

Politics, Education, and Culture: A Case Study of the Preservation and Development of the Native Language of the Evenkis

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Introduction*

We have emphasized more than once that the problems of the indigenous peoples of Canada, Alaska, Greenland, Scandinavia and the Russian North all have much in common. One of these similarities is the objectively pre-determined consolidation of scientists—independent of their nationality, citizenship or political views—in the study of the given problems. The goal is to draw conclusions about the past, and to draft recommendations for the future. Our common scholarly interest in all of the small-numbered peoples of the north should be sufficient to overcome narrow governmental and national interests. It should enable the development and expansion of the tradition of joint symposiums, and lay the basis for cooperation and new partnerships in the areas of revitalization, preservation and development of ethno-cultural values in the current stage.

1.

The development of national relations in Russia today coincides with overall global tendencies. Renewed interest in national distinctiveness, history and language can be seen today among virtually every ethnic group (*narod*) living in Russia, including the native small-numbered peoples.

One of the basic questions on the agenda in the approaching 21st century should concern the historic role and long term development of the native peoples of the north.

“Since long ago the north has been inhabited by Yakuts, Karelis, Komis and the small-numbered peoples of the north—the Nentsy, Evenki, Khanty, Mansi, Koryaki, Chukchi, Eskimo, and others who have all adapted to and mastered the natural resources, founded distinctive cultures and acclimatized to the severe conditions. They made definite contributions to the develop-

ment and domestication of the north.” Thus wrote the well-known Evenki scientist, doctor of philosophical science, Professor V. N. Uvachan, referring to the 1960–80s.

Considering that our country is moving at an increasingly fast pace towards a market economy, it is all the more urgent to pose the question of defending the rights of the native peoples in Russia to land and natural resources, and to the preservation and development of traditional economic practices, such as reindeer herding, fur production and fishing. No aboriginal people has ever been indifferent to the fate of their land. They showed great concern and longed for its protection, and in protest they came up with the following saying: “For us, the last generation of taiga-dwellers, the tundra is like the covering of an old tent (*chum*).” Or: “We are not mere specks of earth”. Raising their voices in defense of their rights, they are not categorically against the development of the North and its resources, but against the destruction of their homeland.

In 1992, a “Mini-UN” was founded in Moscow. It “summons all peoples, parliaments and governments of all states, higher organs of other countries, and non-governmental structures of all countries of the world, which have small-numbered ethnic communities and groups living on the territory of the mother country. Working within the framework of constitutional norms, may they complete and sequentially fulfill the requirements of the world association to revitalize, preserve and develop these peoples”.¹

Today a moment of crisis has arrived: will the 180,000 natives of the small-numbered peoples of the north, Siberia and the Russian Far East survive or disappear forever from the face of the Earth? Was alarm about their interests raised too late? Do they have a chance to avoid vanishing within their own states?

The majority of scientists are inclined to argue that, due to historical circumstance, many of the small-numbered peoples of the north, because of their geographical remoteness and inaccessibility, came into contact with “more technically developed civilizations” and under that pressure were unable to preserve their homelands, traditional occupations and customs, culture and language. But this raises two comparative questions:

First, what about the fate of the South American Indians, who encountered similar contact five hundred years ago, but have entirely preserved their civilization and themselves? The answer is commonly known.

Second, what about the technical development of civilization? In the Soviet Union, as was the case abroad, there existed a traditional view that prosperity and happiness for all, including the small-numbered peoples, will only be achieved through the technical development of civilization. During that time, all economic and national policies exhibited an orientation whose essence is expressed in such popular slogans as “the smoking North” and “haul up the backward peoples to the level of the progressive ones,” etc.

Did it have to be “smoking” and forcefully “hauled up”? Did we not follow an imposed path, exchanging one civilization for another? And, finally, wasn't a paradoxical situation established, in which people who manage to survive in spite of poverty may vanish thanks to technological progress?

