

ALMANAC MY MOTHER TONGUE Volume 3



Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs of the Russian Federation
Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO
Russian UNESCO IFAP Committee
Interregional Library Cooperation Centre

Almanac
My Mother Tongue
Preservation of Indigenous Languages in Russia
Volume 3

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This collection of materials analyses the state-of-the-art, problems and prospects for preserving the languages of the indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation, issues of the elaboration and implementation of national policies aimed, in particular, at the revival and maintenance of such languages, the role of the federal and regional governments, civil society institutions, private sector, as well as language communities.

The materials for the almanac were prepared within the framework of the implementation in Russia in 2023 of the My Mother Tongue Programme developed in 2019 by the Russian UNESCO IFAP Committee and the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre on the basis of the achievements and findings of IFAP and supported by the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs of the Russian Federation for long-term implementation in different regions of Russia.

The authors are responsible for the presentation of facts and for the choice of illustrations submitted for publication. Their opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the compilers.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



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Chair, Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme; Executive Director, Interregional Library Cooperation Centre; Member, Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO; Member, National Organising Committee for the Preparation and Holding of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages in the Russian Federation in 2022–2032

The third volume of the My Mother Tongue Almanac presents the results of the new year of implementation of the programme of the same name which gave rise to a series of events on the preservation of indigenous language in five more regions of the Russian Federation: the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the Republic of Tyva, the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Kemerovo Region and the Altai Krai.

In 2023, the programme focused on the following languages: Bashkir, Sakha (Yakut), Even, Evenki, Yukaghir, Dolgan, Chukchi, Tuvan, Shor and Kumandin.

The My Mother Tongue Programme, developed in 2019, has been implemented by the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme and the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre with the unwavering support of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs of the Russian Federation for 5 years. All this time it has been providing a discussion platform for interregional exchange of experience and establishment of direct contacts among experts in order to further expand cooperation in the field of supporting languages of the peoples of Russia.

In previous years, events within the My Mother Tongue Programme were held in the republics of Karelia, Mari El, Chuvashia, Udmurtia, Ingushetia, Chechnya, North Ossetia-Alania, Altai, Tatarstan, Khakassia, Karachay-Cherkessia, the Yamalo-Nenets and Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Areas, Sakhalin Region and Moscow.

The programme provides unique opportunities to study the language situation in various regions of the Russian Federation, to analyse the problems and prospects for preserving the languages of the indigenous peoples of Russia, and to shape and implement national and regional policy aimed at preserving and supporting these languages.

The My Mother Tongue Programme is implemented to accumulate, analyse, generalise, retransmit and promote this experience at the regional and international levels.

The publication of the My Mother Tongue Almanac in Russian and English is another contribution of the Russian Federation to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, as the results it presents can be used to develop similar programmes in other regions of Russia and other countries, to define parameters and criteria for assessing national language policy, and to provide a recommendatory framework for effective action in this area at various levels.

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The almanac includes photographs from the archives of the Association of Finno-Ugric Peoples of the Russian Federation, as well as relevant authorities and institutions of the regions participating in the programme.

Our special gratitude goes to the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, which supported the implementation of the My Mother Tongue Programme in 2023, as well as the preparation and publication of this almanac.

FOREWORD



**Aisen
NIKOLAYEV**
Head of the
Republic of
Sakha (Yakutia)

Dear friends!

In your hands you hold the My Mother Tongue Almanac, which contains articles by experts on the fate of mother tongues in the modern world and on the search for ways to preserve and multiply our rich linguistic heritage.

Russia is a multinational country where the languages of all peoples are officially recognised as national heritage and protected by the state. According to the 2020 census, the Russian population utilises 155 distinct native languages. These are languages that are currently in use in everyday life and are transmitted from one generation to the next. For a significant proportion of the Russian population, particularly those residing in regions with a strong linguistic heritage, bilingualism (and often multilingualism) is a fundamental aspect of their upbringing. This fosters a distinctive respect for linguistic diversity and facilitates the natural intermingling of disparate languages in our society.

For several decades, Russia has been engaged in the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive and balanced policy designed to provide support for the languages and cultures of its diverse population. The legal and regulatory framework is undergoing improvement, targeted programmes for the preservation and development of mother tongues are being implemented, and traditions of linguistic science are being supported. One of the key objectives of the education system is to establish an environment conducive to the teaching of children in their mother tongues.

A number of international and all-Russian scientific and educational events on topical issues of multilingualism are held in many regions. Furthermore, considerable assistance is being provided to facilitate the publication of literature in the languages of the peoples of Russia, as well as the development of the national press, including in digital format. Significant emphasis is placed on the development and introduction of innovative technologies that facilitate the creation of national fonts, electronic dictionaries, online translators, training programmes, and other resources. Content created in mother tongues is being incorporated into cinematic, animated, and media productions, as well as IT products.

This provides a robust basis for the preservation and advancement of languages in the contemporary context, where globalisation is posing a significant challenge to linguistic diversity. It is widely acknowledged that this issue is pertinent not only to Russia, but also to the majority of multilingual countries globally. For many years, the matter of preserving the world's linguistic heritage has been a primary concern of major international organisations, including the UN and UNESCO. It was for this reason that the

period between 2022 and 2032 was designated the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Russia has responded favourably to this initiative and is making a notable contribution to the successful implementation of the Decade's plans, including through the publication of this noteworthy almanac, which presents the findings of the My Mother Tongue programme.

The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) has considerable experience of working with UNESCO, having organised several major international conferences on the preservation and protection of linguistic and cultural diversity under its auspices.

This topic is of particular importance to us, given that our region is home to representatives of 135 nationalities and ethnic groups. The diversity of languages represents our true wealth, serving as a guarantee of interethnic harmony and social cohesion. The republic adheres to a balanced policy of linguistic preservation and support, which is predicated on the functioning of the two state languages, Russian and Yakut, as well as the languages of the indigenous minorities of the North, namely Even, Evenki, Dolgan, Yukaghir and Chukchi.

We are gratified to announce that our region has become a participant in the My Mother Tongue programme. It is within this programme that the interregional scientific and practical conference "Language Policy in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia): Preserving Traditional Indigenous Knowledge" was held in Yakutsk in 2023 under the auspices of the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme. In the context of rapid global change, the preservation of mother tongues is regarded as a fundamental aspect of identity and a source of unity among the diverse peoples of our country. It is therefore of paramount importance that we foster the widest possible collaboration in the field of language policy.

ORGANISATIONS AND EVENTS

UNESCO Information for All Programme (IFAP)

IFAP was established in 2001 as a flagship intergovernmental UNESCO programme. It is one of UNESCO's two major programmes in the field of communication and information. IFAP is aimed at assisting Member States in formulating and implementing balanced national policies of building pluralistic and inclusive knowledge societies. The programme is based on interdisciplinary and integrated approaches. IFAP priorities are information accessibility, information preservation, information literacy, information ethics, information for development and multilingualism (preservation of languages and promotion of linguistic diversity in cyberspace).

<https://en.unesco.org/programme/ifap>

Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO

The Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO is a governmental coordinating body responsible for involving relevant national agencies and leading institutions of education, science, culture, communication and information in UNESCO's activities, as well as for ensuring the fulfilment of international legal obligations arising from Russia's membership in UNESCO. For 20 years the Commission has been chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov. In its current activities, the Commission relies on the work of Programme Committees (15 thematic and 5 regional), which serve as advisory bodies bringing together leading Russian experts in the fields of competence of UNESCO, as well as on cooperation with specialised UNESCO institutions located in Russia and NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO.

<https://unesco.ru/en/>

Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs of the Russian Federation

The Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs (FADN of Russia) is a federal executive body responsible for the development and implementation of state national policy, the implementation of measures aimed at ensuring the ethno-cultural development of the peoples of the Russian Federation, and the prevention of any form of discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion or language. The Agency's head, Igor Barinov, also heads the National Organising Committee for the preparation and holding of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages in the Russian Federation in 2022-2032. FADN of Russia coordinates the implementation of the Action Plan for the Decade in the Russian Federation.

<https://fadn.gov.ru>

Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme

Russian Committee of the UNESCO IFAP Programme (IFAP) was established in 2001 under the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. The Committee's members represent government agencies, educational, research, cultural and communication establishments, non-governmental organisations and private sector.

The Committee provides assistance in setting and implementing the Programme's ideas, goals, concepts and priority lines of actions at both national and international levels. It also contributes to the advancement of national and international policies and legislation in the fields of culture, education, communication and information for the purpose of building inclusive information society, to the elaboration of scientific, theoretical, and methodological guidelines. Since the very beginning of its work, the Committee has been organising major international conferences on all IFAP priorities.

www.ifapcom.ru/en

Interregional Library Cooperation Centre

The Interregional Library Cooperation Centre (ILCC) is the working body of the Russian UNESCO IFAP Committee. In addition to contributing to the IFAP implementation, ILCC is active at the national arena to participate in drafting and implementing in Russia governmental library policies and national programmes aimed to preserve digital cultural and scientific heritage; reading promotion; supporting languages and developing multilingualism in cyberspace. On a regular basis, ILCC organises international and national events on the above topics; drafts, publishes and disseminates information as well as analytical and methodological materials on the development of librarianship, culture and information policies.

www.mcbs.ru

MAJOR INTERNATIONAL EVENTS ON MULTILINGUALISM BY THE RUSSIAN UNESCO IFAP COMMITTEE AND ILCC



Yakutsk, Russia

International Conference
“Linguistic and Cultural
Diversity in Cyberspace”

2008

Yakutsk, Russia

II International Conference
“Linguistic and Cultural
Diversity in Cyberspace”

2011



Yakutsk, Russia

III International Conference
“Linguistic and Cultural
Diversity in Cyberspace”

2014

UNESCO
Headquarters in Paris

International Expert Meeting
on Improving Access to
Multilingual Cyberspace

2014



In 2008-2019, eight major international events on multilingualism issues have been organised and held by the Russian UNESCO IFAP Committee and the ILCC with support of the Government of the Russian Federation, Government of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) and Government of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra in collaboration with Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University in Yakutsk and the UNESCO IFAP Intergovernmental Council



Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia

Ugra Global Expert Meeting on Multilingualism in Cyberspace

2015

Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia

World Expert Meeting on Multilingualism in Cyberspace for Inclusive Sustainable Development

2017



Yakutsk, Russia

International Conference "Preservation of Languages and Development of Linguistic Diversity in Cyberspace: Context, Policies, Practices"

2019

UNESCO Headquarters in Paris

International Conference "Language Technologies for All (LT4All): Enabling Linguistic Diversity and Multilingualism Worldwide"

2019



HIGH LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “WORLD TREASURY OF MOTHER TONGUES: NOURISH AND CHERISH. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT, POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO PRESERVE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES” (5-7 JULY, 2022, MOSCOW)



The conference, organised by the Russian UNESCO IFAP Committee and the ILCC in cooperation with the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs of the Russian Federation in 2022, was one of the most important events marking the launch of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages in Russia. During the conference, prominent experts from more than 40 countries addressed not only the issues of preservation and revitalisation of mother tongues, but also broader contexts (linguistic, socio-cultural, historical, economic, geopolitical) in which the world's indigenous peoples and their languages exist.



II HIGH LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “WORLD TREASURY OF MOTHER TONGUES: NOURISH AND CHERISH. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT, POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO PRESERVE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES” (30 JUNE - 2 JULY, 2024, SAINT PETERSBURG)



The conference was organised by the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme and the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre with the support of the Ministry of Digital Development of the Russian Federation, the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO and the Permanent Delegation of the Russian Federation to UNESCO.

Over 200 experts from more than 50 regions of Russia and 40 foreign countries took part in the event. The conference focused on the role of education in the promotion of indigenous languages, the possibilities of using information technologies to promote linguistic diversity in the digital environment, and ensuring linguistic rights and the work of language activists.



MY MOTHER TONGUE PROGRAMME: EVENTS AND REGIONS

2020

Interregional Conference “Revitalising Indigenous Languages of the Republic of Karelia” (Petrozavodsk, Republic of Karelia)

Interregional Conference “Advanced Linguistic Computer Technologies as Part of Preserving and Reviving Minority Languages of Sakhalin” (Nogliki, Sakhalin Region)

Round Table “Prospects for Preserving and Promoting Indigenous Languages of the North of Sakhalin” (Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Sakhalin Region)

Interregional Conference “Mother Tongues in the Multicultural Environment of the Region: Preservation, Use, Promotion” (Yoshkar-Ola, Mari El Republic)

Round Table “Problems and Prospects for Preserving and Promoting the Languages of the Republic of Mari El” (Yoshkar-Ola, Mari El Republic)

Interregional Conference “The Role of the State and Civil Society Institutions in Preserving the Chuvash Language” (Cheboksary, Chuvash Republic)

Round Table “The Use of ICTs in Preserving and Promoting the Languages of Russia’s Indigenous Peoples” (Moscow)

All-Russia Conference “Problems of Increasing the Efficiency of Efforts to Preserve and Promote the Indigenous Languages of Russia” (Moscow)

2021

Interregional Conference “Mother Tongue as a Factor of Cultural Identity” (Izhevsk, Republic of Udmurtia)

Interregional Conference “The Altai Language in the 21st Century: Preservation and Promotion” (Gorno-Altaysk, Altai Republic)

Interregional Conference “Topical Problems of Preserving Mother Tongues in Regional Language Policies” (Magas – Sunzha – Nazran, Republic of Ingushetia)

Interregional Conference “The Ossetian Language in the Context of Contemporary Globalisation Processes: Preservation and Promotion Issues” (Vladikavkaz, Republic of North Ossetia–Alania)

Interregional Conference “Preserving and Promoting Mother Tongues in a Multiethnic State: Language Policy, Problems, and Prospects” (Grozny, Chechen Republic)

II All-Russia Conference “Problems of Increasing the Efficiency of Efforts to Preserve and Promote the Indigenous Languages of Russia” (Moscow)

2022

Interregional Conference “Preserving and Promoting Mother Tongues in a Multiethnic State: Language Policy, Problems, and Prospects) (Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan)

Interregional Conference “Language Policy in the Republic of Khakassia in the Context of the Goals for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages” (Abakan, Republic of Khakassia)

Interregional Conference “Language Policy in Ugra: Preservation of Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples” (Khanty-Mansiysk, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra)

Interregional Conference “Regional Language Policy in the Context of the Goals for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages” (Salekhard, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area)

Interregional Conference “Preserving and Promoting Mother Tongues in a Multiethnic State: Problems, and Prospects for the Development and Implementation of Regional Language Policy” (Karachayevsk, Karachay-Cherkess Republic)

III All-Russia Conference “Problems of Increasing the Efficiency of Efforts to Preserve and Promote the Indigenous Languages of Russia” (Moscow)

2023

Interregional conference “Language Policy in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia): Preserving Traditional Indigenous Knowledge” (Yakutsk, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia))

Interregional conference “The Future of Sayano-Altai Languages: Preservation and Development” (Kyzyl, Republic of Tyva)

Interregional conference “Language Policy in the Republic of Bashkortostan as a Factor of Sustainable Development of the Region” (Ufa, Republic of Bashkortostan)

Interregional conference “Kuzbass Language Policy in the Context of the Goals for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages” (Novokuznetsk – Sheregesh, Kemerovo Region)

Interregional conference “Preserving and Promoting Mother Tongues in a Multicultural Region” (Barnaul – Biysk, Altai Krai)

IV All-Russia Conference “Problems of Increasing the Efficiency of Efforts to Preserve and Promote the Indigenous Languages of Russia” (Moscow)

PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LINGUISTIC AND ETHNO-CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE PEOPLES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION



Pyotr TULTAYEV
Chair, Association of Finno-Ugric Peoples of the Russian Federation

Introduction

The Russian Federation, a country with one of the most multinational populations in the world, has been engaged in extensive theoretical and practical endeavours for an extended period to preserve and develop the native languages and cultures of its diverse communities. Financial resources are regularly allocated by federal, regional, and local authorities for the specific purpose of undertaking work in these areas. State subsidies are employed for the publication of textbooks and teaching aids, as well as works of fiction in native languages, the staging of plays in theatres, and the implementation of active work in the field of language digitalisation. Furthermore, public organisations play a pivotal role in the implementation of numerous initiatives aimed at preserving the linguistic diversity of our country. They demonstrate a tangible commitment to the preservation of national identity, thereby making a substantial contribution to the unique cultural code of the Russian Federation.

In the following section, we will delve deeper into the core tenets and

strategic directions of our country's language policy, with a keen focus on Finno-Ugric languages.

Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic peoples of Russia

Russia is home to over 190 distinct ethnic groups, including 19 Finno-Ugric peoples (Veps, Votes, Izhorians, Karelians, Komi, Komi-Permyaks, Livs, Mansi, Eastern Meadow and Hill Mari, Mordvins (Moksha and Erzya Mordvins), Sami, Setos, Udmurts, Khanty, Ingrian Finns) and four Samoyedic peoples (Nganasans, Nenets, Selkups, Enets). Additionally, the country is home to representatives



Participants in the I All-Russia Forum of Finno-Ugric Peoples



Participants in the II All-Russia Forum of Finno-Ugric Peoples

of three Finno-Ugric peoples with their own distinct states, namely Hungarians, Finns and Estonians.

The most numerous Finno-Ugric peoples of the Russian Federation are the Mordvins, Mari, Udmurts, Komi and Karelians. These peoples have their own national-state entities, namely the Republic of Mordovia, the Mari El Republic, the Udmurt Republic, the Komi Republic and the Republic of Karelia, while the Khanty and Mansi have a national-territorial entity, namely the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra. The Nenets, among the Samoyedic peoples, have established national-territorial entities, namely the Nenets Autonomous Area and the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area. The Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia are not only concentrated in the aforementioned republics and autonomous areas, but also in the Kirov, Leningrad, Moscow, Murmansk, Orenburg, Penza, Saratov, Samara, Sverdlovsk, Ulyanovsk Regions, the Republics of

Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, Perm and Krasnoyarsk Krai, and other regions.

The 2020 All-Russian Population Census indicates that the number of Finno-Ugric peoples residing within the territory of the Russian Federation is approximately 1.7 million individuals. In comparison to the 2010 census, the proportion of Finno-Ugric peoples in the overall population of Russia has decreased. It is our contention that the principal factors responsible for this phenomenon are urbanisation, shifts in demographic behaviour (a decline in the birth rate), changes in ethnic identity resulting from intermarriage, migration from traditional habitats and the dispersed settlement of Finno-Ugric peoples.

The largest Finno-Ugric people of the Russian Federation are the Mordvins, with a population of 484,450. The Mari (423,803 people) constitute the second largest Finno-Ugric people in the Russian Federation,

Products by
Mordovian
masters of arts
and crafts



while the Udmurts (386,465 people) represent the third largest. The Komi continue to represent the fourth largest Finno-Ugric people in Russia, with a recorded number of 143,516 individuals.

The decline in the number of Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic peoples has resulted in a decrease in the number of individuals who speak their native languages. The processes of globalisation, the cultural proximity between the peoples of Russia that has developed over many centuries of cohabitation, and the decline in the prestige of Finno-Ugric languages among young people play a significant role in this.

The current linguistic situation

Since the early 1990s, state authorities have been engaged in efforts to bolster the status of the

national languages of Finno-Ugric peoples. In Komi, Mari El, Mordovia and Udmurtia this has manifested in the adoption of laws on their state languages between 1992 and 2001 to elevate the standing of these languages. In Karelia, a law entitled “On State Support for the Karelian, Vepsian and Finnish Languages in the Republic of Karelia” was adopted in 2004. However, the legal status of these languages has yet to be established, with Russian currently considered the state language of Karelia, as it is throughout the Russian Federation.

The majority of Finno-Ugric republics are implementing state programmes to promote the preservation, study and development of the languages spoken by the peoples residing in them. For example, the Mari El Republic has implemented a programme entitled “State National Policy of the Mari El Republic for 2013-2025”, while the Komi Republic has established a programme entitled “Preservation and Development of State Languages of the Komi Republic (2019-2024)”. In Mordovia, the programme “Preservation and Development of National Culture, State Languages of the Republic of Mordovia and Other Languages in the Republic of Mordovia” has been implemented. Similarly, in Udmurtia, the programme “Preservation, Study and Development of State Languages of the Udmurt Republic and Other Languages of the Peoples of the Udmurt Republic” has been put into effect. The aforementioned state programmes provide financial support for projects and activities aimed at the preservation and development of the state and other languages of the peoples of the republics in question.



Meeting of the
Presidium of the
Association of
Finno-Ugric Peoples
of the Russian
Federation

The regional legislation of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area is founded upon the 2001 law “On the Languages of Indigenous Minorities of the North Living in the Territory of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra.” This legislation delineates the measures to be undertaken by state and local authorities in municipalities within Ugra to support the national (native) languages of the Khanty and Mansi indigenous minorities and their traditional culture. The “Concept for Teaching Native Languages, Literature and Culture of the Indigenous Minorities of the North Living in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra” (2015) was officially approved. The Concept focuses on ensuring the right of indigenous peoples to study their native languages, literature and culture. In doing so, it takes into account national, regional and ethno-cultural characteristics, as well as creating conditions for the active use of these languages in social practice.

