Fishermen, Hunters and Herders of Kamchatka and North-East Russia

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Climate Change Adaptation: Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples Inhabiting the Arctic and Far North Fishermen, Hunters and Herders of Kamchatka and North-East Russia

Natural Conditions of the Region

The Kamchatka Peninsula is located in the north-east of Eurasia and is washed by the waters of the cold, rough, and deep waters of the Sea of Okhotsk, Bering Sea and the Pacific Ocean. The area of the peninsula itself is approximately 270,000 square kilometers. Kamchatka is part of the Kamchatka Krai which also includes the continental part to the north of the peninsula, the Commander Islands, and Karaginsky Island. The total area of Kamchatka Krai is 472,3 thousand square kilometers.

The peninsula has mostly mountainous terrain; the Sredinny (“Central”) and Vostochny (“Eastern”) Mountain Ranges stretch across the whole peninsula almost parallel to each other, and the northern part of the peninsula is occupied by the Koryak Mountains.

Kamchatka is called “the country of volcanoes”, because the peninsula is located in a seismic zone, it is subject to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and even tsunamis on a regular basis. The region is also characterized by storms, strong rain and snowfall. Out of the twenty-nine active volcanoes in Kamchatka, twenty-eight are located in its eastern part including the highest volcano in Eurasia, Klyuchevskaya Sopka (elev. 4,850 meters).

Kamchatka is also “a fish province”. The Kamchatka and Penzhina Rivers are known for their depth and length, and also for their richness in salmon types of fish.

The climate of the northern part of the peninsula is subarctic, while the shoreline areas have a moderate sea climate, and the interior regions have a moderate continental climate. The duration of the cold period (with an average daily temperature below 0°C) varies from 160 days in the south to 230 days in the north of the peninsula. The average temperatures of January and February are −7… −8°C in the south and south-east, −10… −12°C in the west, −19… −24°C in the center and the north. Snowfall amounts vary from 40 cm in the north to 90 cm in the south, and up to 130 cm on the southeast coast. In the coastal areas the snow cover persists for 180-225 days.

Avalanches often cause trouble for workers in energy and mining enterprises, reindeer herders, tourists, mountain climbers, and ordinary people. There are 95 avalanche sites on the territory of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, the largest city of the peninsula. In this respect Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky has no equivalent among Russian cities. Avalanches can be witnessed annually in the city, and sometimes
they can have catastrophic results. For instance, on January 24, 1988 alone, there were 33 avalanches with a total snow volume of 300,000 cubic meters.

The summer in Kamchatka is short, cool, and rainy. The average temperature in July and August is +10 to +12°C in the west, +12 to +14°C in the southeast, and up to +16°C in the central part.

A considerable part of the peninsula’s territory, except the Kamchatka River valley and narrow strips of the southeast and southwest coasts, is located in the permafrost zone. On average the depth of permafrost is 20-30 meters, and up to 100 meters near the northern boundaries of Kamchatka.

**Ethnohistorical Review**

Local conditions had a great influence on the economy, everyday activities, and culture of the indigenous population. The economy of the indigenous population is a complex of activities consisting of fishing, hunting (including sea mammal hunting), reindeer herding, and gathering, since any one of these activities by itself is not enough to provide sustenance. However, each of the ethnic groups has its own characteristic combination of these different traditional activities. The role that each activity plays in the sustenance of a certain people varies. The dominant activity influences the location and specific arrangement of the settlements, types of living and household buildings, and other characteristics of the economy.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the life of the indigenous population in Kamchatka was described by a researcher: “Due to historical circumstance, the northern indigenous dwellers live in the land of Kamchatka where it’s impossible to be clothed or well-fed without putting forth personal hard work… because the unconquerable natural conditions make it impossible for the residents to be lazy, and force them to win their daily bread by an incessant, tough battle with the nature of Kamchatka” [36].

**The Indigenous Population of Kamchatka**

Traditionally there was a division between the types of activities for men (hunting, fishing, wood and bone crafting, construction of household buildings, making of skis, boats, and sleds) and women (working with fur, clothes-making, weaving, fish preparation, gathering, cooking). The Koryaks added reindeer herding and sea mammal hunting to their list of activities for men. Both men’s and women’s activities had a pronounced seasonal character.
“The Koryaks, just like peasants, engage in different activities at different times. In the summer the men are occupied with fishing, drying fish, transferring them from the sea to their dwellings, and in preparing food for their dogs. Meanwhile the women clean and cut the prepared fish, and then help their husbands to catch fish. In their spare time they gather different weeds, roots, and berries to use both as food and in their medicine… In winter the men go after the sable and the fox, make fish nets, make sleds, and gather firewood. The women spend most of their time twisting thread for making the fish nets” [14].

According to the data from the Russian Federation Population Census of 2010 there are seven ethnic minority peoples living in Kamchatka Krai with a total population of 14,368 people (4.5% of the total Krai population).

According to the order from the Government of the Russian Federation of May 8, 2009, the whole territory of the Kamchatka Krai was marked as the place of traditional residence and traditional economy of the ethnic minorities. The areas of the compact residence of ethnic minorities of the North include Koryak Okrug, Aleutsky (Commander Islands) and Bystrinsky Districts.

**Traditional Knowledge and Land Use: the Koryaks**

In 2010 the total population of the Koryaks was almost 8,000 people. They reside primarily on the territory of the Koryak Okrug in Kamchatka Krai. Around 1,500 Koryaks live in Magadan Oblast and Chukotka Autonomous Okrug.

At the end of the seventeenth century the Koryaks lived in Kamchatka in isolated groups that developed independently of each other. However the large distances separating nomadic and settled Koryaks did not hinder trade among them: they always exchanged fish, game and livestock products.

A famous explorer of Kamchatka, S. P. Krasheninnikov, wrote in the middle of the eighteenth century: “The Koryaks can be divided into reindeer herders and sedentary people. The sedentary Koryaks are not all alike (although they speak the same language); not only do they speak a different language from the reindeer herding Koryaks, but they even differ greatly among themselves” [14-16].

The Koryaks were divided into two large economic – cultural groups: the coastal fishermen and sea mammal hunters (*Nymylans*) and nomadic reindeer herders (*Chavchuven*s). In turn the coastal Koryaks were divided into several smaller groups that differed in language and economic activities: the Karagins, Alyutors,
Apukins, Palan, and the sedentary Koryaks of the Penzhina Bay coast. The coastal Koryaks occupied the eastern and the western coasts of Kamchatka, while the nomads occupied its interior regions.

The main economic activities of the Koryaks are reindeer herding, fishing, sea mammal hunting, and gathering.