This is a real possibility for all who count themselves among the native peoples of the world. Yes, the processes of convergence are inevitable. And, as in economics and politics, so is this especially true in the mutual relations between the larger peoples and the small-numbered ones. Today, these processes have become inevitable among all the peoples of the north. But all of these relations should be balanced equally at the start.

The aboriginal peoples of the post-Soviet North have for many years seemed uniquely targeted as objects of research. Many experiments aimed at “pulling” them from primitive levels of society straight through to the bright realm of socialism. These experiments were inflicted on an irreparable scale to the physical dwelling sites, traditional economies, languages and cultures of these peoples. Now, it seems, the time has come to recognize these people as subjects of the state and participants in the larger human civilization.

The objective conditions for this have matured in the Russian north, and abroad as well. In this connection, I am not in agreement with some of our scientists, writers and publicists, who from purely semantic considerations maintain that Soviet power never gave the peoples of the north anything, and never promoted their preservation and development. Similarly, I disagree with those who, not long ago, but from the same considerations, maintained that, with each successive year of Soviet power, our native peoples were achieving “rushing leaps” in their development.

Soviet power did a great deal for the preservation and development of the native peoples of the north, Siberia and the Russian Far East, especially in the first years of its establishment in these regions. For example, it is no accident that we call the late 1920s and 1930s a period of revitalization of small-numbered peoples. At that time, many of them were granted relative auton-

omy within their native boundaries. And subsequently, with the establishment of national regions (formerly called autonomous okrugs), writing systems were developed for them, while textbooks and literature began to be published in native languages. In new ways, but preserving traditional kin-based and economic connections, labor was organized into PPO (simple productive unions), which raised their standard of living. Both mobile and fixed scientific and technical institutions were also established.

The first Russian teachers, doctors, community activists, and specialists were historically lucky in the sense that they started to work in the years before there were forced changes in the principles of Leninist national policies. They arrived on the Russian outer fringes following (almost literally) the wishes of V. I. Lenin that, whoever went to live and labor in remote regions went with the firm resolve to master the national language, national culture, local customs and traditions. This was the overall approach of all who rushed to help establish the roots of socialism on the edges of the country. Of course those areas demanded “special caution”, “advance notice and adaptability”. What’s more: “...it was important in every case to make concessions in one’s manners towards foreigners, in order to compensate for the mistrust, suspicion and offenses that had been inflicted upon them in the historical past by the government of the “great power” nation. “Carry out practical work,” wrote V. I. Lenin, “in a spirit of complete national equality and brotherhood”.

Later however, all of these principles were grossly violated. Today it is necessary to compensate the northern peoples for the offenses committed by the totalitarian government and its administrative-command system. The forced reorganization into PPO’s and collective farms (*kolkhozy*), and later into state farms based in large towns, violated not only the kin-based and economic networks of the northern peoples. Just as, in Russia, the policy of depeasantification tore the peasant from his land and domestic livestock, so the northerner was torn away from domestic reindeer and pastures, and from taiga and tundra.

Alienation from property, even mere collectivization, leads in turn to alienation of native northerners from their traditional economies, which are the material bases of their language and culture. To take one example, almost half of the vocabulary of the Evenki language is in one way or another connected with reindeer herding. But during the last quarter century, as a result of the many reorganizations of the northern economy, the number of domes-

tic reindeer in the Evenki Autonomous Okrug has dropped from 60,000 to 10,000. There has been a parallel drop in the number of reindeer herders, who are the main speakers of the language.

Since the start of Perestroika in the USSR, small steps have been taken to aid the small-numbered peoples of the North with the revitalization of their traditional economy in a new technological stage. Without such assistance the situation would be utterly grave. These peoples have come close to the dangerous line beyond which their further existence and development as historical ethnoses cannot be guaranteed. If they are definitively torn from the taiga and tundra, dispersed into cities and large towns, then their unique languages, distinctive cultures and ecologically benign economic systems will vanish. No country should be forgiven by humankind for inflicting such a fate.