In each Finno-Ugric republic, term-orthography commissions and commissions for national languages have been established with the objective of developing and enriching the lexical stock, improving language norms and streamlining terminology. Additionally, these commissions are responsible for preparing proposals for the support, functioning and development of the state languages of the republics, as well as participating in the implementation of the state national policy.

In regions where Finno-Ugric peoples reside, an integrated approach to the preservation and development of national languages is employed across all socially and culturally significant spheres:

- in the educational system at all levels, including pre-school, primary general, basic general, secondary general, secondary vocational and higher education;
- in the field of science, with a particular focus on research in the field of national languages

and their functioning, as well as literary studies;

- in the sphere of culture and art, including theatres, libraries, museums and so forth;
- in the mass media (periodicals are published in national languages and television and radio broadcasting is carried out);
- in the information technology field;
- in book publishing (publication of fiction, scientific and popular scientific literature in national languages, including for children's audiences), etc.

National education

The study of the native Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic languages in the Russian Federation is conducted at all levels of education. In accordance with the directives of the Russian Ministry of Education, federal educational programmes for primary, basic general and basic secondary general education have been approved, wherein all Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic languages studied in schools are represented. In accordance with the aforementioned programmes, textbooks and teaching aids are created and subsequently subjected to a state-level expert examination conducted by the federal educational and methodological association. Should the decision be favourable, the textbooks will be included in the federal list.

The current Federal List of textbooks approved for use in the implementation of state-accredited educational programmes includes textbooks for grades 1-4 in Karelian (in two dialects), Vepsian, Komi,



Mordovian children's performance group

Moksha, Nenets, Udmurt, Khanty and Erzya. Textbooks for grades 5-9 in the Komi, Moksha, Udmurt and Erzya languages; textbooks for grades 5-9 in the Komi and Udmurt languages and Udmurt literature; and textbooks for grades 10-11 in Udmurt literature. In the absence of textbooks for certain Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic languages on the Federal List, schoolchildren are taught using textbooks previously published under the seal of the Ministries of Education of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

At the level of higher education, the provision of textbooks on native languages and literatures is ensured thanks to the work of the staff of the relevant departments of universities.

Research on Finno-Ugric issues conducted at all higher education institutions located in the national republics and districts, as well as in humanitarian research institutes, plays a significant role in the preservation and development of the languages, cultures and traditions of Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic peoples. Basic and applied research is being pursued in a range of disciplines, including



Books published
in the Mari El
Republic

linguistics, literature, folklore, history, archaeology, ethnography, cultural studies, ethnology and political science. The results are then presented at conferences of regional, national or international levels.

A significant occurrence took place in 2023 when the textbook for university students, entitled “Literature of Finno-Ugric Peoples of Russia”, was published. This text examines the evolution of Finno-Ugric literatures in Russia, from their inception to the present era. It presents materials on both overview topics, which aim to familiarise students with the literary processes of specific regions, and monographic topics, which introduce students to the works of the most prominent figures in national literatures, like Kallistrat Zhakov, Kuzebai Gerd, Kuzma Abramov, Yuvan Shestalov, Valentin Columb and others.

Consequently, all Finno-Ugric regions are engaged in active research and study of their respective

indigenous languages, cultures and traditions.

National culture

The implementation of three federal projects (“Cultural Environment”, “Creative People” and “Digital Culture”) of the national project “Culture” in 2019-2024 represents an initiative aimed at developing modern infrastructure of cultural and educational organisations (museums, exhibition halls, libraries, etc.). Furthermore, the aforementioned



Exhibition of
Mordovian folk
art (Saransk)

Opening of the I
All-Russia Forum
of Finno-Ugric
Peoples



projects have encompassed cultural and leisure institutions, including theatres, clubs, cinemas, and cultural centres, across Mordovia, Mari El, Karelia, Komi, Udmurtia, and the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area. The infrastructure of urban and rural cultural and leisure institutions and art schools has been enhanced, numerous libraries have been modernised, and new cinema halls have been established, including those equipped with multimedia technology.

The contemporary practice of actualising and transmitting the national art of the Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia reflects a process of cultural synthesis between the heritage of the past and modern innovations. The national theatre, in its capacity as both an artistic institution and a social community, plays a pivotal role in the preservation and advancement of folk ethno-cultural traditions, while also serving as a conduit for the aspirations of Finno-Ugric peoples to gain a deeper understanding of their own ethnic culture. This originality

is evident in the juxtaposition of folk music with national costume, the organic interweaving of ancient rituals into the performances, and the use of traditional household items as elements of stage design. These elements contribute to the “immersion” of the audience in folk traditions.

At present, there are 13 theatres in operation within the national republics and in regions with concentrated Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic populations (see details in Table 1). It is also noteworthy that theatrical productions in the national languages of the Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic peoples are staged at other regional opera and ballet theatres in Russia. The introduction to the national culture of children of preschool and primary school age is facilitated through puppet theatre performances.

It has become customary to hold annual theatre, arts and folk art festivals of the Finno-Ugric peoples

of the Russian Federation, including international ones. A considerable number of these initiatives are supported by the Presidential Fund for Cultural Initiatives, the

Presidential Grants Fund, the Ministry of Culture, the Government of the Russian Federation and other state organisations.

Table 1

**National theatres of Finno-Ugric regions of the Russian Federation
(as of 2024) ¹**

No. n/a	Region of Russia	Language of theatre productions	Name of the national theatre
1.	Republic of Mordovia	Russian, Moksha-Mordvin, Erzya-Mordvin	Mordovian State National Drama Theatre (Saransk)
2.	Mari El Republic	Russian, Mari	Shketan Mari National Drama Theatre (Yoshkar-Ola); Mari Theatre of Young Spectator (Yoshkar-Ola); Hill Mari Drama Theatre (Kozmodemyansk)
3.	Republic of Karelia	Russian, Karelian	State National Theatre of the Republic of Karelia (Petrozavodsk); Karelian folk theatre “Čičiliusku” (“Lizard”) (Petrozavodsk)
4.	Leningrad Region	Russian, Vepsian	Veps puppet theatre “Peyveine” (“Sunny”) at the Veps Folklore Centre (Vinnitsy, Leningrad Region)
		Finnish	Finnish Theatre of St. Petersburg (St. Petersburg)
5.	Komi Republic	Russian, Komi	National Musical Drama Theatre (Syktyvkar)
6.	Perm Krai	Russian, Komi-Permyak	Komi-Permyak Drama Theatre (Kudymkar)
7.	Udmurt Republic	Russian, Udmurt	State National Theatre of the Udmurt Republic (Izhevsk); Udmurt State Folklore Song and Dance Theatre “Aikai” (Izhevsk)
8.	Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area	Russian, Khanty and Mansi	Theatre of Ob-Ugric Peoples “Solntse” (“Sun”) (Khanty-Mansiysk)

¹ According to <https://www.culture.ru>, <https://teatrygoroda.ru>.

 International Festival
 of Arts and Folk Art
 “Finno-Ugric Transit”


The Mayatul festival in Yoshkar-Ola has consistently proven to be a highly popular attraction among theatre art aficionados. The event brings together the most prominent theatre groups from the Finno-Ugric regions of Russia, with previous editions also featuring representatives from foreign countries. The All-Russia festival-competition of children’s and youth national theatre groups, “Theatre and Children” (Izhevsk), is also of significant importance.

In 2023, Nizhny Novgorod hosted the International Festival of Arts and Folk Art “Finno-Ugric Transit”, which included the participation of amateur performers and theatre groups from the Nizhny Novgorod Region, the Republics of Komi, Mordovia, Mari El, Karelia, the Udmurt Republic, the Komi-Permyak District of the Perm Krai and the Taimyr Dolgan-Nenets Municipal District of the Krasnoyarsk Krai. Amateur theatres, creative groups and studios

presented productions based on a variety of sources, including myths, epics, rituals of Finno-Ugric peoples, musical and folklore programmes, and performances incorporating elements of ethnic choreography.

The popularisation of national culture and art is evidenced by the holding of numerous festivals, competitions and exhibitions of arts and crafts and folk crafts. The most significant of these are the Ugra International Craft Festival (Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area), the Shumbrat All-Russia Festival of National Finno-Ugric Cultures (Republic of Mordovia), the Vastoma (“Meeting”) Interregional Festival of Mordovian Culture (Penza Region), and the Peledysh Payrem (“Festival of Flowers”) Interregional Festival of Mari Culture (Mari El). Notable examples include the All-Russia Folklore Festival “Ancient Tunes of the Udmurts ‘Chakara’”, the Ethnocultural Festival “Russia:

Consonance of Cultures” (Leningrad Region), the Oma Randa Interregional Festival of Karelian Culture (Tver Region), and the Taidosuuri (“Island of Creativity”) Interregional Festival of Amateur Theatres of Finno-Ugric Peoples (Republic of Karelia).

It is certain that regional and national theatrical festivals play a unique role in the preservation of the ethnic culture of Finno-Ugric peoples, as they provide a platform for the participation of the most accomplished creative teams. The contemporary culture of Finno-Ugric peoples has also seen significant developments in film and photography. The Finno-Ugric Peoples Film Festival, entitled Tuivezh (“Crossroads”), has gained considerable popularity.

The festival movement has facilitated the expansion of theatre and folk art among Finno-Ugric peoples. It fosters comprehension of the national heritage, kinship, and originality of the theatrical traditions of each Finno-Ugric people. It also underscores the singularity, distinctiveness, and

inimitability of Finno-Ugric culture, while simultaneously situating it within the broader context of global cultural heritage.

One of the most notable developments in the contemporary fine arts of Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic peoples is the emergence of ethno-futurism. This artistic movement draws inspiration from the traditional system of values and worldview of these cultures, which is based on the principles of harmonious interaction between humans and nature, ethno-cultural diversity, tolerance, and peaceful relations with other peoples. The works of ethno-futurist artists frequently incorporate ethnic symbolism and imagery drawn from Finno-Ugric myths and folklore.

Despite the considerable challenges they face, Finno-Ugric peoples, with their distinctive ethno-cultural and artistic traditions, are committed to safeguarding and advancing a distinctive and irreplaceable aspect of Russian culture that has global significance.



Udmurt National Festival "Gerber"

Traditional
Udmurt dance



National media

As outlined in the explanatory note of the Association of National Mass Media in Russia, the mass media have a significant role in promoting ethnoconsolidation, cultural integration and patriotism. The mass media facilitate the spiritual enrichment of peoples, as well as the preservation of the languages and culture of the peoples of Russia”.¹ The significance of national journalism lies in its capacity to reflect the contemporary issues and pivotal occurrences within a given ethnic group, thereby addressing the informational requirements of the indigenous population. In Finno-Ugric regions, periodicals and television and radio broadcasting in national languages are widely represented and in demand. Currently, there are

60 mass media outlets broadcasting about Finno-Ugric peoples in Russia. The content of these outlets ranges from informative and cognitive to entertaining. Contemporary national journalism is oriented towards a multi-age audience. With the exception of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area, all Finno-Ugric regions publish periodicals for both adults and children.

The dissemination of information in Finno-Ugric languages in Russia (and throughout the country as a whole) is accomplished through a variety of media, including periodicals, audiovisual content, information services, and other forms of global Internet communication.

The press in Finno-Ugric languages comprises over 40 publications, of which more than 30 are included in the subscription catalogue of Russian

¹ <http://nationalsmi.ru/about/ob-assotsiatsii>.

Post². A comprehensive list of regional media and information resources in 30 languages, including Finno-Ugric, is available on the website of the Russian Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs³. The establishment of national publications is typically undertaken by local governments and various public organisations. News items in the indigenous Finno-Ugric languages are presented in separate columns in the regional Russian-language press.

The group of audiovisual information media is represented by educational and news TV and radio programmes, which are primarily concerned with addressing cultural, and awareness-raising objectives. The series of educational films entitled “Komi Incognito” is dedicated to the ethno-cultural heritage of the Komi people. The films were produced by the regional television channel “Yurgan” in Russian, but contain interviews in the national language with representatives of the indigenous population of the Republic. Additionally, the weekly newscasts “Mokshen Val” and “Erzyan Val” (in Mokshan and Erzyan languages) on the NTM (National Television of Mordovia) TV channel and the children’s programme “Ugorika” broadcast by the Ugra TV and Radio Company of the Khanty-Mansi Area, which is devoted to the study of the Khanty and Mansi languages, are also noteworthy.

The federal media holding VGTRK⁴, with offices in 79 regions,



Books and periodicals published in the Udmurt Republic



Periodicals of the Republic of Mordovia

occupies a leading position among information services. It provides a portal for broadcasting in 53 national (including Finno-Ugric) languages of the country. Furthermore, news in indigenous languages is available on other private and regional news channels.

The content of the above-mentioned media groups is characterised by a wide thematic diversity, encompassing culture, education, society, economy, politics and sports. Nevertheless, the primary emphasis is on the portrayal of indigenous people in their daily lives, which serves to reinforce their national identity. It can be argued that ethno-journalism represents a significant means of preserving and developing indigenous languages. This is due to the fact that the

² According to the Russian Post: <https://podpiska.pochta.ru/>

³ A new heading “Mass Media and Information Resources in the Languages of the Peoples of Russia” has been created on the FADN of Russia website: <https://fadn.gov.ru/press-centr/news/novaya-rubrika-%C2%ABsmi-i-informacionnye-resursyi-na-yazyikax-narodov-rossii%C2%BB-sozdana-na-sajte-fadn-rossii>

⁴ <https://vgtrk.ru/regions>.

Mordovian
women's
jewellery



A craftswoman of
the Estonian-Setu
Culture Museum
at work



textual and spoken communication of Finno-Ugric media is constructed in accordance with established literary norms.

The *mass media* of the *global Internet network* initially replicated the content of traditional forms of *mass media* in electronic format. Nevertheless, they have now become firmly established within the broadcasting and information sector, giving rise to new forms of journalism in the digital domain, exemplified by the phenomenon of ethnoblogging. Ethnobloggers engage in the practice of writing about ethnographic culture,

historical background and notable sights of their native regions in Russian and in national languages. Famous in the Finno-Ugric world of Russia are “Diaries of an Udmurt Woman” by Vera Trefilova⁵, “Territory of Komi” by Ruslan Magomedov⁶, “Mokshen blogger” by Oksana Belkina⁷, “Erii Kel” by Olga Bogdanova⁸, “Natto Varpuni” by Natalia Vorobey⁹ and others. The growing interest in ethnoblogging is reflected in the establishment of the All-Russian public award “Ethnoblogger of the Year”¹⁰ in 2019. Ethnobloggers, in their role as custodians of ethno-cultural heritage, serve to stimulate interest in Finno-Ugric cultures and the study of indigenous languages. Furthermore, they facilitate the dissemination of information pertaining to the daily lives and holiday traditions of Finno-Ugric peoples, thereby engaging the digital generation.

Digitalisation of Finno-Ugric languages

In Finno-Ugric republics, a number of approaches are being pursued with a view to the digitalisation of native languages.

The initial vector is the development of proprietary technical linguistic tools and digital services for machine processing of national language

⁵ https://vk.com/vera_wonderbera.

⁶ <https://vk.com/genrikhnemchinov>.

⁷ https://vk.com/varma_moksha, https://t.me/varma_moksha, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnyHrROX-WNaKP2EQVoRi8w>.

⁸ https://vk.com/eriy_kel, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoSdfdxkAKgZ60HGUC6Dm3A>.

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgALm9WPgLPahqA14EW1RtA>.

¹⁰ https://vk.com/doc150813331_526473001?hash=k21MLBNQX7FjkvOHNKS00b9h-gKjoB96nRUeLLiqo8dg&dl=umZfk9uhtuzwC4ICpiUxgUJeYikYTdBowKhM8YBDmeg.

models. These include keyboard layouts (with symbols reflecting specific letters of national alphabets) and fonts, electronic dictionaries, and automatic spell-checking systems, special programmes (analysers) reproduce phonetic, etymological, morphological and syntactic analysis, as well as text monolingual and parallel corpora, machine translation, speech synthesis (text-to-speech), speech recognition (speech-to-text), language mapping, search engines, operating systems and artificial intelligence systems (ChatGPT).

A significant number of the aforementioned services have been developed for the Komi, Mari and Udmurt languages. Consequently, the websites of the Interregional Laboratory of Information Support for the Functioning of Finno-Ugric Languages (which contain a plethora of links to open digital services pertaining to the Komi, Mari and Udmurt languages)¹¹ are accessible to all. In September 2023, the Russian Federal Service for Intellectual Property (Rospatent) issued a certificate of registration for the database of the National Corpus of the Udmurt Language.

The staff of the Institute of Language, Literature and History of the Karelian Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences are engaged in the ongoing process of populating the VepKar open corpus of the Vepsian and Karelian languages, and are concurrently developing the TopKar project. This latter project

will contain information on Karelian toponyms, with the possibility of searching and displaying objects on an online map. The resource will facilitate the preservation, organisation and investigation of geographical object names in Karelia and neighbouring regions.

The Lingvodoc electronic linguistic platform offers a comprehensive array of text and dictionary materials pertaining to nearly all Finno-Ugric languages. Additionally, it provides a suite of analytical tools for examining the morphological and lexical proximity of languages and dialects. The Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Ivannikov Institute of System Programming of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Udmurt Federal Research Centre of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Ogarev Mordovian State University and the Research Institute of Humanities under the Government of the Republic of Mordovia are implementing a training module¹², which comprises over 10,000 exercises in Udmurt, Komi, Erzya and Moksha. Masterclasses on the utilisation of the module in the teaching of the Russian, Karelian, Erzya and Moksha languages were conducted at St. Petersburg State University, Ogarev Mordovian State University, as well as at the All-Russia Forum of Young Teachers of Native Languages and Native Literatures. New dictionaries are being published on the basis of the Linguistic Card Index and the National Corpus of

¹¹ http://wiki.fu-lab.ru/index.php/%D0%92%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8_FU-Lab, <https://mari-lab.ru/index.php/Mari-Lab> и [Udmwiki.fu-lab.ru](https://wiki.fu-lab.ru/).

¹² <https://edu.ispras.ru/>.

the Mari language. The project has resulted in the publication of several dictionaries and reference works. These include the Russian-Mari Dictionary with an electronic version in two volumes (2019), the Mari-Russian Phraseological Dictionary in two volumes (2020), the Dictionary of Comparisons of the Mari language (2019), the Dictionary of Epithets of the Mari Language (2022), and the Dictionary of Antonyms of the Mari Language (forthcoming).

A key indicator of successful digital development is the language representation in the Yandex.Translate service, which provides machine translation in over a hundred languages, including Mari and Udmurt. The incorporation of additional languages is currently being considered, including Komi, Moksha, Erzya, and Karelian.

Significant efforts are being undertaken in Mari El to prepare a dataset for speech recognition on the Common Voice platform. To date, the total duration of recorded Mari speech is 358 hours. A total of 316 hours of speech data have been recorded on the Meadow-Eastern literary norm, with 496 speakers. Of these, 93% of sentences have been checked. Additionally, 42 hours of speech data have been recorded on the Mountain Mari literary norm, with 60 speakers. Of these, the progress of sentence checking is 91%. A Mari speech recognition programme has already been created based on the aforementioned dataset. This can be demonstrated on Telegram via the following handle: @mari_asr_bot. To enhance the programme, it is intended to utilise the parsing of accessible

audiobooks, radio and television programmes in the Mari language.

The SuperMinor project (<http://sumi.ac/>), which aims to enhance the language model generation abilities of minority languages worldwide and to garner greater attention for them, has also commenced work on a dataset.

Researchers from Mari State University and the Vasiliev Mari Research Institute of Language, Literature and History are engaged in the development of an operating system in the Mari language and a chatbot based on ChatGPT. Furthermore, a voice assistant, designated “iVika” (a cognate of the Mari female name Aivika), is being developed on the model of the Bashkir smart speaker “Homai” (Khomai). This language model of artificial intelligence has been trained on a corpus of Bashkir texts and live speech and is capable of conducting dialogue and executing commands in Bashkir and Russian.

The Russian company Paratype has developed a virtual language database of fonts and computer keyboard layouts based on the extended Cyrillic alphabet for 150 languages of the Russian Federation, including Finno-Ugric languages.

The second major area of digitalisation is the development of the linguistic environment on the Web. Internet resources include websites, digital libraries, online encyclopaedias, dictionaries, media content in native languages, multimedia projects, audio resources presenting national music and folklore, YouTube channels, and applications for mobile devices. Educational resources encompass

e-textbooks in native languages, online courses, online schools, video lessons, educational programmes, games, and platforms. Furthermore, social networks, including chat rooms, blogs, forums, and so forth, are also included in this category, as well as educational resources, such as e-textbooks in native languages, online courses, online schools, video lessons, educational programmes, games, platforms, etc.