The Chavchuvens and the Alyutors practiced large-herd reindeer herding. Although the population of the herd could vary from four hundred to two thousand head, the reindeer remained semi-wild and the herders did not use herding dogs. The semi-wild reindeer were looked after on foot by the herders, who used skis during the wintertime. The reindeer were only used in sled teams, as the Koryaks did not use their reindeer for riding or packing. The reindeer provided the reindeer herder with all of the necessities. The meat and the fat were used for food; the fat was also used for religious blessings. The hides were used for making clothes, bed curtains, ski sole coverings, etc. The antlers were used to make tools, weapons (arrow heads and grub hoes), and different everyday items. Rope and thread were made out of the sinew, and the skin was used for belts and straps. The reindeer was also the only means of transportation in the nomad’s household.

Sea mammal hunting in the Sea of Okhotsk and the Bering Strait played an important role in the economy of all sedentary Koryaks and reindeer herding Alyutors. They hunted different species of seal; the main hunting tools were bow and arrows, traps, nets, and clubs. Meat and fat were used in food. The furs were used to make sled straps, dog harnesses, ski bottom coverings, and to sew sacks, sheaths, bags for ammunition, snuffbox cases, and also footwear. The stomachs of the killed animals were used to store fat. Whale baleen was used to sew birch bark vessels for keeping liquids, whale jaws were used to make knife handles, and the vertebrae were used to carve mortars.

Sea hunting products were in high demand among the nomadic Koryaks as part of an exchange trade. V. N. Tyushov wrote that: “…the everyday and economic life conditions of the indigenous people formed in such a way that not a single household, whatever it may be, could do without skins and straps” [36].

Sea mammal hunting was second to fishing in the economy of the sedentary Koryaks. Primarily they hunted seals, and up to the twentieth century also whales and walrus. The main weapon of the sea hunters was the harpoon both with and without toggle-heads (borrowed from the Eskimo and the Chukchi). In the fall the hunters would use nets to hunt the pinnepeds.
Aside from using meat and fat from sea mammals as food for both humans and dogs, their skins were also used in everyday life and, just as reindeer skins, were an object of trade with other tribes.

Sea mammal hunting was a collective activity and the killing was distributed among the community. Special collectives were created for each of the leather boats (baidara). During the hunting period both labor and tools were shared. The baidara collectives were a stable social unit organized on the principle of kinship. Relations inside the collective were governed by norms of the common law, traditions, and rituals.

Fishing played a key role in the economy of both the sedentary and the nomadic Koryaks. In the summer the herders and members of their families not busy with reindeer herding would participate in fishing.

The Koryaks also practiced coastal fishing: they caught different types of salmon fish in the river creeks. Ocean fish were caught in lesser quantities. The nets served as the main fishing tool. Sedentary Koryaks made them out of nettle fibers, while the reindeer Koryaks made them out of sinew thread. The Koryaks also used a certain type of fish trap – merezh (cone-shaped net sack with double walls). Aside from nets and traps the sedentary Koryaks used fishing rods, hooks (mariki), hooks on a long pole that worked as a harpoon, and beater sticks. They also used fish weirs.

The ways of preparing fish among the indigenous peoples of Kamchatka have similar features: drying, using fresh and frozen fish, and fermentation of fish. In the nineteenth century the Koryaks of the north-west coast began to prepare fish powder, after they had borrowed this method from the Evens.

The hunting of fur animals began to develop in the eighteenth century after Kamchatka was joined Russia and the state began collecting yasak, the tribute paid in furs. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, fur animal hunting was developed among all groups of Koryaks, but not any of these groups considered it as the main economic activity. The main fur animals hunted were sable, fox, otter, ermine, wolverine, and squirrel.

Gathering was most widely spread among the sedentary Koryaks. Tubers and bulbs of edible plants, shellfish, the eggs of wild birds, berries, the fruit of the briar and ash, nuts, willow bark, rose bay, and cow parsnip were all used in food.
The nomadic reindeer Koryaks used reindeer as their only transportation animal, while the sedentary Koryaks used the dog. The Koryaks used reindeer only for pulling a harnessed riding sled. Different styles of riding sleds were used for men and women, and sleds with a covered top were used for transporting children. All sleds had curved stanchions. The dog sleds, just like those of the Itelmens, had straight stanchions with two arches, vertical and horizontal. The Koryaks had equipment for moving on ice in the form of barbed bone or metal plates.

For water transportation sedentary coastal Koryaks used boats made of sea mammal skins and dugout boats. The main fishing boat was the *baidara*, around ten meters long, fitted with a sail. A large *baidara* held eight rowers and a steersman. The *baidara* was controlled using single-bladed oars and a tail oar. The sail was put up during high winds. The kayak’s construction was no different from the *baidara*, but it was smaller in size and an enclosed type of boat. Its framework was covered entirely with skins; a round opening on top served as a hatch, and the hunter sat on the bottom with his torso protruding from the hatch. The kayak was steered with a double-bladed oar. The Koryaks of the Penzhina Bay made small framed boats with a round opening for a single, seated person.

Two types of leather boats were used for hunting sea mammals, the *baidara* and the kayak. *Baidara* is a keeled boat based on a grid-like frame constructed out of planks, with a leather covering made of bearded seal or walrus skins. Making a *baidara* is a labor-intensive process; its covering requires up to twelve or more, bearded seal skins. All the framing planks were secured with leather thongs; this added flexibility to the boat which was especially important for moving among drifting ice.

Hunting land animals was an additional activity for the Koryaks. Mainly they hunted reindeer, bighorn sheep, brown bear, fur animals (wolverine, fox, and sable), and water birds.

The Koryaks used two types of dugout boats. One was a dugout formed with a spokes from poplar or asp with very thin sides and bottom. It was no heavier than a leather boat and could be steered using a two-bladed oar, or two long poles. The other was a narrow dugout boat. The Koryaks would transport their cargo on two such boats tied together, just as the Itelmens did.

Snowshoes that consisted of a wooden frame covered with a leather net were an essential accessory of every Koryak. The Koryaks also used wide wooden skis covered on the bottom with reindeer fur laid so that it gripped the snow on inclines.
Traditional household activities included working with wood, bone, metal, weaving, and working with furs. In the ancient times the Koryaks also knew pottery making. Stone axes and spearheads were still used in the twentieth century, and stone scrapers are still used now for fleshing furs.

