyakala*; Orochi, *Kyaka*; *Negidal*, *Olchan* (Peoples of the World, 1989, p. 537). In the mid-1920s, the Udege were referred to as the *Udekheitsy*. Subsequently, in scientific publications on the history and culture of the Udege, the Udege ethnonym began to be applied.

The Udege language is one of the languages without a written form, and it is close to the Amur group of the Tungus languages, particularly, the Oroch and the Upper-Amur dialects of the Nanai language. There are some clear-cut distinctions in phonetics; while vocabulary and morphology are similar (Linguistic Dictionary, 1990, p. 223).

The question of Udege ethnogenesis was studied in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, two hypotheses being advanced. The first hypothesis was based on a southern origin of the people; and the second, on a northern.

Arsenyev wrote: «Who are the Ude(khe)? In terms of the language, they are Tungus; their physical features are mixed; ethnographically (religious cult artifacts), they are Americanoids. I come to the conclusion that they are paleo-Asians with numerous Manchurian accretions. For the last two years, I have been searching for Paleo-Asiatic features in the Udege and found them not only in ethnographic relicts, but also in the language» (Arsenyev, 1949, p. 183).

Hunting was a very important occupation of the Udege. They hunted from the age of 12 years until old age. The outfit of the hunter was the bow (*ben*), arrows (*gada ben*), a spear (*gida*), a big knife on a long handle (*khokdo*) and a stretcher to carry cargo as well as skis and sleds. In the course of hunting, the Udege relied on spears rather than firearms. V.K. Arsenyev wrote that «when the snow is deep, that weapon is safer and more reliable than a Tula rifle, because one can hit an animal more efficiently and quicker than with a bullet» (Arsenyev, 1947, p. 136).

The Udege hunted all year round, even during the breeding season. But it was not allowed to harvest more animals than one family needed for the near future. «That appears to be a very wise ban, which does not admit greediness and useless killing of animals», emphasized V.K. Arsenyev (1947, p. 138).

The hunting products were fully used: ungulate meat was consumed, and the hides served for the production of clothes and footwear. Udege hunting was individual, or, rarely, collective. Hunting was efficient thanks to the knowledge by the Udege of the habits of every animal species and physiographical and meteorological conditions of the territory. By scars left on tree trunks, dents on the grass and footprints on the earth, and even by odor, they would recognize a presence of the animal, its age, sex and direction of movement.

The Udege were skilled at a wide variety of hunting techniques. The most ancient hunting practice is chasing the moose, Manchurian wapiti, or wild boar through deep snow or the spring ice crust. When the snow was deep, the hunter would move on kamus-lined snowshoes (*sugala*) to readily run down the prey and kill it. [Kamus is the skin from a reindeer leg.] In spring, after thaw and subsequent frost, when the snow was covered with ice crust, the Udege would chase prey on lining-free skis to spear it.

Hunting ungulates involved traps. The simplest and the most ancient trap was a hole which was dug in autumn and used in winter. In spring and in summer they were filled with dead wood so that the animals would not fall into the trap by chance.

A common hunting tool was a snare. It was used to catch wild goats and musk deer. V.K. Arsenyev wrote that one Udege family would set 100–300 snares for roe deer on their paths (Arsenyev, 1947, p. 140).

They also used crossbows (*beisigu*). It comprised five parts: a bow (*bei*), an arrow with an arrowhead, the stock across which the bow and arrow were fixed (*sala*), a cock and a thin cord to which a ring (*goiptini*) was connected. This ring, made from tendons, would link the stock and the tip of the cock to hold the bowstring and arrow (Startsev, 1983, p. 31). (join up with preceding). The type of prey determined the size, method of setting, and the type of arrowhead of the crossbow. There were two types of crossbows (*sengmi*) with an arrow having a bidentate arrowhead for fur-bearing mammals (sable, Siberian weasel, fox) and middle-sized (*pou*) with a lanceolate arrowhead for musk deer, wild goat and other animals. The crossbows had a similar design (Startsev, 1983, p. 32).