Educational and awareness-raising portals in national languages (*komikyv.ru* for the study of the Komi language, *edu.mari.ru/school/mari* for the study of the Mari language, *udmkyl.ru* for the study of the Udmurt language) and the School of Mordvin Languages (the winning project of the VI All-Russia Public Award for the Preservation of Linguistic Diversity in 2022) continue to function successfully. Furthermore, the Portal of National Literatures, a resource of the Union of Writers of the Republic of Mordovia entitled “Under the Marena Sun,” the Kuara project by the Udmurt youth organization of the same name, the Udmurt-language Daur TV Internet TV channel and the Udmurt-language Daur FM Internet radio, which is scheduled to launch an online broadcast in November 2023, are among the notable initiatives. The House of Friendship of the Peoples of the Republic of Karelia has prepared 12 episodes of the online KV-Show, which has the objective of popularising the languages, culture and history of Karelians and Veps. The Ob-Ugric Institute of Applied Research and Development is engaged in the ongoing process of populating the Electronic Depository on Folklore of Ob-Ugric and Samoyed

Peoples, which encompasses over 3,000 hours of audio recordings and in excess of 6,000 cards comprising unique folklore texts in the languages of the indigenous peoples of Ugra. These materials are accompanied by Russian translations and scientific commentaries.

In 2023, new applications for mobile devices were launched. These included a game for children, entitled Treasure of the Nation, which supports 30 languages of the peoples of Russia, including Karelian, Komi, Mari, Moksha, Udmurt, and Erzya; WORDScon, an application for learning the Udmurt language developed by 11th grade student Arseniy Pozdeev; and Sam’kill, which is designed for learning the Sami language. The Karelian Periodika Publishing House has released a mobile application, Oma Kieli, which is designed to facilitate the learning of the Karelian and Vepsian languages. The application is available for download.

Additionally, content in the national languages is presented and regularly updated in the news feeds on the official websites of the authorities of the Komi, Mari El, Mordovia and Udmurt republics.

In January 2024, the Ruviki online encyclopaedia portal was launched, and it currently encompasses sections in 12 languages, including Mari, Moksha, Erzya and Udmurt.

The outcomes attained should provide a further stimulus to the digitalisation of national languages, which offers significant potential not only for their preservation but also for their continued advancement.

National NPOs

Public movements have played a significant role in the preservation of the languages of the Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic peoples of Russia. The primary objective of numerous regional NGOs is to enhance the prestige of Finno-Ugric languages, which can be achieved through the organisation of regular ethno-cultural events. The Association of Finno-Ugric Peoples of the Russian Federation plays a pivotal role in the promotion of the language and culture of Finno-Ugric peoples. The Association was instrumental in establishing the All-Russian Forums of Finno-Ugric Peoples and the Interregional Ethno-Cultural Expeditions and Festivals, collectively entitled “Volga, River of Peace. Dialogue of Cultures of the Volga Peoples”, as well as various

republican national holidays (such as Gerber in Udmurtia and Shumbrat in Mordovia), the All-Russia Total Dictation in the Mokshan and Erzyan languages.

Conclusion

The vitality of a nation, its language and culture depend on the careful preservation of its spiritual, moral foundations and traditions. This necessitates meticulous and all-encompassing endeavours that engage the participation of all pivotal institutions and stakeholders.

In the context of the Decade of Indigenous Languages, it is of particular importance to develop recommendations regarding the shaping and implementing efficient national policies to support these

Children's creative team of the Republic of Mordovia





Presidium
of the
Association of
Finno-Ugric
Peoples of
the Russian
Federation

languages¹³, as well as the provision of systemic support measures by public authorities and municipal local authorities for the most vulnerable indigenous languages.

The development and revitalisation of languages and cultural traditions of small peoples also require:

- Expanding the scope of national languages, affirming the principles of cultural pluralism, bilingualism and multilingualism, with the Russian language playing an integrating role;
- Developing national mass media in a wide range of different formats as an important means of broadcasting information for the indigenous peoples of Russia and meeting the cognitive needs of people of various ages;
- Equal representation of national languages on the Internet, developing computer training programmes in national languages for pre-school, general secondary and higher education, etc.
- Support for public organisations that promote the preservation and development of national languages, cultures, folk crafts and handicrafts.

¹³ Barinov, I. (2022). Foreword. My Mother Tongue. Almanac 2022. Preserving the languages of indigenous peoples of Russia. Moscow.

REPUBLIC OF SAKHA (YAKUTIA)



Date of formation: September 27, 1990

Total area: 3 083 523 square km

Capital city: Yakutsk

Total population: 1 001 664 people

Indigenous population: Yakuts, Evenki, Evens,
Dolgans, Yukaghirs, Chukchi

State languages: Russian, Yakut

Interregional scientific and practical conference

“Language Policy in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia): Preserving Traditional Indigenous Knowledge”

(June 19-20, 2023, Yakutsk, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia))

Organisers

- Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme
- Interregional Library Cooperation Centre
- Government of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia))
- Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University

LANGUAGES OF THE PEOPLES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SAKHA (YAKUTIA): SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT



Feodosia GABYSHEVA

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For many years, the Russian Federation has been renowned globally as a nation where the conservation of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity is of paramount importance to its authorities and public institutions. In order to effectively implement the priority tasks of state language policy, a great deal of responsibility is placed on the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, given that each Russian region has its own unique linguistic situation, reflecting the centuries-old history, distinctive culture and spiritual experience of the peoples living there.

Language situation in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

In the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the distinctive geographical characteristics, including vast territory, considerable remoteness and inaccessibility of numerous settlements, have created exceptional circumstances conducive to the formation and evolution of a distinctive linguistic environment. This environment is characterised by a profound respect for linguistic and cultural diversity, the prevalence of bilingualism and



Lena Pillars
National Park

trilingualism, and a growing inclination towards polylingualism.

While being the largest Russian region in terms of area, Yakutia is sparsely populated (with a population of 995,686). However, it is one of the most multi-ethnic constituent entities of the Russian Federation. The Republic of Sakha is home to over 120 nationalities, including the indigenous peoples who have inhabited the area for centuries, namely the Yakuts (469,348 people), Evenks (24,334 people), Evens (13,233 people), Dolgans (2,147 people), Yukaghirs (1,510 people) and Chukchi (709 people).

The Yakut language (autonym: *Sakha Tyla*) the national language of the Yakuts and belongs to the Turkic language family. It is one of the state languages of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), along with Russian. The number of speakers of the Yakut language is approximately 430,000, predominantly residing in Yakutia. The Yakut language exhibits notable differences from other Turkic languages, particularly in its lexicon, which features a substantial number of words of unclear origin and a significant proportion of Mongolian borrowings.

The Yakut language is utilised in both everyday life and social interactions of the Yakuts, as well as in professional contexts across the republic. Furthermore, Yakut is employed as a language of inter-ethnic communication by the Evens, Evenks, Yukaghirs, Dolgans and the Russian-speaking population. The Yakut language is implemented in a multitude of contexts, including cultural events, printed materials (such as books, newspapers, and magazines), radio broadcasting, television programmes, and Internet resources.

The Evenki language (autonym: *Evedy Turen*; formerly known as Tungus language) is one of the languages of the northern Tungus-Manchu family. It has three main dialects, which are distinguished by their geographical location: northern, southern and eastern. These dialects are characterised by a large number of varieties. In addition to the territory of Yakutia, the Evenki also inhabit the eastern regions of Siberia, extending from the left bank of the Yenisei River to the island of Sakhalin and northern China (Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region). A total of 2,973 individuals in Yakutia are native speakers of the Evenki language.

Traditional reindeer sled race



Notwithstanding the fact that the Evenki language is on the brink of extinction, there are grounds for optimism regarding its future. This is largely attributable to the growing ethnic consciousness of the Evenki. There is a growing interest among the younger generation in ethnic traditions and their native language. The use of innovative digital technologies offers a promising avenue for linguistic advancement. For over a decade, a variety of online resources, including Internet portals, mobile applications, and distance learning courses, have been effectively utilized to facilitate the acquisition of fundamental Evenki language competencies.

The Even language (formerly known as Lamut) is the language of the Even people. It is closely related to the Evenki, Nanai and Udege languages, and forms part of the Tungus-Manchu subgroup of the Altai language family. The Even people reside in local communities across several regions in Russia, including Yakutia, Magadan Oblast, Chukotka Autonomous Area, Kamchatka and Khabarovsk Krai. The number of individuals who speak the Even language in the region of Yakutia is 3,368. The current linguistic situation of the Even language can be characterised as critical. The language is gradually being lost, with the degree of proficiency correlating with the age of the speakers. Nevertheless, efforts are being made to develop constructive language-building initiatives, and the use of official languages in public life is being promoted (including through cultural events and the media) in areas with a concentrated Even population.

It is observed that children in large families residing in traditional villages or integrated into reindeer herding communities demonstrate a notable



Indigenous women of Yakutia

proficiency in the Even language. The Even language is employed in written form for the purpose of imparting the native language to students in preschools and primary schools, and in some areas, to secondary school students. The Even language is employed as the subject of instruction across the board, yet it is not the language of instruction at the preschool level.

The Dolgan language, spoken by the Dolgans, an indigenous, small-numbered people of Russia, belongs to the Yakut subgroup of the Uigur-Oguz branch of the Turkic group of the Altai language family. Prior to this, it was a variety of the Yakut language. However, over time, due to sufficient isolation and as a result of isolated development and internal restructuring under the influence of the Evenki language, it became an independent language. The Dolgan people reside in the Taimyr Dolgano-Nenets District of the Krasnoyarsk Krai and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The number of speakers of the Dolgan language in Yakutia is 453.

The Dolgan language, like many other languages of the indigenous minorities of the North, is facing a significant risk of extinction. The key issue is the considerable decline in the transmission of the language from the older generation to the younger one. The

(Yakutia) requires the state to ensure the development and preservation of the languages of all peoples living in the territory. In Yakutia, the federal and regional normative legal acts guarantee linguistic and cultural diversity in a multicultural space.

The Parliament of the Republic exercises continuous oversight and supervision of the implementation of legislation pertaining to languages, and initiates measures involving a diverse array of experts and the public.

A substantial legislative foundation has been established, comprising the following laws: On Languages in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) (1992), On Education in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) (2014), On the Status of Languages of Small Indigenous Peoples of the North of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) (2004), and On the Legal Status of Small Indigenous Minorities of the North (2005).

In addition to the aforementioned legislative acts, provisions aimed at

the preservation of native languages can be found in laws regulating other legal relations, and a number of bylaws have been adopted. In 2019, the Concept for the Preservation, Study and Development of the State and Official Languages of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) was approved; in 2023, the Concept for the Teaching of the Yakut language, Literature and Culture was approved, which outlines a number of measures aimed at creating favourable conditions for teaching the Yakut language, literature and culture in kindergartens and schools, implementing basic and additional general education programmes in the native language, improving the level of native language proficiency, and developing a system of scientific and pedagogical education. The implementation of this Concept will make it possible to create a unified educational space for the native language, including all levels of education, by combining the efforts of the state, society and the family.



Language Development Council under the Head of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

Furthermore, the State programme on Preservation and Development of State and Official Languages in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) for the Period 2020-2024 is currently being implemented. In 2023, the Head of Yakutia, Aisen Nikolayev, approved an increase in funding for the programme to 100 million roubles. The state programme encompasses measures designed to establish the necessary conditions for the development of a system of support for the state and official languages of Yakutia, as well as for the national culture and literature of the republic's peoples.

The Language Development Council, operating under the auspices of the Head of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), is responsible for coordinating and organising activities aimed at developing the state and official languages. In accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation, the Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), and international agreements, the Government of the Republic provides assistance to students residing outside the region in learning the Yakut language.

Annual awards of the Head of Yakutia in the field of preservation, study and development of native languages named after Nikolai Spiridonov, Teki Odulok, Vasily Lebedev, Glafira Vasilevich, Alexander Gertsen, Kirill and Methodius, Professor Nikolai Samsonov, as well as, the badge of honour "For Contribution to the Preservation and Development of Native Languages in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)" are bestowed upon those who have made significant contributions to the field.

These measures are designed to ensure the preservation and advancement of the diverse ethno-

cultural and linguistic heritage of Yakutia.

Native languages in education

The Yakut ethno-cultural education system is regarded as one of the most effective in the Russian Federation. In the regional education system, there are five models of education, depending on the status of the native language and the sociolinguistic situation.

1. The entire period of school education is conducted in Russian, which is the mother tongue of the pupils.

2. Education in the native language (grades 1-4, 1-7, 1-9) with subsequent transition to the Russian language at a designated point in time. The model is operational in Yakut language schools, which are predominantly situated in rural areas and in the city of Yakutsk. This model is partially implemented in locations with a high population density, specifically in Even and Evenki settlements.

3. Education in a non-native language, namely the majority language or the language of vocational education. This model is employed when instructing Sakha children in the Russian language within a multicultural setting and when educating indigenous children in Sakha and Russian, depending on the sociocultural context.

4. Education in Russian or the Sakha language as a non-native language, when the study of the native (ethnic) language is not provided for in the school curriculum for some reasons.

5. Teaching in foreign languages (mainly, Chinese and English). It is anticipated that this model will be implemented in the future.



Students and teachers of the Arctic experimental boarding school

The first three models are the most prevalent ones, ensuring the development of balanced and functional bilingualism and multilingualism.

The Basic Republican Examination (BRE) and the Unified Republican Examination (URE) have facilitated the incorporation of native languages and literature into the curriculum at the secondary level. The BRE and URE are optional and may be selected at the student's discretion. The Republican Examinations have become not only graduation, but also entrance examinations to colleges and universities on a par with the Basic State Examination and the Unified State Examination. These developments have contributed to a resurgence in interest in the native language among the rising generation, the youth and their parents.

The Republican Olympiad of schoolchildren in native languages, is held annually. In 2012, a Unified examination in Yakut language and literature, Even, Evenki, and Yukaghir languages was introduced. The results

of this exam are taken into account for admission to university programmes in philology.

The UNESCO Associated Schools Network (gymnasiums, multicultural schools and polylingual pre-school educational organisations) plays an instrumental role in achieving the objectives of linguistic and cultural preservation. The Arctic experimental boarding school, situated in the Neryungri district, has a particular focus on the education of children belonging to indigenous minority groups of the northern regions. The Nomadic School project was initiated, resulting in the conferral of official status upon nomadic education. The experience has been adopted not only by Russian regions (Yamalo-Nenets and Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Areas, Amur Region and Krasnoyarsk Krai), but also by nomadic schools in Scandinavia, North America and Africa. In addition to the Nomadic School project, a number of innovative educational initiatives have been implemented, including the Pedagogy

of the North, Arctic Teachers, Arctic Educational Cluster, International Arctic Centre for Culture and Art, Arctic School, and others. The objective of each project is to enhance the content of education in order to ensure that children and young people residing in the remote Arctic region have access to quality education on an equal footing with their counterparts elsewhere.

The area of supplementary education is home to centres for integrated study of the language and culture of the indigenous minorities of the North.

Teacher training

The issues of shaping and developing the competencies of native language teachers and linguists within the framework of higher professional education are addressed through a distinctive educational unit at the Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University: the Institute of Languages and Culture of the Peoples of the North-East of the Russian Federation. The Institute provides training in the following areas: 1) Bachelor degree programmes: pedagogical education

(Yakut language and literature and foreign languages (English/Chinese)); pedagogical education (native language and literature of indigenous minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East and primary education); 2) Master degree programmes: philology (Yakut language and literature); cultural studies; folk art culture; linguistics (translation of business literature/media materials, Yakut-Russian, Russian-Yakut translation); 3) Postgraduate training programmes for scientific and pedagogical staff: education and pedagogical sciences (theory and methodology of teaching and education (Yakut language and literature); linguistics and literary studies (languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation (Yakut language); cultural studies (theory and history of culture).

For instance, graduates of bachelor degree programmes gain a comprehensive understanding of foreign languages and the native languages and literatures of the indigenous peoples of Yakutia. The curriculum encompasses the study of the art, culture, history and distinctive characteristics of these peoples, as well as an examination of the various

Participants in the festival of mother tongues "Linguistic Wealth of Russia"





Congress of
Teachers of the
Indigenous
Minorities of the
North

methodologies employed in the teaching of native languages and literature. The objective of the bachelor's programme is to train teachers who are able to work effectively with the children of Yakutia's indigenous peoples, providing them with quality education in accordance with their cultural and linguistic characteristics and needs. Furthermore, graduates of the programme are well-positioned to pursue careers in primary education, ensuring the multifaceted development of children and building their basic knowledge and skills.

In order to further the role of language education, important public events are organised for the pedagogical and scientific community. In 2017, the inaugural Congress of Teachers of Yakut language, literature and culture was convened, while in 2023, the first Congress of Teachers of native languages, literature and culture of the indigenous minorities of the North was held in Yakutsk. In order to address the aforementioned issues, the Association of Teachers of Yakut Language, Literature and Culture and

the Association of Teachers of Native Languages, Literature and Culture of the Indigenous Minorities of the North of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) were established. These associations aim to raise awareness about the challenges associated with teaching the native languages of the peoples of Yakutia.

Scientific and methodological basis

The republican system of ethno-regional education has consistently been distinguished by a robust scientific and methodological foundation, pioneering innovative pedagogical approaches, and exemplary educational practices. These are being disseminated throughout the modernisation of education in the Russian Federation.

Since 1991, the Research Institute of National Schools of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) has been at the forefront of educational research and development. Established on the basis of the Yakutsk branch of the Research

Institute of National Schools under the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the RSFSR, the Institute has formed a scientific and methodological school, conducted research on bilingual, polylingual and ethnocultural education, and developed teaching and learning packages in the native languages of the indigenous peoples of Yakutia.

In 2007, the Institute of National Schools of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) was transferred to federal jurisdiction. In 2020, the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation renamed the institution as the Federal Institute of Native Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation and transferred it to Moscow. A Yakutsk branch was subsequently established, with its specialists currently engaged primarily in the education of the indigenous minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation.

In 2022, a regional Centre for the Study, Preservation and Development of Native Languages was established

at the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in accordance with the instructions of Aisen Nikolayev, Head of Yakutia and Chairman of the Council for the Development of Languages of the Republic. The Centre is responsible for implementing state approaches to scientific and methodological solutions to issues of language preservation and development. It also defines prospects for general and secondary vocational education, taking into account regional, national and ethnocultural specificities. Furthermore, the Centre is tasked with improving teaching and education methods in native languages.

The Institute for Humanitarian Research and Problems of Indigenous Peoples of the North of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences has been operating in the republic for a considerable period of time. Its principal objective is to preserve, study and develop the national (ethnic) identity and cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples of Yakutia.

Digitalisation of the native languages of the peoples of Yakutia

In accordance with the State programme entitled Preservation and Development of State and Official Languages in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) for 2020-2024, targeted projects are being implemented, courses are being organised for those willing to study the Russian and Yakut languages and the languages of indigenous minorities of the North, and mobile applications, digital games, animated films and videos are being created to promote and develop native languages. Specialised news, information and educational websites

Awarding the winners of the national project competition "Mother Tongue – Heritage of the People"

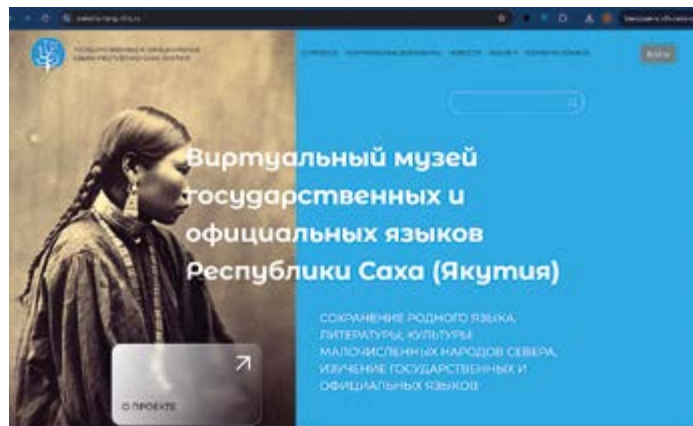


and Internet portals are being maintained, while efforts are also being made to disseminate cultural heritage in native languages.

Thus, the Kulakovsky House of Friendship of the Peoples of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) conducts an annual republican competition for projects pertaining to the digitalisation and preservation of linguistic, literary and cultural heritage, entitled “Mother Tongue – Heritage of the People”.

The National Library of Yakutia occupies a pioneering position in the utilisation of contemporary information technologies for the conservation of the linguistic and spiritual heritage of indigenous peoples of the North. It serves not only as a repository of the most comprehensive library collection in the Yakut language and in the languages of indigenous minorities of the North, but also as the primary organisation for the establishment of a consolidated database for the entire Arctic zone of the country. Furthermore, the library is engaged in the creation of a Virtual Museum of the State and Official Languages of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), which aims to enhance the existing book collection. The museum serves as an educational hub, where representatives of indigenous communities are provided with insights into the significance of their native languages. Additionally, it functions as a resource of information, facilitating the study, preservation and promotion of the state and official languages of the peoples of Yakutia.

The Donskoy-II Institute for Education Development and Professional Development maintains



Virtual Museum of the State and Official Languages of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

its support for the Төрүт тыллар (Native Languages) educational platform, which is designed for use by teachers and learners of the native Yakut language. The Internet portal contains a variety of digital resources, including electronic textbooks, teaching aids, an electronic library with methodological publications, works of fiction included in the school literature programme, an archive video and phonotheque, video lessons in the Yakut language, interactive games, video films and cartoons.