The Koryaks' settlement type was a camp that consisted of several tents of the type called *yarang*. This was a round dwelling that was used both in winter and summer and had a framework made of poles. It was covered with reindeer furs trimmed of their hair, sewn together and laid with the skin on the underside. One *yarang* could be inhabited by twenty five people or more. The Koryaks did not have any auxiliary outbuildings. In the summer they kept their clothes on the sleds and built a primitive roof over them from branches of the dwarf pine covered with old *yarang* covers and tied with straps. Another type of household buildings at the camps were platforms of widely-spaced poles elevated on three legs. In the summer they were used for keeping sleds, reindeer herding inventory, and large wares, as well as for drying skins, fish and meat.

Sedentary Koryaks lived in semi-underground earthen houses with a smoke hole in the roof. They would build a narrow long corridor with a flat roof next to one of the shorter walls of the dwelling. It was used as the entrance only from May to October, and in winter it was closed off and the smoke hole was used as the entrance instead. The Koryaks used a log with notches as the means for going up and down through the smoke hole. Their household buildings were on raised platforms. From the middle of the eighteenth century the Koryaks began to use log dwellings.

The clothes of the Koryaks were of closed design. The reindeer herders make them out of reindeer skins, while the coastal Koryaks use not only reindeer skins but also skins of the sea mammals.

Traditional men’s winter clothing consisted of a fur coat, pants, hat, and footwear. The cut of the coat was the same for men and women alike. Winter clothing was double-layered: the inner layer was made with fur on the inside and the outer with fur on the outside. Most of the coats had a hood and a fur chestpiece. Men’s winter footwear was made out of reindeer skins with the fur on the outside, and the soles were usually made out of the firm skin of the bearded seal. For traveling they wore a *kamleika*, a wide shirt out of reindeer suede or imported cloth over the winter coat. Women’s winter clothing included overalls and a hooded fur shirt. Summer
clothing had the same cut as winter clothing, but was sewn out of reindeer suede, reindeer skins with trimmed fur, and purchased cloth.

The traditional worldview of the Koryaks could be characterized as animism. They believed that their surroundings (mountains, rocks, plants, sea, celestial bodies) were alive, and they worshipped sacred places, the appapyel (hills, promontories, and cliffs). Sickness and death were believed to be the malicious activity of evil spirits (ninvit). The Koryaks offered sacrifices of dogs and reindeer. Ritual objects included boards in the form of anthropomorphic figures (gichgi), special divination stones (anyapel), personal protectors (kalaki), and different amulets. The Koryaks practiced professional and family shamanism. Baptism among the Koryaks (mostly coastal Koryaks) was conducted by the Orthodox missionaries from the 1740s to 1917.

Traditional celebrations were tied to hunting and reindeer herding and were seasonal. The main reindeer herder celebrations were the spring festival of the young reindeer, Kilvei, and the fall festival, Koyanaitytyk, which was organized after the return of the herds from summer pastures. After the day of the winter solstice, they celebrated the return of the sun.

The main celebrations of coastal Koryaks were tied to hunting sea mammals. The whale was the most worshipped animal. They also had nerpa (the eared seal) and lakhtak (the bearded seal) celebrations. During the nerpa festival, Khololo, the Karagin Koryaks wore wooden masks and competed in tug-of-war using a belt with a special whirligig. Before the beginning of the spring sea hunt the coastal Koryaks organized the festival of lowering the baidara into water.

Both coastal and reindeer herding Koryaks had a special ritual for hunting bear, bighorns, and fox. The first fish catch of the season was also celebrated. Part of the celebration was organizing games and competitions: wrestling, running, reindeer and dog sled racing, and tossing people into the air on the skins of the bearded seal.

**Traditional Knowledge and Land Use: the Itelmens**

The Itelmens are one of the oldest ethnic minorities of Kamchatka. Their history goes back to a late Upper Paleolithic culture around eleven thousand years ago. The Itelmens identify themselves as itenmn, which means “local resident.” Eighteenth to twentieth century sources identify the Itelmens as Kamchadals. Before the arrival of the Russians at the end of the seventeenth century, the
Itelmens occupied the whole territory of southern and central Kamchatka, and their population at the time was eighteen thousand people.

At present the Itelmens reside in Kamchatka Krai and Magadan Oblast. According to the Russian Federation census of 2010, their total population is 3,193 people. Most of the Itelmens live in the villages of the Tigil District of the Koryak Okrug: Kovran, Upper Khairyuzovo, Sedanka, and Tigil. The Itelmens traditionally live in large family communities in independent settlements.

Sea mammal hunting played an important role in the Itelmen economy. Primarily they hunted different types of seals, and their main hunting tools included bow and arrows, traps, nets, and clubs. No family could do without sea mammal hunting. The meat and fat were used for food. Skins were used to make belts for sleds, dog harnesses, ski bottom coverings, sacks, sheathes, ammunition bags, tobacco box covers, and also footwear. The stomachs of the animals were used for storing fat. Whale baleen was used to sew birch bark vessels for storing liquids, whale jaws were used to made knife handles, and whale vertebrae were used to carve mortars.

The main activity of the Itelmens was river fishing, and the main object of fishing were salmonid fishes. Fish heading to spawning places were caught by blocking a part of the river with a dam made of poles and a wooden trap – morda. In addition set nets and seine nets were used. The nets were woven out of nettle fiber, and later on, after the coming of the Russians, out of manufactured materials. A smaller amount of fish was procured using spears. Fish was the main component of the Itelmen diet. The catch was then prepared for future use: dried, soured in earth pits, frozen in winter, and, with the appearance of salt, salted. Fresh fish was also rendered for fat.

The Itelmens used baty, dugout wood boats, as the main means of transportation. The boats were made out of willow or poplar. The baty were used to check the set nets and dams, to relocate to the fishing places, and to transport cargo (when transporting cargo baty were tied up into pairs). The Itelmens who practiced sea fishing put extra planks on the sides of the baty and changed the construction of the bottom of the boat.

For winter transportation the Itelmens used dogs harnessed to two types of sleds – riding and cargo. The sleds were made out of birch and their making was strictly done by men. Over time the traditional Itelmen arched stanchion riding sleds were replaced by straight stanchion sleds that were more durable and better suited to carrying large amounts of cargo. The Itelmens used snowshoes that consisted of a
Wooden frame covered by a web of straps, and skis the bottoms of which were covered with reindeer fur.

The Itelmen hunted bighorn sheep, wild reindeer, bears, and fur animals (wolverine, fox, and sable); in their molting period, water birds were hunted. The coastal residents hunted pinnepeds. Fur trade began to develop in the beginning of the eighteenth century after Kamchatka became the part of Russia and the state began to gather fur tax from its residents. The main objects of fur trade were sable, fox, otter, and ermine.