The advent of firearms brought about some new methods of hunting. Formerly, it was only possible to hunt the Manchurian wapiti or moose when the snow was deep, or on the spring ice crust or at river crossings, whereas today they are harvested in all seasons.

In autumn, the Udege hunted large ungulates by stalking. The animal was often chased by dogs, which delayed it and made it possible for the hunter to come within shooting distance. In summer, the Manchurian

wapiti was stalked in salt marshes. Normally, at such sites hunters would construct a *labaz* (*dosyuga*), a small platform on a tall tree. The hunter would hide there waiting for his prey.

Whereas formerly the Manchurian wapiti was taken for its skin, meat, and tendons, the animals are currently harvested for their antlers. The Udege have been utilizing the wapiti in this way since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The price of the antlers is 80 – 175, or more, rubles. The antlers which were best suited for medicinal purposes were taken in late May to early June.

The harvest of fur-bearing mammals was of special importance in economic practices. Before the hunt, the Udege would weave nets, make arrows and sleds, and asked the Taiga Host for luck in the upcoming hunt.

Hunting began at night with a raccoon harvest. The hunters would fix bells on the necks of two to three dogs. An Udege would take 5 - 8 raccoons per night. After the first snowfall, raccoon hunt was discontinued and hunters moved over to the mountains for the sable.

Extensive sable harvest started in the 1870s-1880s when fur merchants appeared in the territory. Depending on the weather, snow conditions and available traps the sable is harvested in different ways. Using the most ancient method, the hunter would drive in a sable under a stump to catch it with a small net sleeve (*nyuke adili*), up to one meter long. The hunter would set the sleeve and wait for the the sable to get out of the burrow and into the trap. Occasionally, the sable was forced out from under the stump with a fire made at the other burrow exit. If the sable got into a hollow, the hunter would cut the tree down. The sable would not escape because it was afraid of noise. After he cut down the tree, the hunter would stop up the hollow. «After that the hunter would chop out a small hole in the upper part of the tree to cover it with a net. The sable either gets out of the hollow on its own or is driven out with fire. In either case, the animal gets into the sleeve», wrote V.K. Arsenyev (1947, p. 180).

If the sable vanished into stone fields, the hunter would give up and set out in search of another sable's tracks. Another method was the crossbow hunt. Finding a track repeatedly used by a sable, the Udege would set a crossbow on that track.

The Udege used three types of deadfall sets: *kafalu*, *nani*, *dui*. The *kafalu* was set in a tree hollow situated several dozens of centimeters above the

ground. The *nani* was set on the ground near the sable of Siberian weasel track. The *dui* was set on the deadwood on which the sable crossed the river.

All types of snares (*lat*, *langi*) were used in the snow-free period. The prey was immediately skinned. A sable was skinned when it was still warm. If the sable is frozen in the trap, its head was wrapped up in a rag and it was warmed up. Otherwise, the Sable Master *Nyuko Azani* would not send sables to the hunter, the Udege believed.

The skin of the sable was put on the frame (*kanagu*), fur facing inside. The frame comprised two twigs connected at the base, whose tips were fixed with a belt. They were often adorned with carving, and the base was bear-, sable- or fox-shaped. The pelt would not be stretched. Due to that the dark axis of the pelt became more pronounced and looked better. After drying up the pelt was kneaded until it became soft. It was kept in this condition until it was sold.

Game birds – hazel grouse, black grouse, waterfowl, mallard, garganey, etc. – were harvested all year round.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, money trade replaced exchange trade. To obtain greater profit, merchants demanded more furs from the hunters. The latter depended on the buyers economically and had to gradually expand the hunt (Sukhomitrov, 1976, p. 25). They hunted fur-bearing mammals both in autumn and in spring.

Merciless hunting and frequent forest fires in the taiga brought about a sharp reduction in commercially important animals, particularly, the sable. While at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century an experienced hunter took 97 sables, in 1904, not more than 14; and in 1909, about 9 sables.

