

ALMANAC MY MOTHER TONGUE Volume 2



INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO
Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs of the Russian Federation
UNESCO / UNESCO Information for All Programme (IFAP)
Russian UNESCO IFAP Committee
Interregional Library Cooperation Centre

Almanac
My Mother Tongue
Preservation of Indigenous Languages in Russia
Volume 2

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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 2022 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 designed 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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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Publisher’s Note	4
Acknowledgements	5
Foreword by Natalia KOMAROVA, Governor of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra.....	6
Organisations and Events.....	8
My Mother Tongue Programme on the Map of Russia	14
Igor BARINOV. Contribution of the Russian Federation to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages	16
Regions in Focus	30
Republic of Tatarstan	30
Republic of Khakassia.....	46
Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra.....	64
Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area.....	82
Karachay-Cherkess Republic.....	96

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The new volume of the My Mother Tongue Almanac presents the results of another year of implementing the eponymous programme, within the framework of which complex events were held in 5 subjects of the Russian Federation: the Republic of Tatarstan, Republic of Khakassia, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area and Karachay-Cherkess Republic.

The My Mother Tongue Programme developed in 2019 is implemented by the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme and the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre with the continued support of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs of the Russian Federation. We consider the preparation and publication of the Almanac in Russian and English as a contribution to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

The My Mother Tongue Programme provides a unique opportunity to study the language situation in different subjects of our country, to exchange experience between regions and to establish direct contacts for further development of cooperation. The results of the Programme can be used to plan activities and design projects in other multilingual regions of Russia, to develop similar programmes in other countries, to establish parameters and criteria for evaluating relevant national policies, and to elaborate a recommendation framework for the implementation of effective policies in this area at various levels.

This volume is dedicated to the memory of Evgeny Kuzmin, whose passing in February 2023 was an irreparable loss for all his colleagues and friends. Evgeny Kuzmin was for many years the permanent head of the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre and the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme and held leading positions in



the Intergovernmental Council of this programme. He had a unique ability to mobilise specialists of the highest level around him to discuss the most acute topics and address the most important issues of the modern information society, including the problems of preserving linguistic and cultural diversity.

It was Evgeny Kuzmin who came up with the idea of establishing the My Mother Tongue Programme, and it was his efforts that brought it to life. We will do our best to continue his endeavour.

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This almanac includes photographs from the archives of the Press Service of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, as well as relevant authorities and institutions of the regions participating in the programme.

Special thanks go to the Russian Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs of the Russian Federation for supporting the implementation of the My Mother Tongue Programme in 2022 and the preparation and publishing of this almanac.

FOREWORD



Natalya KOMAROVA

Governor of the Khanty-
Mansi Autonomous
Area – Ugra

The language of each ethnic group is a key factor in ethnic identification, the basis of intergenerational communication and the most important part of humanity's intangible heritage. In the digital age, support and development of the languages and folklore of indigenous peoples remain important conditions for their preservation.

As one of the most multinational and multilingual countries in the world, Russia has for many years made conscious efforts to preserve and support the languages of its peoples. These activities are pursued at both federal and regional levels.

In recent decades, Russia, in cooperation with UNESCO, has organised nine major international forums on multilingualism support issues. Thanks to the fruitful work of the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO and the Permanent Delegation of the Russian Federation to UNESCO, a solid basis has been created in our country for the successful implementation of UNESCO projects and programmes aimed at introducing international best practices, improving the quality of life of Russians, preserving cultural heritage, developing education and science.

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra has been cooperating with UNESCO for 15 years. Committed to promoting UNESCO's goals, the Government of Ugra, when developing the strategy of socio-economic development of the region until 2050, took into account relevant priorities: development of human capital, building the information society, preservation of the cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples of the North.

Ugra is a region inhabited by 139 ethnic groups, including the indigenous peoples of the North – Khanty, Mansi, and Nenets which represent 2 language groups and 6 dialects. Like other northern regions, we aim at creating conditions for the preservation of the languages and cultures of the indigenous peoples of the North in the places of their traditional residence and economic activity.