In order to remain current and responsive to the needs of its readership, the Ayar National Publishing Company (formerly the Bichik National Book Publishing House) is engaged in the development and distribution of multimedia editions, e-books, audiobooks, and mobile applications in the native languages of the peoples of Yakutia. The publishing house currently promotes its products on the book market through a mobile application, which is available for download from App Store and Google Play, as well as through the digital catalogue of the LitRes platform. All socially significant volumes, including those pertaining to the field of education, are published in electronic format in accordance with the federal state educational standards.

The Ammosov North-Eastern

Illustration to the Yakut heroic epic Olonkho



Federal University is also making significant efforts to utilise educational and digital technologies. The university's digital domain is home to a unique virtual museum of Russian regional dialects in Yakutia, an innovative digital platform that promotes the preservation of the Russian language, folklore and original culture.

The national media company Sakhapechat has a presence in the republic and publishes a number of magazines, including Cholbon, Dalbar Khotun, Polar Star, and Zabota-Archy newspaper, among others. The media company launched the news portal Ilken.ru, which presents news in both the state languages and the languages of the indigenous minorities of the North of Yakutia. The content includes reports, articles, essays, photo illustrations, and videos about the lives of the indigenous population of the North.

Culture and arts

There are over ten theatres in operation within the Republic,

including the Pushkin State Academic Russian Drama Theatre, the Oyunsky Sakha Academic Theatre, the State Sivtsev-Suorun Omolloon Opera and Ballet Theatre of the Republic of Sakha, the Olonkho Theatre, the Zverev-Kyyl Uola National Dance Theatre of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), and others. On an annual basis, the theatrical institutions of Yakutia host upwards of 300 events of diverse nature.

The Yakut folk epic Olonkho is a source of national pride, encapsulating the linguistic richness of the Sakha language. Olonkho was designated a world masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity by UNESCO in 2005, and included in the representative list of world masterpieces in 2009. In Yakutsk, the Olonkho Research Institute performs its functions, projects “Olonkho Pedagogy” and “Olonkho for the Youngest” are being implemented. Additionally, ethno-centres and studios, as well as school Olonkho theatres are operating.

The critical shortage of its own musicians, in particular, orchestrators and music school teachers, became especially evident in the 1990s, when Yakutia's art gained new impulses for development. At this time, the concept of extending the scope of professional music education, with a particular focus on the structured training of gifted children from across Yakutia in a special boarding school, began to emerge as a key concern within the public consciousness of the republic's population. In 1992, the Higher School of Music of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) was established by presidential decree. The school represents a unique model of an educational institution in Russia, offering a comprehensive three-stage programme of professional training for musicians. The school's principal characteristics are as follows: firstly, the combination of primary (pre-professional) music training of an advanced level with basic general education in grades 1-9; secondly, the implementation of a comprehensive range of secondary professional education curricula in grades 10-11; thirdly, the concentration of the most proficient music pedagogical personnel from Yakutsk within the school; and fourthly, the involvement of leading music pedagogues from the Moscow

and St. Petersburg Conservatories and the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music as permanent consultants. The most significant objective of this process was the practice-oriented training of specialists. From the secondary level onwards, students engage in practical activities within the school and production teams, as well as orchestras associated with the Opera and Ballet Theatre, the State Circus and the State Philharmonic Society of the Republic. Additionally, they participate in the violin ensemble "Virtuosos of Yakutia".

On 1 October 2013, International Music Day, the Republic initiated a large interdepartmental public project, "Music for All," which was spearheaded by the first President of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Mikhail Nikolayev. The project entails the introduction of music education in schools and kindergartens, the unification of creative forces, and the reinforcement of the state and society's influence on the spiritual development of the younger generation. The principal objective of the project is to facilitate the transformation of every schoolchild and student into a proficient music appreciator, equipped with fundamental competencies in playing one of the musical instruments or in choral singing, and capable of independently evaluating musical phenomena based on



Performance by students of the Higher School of Music

Building of the
State National
Film Company
Sakhafilm



an understanding of the most significant styles, national schools, and exemplary masterpieces of music.

The State National Film Company Sakhafilm, which was established in 1992 by Decree of the First President of Yakutia Mikhail Nikolayev, plays an important role in the life of the republic. It performs the functions of a regional enterprise in the sphere of Yakut cinematography, with a particular focus on the production and screening of feature and documentary films. Since its establishment in 1992, the company has produced over 140 films, encompassing a diverse range of genres, including feature films, documentaries, popular science films, and commissioned films. It has also demonstrated a noteworthy commitment to adaptations of literary classics, with films based on the works of prominent authors such as Platon Oyunsky, Dmitry Sivtsev – Suorun Omolloon, Anempodist Sofronov – Alamp, Nikolay Gabyshev, Vatslav Seroshevsky, Egor Neimokhov and others. The film company currently employs a highly professional team of film specialists, including directors, producers, camera operators, and sound engineers. A significant number of their films have been bestowed with the highest accolades at international film festivals.

Currently, over 4,000 skilled professionals are employed in Yakutia in the field of traditional arts and crafts, with over 200 individuals holding the republican title of “People’s Master” or “Master of Folk Arts and Crafts”.

The practice of artistic woodworking among the Sakha people is inextricably linked with both household needs and traditional culture. All wooden ritual dishes and utensils used in Yakut culture are designed to be used during the summer festival of Ysyakh. One such element of Yakut wooden utensils is the “choron”, which represents an exceptional asset of the Sakha people’s material culture, as no other people in the world possess vessels of a similar nature.

Yakutia is one of the few regions within the Russian Federation where the traditional, purely northern variant of artistic bone carving is undergoing development. It is hypothesised that this folk art form is relatively recent in Yakutia. The foundation of its inception can be attributed to the mammoth tusk harvesting that flourished in Yakutia. The initial highly artistic products on which Sakha craftsmen began to learn were handicrafts created from mammoth tusks.

Another area in which Yakut craftsmen have achieved a level of excellence that is unparalleled is the creation of silverware. Silver has historically been regarded as a symbol of beauty and wealth among the Sakha people, and was previously considered to be of greater value than gold.

Conclusion

The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) has the requisite potential for the development and preservation of the native languages of indigenous peoples, which is ensured through the

consolidation of the efforts of public authorities, scientific, educational, cultural and leisure institutions, national book publishing houses, broadcasting companies, the film industry, the IT park, business structures, etc.

It is not fortuitous that Yakutia has been selected on four occasions as the venue for international conferences on the preservation of world languages and the promotion of linguistic diversity. These events have been organised by the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme. The outcomes of these significant fora – the Lena Resolution (2008), the Yakutsk Call for Action: A Roadmap towards the World Summit on Multilingualism (2011), the Yakutsk Declaration on Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace (2014), and the Yakutsk Resolution (2019) – have established a framework for productive collaboration between nations in the preservation and advancement of linguistic and cultural diversity in the context of globalisation. The experience

of Yakutia demonstrates the necessity of focusing particular attention on the following aspects.

Firstly, it is evident that the primary factor influencing the survival of languages is the traditional practice of transmitting them from generation to generation within the family. It is, therefore, essential to prioritise the use of the native language in family communication. It is imperative that the native language is present in the child's environment at all times, whether it be through bedtime stories, cartoons, play or daily activities, communication with adults or peers. The most effective projects are those which conduct large-scale awareness-raising campaigns for contemporary parents at the federal level.

Secondly, organisations responsible for the provision of pre-school, general and supplementary education should ensure the continuity of a language environment that is rich in ethno-cultural information and information in



Traditional Yakut festival of Ysyakh

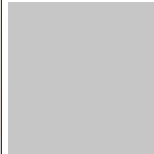
Participants in the III International Conference “Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace” (Yakutsk, 2014)



native languages. It is considerably more challenging to foster a sense of interest and affection for one’s native language when the surrounding environment tends to orientate children towards alternative values. It is therefore crucial to prioritise the establishment of a bilingual educational setting, integrating native languages into the fabric of educational institutions where children spend approximately 15 years, a period characterised by rapid socialisation, personal growth and linguistic development. The cultivation of ethno-linguistic competence among the younger generation will facilitate the continued preservation of native languages.

Thirdly, it is essential that educational organisations are provided with teaching staff who are proficient in the native language. In the first instance, these are teachers of preschool and primary education. It is imperative that the training of bilingual teachers and the development of their professional competence in conducting the educational process in the state language of the Russian Federation and in the native language of pupils be reflected in the federal state educational standards for pedagogical specialities and in the professional standard of a teacher.

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Rimma Zhirkova,
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REPUBLIC OF TYVA



Date of formation: May 24, 1991

Total area: 168 604 square km

Capital city: Kyzyl

Total population: 337 544 people

Indigenous population: Tozhu Tuvans

State languages: Russian, Tuvan

Interregional scientific and practical conference

“The Future of Sayano-Altai Languages: Preservation and Development”

(September 14-15, 2023, Kyzyl, Republic of Tyva)

Organisers

- Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme
- Interregional Library Cooperation Centre
- Government of the Republic of Tyva
- Tyva Institute of Humanitarian and Applied Socio-Economic Research under the Government of the Republic of Tyva
- Tyva State University
- Institute of National School Development under the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Tyva

TUVAN LANGUAGE: HISTORY AND PROSPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT



Vyacheslav MART-OOL

Director, Tuva Institute for Humanitarian and Applied Socio-Economic Research under the Government of the Republic of Tyva

Tyva, the pearl of Central Asia

The Republic of Tyva (also known as Tuva) is a constituent entity of the Russian Federation, situated at the geographical centre of the Asian continent. The republic's borders extend to the Krasnoyarsk Krai, the Irkutsk Region, the Republics of Khakassia, Altai, Buryatia, and Mongolia. The republic's area is about 168,600 square kilometres, and its population, according to the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat), is 337,544 people.

Over half of the territory of Tyva is covered by forest. The territory of the republic is home to over 430 lakes, the majority of which are of glacial origin. Tyva is home to one of the largest rivers in the world, the Yenisei (Ulug-Khem), which has its source in the region.

It is thought that the territory of modern Tyva was first settled during the Asheulean era (400-100 thousand years ago), with the first nomadic civilisations emerging during the Scythian era (IX-III centuries BC). The world-famous archaeological finds from the Arzhan-1 and Arzhan-2 barrows, which provide evidence of the



Azas Lake

Yenisei
River



highest level of development of jewelry and blacksmithing craft in those years, can be dated to this period. The earliest written sources concerning the ancient nomadic states on Tuvan territory date from the Turkic era (6th-8th centuries). The modern Tuvans inherited their language from the ancient Turks.

It is postulated that the Tuvan ethnos in its modern sense emerged between the 18th and 19th centuries during the feudal yoke of the Manchu Qing dynasty. In 1912, the Uryankhai region (as Tuva was then known) achieved independence, and in 1914, it was placed under the protection of Russia. In 1921, during the Russian Civil War, the Tuvan People's Republic

(TPR) was established at the All-Tuva Constituent Congress. Despite its sovereign status, the leadership of the TPR from the second half of the 1930s pursued a course of unification with the USSR. This ultimately led to its voluntary entry into the USSR in 1944, when it became an autonomous region within the RSFSR. In 1961, the Tuva Autonomous Oblast was transformed into the Tuva Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1991, it was transformed once more, this time into the Republic of Tuva. Since 1993, it has been known as the Republic of Tyva (although the Constitution of the Republic states that the names "Tyva" and "Tuva" are equivalent).

The region of Tyva is currently home to a population comprising representatives of 117 different nationalities.

Tuvan language

The 2020 All-Russian Population Census indicates that the total number of Tuvans in the Russian Federation

Tuvan yurts
against the
backdrop of
Mongun Taiga
mountain



Tuvan woman at the celebration of Kyzyl City Day



is 295,384, of whom 7,278 are Tozhu Tuvans. Furthermore, Tuvans reside in concentrated populations in the Krasnoyarsk Krai, in North-West Mongolia, and China.

The Tuvan language (Tyva dyl), which is the official language of the Republic of Tyva along with Russian, belongs to the Sayan group of Turkic languages. As per the classification of UNESCO, it is among the vulnerable languages on the planet. In Russia, 249,000 individuals utilize Tuvan as their primary language, with 248,000 of them employing it in their everyday lives. However, it is notable that 281,000 individuals (representing 93% of the Tuvans of Russia) are proficient in Russian.

The Tuvan language has developed rapidly and exists in two forms: literary and oral, the latter comprising six territorial dialects (central, western, south-eastern, north-eastern, as well as two transitional dialects - Kaa-Khem and Tere-Khol).

The literary Tuvan language encompasses a range of styles, including newspaper-publicistic, artistic, literary-conversational, scientific, and business. The formation of the literary language commenced in the 1930s following the establishment of the national Tuvan written language. Prior to this, the Tuvan language was significantly influenced by Mongolian,

and the Tuvans themselves utilised the literary Mongolian language based on the traditional Old Mongolian script. The date of 28 June, 1930, is regarded as the inception of the Tuvan state writing system, based on the New Turkic Latinised alphabet. It laid the foundation for the purposeful development of the first textbooks, the establishment and growth of educational establishments and the introduction and teaching of the Tuvan language.

Since the 1940s, the Russian literary language has exerted a profound influence on Tuvan, which has resulted in the flourishing of Russian-Tuvan bilingualism. In 1941, the decision was taken to translate the Tuvan script into the Cyrillic alphabet. Dictionaries and grammars of the Tuvan language were produced. The Tuvan language was a mandatory component of legal proceedings.

Until 2015, Tuvan was used in all spheres of social life within the republic. However, there has since been a notable reduction in the scope of its usage. In rural areas, the Tuvan language is employed with greater frequency in familial, everyday household and interpersonal communication. However, in recent years, there has been a disruption in the intergenerational transmission of the native language in Tuvan families, regardless of their place of residence. This is a matter of serious concern to specialists.

Legislative support for the Tuvan language

The status of the Tuvan language, along with Russian, is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Tyva (2001), the Laws of the Republic of Tyva: On Languages in the Republic of Tyva (2003), On Education in the Republic

of Tyva (2003), and On Education in the Republic of Tyva (2014).

The Tuvan-language versions of the laws adopted by the Supreme Khural (Parliament) of the Republic of Tyva are made available on the official website <https://khural.rtyva.ru>. Resolutions adopted by the same authority are published in the Russian language.

Notwithstanding the official status of the Tuvan language, its functions in all spheres of society continue to diminish. The language of office work in the sphere of administrative activities is predominantly Russian. The use of the Tuvan language in legal proceedings is severely restricted. Furthermore, Tuvan is practically absent in many other spheres, including healthcare, economy, transport, trade, and so forth. This results in a decline in prestige of Tuvan and proficiency in it among the younger generation of Tuvans. In light of these developments, the Government of the Republic perceives the survival of the Tuvan language as being at risk. This is due to a number of factors, including globalisation, migration, urbanisation and a shift away from traditional ways of life among the

Tuvan population. In response, the Government is implementing measures aimed at strengthening the status and attractiveness of the native language for the inhabitants of Tyva.

By decrees of the Head of the Tyva Republic:

- the Day of the Tuvan Language, celebrated annually since 2016 on 1 November, has been endorsed. This date was proposed by the People's Writer of Tuva, Alexander Darzhai.
- The National Literary Award of the Head of the Republic of Tuva has been established. This award has been presented since 2019.
- The Terminology Commission, operating under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Tyva, has been constituted as a scientific advisory and consultative body, tasked with the expertise and approval of the terminology of the Tuvan language.
- The Strategy for State Support and Development of the Tuvan Language for the Period 2024-2033 has been approved.
- The State Council on Language Policy under the Head of the

Tsechenling
Buddhist
Temple





Ustuu-Khuree
International
festival of live
music and faith in
the city of Chadan

Republic of Tyva has been established.

State programmes aimed at preserving and promoting the Tuvan language are currently being developed and implemented, with the “Development of the State Languages of the Republic of Tyva for 2021-2024” being the principal one. Regularly scheduled educational, cultural, and awareness-raising events are held with the objective of stimulating interest in the Tuvan language and its development in all spheres of life. These include the Tuvan Language Day, when scientific and practical conferences and discussion platforms are traditionally organised; International Mother Language Day; the national forum “The Tuvan Language – Heritage of the People”; the annual nationwide dictation “Ushdydyk”; and the awarding of prizes by the Head of the Republic of Tyva to persons who have contributed to the preservation and development of the Tuvan language.

Tuvan language in the education system

Until the 1980s, the national school curriculum at grades 1-7 was taught in Tuvan. However, subsequently, due to the unavailability of suitable teaching resources for inclusion in the federal list, schools had to switch to curricula taught in Russian. Thus, the Tuvan language and Tuvan literature were relegated to the status of mere academic disciplines. The number of hours devoted to the native Tuvan language allows pupils to attain only an elementary level of proficiency, which often results in the younger generation switching to the Russian language during preschool and basic general education.

Given the crucial role of the native language in the education system for its preservation and transmission, the current education organisation system sets forth the objective of continuous instruction in the native (Tuvan) language from the preschool level onwards.

A unified programme for the development of native (Tuvan) speech, entitled “Tøreen Tyvam” (“My Native Tuva”), has been introduced in the preschool education sector. The programme encompasses the production of 20 educational cartoons. Professional development courses are regularly conducted for preschool educators engaged in the “Tøreen Tyvam” programme.

The curriculum includes Tuvan language instruction as an elective subject in grades 1-11. In 2019, the federal list of textbooks included didactic lines for Tuvan language and literary reading for grades 1-4. In 2021, the federal register also included model educational programmes for native (Tuvan) language and native (Tuvan) literature from grades 1-11.

A resource centre for ethnopedagogy has been established, comprising 12 exemplary programmes of supplementary education, which have been developed and tested. Mathematics and environmental education textbooks and workbooks

for grades 1-3 have been translated into the Tuvan language and published.

An annual republican Olympiad is held in the native Tuvan language for schoolchildren.

Tuva State University offers a specialisation in “Native Language and Literature”, which provides training for teachers of the Tuvan language and literature at the high school level.

The principal centres of study for the Tuvan language are the relevant departments of the Tuvan Institute of Humanitarian and Applied Socio-Economic Research under the Government of the Republic of Tuva, Tuva State University, the Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow), and the Institute of Philology of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Novosibirsk). The Tuvan language continues to be a focus of attention for numerous foreign scholars, including K. Menges, M. Räsänen, and L. Johansson.

Tuvan girls performing at the Kyzyl City Day celebration



Culture, arts and book publishing

Tuvan is the language used in the performance of stage art, including plays and concerts. The Centre for the Development of Traditional Tuvan Culture and Crafts is engaged in efforts to reinvigorate the traditions of the Tuvan people. However, the repertoires of the Musical Drama Theatre and the Tuva State Philharmonic Society are more limited in scope and include performances designed for children and young people. Furthermore, the Puppet Theatre, which is oriented towards a younger demographic, primarily performs in Russian.

Libraries facilitate the preservation of the Tuvan language by providing accessible literature in digitalised form on their websites. The Chukovsky Children's Library of Tuva, in collaboration with the Library Association of the Republic of Tuva, has been engaged in the digitalisation of children's literature in the Tuvan language since 2022, with the support of a Presidential grant. Additionally, they have been creating audiobooks of Tuvan fairy tales for children, in collaboration with the Tuvan National Orchestra. Additionally, the Pushkin National Library is engaged in the digitalisation of its Tuvan language collections.

Book publishing and mass media

The Tuvan language has given rise to a number of masterpieces of oral folk art, including eight versions of the heroic epic poem "Kezer-Mergen", which is common among the peoples of Central Asia. A substantial corpus of oral folk art has been published in four volumes in the renowned series



National Museum of the Republic of Tyva (Kyzyl)

"Folklore Monuments of the Peoples of Siberia and the Far East".

It is regrettable that the current state of Tuvan book publishing is not as favourable as it could be. The publication of fiction, folklore, translations of Russian and foreign classics, and works by Tuvan authors is ongoing in the Tuvan language. However, in comparison to the 1970s and 1990s, the number of titles and the volume of scientific and artistic publications in the Tuvan language, as well as translated books from Tuvan into Russian, have decreased significantly (the circulation of published books has fallen from 15,000-25,000 to 300-1,000 copies).

In order to ameliorate the situation, a series of measures have been implemented as part of the programme "Development of State Languages of the Republic of Tyva in 2017-2020". In particular, ten volumes of works by Tuvan writers were published as part of the "School Library of Works by Tuvan Writers" series.

The Tuva Book Publishing House publishes literature for children, including Tuvan and Russian folk tales, as well as works by renowned international storytellers. A considerable number of editions are printed in two languages, namely Tuvan and Russian. Of particular interest to children and adults alike are the colouring books based on Tuvan folk

Scholarly works
of the Tuva
Institute of
Humanitarian
and Applied
Socio-Economic
Research



Tuvan language
learning app
“Тывалап
өөрен”



tales. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of contemporary authors producing fiction and cognitive literature for children and adolescents in the Tuvan language. There is a dearth of adapted literature in the Tuvan language catering to the diverse needs of readers with varying levels of language proficiency.

Currently, the sole newspaper published in the Tuvan language with a circulation exceeding 8,000 copies is the newspaper Shyn. Additionally, the Bashky magazine includes a twice-yearly supplement, Tyva dyl, and a children’s magazine, Aldyn kushkash.