The dramatic decline of fur-bearing animals led to an enactment of the law of 1912 banning sable hunting for three years. V.K. Arsenyev did not believe this was an effective solution. «The law-maker had good intentions, but he achieved the opposite results. The fact is that for natives mammal hunting and trapping is as essential sustenance as is fishing. Deprived of sable harvest, they suffer as acute need as farmers banned from farming do, and, hence, a ban alone would not stop sable hunting» (Arsenyev 1947, p. 179). After the ban on sable hunting, the harvest actually doubled. And, that, in its turn, brought about a dramatic decline of numbers of the sable and other fur-bearing mammals.

## The Nenets language yesterday and today

*N.Ya. Barmich, teacher of Nenets language, Cand.Sc. (philology) and Prof. Emer. at Herzen Russian Humanities Educational University*

There are 34190 Nenets in Russia, of whom 26553 speak their own language. This accounts for 77% of the total number of the Nenets. I believe that this is a good value.

During the first half of the 20th century, there were some positive developments in the history and cultural life of the Nenets. In the 1930s, the Nenets introduced the written version of their language (first, it the language had used the Latin alphabet, but in 1936 they changed over to the Cyrillic alphabet). Literature based on the folk traditions of story-telling emerged. Periodicals in the native language were established. Amateur theatrical, dancing and singing groups were organized. At school, children were taught in the Nenets language. It looked like there was an opportunity for further development of the language and original culture.

However, modern state policy in relation to the nomadic people, as well as the secondary and university curricula, negatively impacted the study of the Nenets language.

A change over to a sedentary lifestyle affected the lives of new generations of Nenets. Children who grew up in towns and villages gradually forgot their own language, since the sphere of its utilization became narrow. Children who studied in boarding schools for many years, separated from home, did not know the cultural traditions, customs and economy of their people.

During recent times, the educational mechanism of learning the native language changed. In schools, language standards are not met, and native language courses are not in the curricula. In schools much fewer hours are allotted to the teaching of the Nenets language. As a result, young people either have no command of the native language or the language standards have been considerably deteriorating.

The Nenets language is still used domestically. Folk stories and tales in the native language are passed on from generation to generation. There is some educational literature available, as well as folklore publications, works by Nenets poets and writers, and the newspapers «*Nyaryana Vynder*» (Red Tundra Dweller) and «*Nyaryana Ngerm*» (Red North), which appear in the Nenets language. In the Nenets, Yamalo-Nenets and Taimyr Autonomus Okrugs, once a week there is a thirty-minute-broadcasting service in the Nenets language. In 1993–1994 Finnish TV shot two documentaries in the Nenets language.

They study the Nenets language in schools, colleges, institutes, and universities. Today, they started teaching the Nenets language in kindergartens. Unfortunately, children communicate in their own tongue only in the first (preparatory) grade. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the Nenets language course is compul-

sory, and in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, optional. The colleges of Naryan-Mar, Salekhard, Dudinka, and the Russian State Educational University of Saint-Petersburg (Faculty of the Peoples of the Extreme North) teach the Nenets language, history, culture and traditions of the Nenets people.

Nenets schools focus on the study and propagation of the native language. School classes are provided with study materials, folk tales and poems in the native language. They have been using computers to study the Nenets in the village of Gyda, Tazovskiy District (teacher G.P. Yar). Video-films are used for extra-curricular studies in Yar-Sale (teacher V.M. Serpivo). In the majority of schools and boarding schools, weeks and ten days of the native language and recital contests are held. In the schools of the village Tazovskiy, they study museums and folklore groups (teachers V.A. Sablina, K.V. Salinder). In the villages of Nyda, Kutopyugan, and Tarko-Sale, folklore and dancing groups enrich children's knowledge of the native people and their language.

In the course of teaching some new forms and methods of language study emerge, depending on the technical equipment of the school and level of language command by the students. Some children entering school speak the language of their ancestors freely, others, only a little and still others do not know the language at all.