Let me mention yet another example of this terrible danger. The Evenki diaspora extends from the Ob to the Amur Rivers and on to Sakhalin Island. But the fate of the native populations, including the Evenki, is steadily worsening, and there are fewer and fewer Evenki. Whereas at the time of the general census of 1897 there were 70,000 Evenkis in the whole north-eastern region, in 1939 there were 40,000, and today there are fewer than 30,000. (In 1989 the Evenki population was 29,975.) According to the representative of indigenous nationalities,² in a total population of 19,900 only one out of every six residents of the Evenki Autonomous Okrug is Evenki.

The young generation is a special concern today, since the aboriginal peoples of Russia cannot simply “revitalize” themselves without a concerted effort on the part of the young. In an article entitled “Are We Evenki Unifying?” published in the journal “*Severnnye Prostory*”³, Andrei Isakov, a young worker at the Information Center of the Native Peoples of Russia, who comes from the town of Ust Maya in the Republic of Sakha, related his emotional opinion on this matter. Here is the text of his address:

Evenki—a unique people who, because of following their reindeer, occupy land from the Enisei River to Sakhalin Island—have been divided by false borders, divided as subjects of the Russian Federation. We, the Evenkis, number as many as 30,000 within Russia and around another 30,000 beyond Russia’s borders. Nonetheless, the question must be posed about real unification with closely related brother peoples—the Evens and Orochis, who also carry on a tribal way of life on the great spaces of the North, Siberia and the Far East.

What is there for us, the Tungus, to be afraid of? We are a relatively large group, as you know; some of the other groups number fewer than four thousand. But our greatest problem is that we live in small groups of two to three thousand, sometimes even smaller, among larger numbered peoples (Yakuts, Russians, Buryats). We operate independently, as the government is unable to undertake concrete measures for our unification and preservation of our ancient and unique culture. It is difficult for us not to disintegrate as a group in such conditions. Considering the numbers, if we all unified, we would be able to preserve our uniqueness. Territorial unification is unrealistic; that is a fact. But unification within the framework of cultural and national autonomy is possible. In Russian territory there is an already active law “On National-Cultural Autonomy”. According to this law, we can actually establish a common infrastructure, an information network, SMS, open our own cultural centers, exchange experience and set up national schools and organs of self-government. If we succeed in unifying, it will greatly raise the self-consciousness of the people.

For example, we are preparing to establish a national park on the territory of the Tungokochenski Evenkis and forbid professional hunting there. The people are against it, however, and this is the opinion not just of the 1,400 Evenkis of the Chita Oblast, but of 60–70,000 people, unified with common aspirations and hopes. It would be impossible not to take them into consideration.

In addition, we all know the progressive experience of the Sámi and Inuit, who are unified within national and international structures. This is real power. Their opinions are taken into account not only by the organs of political power, but also by large industrial firms. We, the Evenkis, live also in Mongolia and in China. So, fellow tribesmen, will we raise our heads?

All of the native northern peoples should kindle the desire to survive and to live. It is the responsibility of the government to help and support them on this path with finances, resources and legal rights.

2.

In the exposition of the state programs for national revitalization of the peoples of the Russian Federation, it is written that “Performing a vital constituent role in revitalization are the socio-cultural aspects of activities of government organs and social organizations. These are based on necessary conditions and mechanisms for the production of various forms of national culture, and the preservation and development of national languages and traditions”.

The problems of preservation, revitalization and development of languages of the small-numbered peoples of Russia demand special attention and special state programs, supported by domestic and international funding. It is crucial to provide for instruction in native language in pre-school settings, a system of early education, clubs, and voluntary associations for the study of local languages, literature and culture.

“*Rodnoi Yazyk*” (Native Language) is an association that supports these efforts in education and cultural enlightenment. Such groups will surely contribute to the development of language use in the culture, and to the incorporation of the spiritual heritage of the people into their lives. It is crucial to find various forms of support for the publication of literature in all the languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation. This goal can be served by small regional printing operations. Financial and material support for these operations would permit the publication of small editions of primers, experimental textbooks, workbooks, literary and folkloric texts and newspapers in the languages of the small-numbered peoples of the North.