The Tyva State TV and Radio Company broadcasts local news programmes with an approximately equivalent duration in both Russian and Tuvan. The Tyva-24 TV channel primarily broadcasts in the Russian language, with only one programme in the Tuvan language.

Since 1936, radio programmes in the Russian and Tuvan languages were available; however, cable radio broadcasting has now ceased. There is a paucity of television and radio programmes in the Tuvan language aimed at children and young people.

Information technologies in the development of the Tuvan language

The issue of preserving the Tuvan language, ethnic identity and cultural heritage of Tuvans remains pertinent in the context of rapid digital development, which requires the introduction of advanced technologies to facilitate the active use of the language in the modern information space.

As a result of the implementation of the aforementioned state programme, an electronic corpus of the Tuvan language, a Tuvan keyboard layout for Android and iOS, a Russian-Tuvan and Tuvan-Russian online translator, and a children’s educational mobile app, “Tyvalapereen” (“Learn to Speak Tuvan”), have been created. The process of assembling parallel phrases commenced with the objective of developing a parallel corpus of the Tuvan language. A Tuvan version of Wikipedia has been created, as well as online dictionaries (Tuvan-Russian, Russian-Tuvan, Tuvan-English), apps for listening to and downloading music, and an app on Tuvan traditions. Concurrently, there is a dearth of online resources for teaching the Tuvan language.

It is essential to continuously enhance the ongoing work, taking into account technological advancements, with the objective of ensuring the seamless functioning of the Tuvan language in the regional Internet segment, in alignment with its status as one of the state languages of the republic. Currently, the Institute of Humanitarian and Applied Socio-Economic Research has developed Plan for Digital Development of the Tuvan Language for 2023-2032, which aims to consolidate and coordinate the activities of various institutions and individuals engaged in the digitalisation of the Tuvan language.

Contemporary Challenges and Risks for the Tuvan Language

The analysis of the current status of the Tuvan language in various domains of Tuvan society reveals that the Tuvan language has not yet fully achieved its intended functions.

The reasons for this situation are twofold: firstly, the legislation on the use of the Tuvan language as one of the state languages in the territory of the Republic of Tyva has not been implemented; secondly, the education system has been unified.

In light of the fact that the terminology used in Tuvan in court proceedings is developed independently by lawyers, it is necessary to develop a unified system of special terms and a scientific study of the official business style of the Tuvan language.

Despite some progress in providing the education system with teaching materials, there is a notable deficiency in the availability of teaching and methodological aids for native language and literature at all levels of education. It is imperative that didactic lines be developed and included in the federal list of textbooks for the subject areas of Native (Tuvan) language and Native (Tuvan) literature for grades 5-11. Furthermore, the development of didactic lines for children with limited or no command of Tuvan, as well as for an in-depth study of the Tuvan language, is essential.

The current situation in the education system can be attributed to several factors, including the cessation of the Tuvan language's role as a language of education and upbringing, the absence of comprehensive theoretical frameworks for teaching methods across all Tuvan language,

folklore and literature domains, the scarcity of instructional materials on Tuvan language and literature, and the dearth of methodologists and qualified teaching personnel at the primary education level.

The most crucial areas of scientific inquiry are sociolinguistic research, the examination of Tuvan territorial and social dialects, and the investigation of bilingualism, language shift, and code switching. These fields of study are crucial for the development of effective scientific and methodological approaches and techniques for teaching Tuvan as a native and non-native language, as well as Russian as a second language.

It is essential that specialists from diverse fields collaborate with linguists to compile dictionaries and enhance the stylistic richness of the Tuvan language. One of the principal objectives is to construct an academic grammar of the Tuvan language, with due consideration of the findings of contemporary research. It is essential to develop internet resources for teaching the Tuvan language, as well as specialised dictionaries. Furthermore, a comprehensive corpus is required, which should include linguistic markup, a spell-checking system, a synthesiser and a recogniser of Tuvan speech.

State Support and Development of the Tuvan Language Strategy for 2024-2033

Notwithstanding the measures implemented to safeguard and reinforce the status of the Tuvan language, its utilisation in diverse domains remains imbalanced. In light of these considerations, the State Commission on the Implementation of

Sculptural
ensemble
"Tsar's Hunt"
(Kyzyl)



Language Policy and Preservation of the National Language in the Republic of Tyva was established in 2022. This body developed the Strategy of State Support for the Development of the Tuvan Language in the Republic of Tyva for the period from 2024 to 2033. This document was subjected to public consultation and professional assessment. On 23 August 2023, the Strategy was formally adopted by Decree of the Head of the Republic of Tyva, Vladislav Khovalyg.

The Strategy has been developed in accordance with the fundamental principles of state language policy in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tyva. It aims to foster harmonious interaction between the Tuvan and Russian languages, as well as to facilitate the development and implementation of coordinated activities among state, municipal, and legislative authorities, scientific and educational organisations, and public associations.

The strategy is focused on the development of systematic measures of state support for the development and functioning of the Tuvan language in various spheres of life against the background of a significant decline in its use and the real threat of its extinction. The main objectives are:

- To provide state, legal, legislative and financial support for measures and activities aimed at the

preservation and development of the Tuvan language as the state language, as well as the development of Tuvan-Russian and Russian-Tuvan bilingualism in the Republic of Tyva;

- To create conditions for the full functioning of the Tuvan language in the Republic of Tyva;
- To stop the language shift and restore the transmission of the native (Tuvan) language to children in natural settings.

In order to implement this goal, it is planned to solve a set of practical tasks in all spheres of life of the Tuvan society.

1. It is envisaged that forms of state support for the Tuvan language and bilingualism will be developed and improved at the legislative level. This will ensure the implementation of legislative norms regulating the functioning of the Tuvan language by all subjects of law. Furthermore, it will guarantee the maintenance of a bilingual linguistic landscape on the territory of the Republic of Tyva through legislative activity.

2. It is planned to develop and implement municipal programmes for the advancement of the Tuvan language, with the objective of fostering the active involvement of public institutions in the implementation of municipal language policy. Furthermore, the intention is to utilise state and public mechanisms for the implementation of language policy in the field of the development of the Tuvan language and bilingualism. It is proposed that state financial support be provided for the development of the Tuvan language and bilingualism within the framework of state programmes. Additionally, it is recommended that the Tuvan language be used more actively in the work of state and municipal officials. State and municipal employees should be provided with the requisite conditions

to master the business Tuvan language and Tuvan as a second language. Furthermore, it is essential to establish a bilingual language environment in the state languages of the Republic of Tyva at the municipal level.

3. In the field of education, it is essential to establish a conducive environment that enables the Tuvan to be utilized as a language of upbringing and education at all levels, as well as for the study of Tuvan as a native and state language. In this regard, it is important to devise efficacious methodologies for gauging the proficiency level in the Tuvan language, thereby facilitating an informed decision regarding the language of instruction and enabling the differentiation of Tuvan language learning pathways. To this end, a plan has been devised for the establishment of a polylingual school, whereby the curricula for primary and general education will be selected with the objective of providing instruction in the native (Tuvan) language and allocating the greatest number of hours to the study of the native (Tuvan) language and literature. The “one language, one teacher” principle is being introduced in preschool education with the objective of ensuring that young children successfully master two languages: Tuvan and Russian. This principle suggests that the educational process in kindergartens should be conducted in Tuvan and Russian, with two teachers in each group. One of these teachers will work with the children exclusively in Tuvan, while the other will work exclusively in Russian. This approach is intended to prevent the mixing of language codes.

4. In the field of science, standardisation of the language, development of its orthographic and orthoepic bases, research and development of the terminological system, and functional styles of the

Tuvan language are of great practical importance.

5. The promotion of the Tuvan language and culture will be accompanied by the support of the translation and publication of literature in Tuvan, including works of Tuvan literature and folklore. This will be conducted through educational initiatives aimed at popularising the Tuvan language and culture. In the sphere of mass media, it is necessary to increase the volume and coverage of television and radio broadcasting in the Tuvan language. Furthermore, support should be provided for new channels and studios, with the objective of ensuring maximum coverage of different groups of the target audience. Finally, the popularisation of the Tuvan language and culture through the mass media should be facilitated.

6. In the field of culture and art, priority is given to the provision of support and development opportunities for Tuvan national and folk theatres,



Traditional archery competition at the annual ritual of offering to the master of Bai-Taiga Mountain



Khuresh, Tuvan national wrestling

Kyzyl City Day
Celebration



literary museums, children’s creative groups and associations. Additionally, the establishment of cultural and family centres (“Friendship Houses”, “language nests”) in municipalities is encouraged, with the objective of fostering the languages, cultural and family values of the Tuvan and Russian peoples. The plan includes provisions for the advancement and assistance of children’s Tuvan cinema. This will be achieved through the establishment of a children’s film studio, the dubbing of films (including animated films) and videos into the Tuvan language, the broadcasting of radio plays in the Tuvan language, the preparation and production of educational games to develop knowledge of the Tuvan language and culture, and the creation of mobile audio applications featuring the most notable works of Tuvan literature.

7. In the domain of spiritual growth and religious belief, it is essential to implement initiatives that facilitate religious and philosophical enlightenment, moral and ethical education, and spiritual development, in alignment with the enduring values of the Tuvan people. Furthermore, it is vital to provide support and facilitate the translation of spiritual and religious literature into the Tuvan language.

8. It is intended that the digital development of the Tuvan language and its utilisation in the Internet space will be facilitated by the creation of a National Corpus of the Tuvan language. This will be achieved through the deployment of contemporary digital technologies for the development of dictionaries, translators, spell-checking systems, speech synthesizers and speech recognizers. Additionally, Tuvan-language cognitive and educational content for young people will be created.

9. It is further proposed that the Tuvan language be supported in other official spheres, including agriculture, healthcare, the economy and banking, and transport. In addition, efforts should be made to stimulate corporate language policy and to create information messages on the official websites of organisations in two languages (Tuvan and Russian).

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of Tyva



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REPUBLIC OF BASHKORTOSTAN



Date of formation: October 11, 1990

Total area: 142 947 square km

Capital city: Ufa

Total population: 4 064 361 people

Indigenous population: Bashkirs

State languages: Russian, Bashkir

Interregional scientific and practical conference

“Language policy in the Republic of Bashkortostan as a factor of sustainable development of the region”

(October 03-04, 2023, Ufa, Republic of Bashkortostan)

Organisers

- Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme
- Interregional Library Cooperation Centre
- Government of the Republic of Bashkortostan
- Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bashkortostan
- Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bashkortostan
- Committee of the Republic of Bashkortostan for UNESCO
- Akmulla Bashkir State Pedagogical University
- Ufa University of Science and Technology
- Akhmet-Zaki Validi National Library of the Republic of Bashkortostan

LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE REPUBLIC OF BASHKORTOSTAN AS A FACTOR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION



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Introduction

The Republic of Bashkortostan is one of the most populous and multinational regions of Russia, inhabited by representatives of over 100 nationalities. As Russian President Vladimir Putin observed during one of his visits to Ufa, “Bashkiria, like a drop of water, reflects entire Russia with its diversity of cultures, religions, languages, and the amicable coexistence of peoples.”

The ethnic map of Bashkortostan was shaped by a lengthy historical process. Until the 17th century, the region was predominantly inhabited by Bashkirs, with the exception of the city of Ufa, where Russian servants and their families lived. During the third and fourth quarters of the 17th century, the Volga peoples began to penetrate the territory of the Urals and the Southern Urals, although their numbers remained insignificant.

In the 18th century, the Russian state intensified its colonisation policy in the east. This involved the development of the mining industry in the Southern Urals, the resettlement of non-Russian peoples in this region, and the integration of the territory

of Bashkortostan into the country. Bashkortostan became a multiethnic region, with settlements founded by Russians, Tatars, Mari, Udmurts, and representatives of other peoples. These processes continued in the 19th century with the arrival of Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Latvians in Bashkiria, and were further intensified in the 20th century against the background of industrialisation and the development of new industrial areas of the Soviet state. Consequently, the republic’s population has been constituted by



Nature of the Chishma District of Bashkortostan

Yumaguzinsk
water reservoir



Aigir rocks
(Shurale's
Teeth)



a multitude of ethnic groups over the course of centuries, resulting in a complex and diverse demographic composition.

As of January 1, 2023, the population of Bashkortostan was 4.1 million, comprising speakers of various languages. The 2021 All-Russian Census revealed that 37.5% of the population identified themselves as Russian, 31.5% as Bashkir, 24.2% as Tatar, and 6.8% as members of other nationalities, including Mari, Chuvash, Udmurts, Ukrainians, Mordvins, Belarusians, etc.

The Republic's indigenous population is constituted by the Bashkirs, a people numbering approximately 1.3 million individuals. The total number of Bashkirs residing within the confines of the Russian Federation is 1.6 million.

Language and writing

In addition to the Republic of Bashkortostan, the geographical distribution of the Bashkir language encompasses the Chelyabinsk, Orenburg, Kurgan, Sverdlovsk, Tyumen, Samara and Saratov Regions, the Perm Krai, the Republic of Tatarstan, the Khanty-Mansi and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Areas, as well as a number of other regions both within and beyond the borders of the Russian Federation. The 2021 census revealed that 1.1 million individuals in Russia and 940,300 individuals in Bashkortostan speak Bashkir.

Bashkir is a language belonging to the Turkic branch of the Altaic language family. It incorporates a number of linguistic elements derived from other languages with which it has been in contact. It has been influenced by a number of other languages, including Kipchak, Bulgar, Tatar, Russian, Arabic, Persian, and the languages of Western Europe. The Bashkir language exhibits the greatest affinity with Tatar, Kazakh, and Nogai, and is closely related to eastern Turkic languages, such as Yakut, Altai, Khakas, and so on. Additionally, it displays evidence of influence from Mongolian, Manchu-Tungus, Finno-Ugric, and Iranian languages. The Bashkir language can be understood in Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, Bashkir exhibits distinctive features that set it apart from other Turkic languages. These include the presence of sounds that are characteristic of Indo-European languages, as well as an unconventional verse structure.

The Bashkir language has three distinct dialects classified as Southern, Eastern and Northwestern. The southern dialect is particularly

prevalent in the central and southern districts of Bashkortostan, as well as in the Samara, Orenburg and Saratov Regions. The eastern dialect is spoken in the north-eastern part of the republic, as well as the Kurgan and Chelyabinsk Regions. The north-western dialect is spoken in the north-western part of Bashkortostan, as well as in some districts of the Perm Krai and Sverdlovsk Region.

The dialects exhibit certain differences in phonetics, including territorial differences, which serve to reinforce the hypothesis that Bashkir is connected to other languages of Turkic and non-Turkic origin.

The history of the Bashkir people provides numerous examples of communication through the use of objects, tamgas, ornaments, and drawings. This method of information transfer was a prominent form of communication during the pre-written era in the Bashkir writing system.

Notched sticks were employed for the purposes of counting, the formalisation of contractual relations and the memorisation of information. Salt and pepper were sometimes employed as object letters. Salt was a symbol of friendship and agreement, while pepper was an expression of disagreement and enmity.

An ancient form of descriptive writing in the form of unique rock paintings has been preserved on the walls of the Shulgan-Tash cave in the Muradymov Gorge. The age of the rock paintings is estimated to be between 36.4 and 14.5 thousand years old. The drawings include realistic images of animals that inhabited the region during the Ice Age, including mammoths, bison, rhinoceroses, and horses. It is notable that this rock art monument features the world's oldest depiction of a two-humped camel, as well as



Traditional
Bashkir
jewellery

numerous signs that have no analogues in other monuments of that type.

Historical evidence indicates that the Bashkirs, along with other Turkic peoples, employed writing in the distant past, from the 6th to the 10th centuries, prior to the adoption of the Arabic script. During the period of the Old Turkic Kaganate, the Bashkir tribes employed the use of Old Turkic runic writing, which has survived to the present day in the form of the Orkhon-Yenisei monuments. The signs were carved, cut or painted on a variety of materials, including stone, bone, metal, birch bark, animal skins and wood. Furthermore, research has revealed that 17 of the 38 letters of the runic alphabet were widely used by the Bashkirs as tamgas, which were placed on familial or family-owned property (utensils, bee hives, trees, livestock, saddles, etc.).

In the 10th century, with the adoption of Islam by the Bashkirs, the use of the Arabic script commenced. A considerable corpus of texts was written in Arabic, including poems,

Bashkir shezheres (genealogies), proclamations of batyrs, tombstones and letters. Nevertheless, the Arabic language was not widely spoken; it was only the educated segment of the Bashkir population, primarily religious leaders, who were conversant in it. A local variant of the literary language of the Turkic people of the Ural-Volga region was created on the basis of the Arabic alphabet, which was accessible to the general population. Until the 20th century, it remained the sole literary language for all Turkic ethnic groups residing in the Volga region and the Urals, thereby ensuring a common cultural space. A substantial corpus of scientific and artistic literature was produced in this language, including works by Miftahetdin Akmulla and writers and poets of the early 20th century. Notable authors who wrote in this language include Mazhit Gafuri, Daut Yuliy and Shaikhzada Babich. The Turkic inscription was incorporated into the inaugural coat of arms of the USSR in 1923.

In 1923, the Bashkir alphabet was formally adopted on the basis of the Arabic script. Subsequently, Bashkir, along with other languages,

underwent a conversion process, first to the Latin alphabet and then to the Cyrillic alphabet, with specific Bashkir phonemes incorporated into the Cyrillic script. The modern Bashkir alphabet comprises a total of 42 letters. A total of 33 letters are shared with the Russian alphabet, with additional nine unique letters: ә, ө, ҫ, Ғ, Һ, Җ, Ҙ, Ҡ, Ң, Ҥ, Ҩ, Ң.

The simplification of the writing system contributed to the expansion of literacy among the Bashkirs. Nevertheless, those who sought to maintain their cultural and historical affiliation with the spiritual legacy of the past were compelled to acquire proficiency in reading Arabic script.

Current linguistic situation

The historical location of the Republic of Bashkortostan at the junction of Europe and Asia, at the crossroads of the millennia-long movement of different peoples and cultures, has resulted in the region serving as a microcosm of Russia itself as a unique Eurasian geopolitical entity. As indicated by the 2021 All-Russian

The Quran of the 18th-19th centuries



population census, the republic is inhabited by individuals belonging to over 130 nationalities, who speak a multitude of languages and dialects, exceeding 160 in number. The native languages of Bashkortostan are Turkic (Bashkir, Tatar, Chuvash), Finno-Ugric (Mari, Udmurt, Mordvin) and Slavic (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian). In addition to the aforementioned languages, there are also German and Latvian, which are spoken by individuals residing in distinct settlements. The speakers of the remaining languages present in the Republic of Bashkortostan are dispersed, and thus their linguistic environment is limited to family and diaspora communities, compatriots, and communities actively engaged in the preservation of their native languages and cultural heritage.



State Assembly –
Kurultai of the
Republic of
Bashkortostan

Measures of state support for the Bashkir language

The Bashkir language is the official language of the Republic of Bashkortostan. The legal status of Bashkir as a state language, on a par with Russian, was first defined in 1920. Since 1993, this stipulation has been incorporated into the Constitution of the Republic of Bashkortostan. In 1999, a local law on languages was adopted, which guarantees every resident of the republic the right to use their native language and the free choice of language of communication, upbringing, education and creativity. This is irrespective of origin, social and property status, race and nationality, sex, education, attitude to religion or place of residence. The aforementioned

legislation also stipulates that the Bashkir language may be used in conjunction with Russian in the state authorities of the Republic of Bashkortostan and local self-government bodies, as well as in state institutions at the republican level.

The enactment of the aforementioned legislation necessitated the formulation of pertinent regulations and other bylaws to facilitate its implementation.

One such document is the State Programme on Preservation and Development of the State Languages of the Republic of Bashkortostan and the Languages of the Peoples of the Republic of Bashkortostan, which is subject to regular updates in order to ensure its continued relevance in the context of evolving socio-political circumstances. The programme encompasses projects and measures designed to ensure the continued functionality of the native languages of the peoples of Bashkortostan, for which budgetary resources have been allocated. The programme for 2019-2024 encompasses a plethora of initiatives, including professional development courses for teachers of national Sunday schools and native language teachers, courses to teach the

Bashkir language to the population, measures to train specialists in literary, simultaneous translation from Bashkir to Russian and from Russian to Bashkir, scientific and practical conferences, seminars and other events dedicated to Bashkir language issues, a dictation in the Bashkir language, the creation of animated series in the Bashkir language, and much more.

The development of the state languages of the Republic of Bashkortostan and the languages of the peoples of the Republic of Bashkortostan is outlined in Decree No. UG-159 of the Head of the Republic of Bashkortostan, dated 14 September, 2017. The Head of the Republic has established annual grants for the implementation of projects aimed at preserving, promoting and developing state languages.

Additionally, the legislation of the Republic permits the use of one's native language in legal proceedings, including those conducted by the judicial system and law enforcement agencies. In instances where participants in a case lack proficiency in the language utilized in court proceedings and office work, they are entitled to communicate in their native language or any other language they select, as well as to utilize the

services of an interpreter. Furthermore, every resident is entitled to address state bodies and organisations in Bashkortostan in one of three languages: the state languages of the republic, their native language, or any other language they are proficient in.