Gathering of roots and bulbs of edible plants had a great importance in the life of the Itelmen. They also gathered berries, nuts, ramson, rosebay stems, cow parsnip, and bird eggs. The main celebratory dish (syilk-sylk) was prepared out of ground meat or fish with rosebay added.

For a long time ceramics were not part of the Itelmen culture, and food was prepared in small wooden tubs. The meat or fish was put on the bottom, then covered with water that was brought to a boil using hot stones. Dishware was made out of birch bark and carved from wood. In everyday life the Itelmen often used objects woven out of grass such as mats, baskets, and wraps. Fishing nets were woven out of nettle fiber.

Clothes were sewn from reindeer, sable and fox skins and were richly decorated with appliquéd strips and long furry edgings along the collar, hood, hem, and sleeves made of dog fur. For home wear women used special overalls called khonby that consisted of sewn together pants and quilted jacket. The winter coat was made out of reindeer furs with the fur on the outside and had a hood and a chest covering. For travelling they used wide fur parkas. Men’s and women’s winter coats and parkas had the same cut. For winter footwear they used tall reindeer skin boots, and in the eighteenth century it was recorded that there were shoes sewn out of fish skin as winter fishing footwear. In winter they wore fur hats with a hood-like cut called pakhel. In the summer the men used birch bark hats, while the Itelmen women wore large grass wigs.

The Itelmen believed in the masters of the nature, the hunting and fishing grounds and animals, and in the protectors of the home and hearth. They offered sacrifices, mostly in the form of food, to all supernatural beings. Volcanoes were considered to be the dwelling places of the dead. Family shamanism was widespread among the Itelmen, while professional shamanism was not practiced at all. The Itelmen
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were officially converted to Christianity by the end of the 1740s. However, they retained their traditional rituals up until the 1930s.

*Alkhalalalai (“Cleansing of sin”),* the fall thanksgiving festival, is the main celebration of the Itelmens. The key personage of the Itelmen folklore, is the raven, *Kutkh*, the creator of Kamchatka, who is the primary hero of the Itelmen stories.

**Traditional Knowledge and Land Use: the Evens**

The Evens belong to the Tungus linguistic group and are settled in separate groups in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Magadan Oblast, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, Khabarovsk Krai, and Kamchatka Krai. According to the Russian Federation census of 2010, the Even population in Russia is 21,830 people, among those about 2,500 persons live in Kamchatka.

At the end of the seventeenth century the Evens who were searching for new hunting grounds began to appear in the regions of the Koryak and Chukchi nomadism, and in the 1840s their small groups reached Kamchatka. In the wide desolate regions there, they settled in three groups: in the central and western part of the Kamchatka Peninsula (present-day Bystrinsk and Tigil Districts) and on the territory of the modern Penzhina and Olyutor Districts.

During their relatively short period of living in Kamchatka, the Evens have formed a unique group that was substantially different from their mainland brethren in economy and a number of cultural elements. The Evens of Kamchatka retained their nomadic lifestyle and engaged in a complex economy that combined taiga hunting with fishing and reindeer herding. The Kamchatka Even economy and culture weaves their own elements with those of the Koryaks, the Itelmens, and the Yakuts. While adapting to their new surroundings, the Even newcomers picked up much from their neighbors.

The Evens developed three types of traditional economy:

1) reindeer herding in the mountain-taiga zone in combination with hunting and lake and river fishing;

2) hunting, fishing, and reindeer herding where all three played an equal part, with moves in spring from continental taiga to the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk, and moves back in the fall;
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3) sedentary coastal fishing and hunting economy (on the Sea of Okhotsk coast) with no reindeer herding, but with the raising of dogs for dogsleds.

The Evens of the mountain-taiga zone predominantly used riding and packing reindeer. The Evens bred a tall, strong, and sturdy type of domesticated reindeer. The Even reindeer herding has a number of characteristic features: small herds, high level of animal taming, using smudge fires, using reindeer both as riding and packing animals. The Even reindeer is a special “Lamut” breed formed over hundreds of years of reindeer herding in the conditions of the northeastern taiga. The Evens, inhabitants of the taiga zone, used reindeer for both saddle riding and packing. Harnessing herded reindeer was learned from the Koryaks. The Evens did not use herding dogs. They also did not practice feeding salt to the reindeer in winter or milking the does.

The rich pastures of Kamchatka allowed the Evens to significantly expand their herds. The average size of the reindeer herd could be from two to five hundred animals. It was characteristic of the Evens to use some reindeer for saddle riding and other reindeer as pack animals during their travels. They used special saddles without stirrups for riding. The saddle was fixed on the shoulder blades of the reindeer with a single girth. The Evens used a staff while riding.

While travelling all of the belongings were put into bags made out of skins from reindeer heads. As a rule the reindeer caravan was led by a woman. When moving from camp to camp, the men drove the reindeer and hunted. The caravan was set up in the following order: the leading woman went in front on a riding reindeer followed by a reindeer with child’s cradle, then the pack reindeer with cargo in pack bags, then the reindeer dragging the tent covers, the reindeer with short tent poles, and lastly the reindeer that dragged the long supporting poles.

Both skis and snowshoes were essential tools for any Even. The Evens used fish glue to stick the fur lining made of reindeer, seal, or elk to the bottom of wide wooden skis.

Unlike their mainland brethren, the Kamchatka Evens used various means of transportation. From the reindeer-herding Koryaks they learned how to harness reindeer and make the arched stanchion sled, while from the Kamchadals and coastal Koryaks they learned dog transportation. They rode on sleds only in winter during moves and fur animal hunting. By the end of the nineteenth century almost all households of the Bystrinsk Evens had horses that were used in the summertime.
for long trips. In winter the horses grazed on whatever forage their hooves could scrape from under the snow.

The Evens used to hunt for wild reindeer, elks, wild sheep, forest and water fowl, and for fur game: sable, squirrel, fox, ermine, glutton, and otter. Traditional hunting weapons were bow, spear, knife with long handle, blade, crossbow, trap, break-back trap, and gun. They hunted astride reindeer, chasing, with a reindeer as a bait and with a hunting dog. Bear-hunting played a particular role. It was regulated by strict rules and accompanied by rituals. Special Bear Festival was organized on the occasion of bear-hunting.

The Kamchatka Evens practiced general Even hunting methods. A reindeer decoy was used to hunt wild reindeer. In the summer the wild reindeer were pursued on reindeer, and in winter by sled or on skis. Due to the decrease in the wild reindeer population, hunting for bears and mountain sheep became more widespread. Sable and fox were hunted with a dog. Fur animal hunting had a secondary role; the Evens primarily hunted fox and sable, and in lesser quantities wolverine, lynx, otter, and ermine. Almost all of the furs were used for trade.