Keep in mind that if a language disappears from its proper physical locale, from the source of its origins and of its cultural and social usage, nothing, not even the very best educational-methodological materials and policy proposals will be able to revitalize it. We are looking at real things, in order to draw very real conclusions.

Beginning with the family and the nursery school, indigenous children of the North automatically learn Russian first. Only later in school, and not even in all schools, do they begin to learn their native language. The need to preserve the native languages of the peoples of the North in Russia, as well as in other countries, is an acute and generalized problem. It seems to me that in order to solve it, we will not only need to learn from each other, but to work together as well.

In the late 1960s I was lucky enough to play one of the main roles in the film “*Drug Tymanchi*”, which was directed by A. D. Nitochnin, and which later received two “Gold Nymph” at the Monte Carlo Film Festival. The initial filming, depicting the life of an Evenki boy, was very difficult, because it was hard to find amateur Evenki actors and to translate the nuances of the Evenki taiga lifestyle into Russian. But when we translated the screenplay into Evenki, the film, as they say, started rolling. However, when the film was to be screened in the villages of the okrug, an unexpected problem arose. Not all of the viewers, but especially the youth and children, understood the

richness of their native language, or the various shades of meaning and tone. And it was necessary once again to translate into Russian, because at that time Evenki was not taught in the native schools. This incident forced me, an Evenki woman by birth and upbringing, to ponder seriously the future fate of native languages. In order to solve this serious problem, I set out in 1971 to start an experimental program in native language education at the Turinski Eight-Year Boarding School.

Twenty years of practice and scientific research have brought me to the following conclusion: in the areas where indigenous peoples live the socio-linguistic situation has grown increasingly complex, and today, the choice of language for instruction is of great importance. At the end of the 1920s and 30s the socio-linguistic particularities of the small-numbered peoples of the North were thoroughly studied. Considering the fact that an overwhelming majority of the population of the North did not speak Russian, the logical decision was made to conduct early education in local native languages, with a parallel program to teach Russian. Alphabets were created in formerly unwritten languages, primers were written in indigenous languages, and educational literature began to be published. Unfortunately, in the post-war years education in native languages declined. In the 1970s, elements of native culture began to be revitalized, but while many resolutions were passed calling for the improvement of education in native regions, many problems remained.

Beginning in the 1930s, Evenki language publications included scientific-methodological (mostly primers and textbooks), fiction (in both translation and original form), and socio-political literature. Even during the years of repression, which Tungus scholars and teachers (Tungusovedi) among others also endured—and in years of stagnation, when under the slogan of “unification” native language teaching was curtailed and national schools were closed—Evenki language literature continued to be produced, and enthusiastic teachers continued to teach native speech to children. While in many autonomous okrugs and national regions native language was being taught only in early classes, in the Evenki Autonomous Okrug it came to be taught as a regular subject from the first through eighth grades. Thanks to the strength of the scientific Tungusologists, to pedagogues of the NII national schools of the Russian Federal Ministry of Education, and to teacher-experimenters, a full course has been developed for teaching literary Evenki language (phonetics, morphology and syntax). This course offers a detailed pre-

sentation of Evenki from the first through eighth grades. There is another text being prepared which will serve ninth and tenth graders. It has been designed with a professional orientation for the study of various branches of the traditional economy (reindeer herding, fur trapping, fishing, production of traditional clothes and preparation of traditional food). For extracurricular reading in Evenki there are books for the fifth through ninth grades.

Despite this seemingly happy picture, new problems arise. All of these pedagogical materials are designed for children who speak their native language well, meaning that they understand the language and speak it. For example, the committee of authors who created these books estimated that 30–35% of children have a good command of their native language. The remaining ones have a weaker grasp (they understand but do not speak) or they have no knowledge of the language at all and therefore understand the textbooks only with great difficulty.