The laws and other normative legal acts of the Republic of Bashkortostan are officially published in both Russian and Bashkir, the state languages of the republic.

The majority of road signs, the names of settlements, the signs of institutions, address plates and tourist navigation signs are displayed in both Russian and Bashkir. This project has been successfully completed since 2000. In recent years, announcements pertaining to railway, air, river, road and city public transport have been made in the Bashkir language.

A significant contribution to the safeguarding of the distinctive linguistic heritage was made by the multifaceted initiatives undertaken by the Bashkir Government to preserve the languages of the indigenous peoples of Russia in the Republic of Bashkortostan. These endeavours were spearheaded by the National Committee of the Republic of Bashkortostan for UNESCO, the

Participants in the series of events to preserve the languages of the indigenous peoples of Russia in the Republic of Bashkortostan



Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme and the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre within the framework of the My Mother Tongue Programme. The experts deliberated on methodologies for the preservation and promotion of the native languages of the peoples of Bashkortostan, proposing specific solutions to the aforementioned problems, including the use of language technologies.

The measures taken at the state level, the language policy of the Republic of Bashkortostan as a whole, including the adoption of important normative legal documents in this sphere, as well as the holding of events on the republican and international levels, provide favourable conditions for the preservation and strengthening of the position of the Bashkir language as part of the national heritage. The language continues to develop and is used on a daily basis by the Bashkir people, with a notable increase in its use in education, culture, publishing, the media, family and household communication. It is becoming increasingly evident that the use of Bashkir is on the rise in urban settings, particularly among the younger generation. It is becoming increasingly regrettable to be unaware of one's native language, particularly in the context of the Republic's course for sustainable development.

Education sector

Education is a field that all residents of Bashkortostan are inextricably linked with. The teaching and study of the Bashkir language is regulated



Studying the traditions of national costumes of the peoples of Bashkortostan in kindergarten

by the republican Law on Education, which stipulates that this is carried out in state and municipal educational organisations in accordance with federal state educational standards. At the request of the parents, the option of choosing the language of education in accordance with their own linguistic preferences is available. This may include the mother tongue, which can be selected from the languages spoken by the peoples of the Russian Federation, including Russian and Bashkir.

The Concept of Teaching the State Languages of the Republic of Bashkortostan and the Native Languages of the Peoples of the Republic of Bashkortostan, approved for the period 2021-2030, is designed to ensure the effectiveness and accessibility of the system for learning these languages.

The ability to speak and write correctly in one's mother tongue is contingent upon the capacity to think and express one's thoughts in it. In order to ensure the continued preservation and development of the mother tongue, significant emphasis

Introducing schoolchildren to the culture of the Bashkir people



is placed on the intergenerational chain “family - kindergarten - school - higher education institution - society” within the region. As a result of the collaborative efforts of the republic’s various ministries and departments, the commendable tradition of receiving education in one’s mother tongue is being upheld.

A total of 13 languages are incorporated into the educational system of the Republic of Bashkortostan. In the regional preschool system, instruction is provided in Bashkir, Tatar, Chuvash and Udmurt, while Mordvin and Mari are additionally studied as native languages. In the 2023/2024 academic year, a total of 29.5% of schoolchildren (153,800 pupils, 8,500 more than in the 2022/2023 academic year) will study their native languages (not including Russian). Furthermore, educational institutions have established the teaching of Bashkir as a state language. In the 2023/2024 academic year, 408,800 students (78.5 per cent) elected to study it, representing a 42,000-student increase compared to the previous academic year.

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bashkortostan is engaged in a significant initiative to establish a network of polylingual multidisciplinary schools.

Eight polylingual schools are currently in operation, two of which are located in Ufa, the region’s capital. One of the distinctive features of these educational establishments is their comprehensive approach to enhancing the quality of the learning process and the overall standard of education. The polylingual education system in the republic is distinctive in that it incorporates not only Russian but also the native Bashkir language and other languages spoken by the peoples of Bashkortostan as the language of instruction. It is anticipated that ten more polylingual educational institutions will be established by 2030.

Furthermore, since 2023, teachers in polylingual schools who teach subjects on a bilingual and polylingual basis have been provided with annual financial support measures.

Further plans include the establishment of a national polylingual

educational centre, which will facilitate year-round polylingual shifts, jamborees, training camps and seminars for both students and teachers of polylingual general education institutions.

One of the most notable achievements of Bashkortostan is the Bashkir language dictation, which has attained an international standard since 2019. At the outset, 70,000 residents of the region participated in the dictation. By 2023, the number of participants had exceeded 340,000 individuals worldwide.

The republic's event calendar includes events designed to preserve and promote the native languages of the peoples of Bashkortostan in all municipalities. In observance of the International Day of Native Languages (21 February), a variety of events are held, including festivals, book fairs, flash mobs, literary marathons, quizzes, as well as unified lessons and school assemblies in general education institutions.

A considerable number of educational establishments in the republic disseminate information through the medium of wall newspapers and organise exhibitions on a variety of subjects connected with the life and work of Bashkir writers and poets, Bashkir folk musical instruments and native languages. Such initiatives not only assist students in developing a deeper comprehension of their linguistic heritage, but also motivate the younger generation to pursue further studies and utilise their native language in their daily lives.

The 39th Gymnasium of Ufa has the distinction of hosting the Jalil Kiekbayev Festival of Native Languages, while School No. 18 of Salavat plays host to the International Festival of Native Languages.

Information technologies in the development and promotion of the Bashkir language

With the support of a grant from the Head of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Ufa programmer Aigiz Kunafin has developed a smart speaker, designated "homai," which serves as an analogue of the well-known Siri and Alexa. It is a language model of artificial intelligence trained on a corpus of Bashkir texts and live speech. The device is capable of responding to queries posed in Bashkir and Russian, providing detailed responses. homai is equipped with a comprehensive knowledge base encompassing the history and culture of the native land, along with the ability to assist in the preparation of traditional dishes. The smart speaker facilitates the dissemination of the Bashkir language, rendering it more accessible and understandable. To this end, three communication profiles have been developed, distinguished by the extent of Russian language incorporation. For those at the initial stages of acquiring the Bashkir language, the speaker will employ a combination of Russian and Bashkir. In contrast, for those who have attained a high level of proficiency, the speaker will exclusively utilize Bashkir.

The team of scientists from the Ufa University of Science and Technology, led by Professor Gulfira Abdullina, has been engaged in the successful development of modern technologies for educational institutions, including those with a polylingual form of education, for over a decade. Ainur Khaibullin has developed a mobile application, "Sələm", which contains over 1,500 frequently used phrases and words in both the Bashkir and Russian languages, covering more than 35 topics. According to the Google Play and App Store, the application has

been downloaded by over 15,000 users. These technologies are being employed with great efficacy in the region’s polylingual educational sector.

Additionally, the staff of the Ufa University of Science and Technology have developed a comprehensive multimedia mobile app for self-study of the Bashkir language, entitled “Bashkir Language Self-Tutorial. Elementary Level” and the mobile app “Bashkir Sign Language”, the first-ever educational and methodological interactive manual for the acquisition of the Bashkir dactyl alphabet and the fundamentals of the Bashkir sign language.

Furthermore, researchers from Ufa University have authored an album entitled *Həzīsə oləsəy əkəttəre* (“Grandmother Hadisa’s Fairy Tales”) within the federal project “Grandmother’s Fairy Tales”. This project, initiated by the Foundation for the Study and Preservation of

Native Languages, aims to establish a nurturing linguistic environment for preschool children, facilitating cross-cultural exchange and preservation of native languages.

The Foundation for the Preservation and Development of the Bashkir Language has developed a free interactive service, IQ BalaBash, which provides children with an enjoyable and effective way to learn the language. The principal character, Snow Leopard, interacts with users in the Bashkir language, making this application suitable for use by adults and children alike.

Another application created by the Foundation, “OS3. Inophone. Bashkirian”, enables users to learn over 350 of the most commonly used words in the Bashkir language in an engaging and interactive manner. The straightforward and user-friendly interface facilitates the initiation of

Participants in the International Recitation Contest of the Bashkir Epos Ural-Batyr



Bashkir language learning at an early age.

In the context of the BALALAR project, which was funded by a grant from the Head of the Republic for the preservation and development of state languages and languages of the peoples of Bashkortostan, a free app, “Əlifba”, has been developed for children from 0 to 12 years old. This app contains Bashkir words with the voicing of letters and words. No Russian translation is provided, since the user sees a picture after the word is collected from letters. The BALALAR project has developed a range of digital products for children in their native language, including cartoons, educational videos, mobile applications and games. These products have been designed to engage children and their parents in a way that is both enjoyable and educational.

The “BashWord” application has been developed with the specific intention of assisting those who are in the initial stages of acquiring the Bashkir language. The exercises have been devised by experienced educators with the objective of enhancing reading, listening comprehension and listening skills in a time-efficient manner, with 10 minutes of daily practice. The 39 sections comprise 117 lessons, encompassing over 1,500 words and phrases, which are designed to enhance language proficiency.

In recent years, UNESCO Associated Schools have been implementing a novel approach to the acquisition of mother tongues, combining contemporary technology with creative methodologies.



Akhmet-Zaki Validi National Library of the Republic of Bashkortostan



Local History Museum of the City of Blagoveshchensk

For example, the Davletkildeev Republican Art Gymnasium has created a series of animated educational cartoons, entitled “The Pearl of Bashkortostan,” in both Russian and Bashkir. The project, which was implemented in collaboration with the Bashkir musical ethnogroup Argymak, provides insight into the artistic, cultural, and natural heritage of the republic, showcasing the contributions of artists, museums, theatres, and natural sites, as well as the rich musical traditions of the Bashkir people. This serves as a compelling illustration of the potential for students to actively engage in the process of learning and promoting their native languages, while simultaneously developing their creative abilities through the utilisation of contemporary technologies.

Cultural sphere

The study and preservation of the languages of the peoples of the Republic of Bashkortostan is also pursued

Performance
of Arman
ethno-folk
band



through the medium of creativity, including through the organisation of various festivals and competitions.

The peoples of Bashkortostan have a substantial corpus of oral folk art. The most notable piece of Bashkir folklore is the folk epic Ural-Batyr. Each line of this unique work is imbued with profound philosophical meaning, and it is our objective to disseminate this knowledge as widely as possible. In order to popularise this work, an international competition is held annually to gather kindergarten pupils, pupils of secondary schools, students of secondary professional educational organisations and first-year students of universities in the Republic of Bashkortostan, regions of the Russian Federation and neighbouring countries. The contest's nominations encompass not only the performance of the epic in the languages of the world's peoples (it has already been performed in Russian, Bashkir, Tatar, Arabic, German, Spanish, English, Azerbaijani, Turkish, Italian, French, and Chinese) but also the creation of a guidebook, a game based on the epics of the world's peoples, a video clip, and essay writing. A distinct section was established for children with disabilities.

The Akhmet-Zaki Validi National Library of the Republic of Bashkortostan houses a substantial collection of documents in various media, currently comprising over 3.3 million items. The collection includes manuscripts and printed editions in Arabic script created in the territories of the Ufa and Orenburg provinces, as well as in the most remote regions of the world and the Russian Empire. The collection includes lists of the Quran and its commentaries, handwritten poetry collections, classic works of Oriental literature, treatises and textbooks on grammar, history and mathematics. A considerable number of these texts were composed and published over three centuries ago. The library houses a rare books collection, which includes the first book of Bashkir national poet Mustay Karim, published in Latin back in 1938.

The National Library is engaged in a systematic programme of action aimed at the preservation and promotion of the native languages of the peoples of the region. A series of events are held in commemoration of International Mother Language Day, including roundtable discussions on the history of textbook creation in native languages, republican flash mobs and street

promotions. Additionally, reading marathons and thematic exhibitions are held.

Since 2019, the Bashkir Language Day (14 December) has been celebrated annually in the republic, with active participation from a range of cultural institutions, including national libraries, historical and cultural centres, the Peoples' Friendship House, and musical ensembles.

Since 2007, the republican competition festival of theatre and folklore groups, entitled "Pearls of Bashkortostan", has been held with the objective of reviving folk customs and traditions, preserving and disseminating the best examples of folk art, engaging schoolchildren in creative activities, maintaining interest in the native language in all its diversity, history, ethnic culture and folklore of the people. The vibrant performances presented by the republic's groups instill a sense of pride in the younger generation towards their native language and the rich spiritual and cultural heritage of their people.

The Republican Centre for Folk Art implements a plethora of projects

aimed at promoting the culture of the Bashkirs, Russians, Tatars, Mari, Udmurts, Mordovians, and Ukrainians, among others. These events have significant public impact, with many gaining recognition not only within the Republic but also abroad. A number of significant festivals and contests are held at the republican, interregional and international levels, including the "Ural Mono", "Berzämlek-Commonwealth", "Salauat yiyuny", "Ashkazar tandary", "Duçlyk moңo", "Irandek Mono", "Tugan tel", "Round Dance of Friendship", Russian Song and Ditty Festival, and so on. Cultural relations with colleagues from other regions of Russia and the State House of Folk Art are undergoing a period of rapid development.

The theatres of the Republic of Bashkortostan serve as an exemplary model for the preservation of native languages and are among the primary vehicles for the transmission of cultural traditions. The theatrical tradition of the Bashkirs has its roots in antiquity. The rituals, songs, dances and ditties were transmitted from one generation to the next. These forms of oral folk



Traditional holiday of Sabantuy

art underwent a process of evolution, ultimately giving rise to theatrical performances. In the present day, a number of different theatres operate in the cities of the region, including those dedicated to the performance of plays in Bashkir, Tatar and Russian, as well as youth, musical and puppet theatres. The theatres stage productions in Russian, Bashkir and Tatar, with many of them providing simultaneous interpretation.

Annually, the Republic of Bashkortostan commemorates Sabantui, the plough festival, with a significant celebration. Those in attendance can look forward to a variety of intriguing events, traditional competitions, and the opportunity to taste the region's distinctive cuisine. The principal events of the holiday include horse races and competitions in traditional sports, the most celebrated of which is the national wrestling sport of kuresh. This involves two participants attempting to throw each other to the ground with the aid of a towel or a broad belt. In accordance with tradition, the contest is initiated by two boys, after which boys and men compete with regard to their seniority. The event reaches its zenith with the duel between two batyrs, the most formidable rivals. The winner is presented with a valuable prize, such as a live ram. Additionally, Sabantui serves as an occasion to laud traditional handicrafts. Skilful needlewomen present a selection of handicrafts, crafted in accordance with traditional techniques.

Media and literature

The inhabitants of Bashkortostan, whether guests or residents, have access to a variety of local newspapers and magazines offering pertinent and engaging content in different languages. As of 1 January 2023, approximately

146 state-run print media outlets have been registered in the republic, with publications in the Bashkir, Russian, Tatar, Chuvash, Mari and Udmurt languages. The total circulation of state media is 247,000 copies.

A considerable number of TV and radio channels, in addition to print media, provide information in several languages. The state sector of TV and radio broadcasting is represented by four TV channels: the socio-political channel BST, the children's channel Tamyр, the musical channel Kurai-TV, and the inter-municipal channel Salam. Additionally, there are three radio channels: Sputnik FM (broadcasting in Russian), Yuldash and Ashkadar (broadcasting in Bashkir).

In the 2022/2023 period, BST was the most popular mandatory publicly available TV channel in Russia's regions, according to the ranking published by MediaHills. In 2023, it became one of the three most popular TV channels among the residents of Bashkortostan, surpassing even the federal First Channel. BST transmits its programming in Russian and Bashkir, as well as in the languages of other ethnic groups residing in the republic. One of the most significant joint initiatives of BST TV channel, Radio Yuldash and the Gafuri Bashkir Academic Theatre is the project "Yaugir Khuze" ("Poet's Word"). This project is based on recordings of the author's renditions of works of war lyrics by Bashkir front-line poets.

Additionally, BST created a series of videos featuring individuals from various ethnic groups in Bashkortostan, reciting Rami Garipov's poem "Tugan tel" ("Mother tongue") in their respective languages. The translations of the poem were subsequently disseminated via the TV channel's social media accounts.

Children’s upbringing based on their native traditions and language is the most natural and consonant with their inner world. The extensive experience of the children’s and youth TV channel “Tamyr” of the Bashkortostan TV and Radio Company serves as a compelling testament to the veracity of this assertion. The influence of their peers has enabled thousands of children to raise their level of proficiency in the Bashkir language. The channel’s programming comprises both in-house productions and dubbed animated and documentary films in the Bashkir language. The films and programmes produced by Tamyr have been the recipients of numerous accolades at international festivals. Notable large-scale initiatives such as the television series for teenagers, “Bireshmə!”, (Do not abandon hope!), “Yshan” (Believe); the animated series “Nurbostan”, the inaugural television competition for Bashkir classical music performers “Elkan”, the inaugural children’s award “Bireshmə!”, the television competition for lullaby songs “Bishek”, the television competition for young bards “Kosh yuly. Balalar” have become a socially significant phenomenon, a school of life and a source of joy for children and teenagers.

The Bashkir publishing house “Kitap”, which ranks among the foremost national language publishing houses in Russia (as certified by the Russian Book Chamber, in 2018 the publishing house released roughly 200 titles with a collective circulation of approximately 103 million copies), is engaged in assiduous endeavors to advance and disseminate national literature.

Kitap is notable for its unique publications, the discovery of new literary talents, and the implementation of innovative creative projects. One such project is the first multimedia book



Works by
Bashkir writers

about the adventures of a mischievous cat, “Shayan Bes’ai. The Disgraceful Cat.” The book features a QR code on the final page that can be scanned to access a digital story game in which readers can interact with the cat, the book’s central character.

In 2023, the publishing house unveiled the audio project “Bashkir Folk Tales” to the public. The characters of the fairy tales were voiced by renowned contemporaries, including Vadim Samoilov, the lead vocalist of the Agata Kristi band, Sergey Prikazchikov, the lead singer of the Pitsa band, and an Honoured Artist of the Republic of Bashkortostan. As a result of this initiative, the Bashkir folk art tradition has been made accessible to a broad audience, including those who have not had the opportunity to engage with the cultural heritage of Bashkortostan.

Conclusion

The native languages of the peoples of the Republic of Bashkortostan

exhibit distinctive characteristics that reflect the particularities of the cultural milieu in which they are embedded. These languages interact and evolve in a dynamic process that shapes the moral and spiritual values of society. These languages serve a dual purpose, functioning both as a means of communication and as a vehicle for the transmission of cultural heritage and traditions from one generation to the next.

The primary custodian of cultural and linguistic heritage is the family unit. One of the most effective tools for preserving and consolidating national identity at the genetic level is the parents' own example as native speakers of the language, who use it in everyday life.

Nevertheless, the coordinated contributions of numerous other stakeholders in the advancement of native languages are also essential. The Government of the Republic of Bashkortostan plays a significant role

in this regard, providing legislative support for the languages of the region's diverse peoples, implementing a comprehensive and well-considered language policy, strengthening positive trends in the promotion of native languages, and creating conditions for their equal functioning.

The development and preservation of the indigenous languages of the inhabitants of Bashkortostan represents a pivotal objective within the republic's educational policy. It can be stated with a reasonable degree of confidence that the educational system of the region provides favourable conditions for variant education, offering the option of using the native language for both teaching and education.

As the development of digital technologies creates new possibilities for the use of mother tongues, it is of particular importance to continue to accumulate and disseminate the experience of the Republic of Bashkortostan in this area.

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of the Head of
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Internal Policy



Ural
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"Salam" and
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KEMEROVO REGION – KUZBASS



Date of formation: January 26, 1943

Total area: 95 725 square km

Capital city: Kemerovo

Total population: 2 547 684 people

Indigenous population: Shors, Teleuts

State language: Russian

Interregional scientific and practical conference

“Kuzbass Language Policy in the Context of the Goals of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages”

(October 16–17, 2023, Novokuznetsk – Sheregesh, Kemerovo Region – Kuzbass)

Organisers

- Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme
- Interregional Library Cooperation Centre
- Association of the Shor People “Shoria”

supported by the Government of the Kemerovo Region – Kuzbass

ISSUES OF PRESERVING THE SHOR LANGUAGE IN THE KEMEROVO REGION



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Introduction

The Kemerovo Region is situated in the south of Western Siberia, sharing boundaries with the Tomsk and Novosibirsk Regions, the Altai Krai and the Republic of Altai, the Krasnoyarsk Krai and the Republic of Khakassia. The administrative centre of the region is the city of Kemerovo.

The majority of the Kemerovo Region is comprised of the Kuznetsk Depression, which contains substantial deposits of black coal. This resulted in the region being designated as Kuzbass

(Kuznetsk Basin), a name that was officially adopted in 2019.

One of the most notable mountainous areas of the Kemerovo Region is Mountainous Shoria, a territory located on the spurs of the Salair Ridge, the Abakan Range and the Kuznetsk Alatau. It is a genuine gem of the Kuzbass region, which is known as “Siberian Switzerland” due to its natural splendour. The region boasts numerous tourist centres, the largest of which are the Sheregesh and Tumannaya Mountain ski resorts.