This brings up the need for retraining teachers of the Nenets language with a profound awareness of ethnic psychology, history, traditions and the customs of the people. Teachers should specially be trained to work with students who have poor or no command of their own language.

Whether the Nenets children will remain children of Nature, whether they will retain the wise traditions of their own people and their language will be determined by the state of school today and tomorrow and the state of native language teaching.

The Nenets schools should resolve this objective of teaching the native languages and bringing up children via native language.

But what course will the Nenets school take in future?

In the first place, the people who are the keepers of their own language and culture, the creators of their unique way of life, should express their opinions. In the second place, the issues of school teaching and education prospects must be addressed.

## A business trip to Vorkuta

*The Editorial Office*

On November 27–30, a staff member of the magazine editorial offices visited Vorkuta in connection with our publications on the situation of the Vorkuta Nenets (see Nos. 3 and 4) and the vociferous negative response of the Vorkuta administration to those publications (No. 4). We wanted to see things with our own eyes, since information arriving in the newspaper office was highly contradictory.

The administration was indignant at the publications, claiming that they did all they could for the Nenets. The members of the community concerned, mainly several women with an educational background, pointed out the hard situation of the Nenets and the abuses committed in relation to them. What the Nenets migrating near Vorkuta thought of the situation was not known to us. Hence, a member of our newspaper office made his first trip to the tundra, to the Nenets *chums* (tents). His guide and interpreter was Tatyana Rasulova, a teacher of the Nenets language who was the first to send us information about the Vorkuta Nenets, which aroused the anger of the Vorkuta city administration.

### *A talk in the Tundra*

Judging by the tape record, just after an hour's conversation the dwellers and the hosts of the *chum* visited by our correspondent were already singing their ancient songs in the native language.

His hosts confirmed all the bitter facts described in the letters published by us and added some new information. But the Nenets are reticent when it comes to describing their misfortunes. They only answered the correspondent's questions.

*«Yes, the number of reindeer has declined over the last five years. Yes, wolves are of concern to us. No, there are no rifles because no hunting certificates are issued. And we don't know how to get them. Yes, my wife died and I remained alone with my children. Yes, young people started drinking heavily. This is very bad. Yes, things got even worse after we would come to the city. They said to Petr Ilyich Laptander in the city: 'Take away your reindeer', and he said: 'Take away your you drilling rigs'. No, there are no rangelands left. In fact, we are allowed to pass through the tundra only after the 'state farm' reindeer have grazed. Hence, we have weak, small deer. Also, they send helicopters to the 'state farm deer'. They bring them everything and bring covers for the chums. No, they don't send helicopters to us, and if they do fly in, they take away our deer. Or they come in cross-country vehicles and say that they will shoot our reindeer unless we butcher them. Yes, we must*

*study because there are very few literate people. Yes, we must migrate as far away from the city as possible, otherwise young people will become thorough drunkards. Yes, there are some factories. Two of them. But they are either closed down, or there is nothing available there. How are we living? We are living the way we want.»*

They have no idea of their civil rights and, even less, the rights of the indigenous minorities of the North. And they lay no claims. Although they can't understand why they are treated worse than «state farm» people, who are also Nenets. But our interlocutors don't want to exchange their life for state farm life. They merely want respect – they are on their own land.

Among the interviewees were few who spoke Russian. They spoke the Nenets language among themselves. At the first request of our correspondent to sing an ancient song, the reindeer herders forgot their laments and sang...

### *A talk in the Vorkuta Administration*

Another step forward to clarify the situation was a talk with the deputy head of the administration of the city of Vorkuta, Anatoliy Afanasyevich Zamdedyanskiy. Briefly, this is what he told us.