What solutions are available? It is most likely that only a differentiated approach to the education of students with different linguistic abilities will work. It follows, then, that the teachers must recognize this problem, and that in the practice of teaching they must use innovative methodological devices aimed at the elimination of this specific type of problem. But what a great help it would be to schools if there were published, for example, of a series of supplementary sections to the basic textbook! Also manuals that took into account not only the linguistic skills of the students, but also the dialect group to which a group of students belonged. After all, the existing textbooks cannot avoid posing difficulties for the student who speak dialects other than Podkamemno-Tunguski.

It is difficult to overvalue the contribution to the study of northern languages made by the linguists of the older generation. It was they who wrote the first primers and student dictionaries. But it is wrong to think that all of the languages of the small-numbered peoples of the North have been well studied, and that all linguistic problems have been fully solved. Much remains to be done: complete academic grammars for these languages need to be written; the contemporary conditions of the languages need to be studied along with various language-contact situations, etc. A related problem is that the older generation of Tungusologists is dying off, and new cadres are being produced very slowly and in small numbers.

Today we face a situation in which it is crucial to unify the efforts of all specialists who study various problems of the small-numbered peoples of the

North—their languages, education and culture—and to solve these problems in a cohesive way and through mutual cooperation.

Language policies relating to the small-numbered peoples of the Russian North should be directed to the preservation of native languages. This objective process plays a growing role not just for Russian, as a language of international society, but also for native languages. They are the basic source of spiritual revitalization, the renewal of ethnic self-identity and dignity, and also the preservation of the more-or-less vital elements of traditional culture.

However, for now, standing on the path to the full revitalization of the indigenous peoples of Russia, there are more practical and theoretical problems than there are real achievements in the aforementioned areas. The greatest of these problems consists of surmounting the practices of total levelling—this took many forms: “historically united societies”, “clan society”, unification of languages, etc.—which were carried out among all the peoples of the country, including the native northerners. Concrete evidence of this can be seen, in the past as well as up to the present time, in the everyday application of many scientific concepts and programs, and the resolutions of the governing organs of the USSR (and now the Russian Federation). For example, since 1957 more than 40 such resolutions have been passed. But they all—from first to last, with the possible exception of one that was created on the initiative of the first gathering of the small-numbered peoples of the North in March 1990—were directed at what was called “development of the regions of habitation” of these peoples, and not at the development of the economies, social spheres, distinctive cultures and languages of the small-numbered peoples themselves.

The ideas and programs for the development of education in the North in general, and in national schools in particular, were created in accordance with these principles. They were essentially modelled on all-Union, all-Russian and regional programs. However, in order to preserve and develop the languages of the peoples of Russia, it is crucial to devise a general conception of their development, as well as a conception based on the specific conditions of each level of autonomous education, including national, regional and village.

Therefore the conception of national schools cannot be viewed as though it were set apart, divided from the common system of raising and educating children. The ideas and principles of the northern national schools should be linked with the system of upbringing and education used for the younger

generation, regardless of nationality. With regard to all peoples it can be said: one cannot be a fully valued cultured people without knowing the values of another, neighboring people, their traditional lifestyle, language, and culture, psychophysiological characteristics, etc. Therefore, elements of “national upbringing and education” should enter into the programs of all schools located on the territories of the autonomous okrugs, regardless of the makeup of the students.

For example, in programs for the study of history there should be units addressing the history of the republic, the autonomous oblasts and okrugs, as well as the national okrugs and villages. In keeping with the new history (the history of political movements), programs should include the study of the status of autonomous education, human rights and freedoms. Programs should include the study of physical and economic geography, autonomous education, national toponyms, and traditional and contemporary economies in the northern territories (from simple production alliances to small companies, from family ownership to kin-based organizations). There should be programs for the study of the folklore heritage of the small-numbered peoples of the north, the works of local writers, poets and publicists, programs on botany and zoology (e.g. the study of the animal and plant worlds characteristic of the homeland of different peoples and adjoining regions). There should be programs for production training, work in reindeer herding and fishing brigades, workshops on making national clothing and shoes, as well as producing objects of decorative and applied arts. Programs should include physical culture, the study of the psycho-physiological particularities of the native population, and native sports. In music programs, the study and use of native songs and dances should be emphasized. In drawing programs, drawings should be based on and made out in nature; pictures and models should depict domestic and wild animals native to the regions where the small-numbered peoples of the North live; and sketches should show national ornaments.