Kuznetsk Alatau

Population of the Kemerovo Region

The Kemerovo Region is the most densely populated area in Siberia and the Asian part of Russia. It is home to over 130 ethnic groups. The majority of the population are Russians (as indicated by the 2020 census, they count for 2,280,108 individuals, representing 93.7 per cent of the region's total population). For nearly four centuries, the Russian population has coexisted with the indigenous, relatively small Teleut and Shor communities of the Kemerovo Region.

The *Teleuts* are an ancient indigenous people of Siberia, belonging to the Turkic ethnic group. The majority of the Teleuts reside along the Bolshoi and Maly Bachat rivers in the Belovsky district, with a distinct group situated within the municipal boundaries of Novokuznetsk. The total number of Teleuts in the Kemerovo Region is

2,520, with additional groups residing in the Altai Mountains and Altai Krai. The language and culture of the Teleuts are closely related to those of the Altai people, with whom they were officially considered to be part of the same ethno-territorial group until 1993.

The *Shors* are a Turkic people who inhabit the southern part of the Kemerovo Region, situated along the Tom River and its primary tributaries, the Kondoma and Mrassu. Their territory extends across the borders of Khakassia and encompasses the Altai Mountains. The majority of the Shors reside in the region of Mountainous Shoria, with smaller communities located in the neighbouring areas of Khakassia, the Altai Republic, Krasnoyarsk and Altai Krai. The 2020 census recorded a total of 10,507 Shors in Russia.

The formation of the Shors can be attributed to the intermingling of the indigenous Samoyedic and Ugric populations with Turkic-speaking tribes, predominantly Uyghur and Yenisei-Kyrgyz, who migrated to the territory of modern Kemerovo Region during the period of Turkic rule in Central Asia and the Altai-Sayan Plateau, spanning from the mid-6th to the early 20th century.

From an ethnographic perspective, modern Shors can be divided into two distinct groups: the southern group, which is situated in mountainous taiga regions, and the northern group, which is located in forest-steppe areas.

Prior to 1917, the primary occupations of the Shors were fishing and fur trading, in addition to manual farming, stall cattle breeding, trade, and carriage. The most developed crafts included weaving, pottery and netting, leather and woodworking. Northern Shors have historically been significant in the fields of blacksmithing, mining,

Shor family
in national
costumes



Items of
Shorian life



and iron ore smelting, which has led to them being referred to as “Kuznetsk Tatars” by Russians.

For an extended period, the Shors maintained adherence to Tengrianism, encompassing practices such as ancestor veneration, trade cults, and other beliefs.

A total of 2,839 individuals speak the Shor language, of whom 2,626 are of ethnic Shor descent. From a linguistic perspective, the Shors are most closely related to the Altaians and Khakas people, while from a cultural standpoint, they are most similar to the Altaians and Chulym.

Genealogy of the Shor language

The Shor language is a member of the Khakas subgroup of the North-Eastern group of Turkic languages.

The modern Shor language is represented by two dialects, which are classified as belonging to different groups of Turkic languages. The Mrassu dialect, which belongs to the

Khakas group and is linguistically similar to the Khakas language, and the Kondoma dialect, which belongs to the Mountain-Altaiic group and is linguistically similar to Kumandin and Chelkan. Each of the two dialects is further divided into five subdialects.

It is noteworthy that during the mid-19th century, a number of Shors relocated to Khakassia. This resulted in a shift in their language, influenced by Khakas, which is now regarded as a Shor dialect of the Khakas language.

The original Shor lexicon comprises the common Turkic lexical fund, as well as anthroponyms and toponyms. A significant proportion of the vocabulary is of Russian origin, while a smaller percentage is constituted by borrowings from Mongolian and other languages.

Shor script

The Shor script has undergone numerous changes to its graphical basis over the course of its existence.

It is commonly accepted that the first Shor alphabet was devised by missionaries of the Altai Spiritual Mission in the mid-19th century, with consideration given to the phonetic characteristics of the language. The alphabet was developed on the basis of the Cyrillic alphabet, incorporating additional letters ö, ü, һ and і. This alphabet was used for the first books to be published in the language: The earliest known Shor texts are the “Sacred History” (1883), “Indication of the Way to the Kingdom of Heaven” (1884) and the first Shor primer, “Shor kizhileri balalaryn michike yrgetche” (Shor primer for the aliens of the Eastern half of the Kuznetsk district). Notwithstanding the existence of these missionary publications, the majority of Shorians remained unaware

of the Shorian script. Therefore, the establishment of the national Shor writing system is sometimes considered to have occurred in 1927, when Yakov Telgerekov published the primer “Karashkydaň shygar. Shorlardyň pashtapky ýrgencheň boukvary.”

As the process of Latinisation of scripts was actively underway in the USSR in the 1920s, the Shor Latinised alphabet was introduced in 1929. However, this offered no advantages and only hindered the cultural development of the Shor people. Furthermore, the newly introduced alphabet lacked the requisite letters to represent a number of specific Shor sounds, thereby rendering the identification of morphemes a challenging endeavour. In 1939, a further transition was made to the Cyrillic alphabet.

The literary Shor language was formed on the basis of the Mrassu dialect. During the period of existence of the Gorno-Shor National District (1929-1939), a substantial corpus of literature in the Shor language was produced. This included primers, grammars, reading books, textbooks on mathematics, geography, and history, as well as teaching aids, a Russian-Shor dictionary, and the works of the first Shor authors. From 1932 onwards, the newspaper Kyzyl Shor (literally, “Red Shoria”) was published. During this period, the Shor language was employed in legislation, administration, and legal proceedings.

However, the development of industry in Mountainous Shoria resulted in the dissolution of the Gorno-Shor National District. Furthermore, the subsequent repression of the population deprived the Shors of any public figures capable of defending their political and cultural rights. The territory was subdivided into three administrative

districts: Kuzedeevo, Tashtagol, and Myski. In 1942, the final edition of the Kyzyl Shor newspaper was published in the Shor language, and all Shor schools were subsequently closed. The Shor language was proscribed, no longer used as a written language and no longer taught in schools.

The resurgence of Shor writing commenced in 1988 with the introduction of a novel alphabet, devised by Elektron Chispiyakov and based on the Cyrillic script. In the revised orthography, the letters denoting iotated vowels were no longer employed in native words or in early Russian loanwords, remaining solely for later loanwords. Furthermore, specific phonemes of the Shor language were represented by the addition of new letters. The modern Shor alphabet comprises 39 letters, including special symbols: ƒ, ƙ, Һ, օ, ӱ.

Shor folklore

The lives of the Shor ancestors, the economic set-up of their life, material and spiritual culture, and their rich and peculiar history are depicted in Shor folklore. As Andrey Chudoyakov asserts, folklore represents the most expansive and diverse aspect of the Shor people’s spiritual existence. The corpus encompasses all forms and phases of folk art.

The largest genre is that of the heroic epic. The Bogatyr tales (Alyptyg nybak) were performed through throat singing (kai) accompanied by a two-stringed plucked musical instrument, the komus, which was typically presented during nocturnal performances. The oral folk art tradition has been meticulously preserved by numerous generations of kaichi until the present day. Additionally, tales, narratives, and legends; riddles, proverbs, and sayings;

practices related to hunting, weddings, love, praise, history, and other subjects were also prevalent.

The current linguistic situation

It is regrettable that the number of individuals who speak the Shor language is declining on an annual basis. All Shors are bilingual and tend to utilise Russian as their primary language in their everyday lives (according to the 2010 census, 99.7% of Shorians speak Russian, with 60% of this group identifying it as their mother tongue).

The Shor language is not currently employed in the activities of the authorities, judicial proceedings, industry, trade, transport, theatre or cinema.

The corpus of Shor literature comprises primarily collections of folklore, fairy tales, heroic tales, poems by Shor poets, as well as national songs, riddles and proverbs.

There is a paucity of scientific and non-fiction literature in the Shor language. However, Shor empirical material is presented in sufficiently large quantities in scientific publications in Russian, English, German and Turkish.

The dissemination of Shor language content via television is confined to a single weekly broadcast, which lasts for less than ten minutes.

In familial and domestic discourse, the Shor language is employed by individuals belonging to the older and middle generations, particularly in remote compact settlements. Nevertheless, the processes of urbanisation and assimilation, as well



Komus, a traditional Shorian musical instrument

as the influence of the mass media, are transforming the perceptions of life even among the inhabitants of such settlements, who are increasingly communicating with each other in Russian. The majority of young people today do not perceive the necessity to learn the Shor language and to maintain their national culture.

In light of these concerning developments, regional authorities and activists are taking steps to safeguard the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Shors.

Legislative support

In accordance with the Law on Indigenous Minorities of the Kemerovo Region – Kuzbass, the Shor language is identified as the language of indigenous minority population within the Russian Federation.

In order to guarantee the rights of minor indigenous communities to develop their ethnic cultures, the Kemerovo Region government has developed and implemented regional programmes providing for the creation of conditions to identify, preserve, support, develop and study the intangible ethno-cultural heritage of indigenous peoples, holding various ethno-cultural

events, supporting the work of ethnic cultural public associations, publishing national literature and educational and methodological aids aimed at preserving the native languages of small indigenous minorities, improving the system for training indigenous language teachers, organising language courses, etc.

Interethnic cultural cooperation in the Kemerovo Region is strengthened through the support of amateur national art and artistic endeavours.

Preservation of traditional Shor culture

Numerous national public associations, national cultural centres, autonomies, associations, meeting centres and creative national collectives are active in the Kemerovo Region. A total of 48 public organisations are registered in the region, including 10 Shor organisations, as well as five clan and territorial communities representing indigenous minorities of Kuzbass.

Since 2001, the Coordination Council of National Public Associations of Kuzbass has been in operation, serving as the unifying centre for all national organisations, diasporas and

communities in the region. The Council is comprised of the leaders of the most prominent and active organisations, including the Association of the Shor People “Shoria” aimed at reviving and developing the Shor language, original culture, traditions and customs of the Shor people. It works with Shor youth and organises cultural events.

In response to the initiative of the Kuzbass authorities, a series of interethnic forums, traditional national holidays, festivals and creative projects are organised on an annual basis. These events are made possible through the participation of various public associations. Such initiatives contribute to the revitalisation and dissemination of the spiritual heritage of the Shor people, safeguarding their folklore, national customs, traditions, culture and sports, and consistently attract a considerable number of attendees. In January, the Myltyk Payram (“Gun Festival”) is held, which commemorates the commencement of the hunting season. The programme comprises a series of traditional rituals, competitive games, instructional sessions on the preparation of traditional Shor dishes, and performances of ethnic music. In March, the Shorian New Year, Chyl Pazhi (“Head of the Year”), is celebrated. This is a day of

purification and blessing. Those in attendance at the festivities have the opportunity to engage in archery and observe the art of throat singing performed by masters. One of the most notable summer Shor holidays is Pairam, which is attended by delegations from numerous cities and towns within the Kemerovo Region, including creative folklore groups,

Joint meeting of the Council on Interethnic Relations and the Interreligious Council under the Governor of Kuzbass



members of public national associations, and athletes.

In July and August, the Cedar Festival, the Legends of Tomusa Ethno-Festival and the celebration of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples take place. These events feature a variety of traditional activities, including shamanic chants and throat singing, national sports competitions, and displays of traditional crafts. Blacksmiths, potters, carpenters, folk artists, hunters, fishermen, and cooks showcase their skills in these displays.

For several decades, the interregional competitions of Shor hunters and the Spartakiade (sports contest) of Indigenous Minorities of the Kemerovo Region have been held with the objective of developing national sports that reflect the cultural identity and the spirit of the peoples of Kuzbass.

In order to foster the creativity of indigenous minorities in the region and to facilitate the revival and preservation of their cultural heritage and native language, the Ministry of Culture and National Policy of Kuzbass organises the traditional Elim Festival. This festival encompasses a range of artistic disciplines, including solo performances on traditional musical instruments and instrumental ensembles, puppet theatre in the Shor and Teleut languages, folk and applied arts, and other forms of traditional expression. At the festival, one may observe and hear the playing of Shor musical instruments, including the kai-komus and tambourine.

A significant initiative in the support of Shor culture was the establishment of the Ene Tag (Mother Mountain) spiritual centre, made possible with the



Participants in the Elim Festival

assistance of Sibantracit Group. This centre offers insights into the customs, household and way of life of the ancient Shors. In 2021, an ethnographic village of the Shor people was established on the grounds of the spiritual centre. The village is designed to represent a traditional Shor settlement and includes a dwelling with a wood-burning stove, a blacksmith's shop, a summer veranda, and outbuildings.

Efforts of the education sector to preserve and develop the Shor language

The scientific and pedagogical community of the Kemerovo Region is engaged in an ongoing process of exploring novel approaches and methodologies for the preservation of the native Shor language, while also striving to facilitate effective learning experiences for the younger generation.

In the context of pre-school education, the Shor language is employed as a pedagogical tool in two kindergartens situated in the town of Tashtagol. In Secondary Boarding School No. 16 in Orton, a settlement within the Mezhdurechensk urban district, the Shor language is employed

Students of the Chasky Centre for Shor culture, language and literature (Sheregesh settlement)



as the medium of instruction and is studied as a subject from grades 1 to 9. In five educational establishments in the Tashtagol district, two in the Mezhdurechensk urban district and one in the Myski urban district, Shor is taught as an extracurricular activity from grades 2 to 7. The Chasky Centre for Shor Culture, Language and Literature in Sheregesh and the Children's Creativity Centre in Mezhdurechensk provide supplementary general education and general development programmes in the Shor language, literature and culture for students aged 5 to 18.

In order to ensure the continued preservation and sustainable development of the native language, literature and culture of the Shor people, practising teachers of the native (Shor) language have prepared a range of electronic and digital educational resources and materials, which are employed in distance learning on the basis of an exemplary educational programme for the teaching of the native (Shor) language to students of general education institutions using published federal textbooks. Furthermore, additional general education programmes for teaching

Shor children are being developed. In particular, a new methodological system is being created for teaching the state Russian language based on the native Shor language, using the examples of students in the Tashtagol district who are learning or already know the Shor language.

The study of Russian and Shor languages provides an opportunity for children of Shor nationality to develop

bilingual proficiency in both languages. At the time of their entry into school, not all children are equipped with the knowledge of their mother tongue, Shor. In urban schools, the majority of children commence their learning of the language from the outset, as their families are already at least the second generation to reside in the city. Nevertheless, when listening to the speech of representatives of the older generation, reading and seeing the names of settlements in the Shor language, and listening to the songs of folk amateur groups and young performers, these children are passive participants in the language situation.

A considerable number of textbooks and study guides for educational institutions at both the secondary and tertiary levels are available in both Shor and Russian, with examples in Shor. A notable accomplishment was the publication of a series of Shor language textbooks for primary education that align with the Federal State Educational Standard. The project is led by Elena Chaikovskaya, a prominent linguist and pedagogue in the region, and a representative of the Shor people.

A methodology for the teaching of Shor as a foreign language is also currently under development.

In order to stimulate greater interest in the Shor language among students and their parents, schools organise open meetings for parents, where teachers provide information on the possibilities for learning the Shor language, both within the main educational programme and in extracurricular activities and supplementary education.

The Shor language and folklore are employed by educators as a means of studying ethnic applied arts. This enables students to expand their knowledge base by gaining insight into the multifaceted cultural heritage. A comparative analysis of Shor and Russian epic poetry facilitates a deeper comprehension of the evolution of epic forms across diverse cultural contexts, elucidating the interconnections and influences between them.

For the study of Shor language, literature and culture in Kuzbass, an educational web resource is effectively operational. This has been placed by the Association of the Shor people, “Shoria”, in a special section of the menu of its website¹. The section and its resource content (textbooks, manuals, films) have been developed by members of the Association for

Shor language teachers and all those willing to study Shorian language and literature through a centralised platform that brings together methodological, educational and cognitive projects in the field of culture and language. These include normative documents (native language programmes for grades 1-4, thematic plans for Shorian literature for grades 5-7), educational literature and educational films on the language:

- textbook *Ezenoktar! Shorian language for the first year of learning as a non-native language* (with video and audio applications);
- workbooks with games for children;
- a collection of dictations and tests for self-control and school work;
- *Shorian language primer for Grade 1* (Prosveshchenie Publishing House, 2020);
- Collection of linguistic games and tasks *Fun Grammar. 100 tasks*;
- a series of video lessons of the Shor language (15 lessons of 7 minutes each contain thematic videos, printed texts, information about the culture and life of the Shor people, a system of tasks, etc.);
- educational film “Tales of Shapkai in the Shorian language” for physical education lessons.

For literature lessons, the section accommodates:

Shor language lesson in Mezhdurechensk school



Shor language textbooks

¹ <https://шория.рус>

- programmes, texts and methodological commentary on the study of Shorian literature in grades 5-7 with presentations;
 - 6 lectures with presentations on the study of general themes of Shorian literature at school (“Ancient Turks in the works of Tayana Tudegesheva”, “Ritual and Mythological Context of Shor Literature in Grade 6”, “The Hunter’s Code in Safron Totysh’s story “Son of Taiga”, Stepan Torbokov and his taiga dwellers – bearers of human qualities”, “The Past as Mytho-Poetic Time in Shorian Literature”, “Stepan Torbokov and His Pedagogical System in Poetry”);
 - multimedia project “Palymbai sarynnar” (“Shor Lullaby”). The set includes printed texts of Shor lullabies, methodological support “Lullaby as a lyric of motherhood”, a puzzle game, an animated film based on Shor lullabies, and audio recordings of Shor lullabies;
 - books by Shor authors published in small editions, which are not accessible to readers, in a special subsection “Electronic Library”;
 - video film “Shor poetry performed by the authors”.
- Furthermore, as part of the integrated programme on the Shor language, literature and culture, schoolchildren are introduced to various forms of fine art based on materials of oral folk art in the Shor language. an original set of didactic aids, entitled “Karysh. My First Steps” has been developed to facilitate the consideration of the ethno-regional dimension of Mountainous Shoria in the study of Shor language, culture and literature, as well as local history and ethnography. The set comprises a didactic guide, entitled “Tanysh” (“Getting to know each other”), and a didactic colouring book, entitled “Taglyg Shor cherlerdi” (“Animals of Mountainous Shoria”). These resources facilitate the expansion of children’s vocabulary and the broadening of their outlook by introducing them to the animal and plant world of Mountainous Shoria

Video lesson
of the Shor
language



Шорский язык. Видеоурок №1

4.3
Рейтинг

2345
Просмотров

Шорский язык Видеоурок 1
⋮

ЭЗЕНОҚТАР!

Так начинается общение
Горной Шории,
чит «Здравствуйте»!

ИШ №1 (Урок №1) - ЭЗЕНОҚТАР (Приветствие)

and the culture of the Shor people. As part of the integrated curriculum, considerable attention is devoted to the study of the Shor national costume, encompassing its distinctive features, the materials and techniques employed in its production, and the influence of traditional worldviews on its design. Throughout the academic year, pupils are offered the opportunity to participate in masterclasses on the production of traditional jewellery, Shor embroidery techniques and belt weaving. These sessions are held during school hours and also during the school holidays.

Furthermore, public organisations of the Shor people of the Kemerovo Region implement social projects with the objective of preserving and developing the Shor language. For example, in the cities of Myski and Novokuznetsk, public figures have initiated open classes in the Shor language, which are available to all interested parties.

At the Kuzbass Humanitarian and Pedagogical Institute of Kemerovo State University, the Shor language is employed as a pedagogical instrument in the training of educators specialising in the Russian language and literature within the Native Language and Literature programme.

Conclusion

In the context of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), activities to preserve and develop native languages in the Kemerovo Region have been reinvigorated. A regional organising committee has been established in Kuzbass with the objective of preparing and conducting the Decade, and an action plan for the period 2022-2024 has been devised. This

plan encompasses the training of young specialists, the professional development of teachers of the Shor and Teleut languages, and the organisation of events with the aim of preserving, promoting and studying the native language and traditional culture of the indigenous minorities of the region.

The majority of the Shor population has not yet identified the necessity to study their native language, largely due to the significant limitations in its spheres of use. In the contemporary era, particularly when individuals relocate from rural to urban settings, even elderly speakers of the Shor language tend to cease communicating in their native tongue and gradually lose proficiency in it. It is therefore of the utmost importance to foster a favourable linguistic environment and to facilitate communication in the Shor language, particularly within the family unit.

The Kemerovo Region has amassed a substantial corpus of experience in the education sector's engagement with the preservation of indigenous languages. This includes



Preservation of Shor embroidery traditions

the publication of educational and methodological literature, the development of distinctive curricula, and the organisation of linguistic camps. Nevertheless, it is imperative that all stakeholders be engaged in the processes of language preservation and promotion, and a well-considered and targeted language policy be implemented.

In 2023, the Kemerovo Region – Kuzbass State Programme “Culture of Kuzbass” was adopted. Its principal objectives are the preservation of the region’s cultural potential and heritage, the creation of conditions conducive to the development of the languages of the various nations and nationalities residing in the region, and the promotion of interethnic peace and stability in Kuzbass. It is anticipated that the realisation of these goals will facilitate the emergence of new opportunities for the Shor language.