*«The problem of indigenous minorities recently arose in the city of Vorkuta. Until 1996 Vorkuta was a common industrial city.*

*In 1996 the head of the administration addressed me: «What shall we do? The Nenets came and left 27 children. They say: «We won't survive with them on the tundra and we don't want our children to die ...»*

*We immediately established two groups of children of indigenous minorities in the kindergarten. The children were weak and didn't speak Russian ...*

*We found out who the parents of those children were. They were not citizens of Russia but mere nomads. The Nenets Autonomous Okrug (NAO) and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (YaNAO) are defined as territories occupied by indigenous minorities and they have some special bodies. There are no such bodies in Vorkuta. We started doing something so that people would not suffer. First we determined the children's age. Can you imagine, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a Decree of Aging and Documentation of the Nenets was issued? Over 200 new citizens of Russia were registered. That entailed pensions, welfare ...*

*These Nenets spend most of the time in the NAO and YaNAO.*

*The reindeer herding farm head Comrade Pasyнков advanced claims. It turned out that the entire tundra was divided among reindeer herders, and after they learned what we did for the Nenets in Vorkuta they would turn to us...*

*Pasyнков and I were planning to involve these Nenets in organized reindeer herd farming, but we failed – those people are used to living on their own...*

*After some thought we decided to establish factories where the Nenets were migrating. The factories have everything reindeer herders need. There is a social worker to whom they can turn. A nomad does not go to Vorkuta. He goes to a factory where all his problems are solved – the problems of pension, kindergarten, production. The advantage of the factory is that it solves the problem of retaining people in the system they are used to... If not for the initiatives of the head of the Vorkuta administration Shpektor, there would be four times as many problems with reindeer herders as there are now. An efficient businessman, he created everything himself without budget funds – the kindergarten and factories. In 1997 there were no factories at all; and in 2000, construction started on the fifth factory ...*

*The Komi Republic is not a subject concerned with indigenous minorities. That is, the budget funds are to be redistributed between NAO, YaNAO and Komi. We haven't managed to do it so far...*

*Pasyнков and I decided to purchase reindeer meat from them in Vorkuta. But they won't go to Pasyнков's marketing centers. The reason? In Ust-Kara the price of meat is 50 rubles, and Pasyнков's centers give them 20 rubles less. Because there is a state subvention operating in Ust-Kara. Now Ust-Kara is closing down and all those reindeer herders will turn to us. Mrs. Rasulova demands a guest house. Pasyнков does have a guest house. But reindeer herders will come to Sovetskiy and Vogasher [villages]. Today we have been informed that reindeer herders turned up at a new place. We can't create so many hotels. Why do they come to the Central Square of Sovetskiy? Why don't they go Pasyнков? Pasyнков is complaining against the administration. The reindeer migration routes are changing. Ecological problems arise. If their reindeer have eaten up all the reindeer moss it will take a long time to regenerate.*

*But we plan on to organize a meat-processing system. In western markets a ton of coal costs 50 times less than a ton of reindeer meat. An agreement between YaNAO, NAO and the Republic of Komi for redistribution of funds is needed. We came up with a draft agreement. We forwarded Goskomsever a letter with a proposal to include*

*the Vorkuta Region in the formal list of areas of residence of the indigeneous minorities the North. But the problem has not been resolved yet ...*

*You shot footage on the tundra where reindeer herders are complaining of their poor life. But you better ask them how much time they have been here. If they say 2–3 years, that is true, but if they say 10 years, that would be absolutely wrong ...*

*For three years we did our best with no funds ».*

Regarding the Nenets language teacher Tatyana Rasulova, Zamedyanskiy said the following: «*She is exaggerating the ethnic problem, but does not stick to working discipline. But this is a court matter*».

Judging by the tape recording, the talk was generally friendly and Anatoly Zamedyanskiy agreed with a number of reasonable suggestions by Vladislav Peskov regarding solution to the Nenets problem. Among these suggestions were: development of a Nenets factory service in the Vorkuta tundra; promotion of the community movement; settlement of the problem of the joint use of ranges by «state farms» and private reindeer herders; equipment of reindeer herders with radio stations, kerosene lamps, covers for their chums, assistance in issuing hunting certificates; organization of medical service at factories, disinfections of clothes and equipment, summer migratory school, dwellings for every Nenets clan in Sovetskiy, holding a festival for private reindeer herders and reindeer races with a «Buran» snowmobile as a prize, and many other things.