For all groups of the Kamchatka Evens coastal, river, and lake fishing was an important activity along with hunting and reindeer herding. For fishing they used hook and tackle, fishing rods, nets, and also fishing spears. From the Itelmen and Russian old-timers, the Bystrinsky Evens learned fishing using dams with fish traps. The Okhotsk Evens had permanent settlements on the seashore and near rivers where fish spawned. They caught salmon, and also hunted sea mammals by the edge of the ice using clubs, harpoons, and later shotguns. For spring hunting and river fishing, they used dugout boats with slightly sharpened ends.

The Evens gathered plants much less than the Koryaks and the Itelmens. The Evens gathered and prepared plants for food, medicine, and household use: sweet root, roots of Alpine knotweed, wild garlic and onion, daylily, rosebay, berries, dwarf pine nuts, bark, branches, and needles; they gathered the bark of bird cherry, alder, and white and stone birch to use as tanning materials and dyes. Crushed rotted wood was used as absorbent material in cradles; dwarf birch and willow were used to make thin soft shavings that served as towels: people dried themselves with them after bathing, cleaned and dried dishware, and burned them after use. Along with imported tea the Evens brewed flowers, rosehip leaves and fruit, and fireweed leaves.
The Evens had two types of portable dwellings: cone-shaped tent covered with skins, suede, fish skins, and birch bark, and a cylindrical-conic hut. The cylindrical-conic dwelling consisted of short walls and a conic roof. The framework of the dwelling was made out of beams that were then covered with skins. The Bystrinsky Evens, like the Koryaks, set up fur canopies inside their dwellings under which they slept.

The northern Kamchatka Even groups did not use fur canopies in their dwellings. The sedentary Evens in the eighteenth century lived in earthen huts with a flat roof and entered their home through the smoke hole. Log dwellings appeared later on. For household buildings the Evens used raised log cache houses and platforms. Belongings were usually stored outside of the dwelling in pack bags, and sun-dried fish, meat, and extra clothes were stored on raised platforms.

From the 1930s, most of the Kamchatka Evens began to convert to a sedentary lifestyle. In addition to their traditional activities, they also began to practice animal husbandry and gardening. Men practiced blacksmithing, working with bone and wood, making belts and harnesses; women practiced working with animal furs, making clothes, sleeping accessories, packing bags, and covers. Even blacksmiths made knives, shotgun components, and axes. They procured iron and silver products through trade with the Yakuts, and later with the Russians. Silver, tin, copper, and iron ornaments were made by melting down old coins.

The main element of Even clothing for both men and women was a button-down caftan, cut similarly for both sexes, made of reindeer fur or suede with flaps opening in the middle of the chest. Since the sides of the caftan did not meet on the chest its essential add-on was a knee-length chest covering, sometimes sewn out of two pieces: the chest covering itself, and an apron. Under the caftan the Evens wore reindeer-skin shorts, and gaiters and mukluks as footwear. In winter they wore fur hats with a cut in the front, but with flaps that could be tied together. In the north of Kamchatka, pullover winter clothing became widespread due to the cross-cultural influence between the Evens and the Koryaks.

Festive clothing was richly decorated with beads, jingles, metal badges, appliqués, fur trim, and fringes. Depending on the time of the year, footwear was made from suede or fur, and women’s footwear was decorated with bead ornaments. Men’s and women’s headwear consisted of a cap closely fitted to the head made out of thin stripes decorated with beads. In winter they would wear a big fur hat on top of it, and the women sometimes wore a kerchief.
In the summer many people wore Russian shirts, pants, dresses, cloth caftans, peaked caps, and kerchiefs. All groups of the Kamchatka Evens used their ethnic costume as festive clothes.

Baptizing of the Evens went on throughout the eighteenth century. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Evens were considered Orthodox, but they retained the rituals and behavioral norms characteristic of their traditional shamanistic belief system. These included hunting rituals and the cults of the bear, the hearth, and spirits governing the nature.

**Traditional Knowledge and Land Use: the Kamchadals**

The Kamchadals are an ethnic group of a mixed origin that was formed as a result of marriages between the indigenous population and Russian old-timers. The descendants of the russified Itelmens mixed with the Russians and relocated to Kamchatka in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where they formed a specific ethnic group, whose culture reflects cross-cultural influence between the Russians and the Itelmens.

The ethnonym “Kamchadal” was used in the first written sources (S. P. Krasheninnikov and G. V. Steller) to describe a different indigenous people, the Itelmens, and comes from the Koryak word *konchala*. “The Kamchadals live in tents from fall to spring and then move into houses on stilts… At each tent there are as many stilt houses, as many as there are families in the settlement: since they serve as both summer homes and as storages… These stilt houses exist not only side by side with the winter tents, but also in those places where in summertime they hunt for food, and such a building is very practical and necessary due to the nature of those places: because of wet weather there the people are forced to finish drying their fish under the stilt houses… Populous settlements are sometimes surrounded by the stilt houses and are quite a sight from far off. Any such settlement seems like a city because of the stilt houses, and before knowing about them even we thought them to be towers” [14-16].

The indigenous sedentary residents were all called Kamchadals. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, official census documents called the descendants of the sedentary indigenous peoples Kamchadals, and the descendants of Russian old-timers, the Russians. Beginning with the 1926 census “Kamchadals” became a term for the russified indigenous sedentary population and those descendants of the Russian old-timers who entered into marriages with them. According to the
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Russian census of 1926 there were 3,704 Kamchadals in Kamchatka Okrug. That number also included a group of the Itelmens that was later recorded separately.

The status of the Kamchadal as an indigenous ethnic northern minority was officially confirmed by the Government on the Russian Federation of March 24, 2000 as provision No. 255 “On the Unified List of the Indigenous Ethnic Minorities of the Russian Federation”, which included the Kamchadals in this listing.

According to the data of the Russian Federation census of 2010 the total population of the Kamchadals is 1,927 people. This people lives on the territory of Kamchatka Krai (the city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Sobolevsky, Ust-Bolsheretsk, Milkovsky, Ust-Kamchatsky, Yelizovsky, Tigilsky, and Penzhinsky Districts) and in the Olsky District of Magadan Oblast.

The main activity of the Kamchadals was fishing, which is why they chose as their places of residence the banks of rivers rich with fish. Itelmen settlements were permanent, and each had both winter and summer dwellings. In the period of frost, from the beginning of November and to the end of April, the Kamchadals lived in winter dwellings (semi-underground huts), and in April they moved to houses elevated on stilts (balagans).