Today it does not make sense, as some well-known ethnographers have suggested, to abandon “northern textbooks” in native languages which were created in the 1970s and 1980s. These books were for the most part created by scientific representatives of the peoples in question, and are thus based on solid knowledge of those languages, cultures and conditions. The authors established one principle aim: to instill the habit of using the literary forms of native speech, including reading comprehension and grammatically cor-

rect writing, and to familiarize the students with the folklore and original literature of their people. For example, in the early 1970s in the Evenki Autonomous Okrug (on the initiative of K. V. Sturova, a candidate of pedagogical science and the director of the department of education, and of us, the teachers of the Turinski Boarding School) the first efforts were made to conduct experimental lessons in native language and literature. Systematizing the experimental material was an essential step in creating the first program in Evenki language for the mid-level student group. This was in accordance with which Tungusologists (V. D. Kolesnikova, N. Ya. Bulatova, Yu. D. Sverchkova, Z. N. Pikunova) and pedagogues in the Okrug department of education (L. G. Osipova, A. T. Lapuko, Z. G. Ineshina), who prepared textbooks for the fourth through eighth grades. The very best teachers of the Ilimpiski and Bakitski Regions—N. P. Oyegir, L. I. Ivanova, V. K. Rukosuyeva, Z. I. Kochneva, N. V. Ivanova, I. D. Panteyeva, E. G. Khukochar, N. I. Chumak and others—became the first assistants in the creation of a complex of educational and pedagogical materials in a native language.

Shortly thereafter (1993) came another first publication of “A Book for Teachers in Evenki Schools” (fifth through ninth grades). This educational device has as its goal to help teachers master the methods of teaching Evenki language in light of contemporary needs, and taking into account the achievements made in Tungus Studies. The task of education is simultaneously to encourage the use of the language as a means of communication and to master contemporary literary forms.

The methods of teaching Evenki in lower schools are also undergoing changes. V. A. Gortsevskaya and A. A. Kudrya have created a new program which is different from ones used earlier. It revises the teaching materials for early classes by strengthening the oral lessons, and by teaching the dialect particularities of Evenki in a defined sequence by presenting sounds and letters along with grammar. In addition, it reduces the complex material presented in the first three years, and devotes special attention to encouraging the students to speak Evenki.⁵

In the late 1980s in the schools of the Evenki Autonomous Okrug another experiment was conducted. Evenki was offered as a regular subject in the seventh through tenth grades with an emphasis on Evenki terminology for traditional sectors of the economy (reindeer herding, fur trapping, and fishing).

Along with this program, questions about teaching and raising children in their native language were always discussed at teacher conferences, round

tables, etc. Academics presented papers, as did teachers and instructors from the Igarski Pedagogical College. From Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) there were contributions from instructors at the A. I. Herzen State pedagogical University, as well as from Z. I. Kovaleva, the sole editor of Evenki materials at the St. Petersburg publishing house “Enlightenment”.

Thus, today we have a fairly broad literature on native language teaching. Much of this is due to contributions made by the Scientific Research Institute of National Schools under the auspices of the Ministry of Enlightenment of the Russian Federation, and its special sector devoted to schools of the Northern Peoples, in which there were representatives from eleven nationalities: Evenki, Nentsy, Saami, Dolgany, Khanty, Mansi, Eskimo, Chukchi, Nivkhi, Nanaitsy, Itelmeny and Koryaki. For the most part these people live in their own autonomous okrugs and this gives them the opportunity to offer permanent assistance to the national schools there.⁶