But Anatoly Zamedyanskiy justly said that they had no funds to fix all those things, nor do they have a special body assigned this responsibility. Zamedyanskiy was absolutely right when he emphasized that all the above problems could be solved upon the Vorkuta Region being placed on the official list of regions of northern indigenous peoples' residence. Also required are allocation of budget funds and joint efforts of NAO and YaNAO and the Republic of Komi.

Zamedyanskiy was only wrong in stating that the Nenets in the Vorkuta Region appeared only very recently. To clear up the situation we had to approach a specialist. For the history of the error due to which the Vorkuta administration did not know about the existence of the Nenets in the region, see «Historic-demographical note...» by our scientific consultant (for translation see below).

We also have comments of several residents of Vorkuta sympathetic to other people's misfortunes, particularly children's. Those are mostly ladies with an educational background. These women told our correspondents about the hard situation of numerous Nenets families, and pointed out abuses committed in the kindergarten where there are only 12 children, whereas the staff number is 36. The women spoke about a biased attitude to Tatyana Rasulova, who was dismissed from the kindergarten on the grounds of Article 33 of the Labor Code. As a result, the children were left without a translator and a teacher. Both on

the tundra and at a meeting in the Sovetskiy village, where a decision was taken to establish a public organization of indigenous minorities, our correspondent could see with his own eyes that people trust Tatyana Rasuloва. Thus, the attitude of the administration toward this Nenets language teacher, sincerely concerned with the Nenets' situation, appears to be irrational.

Nevertheless, human right activists from Vorkuta did not give up hoping for the victory of wisdom and rational actions on the part of the administration. This is one of their statements: «If our mayor receives a law on indigenous minorities he would observe it. ... The head of the administration of the city of Vorkuta, Igor Leonidovich Shpektor, is President of the Association of the Cities of the Extreme North, and he wants to be a model mayor. There is a reindeer on the city flag. If the mayor is advised of some effective

measures to improve the life of the Nenets, and if Salekhard extends its patronage to some of its people migrating through the territory of Komi, Yamalo-Nenets Okrug and Nenets Okrug, then it would be possible to get things under control».

We also hope that the problems of 253 Nenets who received documents in the city of Vorkuta can be solved. The Association on its part is ready to support a proposal of the Vorkuta administration regarding inclusion of the Vorkuta Region in the list of areas of residence of indigenous minorities of the North and of allocations of budget funds for the solution of their problems. The Association is also ready to promote the search for extra-budgetary funds for the projects assisting socio-economic and cultural development in the Komi Republic. Let us solve this problem jointly.

### Historic-demographic note on the Nenets of the Komi Republic

*D.D. Bogoyavlenskiy, Senior Researcher, Center for Human Demography and Ecology, Institute of National Economic Forecasting, Russian Academy of Sciences*

The Nenets living in the Komi Republic are a small part of the Nenets of Russia, who are officially referred to as one of the indigenous minorities of the North. At the same time, the Komi Nenets appear to be the least understood ethnic group of Nenets, receiving the least attention. They are a total of 400 people out of the total Nenets population of 34,000, i.e., a little more than 1% of the entire people, whereas their proportion in the entire population of the Komi Republic is still less.

An interpretation of the present-day legal and social situation of the Nenets in the Komi Republic requires some historical digression.

Over a long time period, the northern groups of the Komi people (Komi-Izhemtsy) gradually moved northward, where they became neighbors of the Nenets, the latter being partly assimilated. In the territory of the present-day Komi (except the area annexed in 1959, which will be discussed below), by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were about 400 Nenets, and in 1926 their number reached 900 and remained almost unchanged until 1939. They all lived in three former regions of the Republic which at that time were regarded as the territories of the Extreme North: there were quite few of them in the Izhemskiy; somewhat more in Ust-Tsilemskiy; and the majority in Ust-Usinskiy. By that time, they had all been strongly assimilated – over three fourths of them referred to Komi as their native language.