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area pays special attention to the spiritual and cultural aspects of the peoples' lives. Every year a competition is held for a governor's grant to support projects that contribute to the preservation, development and popularisation of folklore, traditions, language, crafts and traditional economic activities. The Torum Maa Ethnographic Open-Air Mu-

seum, the Solntse Theatre of Ob-Ugric Peoples and the District House of Folk Art convey the living culture of the indigenous peoples and transmit spiritual and cultural values to the younger generation. The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is celebrated in Ugra every year on August 9.

It is particularly valuable that the support and development of indigenous peoples is carried out in close cooperation with UNESCO's humanitarian, cultural and educational projects. UNESCO as the promoter of the world's cultural and intellectual potential has become an indispensable partner and friend of our region in this endeavour. Since 2014, Ugra has provided opportunities for holding international conferences of the UNESCO Information for All Programme to set the stage for discussing political, legal, ethical and social problems related to building a global information society, as well as for preparing projects aimed at ensuring universal access to information. I am convinced that the partnership relations between Ugra and UNESCO will be further developed, including through projects focused on youth socialisation, preservation of natural and cultural heritage, sustainable development of indigenous peoples.

The UN General Assembly has declared the period between 2022 and 2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. One of Russia's contributions to the implementation of the Decade is the My Mother Tongue Programme by the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme and the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre. As part of this project, the second volume of the eponymous Almanac is being published, providing up-to-date information on the state of indigenous languages and the language policy of the Russian Federation. This information will be of great interest to Russian and international experts, governments of multilingual countries, scientific communities and public associations dealing with issues of cultural diversity, inter-ethnic relations and the preservation of indigenous languages and cultures.

The Almanac is a valuable tool to help the world community understand that dialogue based on trust plays an important role in the preservation of mother tongues, and that linguistic and cultural diversity serves as a foundation for the development of good neighbourly relations in the world.

Indigenous cultures ensure the interconnection of traditional and modern ways of life. The native language is an inexhaustible wealth, and the speakers of this languages are its main custodians. The words of Evdokia Rombandeyeva, an outstanding specialist in the language and culture of the Mansi people, whose name is rightly included in the encyclopaedia «Leading Linguists of the World», can serve as a motto for activities to support and preserve indigenous languages: *“We hope that by our joint efforts we will prolong the life of the language, and thus the life of our peoples. Our peoples should leave their mark on the history of world culture”*.

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 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>

Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme

Russian UNESCO IFAP Committee was established in 2001 under the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. It is the Programme's first national committee ever. 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/knowledge societies, to the elaboration of scientific, theoretical, and methodological guidelines, to the establishment of best practice centres and to the improvement of activities of various institutions within its competence. Since the very beginning of its work, the Committee has been organising major international conferences on all IFAP priorities.

www.ifapcom.ru

Interregional Library Cooperation Centre (ILCC)

Moscow based NGO Interregional Library Cooperation Centre (ILCC), established in 1995, is the working body of the Russian UNESCO IFAP Committee. In addition to contributing to the IFAP implementation worldwide, ILCC is active at the national arena to participate in (a) drafting and implementing in Russia the governmental library policies and national programmes aimed to preserve library collections and digital cultural and scientific heritage; (b) developing an All-Russian network of public centres for access to legal and other socially meaningful information; (c) reading promotion; (d) advancing professional library training, and (e) preserving languages and developing multilingualism in cyberspace. On a regular basis, ILCC also organises international and national events on the above themes; 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



Eight major international events on multilingualism issues have been organised and held by the Russian UNESCO IFAP Committee and the ILCC since 2008 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.