However, it is important to recognize that there are still many unresolved problems and tasks. Thus, while there exists an educational program for lessons in native language (Evenki) it is designed for students who speak the language, and these students are a minority in the schools. Knowledge of native languages is being lost. To solve this problem as it is presented to us, it is most important to:

- (1) Offer support for traditional economic forms, especially reindeer herding, because the herders form the core of the native language speakers.
- (2) Consistently devote resources and attention to the preparation and improvement of cadres of native language teachers.
- (3) Continue using methods devised for teaching foreign languages until new programs and materials can be prepared and published for groups of students who have no grasp of their native language. Considering this goal, it makes sense to form an author's collective of teachers who already have acquired the relevant experience by teaching in the schools of the Evenki Autonomous Okrug.
- (4) Create a program for the revitalization of traditional systems of family-based child-rearing and revised child-rearing methods in preschool settings.
- (5) Create a child-rearing textbook in Evenki for parents.
- (6) Create a textbook for older students called “Evenki: History, Material and Spiritual Culture”.

- (7) Create a “Teach Yourself Evenki” text for adults who do not speak Evenki.
- (8) Create a scientific center devoted to the study of the socio-linguistic problems of the indigenous peoples of the North.
- (9) Create “one-teacher schools”, which would add a native-language-speaking teacher to the membership of family herding operations and large herding collectives maintained by state farms.
- (10) Create original children’s literature in Evenki, Ket, and Esseiski Yakut languages.
- (11) Allocate additional time and place to local radio programs for the broadcast of native languages, because children can only learn their material and spiritual culture through native words.
- (12) Create a cycle of films and videos called “Evenki” with national-cultural content. Organize a creative association called “Evenkiya” for the production of documentary films and videos about the life and culture of the Evenkis, Yakuts and Kets.
- (13) Organize the release of a recording of Evenki songs, northern music performed by local amateur artists and folklore ensembles.
- (14) Organize the publication of a journal which would include the literary works of Evenki writers, poets and storytellers and be published in Evenki.
- (15) Support the idea for the creation of a red book “The Disappearing Native Peoples of the Russian North and Arctic” (1997–1999), which has been proposed by the Institute for the Study of the Problems of the Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberian Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences, with the goal of saving and revitalizing the indigenous peoples of the Russian north.

3.

Allow me to close with the words of the famous Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyayev:

“Man enters humanity through national individuality, as a national person, like a Russian, Frenchman, German or Englishman. Man cannot leap over an entire stage of being, as this would lead to impoverishment and decline. The national man is more and not less than a simple person; in him there are general characteristics of man as well as individual-national characteristics. We can wish for

the brotherhood and unification of Russian, French, British, Germans and all the peoples of the world, but we cannot wish for the disappearance of expressions of national images, national spiritual types and cultures from the face of the earth. That sort of dream about man and humanity, abstracted from all nationality, is a craving for the extinction of an entire world of value and richness. Culture never was and never will be an abstracted humanity, it is always a concrete humanity, that is, national, individual peoples. And only in that quality do they rise as themselves to a generalized humanity.”⁸

Notes

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1) *Severnye prostory* 1992, No. 7–8: 1.

2) *Pravda*, June 6, 1989; *Trud*, March 28, 1989.

3) Isakov, A. Evenki obedinimsya? *Severnye prostory* 1992, No. 7–8: 2.

4) Kontseptsiya Gosudarstvennoi programmy natsionalnogo vozrozhdeniya narodov Rossiskoi federatsii (proyekt). *Federatsiya*, Aug. 1992: 2.

5) Boitsova A. F. and A. A. Kudrya 1981. Razvitiye evenkisko-russkogo dvuyazychiya. In *Prosveshcheniye na krainem Severe*, No. 19: 90. Leningrad: Prosveshcheniye.

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7) Pikunova, Z. N. 1993. *Kniga dlya uchitelya evenkiskoi shkoly (5–9 klassy)*. St. Petersburg: Prosveshcheniye.

8) Berdyayev, N. 1918. *Sudby Rossii*. St. Petersburg.