The extraction of coal deposits of the Vorkuta Basin, started in the middle of the 1930s, dealt a heavy blow to reindeer herding of the Ust-Usinskiy

District Nenets. The workers employed were convicts, and work was done with loss of life and with neglect of the indigenous people of the Bolshaya Zemlya Tundra, as was practiced at that time. Coal production particularly increased during World War II (over 12-fold between 1940 and 1945), the forthcoming victory justifying all the costs.

By the late 1950s, there remained about 200 Nenets in the Izhemskiy and Ust-Tsilemskiy districts – the former Ust-Usinskiy (in 1959 this was a territory of the Pechora District and the Vorkuta and Inta city councils) had almost no Nenets. Some died during the war and the post-war hard period, and some migrated to the Nenets Okrug (in those times it was referred to as «ethnic»).

Subsequently, the number of Nenets unexpectedly increased. The reason was that in the Nenets Okrug, on its eastern edge, bordering to the Vorkuta City Council of Komi, coal deposits were also discovered; and in 1954 a built-up area at the site of mine construction became the Khalmer-Yu construction village (actually, Khalmer-Yu is the Nenets word for cemetery). In 1957 the mine produced its first coal, and by the end of 1959, the construction villages Khalmer-Yu and Tsementozavodskiy, with the adjacent area of coal bed occurrence, were transferred from the Nenets National Okrug to the Komi ASSR. That was economically feasible.

The nomad Nenets registered in the Khalmer-Yu village began to be regarded as part of the Vorkuta population (both villages were affiliated with the Vorkuta City Council). In fact, in the Komi Republic, a substantial group of «city resident Nenets» developed; they were «city residents» only on paper and continued migrating between the Komi and Nenets okrugs maintaining close and often kindred relations

with Nenets of both the Nenets and Yamalo-Nenets okrugs.

At the same time, there remained a group of «rural» Nenets – in the Ust-Tsilemskiy and Izhemski districts.

It has been assimilated by Komi to a considerably greater extent, and judging by population data, their number has been declining, which does not apply to the so-called Vorkuta «city residents».

#### Number of Nenets in the Komi Republic \*

(numbers according to census)

	y e a r s			
	1959	1970	1979	1989
Total population.....	374	369	366	376
Urban population.....	190	266	266	289
% of people who regard Komi as their native language....	27.4	18.4	26.3	16.3
Rural population.....	184	103	100	87
% of people who regard Komi as their native language.....	42.4	42.7	39.0	40.2

*\*Since we have no data available on individual administrative units within the Republic, the table gives data on the entire Nenets population of Komi, including a small number of the Nenets living in southern districts and in Syktyvkar. But there are not more than 50 such people.*

When in 1980 the concept of «Regions of Residence of the Peoples of the North» was developed, only the northwestern territories of the Komi Republic were attributed to those regions - Izhemski and Ust-Tsilemski districts – the area subordinated to the Usinskiy city administration (the then city council), in addition to the village of Usinsk and another village subordinated to the Inta city administration. Thus, the Vorkuta Nenets remained outside of the approved territories of the peoples of the North.

There was a view that urban groups of indigenous minorities do not lead a traditional mode of life. Judg-

ing by constant contact and exchange between the urban and rural populations, this view is questionable, and, in the case of Vorkuta Nenets, erroneous.

The paradox of the Komi Nenets situation lies in the fact that only a minority of the indigenous population (those in «the regions of residence...») enjoy all the rights they are entitled to. According to the 1989 census, there were only 46 such Nenets; and by the census of 1990, 60-70 people. The majority of them live on the lands of their traditional residence - on the Bolshezemelskaya Tundra, becoming second-rate people and being treated as a confounding factor.