One of the main secondary activities of the Kamchadals was gathering: “The curiosity of this people, and their knowledge of the potency of plants and how to use them in food, medicine, and for other needs is so astounding that it can hardly be equaled either by other remote wild peoples or those who are civilized. They know all of their plants by name; they know the potency of separate plants and their different attributes depending on the place of growth” [14].

Edible and medicinal plants were gathered to be prepared for later use. The plants were also used for weaving household items. “There is a tall white grass on the seashores that looks like wheat (wild rye – *Elymus mollis*) and also grows in sandy places… they weave mats out of this grass and then use them instead of carpets and drapes…from the same grass they weave cloaks that are very much like our old heavy cloaks… The most careful work of this grass is noticed in the pouches and baskets that women use to keep their little things. At first glance no one could say that these things were woven out of reed. Sometimes they are even decorated with baleen and dyed wool” [14].

Due to Russian influence the traditional culture of the Itelmens began to change beginning in the 1730s. Russian construction traditions quickly influenced the
Itelmens who began to build dwellings similar to Russian houses. By the 1740s Itelmens began to wear Russian clothing – blouses, skirts, cuffed shirts, and kokoshnik headwear–and they began to style their hair like the Russians. In the middle of the nineteenth century gardening began to spread and has now practically replaced traditional gathering. By the beginning of the twentieth century animal husbandry was fairly widespread. The Itelmens began to raise cows, and locally-bred horses became the main transportation means in autumn.

At present the descendants of those Kamchadals who are still tied to their traditional economy reside in the Sobolevsky, Bolsheretsky, Milkovsky, Klyuchevsky, and Ust-Kamchatsky Districts of Kamchatka Oblast, and the Tigilsky and Penzhinsky Districts of the Koryak Autonomous Okrug. Their population is around eight to ten thousand people. Another several thousand people in the city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky and Yelizovsky District consider themselves to be Kamchadals. Most of those are descendants of the two last pre-Revolution Russian migration waves of 1850 and 1912-1914. They are also primarily engaged in fishing.

**Traditional Knowledge and Land Use: the Aleuts**

The name “Aleuts” was given to them by the Russians and is first recorded in 1747. The Aleuts of the Bering Strait identify themselves as Unangan, Negosis, and Negogakhvs; the Aleuts of the Medny Island call themselves Sasignan and Saksinnan. The Aleuts are a people of the Pacific Ocean coasts of Asia and America. The majority of Aleuts reside in USA on the Aleutian Islands and the south-western part of the Alaska Peninsula. In Russia the Aleuts reside on the Commander Islands where they form an independent ethnic group, the Commander Aleuts. At present the main part of the Commander Aleuts live in the village of Nikolskoe on the Bering Island (Aleutsky District of the Kamchatka Krai).

The ancestors of the modern Commander Aleuts came to the Commander Islands in 1823-1825, when the Russian-American Company relocated several families from the Aleutian Islands to Bering Island for sea mammal hunting. Later the Aleuts settled on the neighboring Medny Island as well.

According to the Russian Federation census of 2010 the Aleut population in Russia is 482 people of whom 340 live in the Nikolskoe Village.

Hunting for sea mammals (eared seals, fur seal, sea otter, and whales) is the primary activity of the Aleut traditional economy.
During sea hunting the Aleuts used both toggling and non-toggling harpoons. The harpoons and spears were thrown using spear-throwing devices – wooden boards about 50–70 cm long, with an oblong groove, hollows for the fingers on one end and a bone rest for the harpoon on the other. The Aleuts also used bow and arrows. *Baidara* (framed boats covered in skins of the eared seal) played an important part in sea hunting. The hunter sat into the round opening of the boat, and tightened the edges of the opening’s covering around his waist. To prevent accidents floats made of inflated eared seal skins and sea lion stomachs were tied to the boat. With the appearance of firearms the Aleuts begin to make two-man boats; while one man fired, the other kept balance. Multi-oar open boats were used to transport children and women, cargo, and also during military expeditions.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the seal population of the Commander Islands had declined so much that the commercial seal hunting almost has ceased. In 1926 an embargo was placed on hunting sea otters. Presently commercial hunting of sea otters, eared seal, and Kuril harbor seal is prohibited. Limited seal hunting still exists on the Bering Island. Every year there is some hunting of the seal. Its meat is used for food, and the skins go through primary treatment, are salted and then transported to Kamchatka. Hunting of eared seal and Kuril harbor seal has ceased.

The Aleuts also practiced fishing during spawning season. The fish were caught using fishing rods. During the spawning season they would also build dams in advance and then use fishing spears and scoop-nets. Fishing of both ocean fish (pacific halibut, codfish, perch, and flounder) and anadromous fish (sockeye, coho salmon, humpback salmon, and char) was widespread.

The Aleuts gathered eggs from the bird colonies, and mollusks and seaweed from the tidal zone. Gathering of seaweed, mushrooms, berries, and edible wild plants played a secondary role.

Arctic fox hunting is allowed, but is rarely practiced since the furs are not in demand. Hunting sea birds and gathering eggs was prohibited in 2010 because the main place of this activity, the Toporkov Island, was included in the territory of the Commander Islands Nature Reserve.

In the past Aleut settlements were located on the sea coast, often in river estuaries. The settlements consisted of two to four large semi-underground earthen huts. They were built out of drift wood, and covered with dry grass, skins, and turf. Several rectangular openings were left in the roof for entrances, and logs with
notches were used as ladders. Inside the hut they built plank beds along the walls. The home could fit from ten to forty families; each family lived on its own part of the plank beds, separated from each other with posts and curtains. For the summer each family moved to a hut or semi-underground earthen hut made of whale bones and drift wood.

A traditional piece of Aleut clothing was the parka – a long pullover type of clothing made of seal or sea otter furs, or bird skins. Women’s parkas were made from the skins of sea otter or seal with the fur on the inside. Over the parka they wore a waterproof shirt made of sea mammal intestines, with sleeves, closed collar and a hood. The edges of the hood and sleeves were tied together with a cord. This type of clothing was used for hunting. Men’s and women’s clothing had the same cut, but differed in ornaments. For footwear they used high boots made of sea mammal skins.

Hunting headwear – wooden conical hats (worn by chieftains) or hats with a cut upper part and elongated front (worn by the hunters) – was richly decorated with polychrome painting, carved bone, feathers, and eared seal whiskers. Festive and ritual headwear consisted of hats of various shapes made of leather and bird skins, and leather headbands with decorative stitching.