The discussion of traditional and innovative measures of language support was conducted within the framework of a series of events for the preservation of indigenous languages of Russia in the Kemerovo Region. These events were organised in October

2023 by the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme, the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre and the Association of the Shor People “Shoria” with the support of the Government of Kuzbass. Experts delineated novel promising avenues of inquiry in this domain, employing advanced computer technologies. Since the younger generation does not perceive a language as vibrant and in demand if it is not represented in the digital environment and cannot be utilized in the contemporary communication environment, IT are especially crucial for fortifying the position of the indigenous languages of the region in the digital realm. The development of digital tools (speech recognition and synthesis systems, online dictionaries, online translators, etc.) will be contingent upon the creation of a corpus of the Shor language through the digitisation of existing texts of national literature. Joint efforts of the scientific community and language activists, with the support of the authorities and private businesses, will facilitate the promotion and ensure the full functioning of the indigenous languages of Kuzbass at a new level.

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ALTAI KRAI



Date of formation: September 28, 1937

Total area: 167 996 square km

Capital city: Barnaul

Total population: 2 115 308 people

Indigenous population: Altai people (Kumandins, Chelkans, Tubalars, Teleuts, Telengits)

State languages: Russian, Altai

Interregional scientific and practical conference

“Preserving and Promoting Mother Tongues in a Multicultural Region”

(November 23–24, 2023, Barnaul – Biysk, Altai Krai)

Organisers

- Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme
- Interregional Library Cooperation Centre
- Ministry of Culture of the Altai Krai
- Shishkov Universal Research Library of the Altai Krai

supported by the Government of the Altai Krai

CURRENT STATUS AND PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE KUMANDIN LANGUAGE IN THE ALTAI KRAI



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Altai Krai

The Altai Krai is a constituent entity of the Russian Federation, situated within the Siberian Federal District. The Krai occupies an area of 167,996 square kilometres, making it the 24th largest constituent entity of the Russian Federation and the 10th largest in the Siberian Federal District. It is fronted to the north by the Novosibirsk Region, to the east by the Kemerovo Region, to the south-east by the Republic of Altai, and to the south and west by the 843.6-kilometre-long stretch of the Russian state border with the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The Altai Krai has a long and eventful history with regard to its ethnic composition. The region's rich ethno-cultural uniqueness, which has been repeatedly noted by travellers and researchers over the past centuries, remains intact to this day.

Kumandins, an ethnic group included in the list of indigenous minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation, have a relatively dense population in the region, with a total of just over two and a half thousand individuals.



Sacred mountain of Chilgai

Main stages of ethnogenesis of Kumandins

Kumandins are an ancient Turkic-speaking indigenous people who have inhabited several regions of Russia for centuries. They are currently resident in the following regions of Russia: Altai Krai (Biysk, Krasnogorskoye, Solton districts), Altai Republic (Turochak district) and Kemerovo Region (Tashtagol district).

The ethnonym “Kumandy” is believed to be derived from the ancient name of the totem of the people, which was the swan. According to legends, Kumandins are said to have originated from this bird.

The traditional Kumandin settlements were few in number and located in a narrow strip along the rivers. They exhibited no clear layout. In the regions where Kumandins settled (the basins of Biya, Nenya, Suzop, Kazha, and Isha rivers), it is customary to distinguish two major ethnographic groups: the upper Kumandins (Oryo Kumandy) and the lower Kumandins (Altyna Kumandy). The former are located in the upper reaches of the Biya river, while the latter are situated in its lower reaches.

The earliest known period of Kumandin ethnogenesis is thought to have begun around the turn of the 16th-17th centuries. The question of the ethnic history of Kumandins is a topic of ongoing research and debate among historians and archaeologists. A comparative analysis of the fundamental economic and cultural ethnic features, including production terminology, house building, basic occupations, tools of production, clothing, rituals, mental traits and traditional beliefs, has led scientists to identify three ethno-cultural strata as the basis of the formation of the Kumandin ethnos.

In the first instance, this is the Palaeosiberian hunting and fishing stratum. The primary activity is the regular hunting of migratory wild reindeer. In pursuit of the animal, Kumandin hunting artels, frequently united with those of neighbouring peoples (Shors, Sagai, Beltir), on occasion reached the latitude of Yeniseisk.

The second is regarded as an agricultural, horse breeding and craft ethno-cultural stratum, designated the Dingling ethno-cultural stratum. Its origins are attributed to the Hun-Sarmatian epoch. In terms of traditional occupations, this stratum encompasses farming on plains and mountain slopes,

the rearing of cattle at home, and tribal horse breeding, which is characterised by a rich and unique terminology. Mining, metallurgy and domestic handicrafts were of particular importance to Kumandins, becoming the principal source of livelihood for the entire ethnos. These skills were maintained until the mid-twentieth century. It is attested in written sources that the quality of the iron, steel and metal



The basins of the Biya, Nenya, Suzop, Kazha, and Isha rivers are the ancestral home of the Kumandins in the Altai Krai



Residents of Kumandin settlements. Late 19th - early 20th century.

products produced in the region was of an exceptionally high standard. Every male Kumandin was required to possess the skills necessary for mining and blacksmithing.

Furthermore, the historical memory of Kumandins has preserved direct information that allows us to attribute the starting point of ethnogenesis to the Dingling-Hun period. These are comprehensive ethical and religious texts, recorded between 1987 and 1990 by Makar Kastarakov from the Upper Kumandin region. The texts depict the Dins as fair-haired, bright-eyed, and tall individuals, which aligns with the anthropological observation of their Caucasoid phenotype (notably higher than that of neighbouring populations, including those with close genetic ties).

Finally, the most recent, relatively weakly expressed ethno-cultural stratum of semi-nomadic pastoralists, exhibiting the culture of the all-Turkic type, must be mentioned. This is correlated with the presence of a discernible Kypchak layer in the Kumandin language, as well as in practices relating to herding, herd horse breeding and sheep breeding, and furthermore, in domestic crafts associated with leather and bone-cutting.

All three ethno-cultural strata gave rise to a unique local economic and cultural type of foothill farmers-pastoralists-craftsmen, representatives

of which Kumandins and part of the future Shors remained at least until the second half of the 18th century. The initial phase of the Kumandins' ethno-formation was concluded with the establishment of the Kumandin Yasachnaya Volost and its subsequent incorporation into the Russian Empire.

At the present time, the primary ethnic processes among Kumandins are assimilationist in nature. There is a considerable proportion of mixed marriages among this population, with up to 70% of marriages involving a Russian partner. Furthermore, the processes of linguistic and cultural assimilation, urbanisation and the reduction in the number of Kumandin



Kumandin woman in traditional dress with an invariable attribute - a wooden pipe (kan-za)

ethnic representatives have a significant impact on the erosion of the Kumandin culture.

Religion and culture of Kumandins

The traditional religious beliefs of Kumandins were characterised by a strong animistic component, whereby a range of spiritual entities, including those associated with water (sug-ezi), fire (from ene), mountains, taiga, and so forth, were held in high regard. A central role in the religious practice of the Kumandins was played by the shaman (kam), who served as an intermediary between people and spirits, as well as supreme deities. From the early 19th century, the

Kumandin shaman (kam)



Kumandins were converted to Orthodox Christianity. However, the traditional pagan beliefs and practices persisted, and continue to the present day.

The oral folk art and artistic traditions of Kumandins have been insufficiently studied, which represents a significant gap in the existing research. The most prevalent genres of folklore in the region's historical past were song quatrains (takpak), assorted forms of domestic and magical fairy tales (chorchok), and epic works (kai). A distinctive role was played by kaichi,

who were master performers of fairy tales and epics, and shorchi, who were performers of songs accompanied by the shor musical instrument.

General characteristics of the Kumandin language

The Kumandin language represents a northern dialect of the Altai language, which is a member of the Uyghur group of Turkic languages. Three distinct dialects are identified within the Kumandin language. These are Turochak, Solton and Starobardin.

A number of phonetic features indicate that the Kumandin language is closely related to the Shor language and, to a lesser extent, the Khakas language. However, it also exhibits distinctive characteristics that set it apart not only from other Altai dialects but also from the broader Turkic language family. The older generation of Kumandins continue to utilise their native language in everyday communication, whereas younger individuals tend to favour Russian, which is the dominant language among all Kumandins.

The Kumandin language is currently experiencing a notable influence from the Altai literary and Russian languages. This is due to the fact that the Kumandin people reside in an area where they interact closely with Russians, as well as with Southern Altaians. Furthermore, in the Solton district of the Altai Krai and the Tashtagol district of the Kemerovo Oblast, Kumandins reside alongside Shors, which results in the Kumandin language exhibiting certain influences from the Shor language.

In the mid-19th century, missionaries of the Altai Spiritual Mission developed a script for the Altai language, which Kumandins employed to record their

language during the pre-revolutionary period. The dissemination of Christianity in Altai during the latter half of the 19th century gave rise to the initial corpus of religious texts in the Kumandin language. In the 20th century, studies and dictionaries of the Kumandin language were produced.

In the early 1930s, an endeavour was undertaken to educate the Kumandins in their native language. For this purpose, in 1933, the “Kumandy-Bukvar” (Kumandin Primer) edited by Nikolay Kalanakov, was published using the Latin alphabet. Nevertheless, this initiative did not progress further, and the teaching of Kumandins in schools continues to be conducted in Russian to the present day.

The first dictionary publication to include a grammatical description of the language was Nikolay Baskakov’s monograph, “The Kumandin dialect (Kumandy-Kizhi): grammatical sketch, texts, translations and dictionary,” which was published as part of the series “Northern dialects of the Altai Oiro language” in 1972. Subsequently, a Russian-Kumandin phrasebook, entitled “Learn to Speak Kumanda”, was compiled under the supervision of Feofan Satlaev, based on the aforementioned study.

In the 2000s, with the growth of ethnic self-awareness, interest in the Kumandin language began to revive once more. In 2005, Leonty Tukmachev’s “Alphabet of Kumanda” (“Alphabet of the Kumandin people”) was published in the Altai Krai. This included a Cyrillic-based alphabet and a Kumandin-Russian dictionary. In the same year, M. Petrushova published a textbook entitled “A Brief Grammar of the Kumandin Language”.

The Kumandin language is officially recognised as one of the languages of the indigenous minorities of the Russian Federation. The number of speakers of the language is in constant



Holding the Day of Mother Tongue in the National Cultural Centre of Krasnogorskoye village

decline. In 2010, the census recorded 738 speakers (25.5% of Kumandins), but today only approximately 50 people speak Kumandin.

In recent years, there has been a renewed movement for the teaching of the Kumandin language. Currently, optional teaching of the language is being carried out at the Centre of Traditional Kumandin Culture in the village of Krasnogorskoye, and appropriate programmes have been developed. However, children and young people practically do not speak Kumandin. A questionnaire on the knowledge of the native language, conducted in 2022 among Kumandin children, showed that in the younger group of those studied, the share of those who speak Kumandin is zero.

The threat of language loss is the most acute ethnic problem of Kumandins. Awareness of this threat has caused concern among the ethnically active part of the people and prompted Kumandins to create public organisations and implement ethnic projects.

Kumandin community organisations and language preservation

There are six public organisations of Kumandins in the Altai Krai. Four of the aforementioned public organisations

were established in the territory of Biysk, namely “Istok”, “Samzar”, “Association of Kumandins of Altai”, and “Pai Kizhi” (“Rich Man”). In the Krasnogorskoye district, the organisations “Toreen Cher” (“Motherland”) and the national cultural centre of the Kumandin culture, “Estey” (“Star”), are to be found. In the Solton district, a community designated “Ayrychak” (“Stream”) has been established. The remit of public organisations of Kumandins includes the following tasks:

The organisations’ primary objectives are as follows:

1. The promotion of the spiritual, cultural, social and economic revival of the Kumandin ethnos, as well as the study and promotion of Kumandin history.
2. The development of the self-consciousness of Kumandins, in addition to the protection of their spiritual, economic, social, ethnic, cultural and other national interests.
3. The protection of the rights and legitimate interests of Kumandins in

state and local government bodies in accordance with the current legislation.

4. The cultural, spiritual and moral education of Kumandins, preservation and development of the Kumandin traditions and customs, age, the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, the preservation and development of traditional high moral ethical standards of behaviour of Kumandins and the development of new ones.

These objectives are being achieved by directing public attention towards the issue of reviving and developing the Kumandin language and culture. Additionally, the provision of comprehensive information regarding the history, culture and daily activities of Kumandins is being facilitated. Furthermore, the cultural self-expression of Kumandins is being promoted through the medium of folklore and participation in amateur art. The Government of the Altai Krai has devised a specific Action Plan for the period 2016-2025 to facilitate the implementation of the Concept of Sustainable Development of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation in the Altai Krai. In addition, the Government has formulated a Regional Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, which will be implemented between 2022 and 2032.

A number of Kumandin organisations are represented on the Council for the Implementation of State National Policy, which operates under the Government of the Altai Krai. Kumandin organisations receive financial assistance under the state programme “Implementation of State National Policy in the Altai Krai” for the purpose of supporting and developing traditional culture, and are permitted to attend major federal

Traditional Kumandin dishes: blood sausage, tutpach, djurg



Manufacturing milled barley grain - talcan



meetings and events. The programme facilitates the implementation of such titular events in the Krai as the Festival of Kumandin Culture, which is dedicated to the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

In order to provide the region's ethnic cultural associations with the requisite resources, methodologies and organisational support, the House of Peoples of the Altai Krai has been established and is currently operational within the region.

The region offers distinct financial assistance to non-governmental, non-profit organisations engaged in the implementation of ethno-cultural development initiatives. Annually, projects pertaining to the "Development of Interethnic Cooperation" are supported through a competitive grant process overseen by the Governor of the Altai Krai.

Notwithstanding the common ethnic affinity, each Kumandin community employs an independent positioning strategy. The Krasnogorskoye "Toreen Cher" community is regarded as one of the most innovative and dynamic groups among its tribal counterparts.

Use of the Kumandin language in education and in the preservation of traditional national culture

Kumandins place great importance on the revival of their language in order to maintain their cultural identity. One of the most significant projects in this regard is the "Preserving the language, preserving the people" initiative. As asserted by Aisha Amirova, the head of the Krasnogorskoye community, "only the native language serves to connect



Kumandin household items

human souls across the boundaries of time and space, uniting the past and the present, history and modernity. The native word serves to integrate an individual into the collective identity of their people".

A number of conferences, congresses, contests and festivals have been devoted to the problems of the Kumandin language. Such activities are exemplified by the national cultural centre of the Kumandins, "Estey", and the "Toreen Cher" community.

The year 2022, which was proclaimed the Year of Cultural Development of the Peoples of Russia, also marked the commencement of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. In accordance with the implementation plan for the Decade, a number of events are being held in the Altai Krai. Nevertheless, the issue of teaching the Kumandin language remains a pertinent concern.

Earlier attempts were made to teach the Kumandin in schools of Krasnogorskoye, Solton districts and the city of Biysk, but this process was complicated by the lack of educational and methodological literature, as well as the lack of special training for teachers. So far, for various reasons, no comprehensive programme for studying and teaching the Kumandin language has been created, there are no qualified teaching staff, and no native language teachers are being trained for Kumandin

schools. At the suggestion of Natalia Glukhova, activist of the “Toreen Cher” community and member of the Council on State National Policy under the Government of the Altai Krai, an initiative group was set up in the village of Krasnogorskoye to continue work on the preservation and development of the Kumandin language in the region. At the meeting of the initiative group, the available methodological literature was analysed and a plan was approved to hold an annual holiday “Mother Language Day”, reprint books by Turkic scholars on the Kumandin language, and conduct regular questionnaires to analyse the effectiveness of the work carried out.

In accordance with the plan, “Toreen Cher” regularly participates in competitions for subsidies to implement publishing projects on ethno-cultural development, inter-ethnic cooperation and strengthening the unity of the Russian nation. Thus, in 2019 the project “Preservation and development of the language of the indigenous small-numbered people - Kumandins” was implemented. Within this initiative a Russian-Kumandin dictionary,

a brief grammar of the Kumandin language, and a thematic dictionary for schoolchildren were published. The project ended with a seminar and a presentation of the published literature for representatives of public organisations of the Kumandin people.

In 2020, “Toreen Cher” initiated the project “Language – the national heritage of the people”. Consequently, the Almanac of Kumandin culture which includes works by native speakers was published, comprising both elders and younger authors, as well as contributions from renowned scientists. The Almanac presents a diverse array of literary genres, including fairy tales, legends, proverbs, riddles, children’s poetry, and songs. The fairy tales are illustrated by children from the creative studio “Palar”.

In 2021, the initiative group proceeded to develop the project, entitled “Preserving the Language, Preserving the People”. A campaign in support of the native language, “Men kumandy kizhi” (“I am a Kumandin”), was conducted. During the course of the campaign, video clips were recorded and subsequently uploaded to the Internet, in which Kumandins were invited to speak about themselves in their mother tongue.

Several books were published including “Grandmother’s Fairy Tales”, “From the Depths of Centuries. Dishes of Kumandin cuisine”, “Ethnic Motifs in Modern Fashion”, “Collection of Ethnographic Materials” and “National Wrestling Tradition of Koresh”.

The representatives of the initiative group are aware that the Kumandin language does not serve a multitude of social functions. It is therefore crucial to guarantee that the younger generation of Kumandins are able to utilise their mother tongue to communicate within their family and with individuals of their own nationality, as well as to read simple

Kumandin-
Russian
Dictionary,
published in
2005



Folklore group
"Odychak"



works of folk literature. The project entitled "Learning the Mother Tongue Together with Parents," is designed to address this issue. It encompasses the creation of baby books for young readers and an educational game "Ethnoloto" for the youngest children, both in the Kumandin language.

The Shukshin Central City Library of Biysk plays an active role in the implementation of the Regional Plan for the Decade of Indigenous Languages, regularly holding events such as Mother Language Day, ethnoquizzes, and quizzes on the Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

Kumandin language in information projects

On an annual basis, members of the community publish a variety of linguistic materials, including books, brochures, dictionaries and phrasebooks, pertaining to the Kumandin language. During the pandemic, Kumandins were compelled to curtail their physical activities. However, this did not preclude the emergence of online practices. For instance, recordings of national songs began to appear on the Internet, and a podcast featuring Kumandin fairy tales was launched. Language activists are developing a mobile app, tentatively

titled "Kumandin language self-learner," and are also planning to compile an electronic corpus of the Kumandin language.

Notwithstanding the extensive digitalisation of the Altai Krai, the Internet is not consistently available in Kumandin villages. Virtual ethnicity is not only endorsed by the indigenous population but also by external users. To illustrate, in the VKontakte group "Kumandins of Altai", researcher Alexander Besimalov organises a competition among young Kumandins to study ethnic culture.

The region provides state support to organisations engaged in the production, distribution and replication of socially significant projects in the field of electronic and print media, with the objective of preserving the Kumandin culture. In 2023, the regional television channel Katun 24, which is part of the Region Publishing House, and municipal media outlets of the Altai Krai received financial assistance as part of the state programme "Implementation of State National Policy in the Altai Krai".

The most significant event of 2023 was the All-Russia Festival, "Day of Russia on the Turquoise Katun," which included participation of Kumandins. In order to facilitate coverage of the event by representatives of regional and municipal media, the Government of the Altai Krai organised a press tour. Additionally, the festival was covered by federal media outlets and their regional branches. Such newspapers as "Komsomolskaya Pravda" and "Moskovsky Komsomolets na Altai" also reported on the event.

The regional media frequently publishes materials on the life and culture of Kumandins. Additionally,

Re-enacting
the Kumandin
wedding rite



two colourful documentaries, entitled “Kumandins” and “The Legend of Kumandins”, have been produced. In 2023, Kumandins were invited to participate in the information project “In Theme” of the “Katun 24” TV channel on two occasions.

Prospects for activities to support the Kumandin language

A new impetus for the preservation and development of the Kumandin language was provided by a series of events held on November 23-24, 2023, at the Shishkov Library of the Altai Krai and the Shukshin Central City Library of Biysk within the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and the State programme of the Russian Federation “Implementation of State National Policy,” as well as the “My Mother Tongue” programme.

The distinctive event, which was organised on the initiative of

the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme and the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre, attracted the attention of a diverse range of individuals, including representatives of government authorities, members of the scientific and expert communities, staff from cultural and educational institutions, developers of projects related to indigenous languages, language activists and public figures, teachers, undergraduate and graduate students. In excess of 200 individuals from Moscow, Yoshkar-Ola, Kyzyl, Ufa, Novokuznetsk, Novosibirsk, Barnaul and Biysk participated in the proceedings.

An analysis of the current linguistic situation reveals that Kumandins are currently experiencing an ethnic resurgence and a renewed interest in their cultural heritage. The recognition of the potential for the Kumandin language and identity to be lost has prompted a process of reflection and action among Kumandins themselves, resulting in the formation of a range of ethnic projects, communities and public organisations. External factors that encourage the promotion of ethnicity include the provision of support from federal and regional authorities.

The formation of collaborative relationships with federal-level experts and specialists, language activists, and colleagues from other regions facilitates the identification of specific objectives for the preservation and unification of the Kumandin language, as well as the development of strategies to achieve these goals.

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