## How the animals brought old age to the Taiga

Once upon a time, the trees and other plants of the Northern Taiga knew not of old age. They came into being and stretched their saplings towards the warming sun, seeking to soak in its life-giving rays and, having gathered power, passed it on to others. During hot summer days they gave earth, the First Mother, cooling shade. In the winter, people gathered healthy sap from the trees. Having fulfilled their mission, the plants turned into humus, only to grow again in due time. Leaves, flowers and grass never quarrelled or argued. They merely rustled in anxiety before a storm began or when a predator hid nearby.

In the beginning, similar laws applied to the animals, too. They never fell sick or become old. But on one occasion, all the animals met in the Taiga for a big council – *chakabak*. They had to decide which one of them should erect a food stock for the winter. Everyone knows – the summer is plentiful, berries and mushrooms to be had without end. The rivers are full of fish. Only really lazy animals could have trouble finding food. But in the winter earth is hardened by frost and the rivers covered by a thick layer of ice. A food stock would be good to have.

Amakan the bear disagreed and roared with anger: «The winter is meant for sleeping, not for eating!» And turned his back to the animal *chakabak*.

The hare flapped his ears and said: «That food stock? There is enough tree bark around. Chew some and be satisfied.»

Oron the deer stomped the ground in indignation and said: «Dry moss is no good. You have to kick away the snow and eat it fresh.» His words were accompanied by a lively demonstration of the process.

Chapakan the squirrel weaved her tail as if flirting: «Oh no, my friend. You won't survive a long, cold winter without a stock of dry mushrooms and cedar nuts, and your fur will be dull.»

Ergechi and *sluki*, wolf and fox, smiled to each other saying, «Fresh flesh for us.»

The raven sighed; he knew his dependence on *ergechi* and *sluki* in the winter and on *amakan* during summer. If they are unsuccessful in their hunt, he must hover in hunger over the Taiga. Still, he decided to contribute to

the discussion: «Why? I have nothing against some carrion. I recommend it to everyone – it even holds longer in the cold.»

The meeting would have ended in peace, but *sluki* unintentionally hurt the raven: «What are you, *utakan*, doing on the *chakabak*? We are all here self-sustaining – even little *tarbagan* can dig out some roots by himself. Only you eat the leftovers of others.»

The raven was quite offended and left the council without a word. Still, he stayed nearby to see the outcome.

But the debate in the *chakabak* became even hotter. The animals could not decide who should collect the winter food stock.

«Let the hare do it,» said *ergechi*, «He's got nothing better to do in the Taiga but run around confusing trails.»

«At least I don't slaughter,» snapped the hare. All the animals broke with each other on that *chakabak*. It all ended when the angry *ergechi* jumped on the hare, tore him to pieces in front of everybody and ate his guts.

The other animals left the *chakabak* in fear and dismay. That was unprecedented – evil at a *chakabak*, where wolf and hare, bear and *tarbagan* are equal. Only the raven was delayed in the glade. He stopped to eat some leftovers and then flew over to the moon rocks. He knew that Black Illness dwelt on top. She had nothing to do in the Taiga as long as the animals lived in peace and harmony. But quarrels, fights and dark intentions gave her a chance to advance. Now that *uman*, murder, had been committed, or hunting without purpose, she could spread her deadly venom across the Taiga.

The raven took Black Illness on his back and flew down from the moon rocks to the valley. And illness came to the animals that disregarded the laws of *chakabak*.

Ever since, illness and death inhabited the Northern Taiga. People who have eaten of a quarrelsome oron or mad boar, started quarrelling or became easily irritable. And on those occasions, even the good spirit Fire, keeper of the hearth, could not avert the penetration of illness into their chums.

*N. Koledneva* rewrote this tale told by *Maria Spiridonova Kurbaltunova* 1978 in *Chapo-Ologo*, *Kalar Rayon* of the *Chitinskaya Oblast*. *Maria Kurbaltunova* was *Evenki*. She passed away in 1980 at the age of 64.