One of the main festivals of the Aleuts was the celebration of winter solstice that included dancing, reenactment of hunting scenes and mythological narratives, and gift-giving. The rituals preceding the hunting season were accompanied by pantomime and dancing to songs and drumming. The performers put on ritual headwear and wooden masks that portrayed the mythological personages.

The traditional belief system of the Aleuts was based on animism, and the belief in the existence of good and evil spirits. They also worshipped ancestor spirits. Shamanism was relatively widespread. Hunting magic included rituals for calling on animals, special hunting taboos, and wearing amulets.

At present there are less than ten people (long-term residents who are over seventy years old) who speak the Aleut language. People in the age group of fifty-five to seventy years can understand the Aleut language and can speak it a little, but most of the Commander Islands Aleuts know only certain phrases and terms in their native language. About twenty people are studying the Aleut language, and another twenty people study choir singing in the Aleut language.
The Indigenous Residents of Kamchatka and the Climate Changes

A survey was conducted in 2010, 153 people from indigenous ethnic minority groups of the North were interviewed in Yelizovsky (the city of Yelizovo, Razdalny Settlement, Paratunka Village, Zeleny Settlement, Tsentralny Koryaki Village), Bystrinsky (Esso Village and Anavgai Village), Milkovsky (Milkovo Village), Karaginsky (Ossora Settlement, Karaga Village, Tymlat Settlement, Ivashka Village, reindeer herding team of the farm No. 1 of the Agricultural Production Cooperative AFA “Druzhba”), Olyutorsky (Khailino Village, Tilichki Village), Tigilsky (Kovran Village, Tigil Village) Districts and the City of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky District.

The water in the rivers is getting dramatically warmer and even the fish notice it. Before graylings would go twelve kilometers upstream below the Anavgai Village, but now they go to about fourteen kilometers because the water is getting warmer. The temperature has been going up for about four years now. Now it’s hot in the summertime; before it would rain in August, now it doesn’t rain nearly as much. The snow has started falling later: it’s the end of November, and there’s barely any snow. The rivers freeze late. Before, by November, half the river would be frozen already, and now it freezes only in February and it’s dangerous to go to the river. The frosts are not the same as they were before.

Even the trees have changed; for instance, the willow leaves used to be small and delicate, and now they’re big.

There’s less fish. They come late, and begin to go not as expected. Here’s how the fish would go before: if the chinook salmon (quinnat) starts moving upstream, it goes first, then there’s sockeye (red salmon), then chum salmon, then char, coho salmon, fall chum salmon, fall coho salmon. Now the fish just go as it happens. One week the fish go as they should, next week there’s no fish at all. Before, the fish would go higher up for spawning. Chinook salmon was larger, and now it’s small, about one and a half meters, and before it could be as big as two meters, sometimes even two and a half. Before, there used to be a lot of fish. The children go fishing now, spend the whole day at the river, and it’s pointless because there’s no fish. Before, all the tributaries had spawning places, and we didn’t even have to catch fish there.

Mark Ilyich Indanov, Even, born in 1964, hunter and fishermen, Bystrinsky District
Nowadays it’s as if nature is angry. There was no heat such as there is now. Nowadays the whole summer can be hot, or rainy. There’s less snow, and before there used to be a lot of it. Children used to slide down the hills and now you can see the dwarf pines and stone pines. Even the berries: they are either not ripe or all dried up. Honeysuckle grows only every other year. One year it rests, another year it grows. Before, there used to be a lot of it, every year, and now it’s every other year.

Every spring we’d catch char in the stream, and now the stream is small. Before, we’d catch only enough to get by, even the fish bones we didn’t throw out, but dried them and gave them to the dogs. We’d catch the fish with the weir only for food, we’d even dry the roe, but now people catch fish as they like: they’ll take the roe and throw out the fish. It’s even forbidden to catch fish. The lifestyle has changed.

There weren’t as many mosquitoes before. Now it happens that even gnats are flying around in the fall. Even the ointment doesn’t help.

Nikolai Yegorovich Indanov, Even, born in 1966, Bystrinsky District

They brought sparrows here, and they started breeding so fast. Once we went on a business trip, and were riding through the tundra where not long before that we had gathered cloudberries. We picked so many that time, the whole tundra was covered with cloudberries! Well, we decided to gather some cloudberries again. There were five of us. We stopped, lit a fire, took a small pot with us, and went to pick berries. We went round and round and didn’t find any berries at all. We even found our old tracks... then we looked closely and saw a black blot flying around, and then, when we were riding again, we saw that it was the sparrows. They would swoop down on the tundra and right before our eyes eat up all the berries. They formed this big dark blot, and I don’t know how many of them got together, but the tundra is so big, and yet in minutes it became barren.

Oktyabrina Nikolaevna Indanova, Even, born in 1934, Bystrinsky District

The residents of the Ossora, Karaga, and Tymlat Settlements (Karaginsky District), and also the reindeer herders of the Agricultural Production Cooperative note a large number of storms, stronger winds, and lack of stability in the temperature regime, that is, sudden warmings and freezings. They also note that now it is harder to get to places of the traditional economic activities (fishing, reindeer grazing, gathering spots of berries and mushrooms). The climate has become more
humid. Many of the interviewed people noted sparrows appearing in the district, although the birds were not there before. They also note that the tundra is little by little being taken over by the forest.

The interviewed residents of the Kovran and Tigil Villages (Tigilsky District) noted that throughout the day there are sudden changes in the weather on the Sea of Okhotsk coast that “make it impossible to fish”. The fish spawning places have changed.

A survey of the local residents was taken in the Olyutorsky District, in the villages of Khailino and Tilichiki. There people note that “the tundra is slowly overtaken by the young forest, and in 2010 there were a lot of fly agaric mushrooms in the tundra”.

**Traditional Knowledge on Nature and Climate Change (Research project 2007 - 2008)**

Local residents used to decide on the hunting periods themselves during a communal gathering, and changed the time from season to season depending on the weather. They hunted the bear in the spring, when the willow turned yellow, because at that time the bear had left his cave. They would finish bear hunting in May, and in June the she-bears had their cubs. They would also hunt the bear in the fall, from the first of September “so that the fur is nice, and there’s a lot of bile”; in the fall they would hunt using the tracks in the fresh snow – “following the steps”. They would also follow the steps of the wild reindeer, but rarely hunted them. The hunting period for bighorn sheep began on the first of September (first of August, according to other sources) and would last for about two months until the snow came. One family procured around one or two bears and one or two bighorns per season.

The responders noted that formerly the bears were larger and fatter. They pointed out that bears have begun to hibernate later and come out of their dens earlier in the spring.

At present hunting periods have not changed significantly. The responders pointed out that the young people do not know the old rules and traditions and often use the hunting methods of poachers (such as setting up noose traps for the bear).

Up to this day there are still various rituals and beliefs that have to be adhered to during hunting, for instance, the ulyekich or gift to the forest; never sharpen knives
before the hunt; never say where you’re headed to, etc. It is interesting that Russian hunters adopt these customs of the indigenous peoples.

Teams of two or three people would usually hunt the bear and then share the catch with their fellow villagers. The bear had to be killed with one shot: to the head if it was standing upright, and to the heart if it was running. One shot could be made in front of the bear in order to get the aim right. After killing the bear the people performed the following ritual (from the words of N. Ye. Adukanov and M.I. Indanov): “When it’s killed we spread it, cut off the head, turn the eyes to the inside of the skull so it doesn’t see, cut off the ears so that it doesn’t hear, and stuff the nose with grass. We also put a stick in its mouth so it doesn’t bite. We put the head in an elevated spot, on a mound or a hump and face it to the east so that the soul goes to the sun. Then we take the meat.”

Opinions of Indigenous Residents on the Present Conditions of Their Natural Environment

I don’t even remember exactly when the poaching started. From 1996 on, it got really bad. Mountains and mountains of fish! It’s not enough that the fish jumped out on the shore, but they would take tons of them, then gut them all and just leave it all in the forest. After that there’d be burned out spots there. When the fish rots, the burned out spots form. Then there’s no grass growing there for a long while. There are still bald spots left. Those were places for berry gathering, but they made landfills out of them...

They caught the fish with tractors and dragnets. Then they built factories, so many of them, like kiosks they were just standing one next to another. You go by car at night and the road is like a phosphorus river because the fish were rotting with worms, and all of it was crawling across the road, and just roiling. It was just terrifying.

Lyubov Petrovna Ionova, born in 1934, Ust-Bolsheretsk

Do you remember the chinook salmon we used to catch? The chinook salmon used to be as big as a man, and now? ... Yes, there are a lot of problems with the fish. The indigenous population relies on fish for sustenance, we grew up eating fish, we can’t live without fish, it’s like bread and butter. The food should be like that every day. Now it turns out that the local people are left with no fish...
Whoever is in power gets all the fishing places. They just keep taking all of it. What’s happening on the river is horrifying! ... Only in 2000 did they allot us fifty kilograms of fish, and it lasted us the whole winter! There was even a little bit left afterwards. After that there was nothing. Sometimes you just want fish so much, you just go and ask for it because it’s hard when there’s none of it.

Dolina Stepanovna Sazonova, born in 1928, Ust-Bolsheretsk

We had a flood in 2002... They would take the humpback salmon with tractors. It was like an extermination! They didn’t even let the fish go up the river to spawn. There, in the Oktyabrsky Settlement, they caught them right in the ocean. Didn’t even let them enter the river. You wouldn’t believe what is happening in Oktyabrsky! Last year you would ride along and just see nets spread almost to Magadan; there were no end to them. How can the fish enter the river if it’s all blocked off? The only open passage days for the fish to enter the river were Saturdays and Sundays. But the poachers got them on the weekends. There’s just no way out! The fish are rotting from the head and down.

Nina Aleksandrovna Pilipyuk, born in 1933, Ust-Bolsheretsk

After the 1970s we began to notice that there were fewer and fewer fish, and the fish themselves grew smaller. Before, the master of the house would bring fish only to eat, enough for a day or two. He never sold it, just caught enough for himself. If he caught a lot of it, he’d go to the neighbors and share it.

When the road was built, our friends who lived in the city began to come down to visit, and we saw that they were very greedy for fish. My husband would tell me that they’d catch two or three boat loads of fish, but still they wanted more. How would they even carry away so much? He was surprised himself. He even spoke with them and was surprised by their greed. The local population doesn’t have so much greed. My four older brothers would kill one or two ducks. Only enough for a day. Then the hunters from the city would come and carry away the loot in sacks. We’d ask: “What are you going to do with all of that?” And they’d say: “We’ll find a way to do with it.” And they would just take sacks and sacks of them. The visitors are just temporary guests. They have no plans to settle here, but only to take away from Kamchatka. The people that are born here and have lived here for a long time and made friends with the locals, they don’t behave in such a way.

Yelena Alekseevna Sidorova, born in 1943 in the village of Kavalerskoe, resides in Ust-Bolsheretsk Settlement
Last year (2004) I was in Koryakia. The people there are so poor, only those who are in geology and fish processing make money there. The people rely only on fish and potatoes for sustenance. The potatoes grow well there, not like here in Oktyabrsky. There’s only sand here. We fertilize with fish. When the capelin (smelt) comes we can fertilize. We used to eat reindeer meat, and then birds and animals – partridge, hare, bear.

We don’t have reindeer anymore: when the collective farm fell apart it became unprofitable, and all reindeer were killed. There’s still reindeer herding in Khailino and Pakhachi. In Vyvenka there’s only fish and nothing else. Everybody catches fish in the summer. Right then and there they sell the roe for a pittance, but what can you do? Then they bury the fish and everything glistens from the fish scales. Yes, they bury the fish. They take out the roe because they can sell it, and then they bury the fish wherever they can, so that it’s not too obvious and they don’t get fined. A lot of fishermen come over there nowadays. They keep asking why there’s so much roe and no fish. Well, the answer is that they’re all buried. All of them ... It’s really obvious that the fish are changing, like they’re poisoned. It’s really obvious. There’s geology work not far away, platinum mining. Even at the end of the 1980s, we were resentful of them mining there. All the fish have defects: sometimes there’s something black in the fish, sometimes other things.

Maria Nesterovna Mulitka, born in 1961 in the village of Vyvenka, resides in Oktyabrsky Settlement

A barrel of salted fish was enough for the whole winter. Now they mostly just catch fish for sale. They take the roe and throw out loads of fish at the disposal site. The places where they leave the fish are then like bald patches for a long time. It’s all done by the city folks. They began to actively come in the 1990s. Before that, we never caught fish for sale. Now there’s more and more of that fishing rush. Mostly it comes from the visitors.

Vladimir Pavlovich Ignatyev, born in 1943, the village of Kavalerskoe

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The United Museum of Kamchatka Krai kindly provided the following materials from its collections:

I. Photos from Dybowski Album - F IV 5176/0001-0029
II. The Evens. Photos by G.Z. Gaidukevich. The 1960s
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