MY MOTHER TONGUE PROGRAMME. EVENTS AND REGIONS

- Interregional Conference “Revitalising Indigenous Languages of the Republic of Karelia” (Petrozavodsk, Republic of Karelia, 2020)
- Interregional Conference “Advanced Linguistic Computer Technologies as Part of Preserving and Reviving Minority Languages of Sakhalin” (Nogliki, Sakhalin Region, 2020)
- Round Table “Prospects for Preserving and Promoting Indigenous Languages of the North of Sakhalin” (Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Sakhalin Region, 2020)
- Interregional Conference “Mother Tongues in the Multicultural Environment of the Region: Preservation, Use, Promotion” (Yoshkar-Ola, Republic of Mari El, 2020)
- Round Table “Problems and Prospects for Preserving and Promoting the Languages of the Republic of Mari El” (Yoshkar-Ola, Republic of Mari El, 2020)
- Interregional Conference “The Role of the State and Civil Society Institutions in Preserving the Chuvash Language” (Cheboksary, Chuvash Republic, 2020)
- Round Table “Mother Tongue as a Means of Preserving and Transmitting the Chuvash Culture, History, and Traditions” (Cheboksary, Chuvash Republic, 2020)
- Round Table “The Use of ICTs in Preserving and Promoting the Languages of Russia’s Indigenous Peoples” (Moscow, 2020)
- Interregional Conference “Mother Tongue as a Factor of Cultural Identity” (Izhevsk, Republic of Udmurtia, 2021)
- Interregional Conference “The Altai Language in the XXI Century: Preservation and Promotion” (Gorno-Altaysk, Altai Republic, 2021)



- Interregional Conference “Topical Problems of Preserving Mother Tongues in Regional Language Policies” (Magas – Sunzha – Nazran, Republic of Ingushetia, 2021)
- Interregional Conference “The Ossetian Language in the Context of Contemporary Globalisation Processes: Preservation and Promotion Issues” (Vladikavkaz, Republic of North Ossetia–Alania, 2021)
- Interregional Conference “Preserving and Promoting Mother Tongues in a Multiethnic State: Language Policy, Problems, and Prospects” (Grozny, Chechen Republic, 2021)
- Interregional Conference “Preserving and Promoting Mother Tongues in a Multiethnic State: Language Policy, Problems, and Prospects” (Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, 2022)
- 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, 2022)
- Interregional Conference “Language Policy in Ugra: Preservation of Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples” (Khanty-Mansiysk, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra, 2022)
- Interregional Conference “Regional Language Policy in the Context of the Goals for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages” (Salekhard, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area, 2022)
- 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, 2022)
- All-Russian Conferences “Problems of Increasing the Efficiency of Preserving and Promoting the Indigenous Languages of Russia” (Moscow, 2020,2021, 2022)



CONTRIBUTION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES



Igor BARINOV

Head, Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs of the Russian Federation; Chair, National Organising Committee for the Preparation and Holding in the Russian Federation of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages in 2022–2032

Multilingualism of Russia

The Russian Federation is the world's largest State with a high level of cultural, religious and linguistic diversity maintained over many centuries. The preservation and promotion of the languages of the peoples of Russia remains a long-term and absolute priority of State policy, enshrined in the Constitution of the Russian Federation and in federal and regional legislation. Thus, according to the Constitution, the State shall:

- guarantee the preservation of ethnocultural and linguistic diversity;
- postulate everyone's right to use their native language, to freely choose the language of communication, upbringing, education and creative work;
- not allow the propaganda of linguistic superiority;
- guarantee all of the peoples of the Russian Federation the right to preserve their native language and to create conditions for its study and development.

The fundamental law of our country specifically guarantees the rights of small indigenous peoples. Over seven centuries as part of the Russian state, they have preserved their unique cultural characteristics: their belief systems, traditions and customs, farming and settlement techniques, and their native languages.

State language policy is based on the principle of supporting and developing the languages of all peoples of Russia. With that Russian language is recognised as the State language of the Russian Federation in all its territory as the language of the State-constituting nation, being a member of the multinational union of equal peoples of the Russian Federation. Federal Act No. 52-FZ, adopted on February 25, 2023 *On Amendments to the Federal Act on the State Language of the Russian Federation*, is sought to improve the mechanisms for ensuring the status of the Russian language as the State language of the Russian Federation throughout the country.



Strategic session on Preserving the Languages and Cultures of the Small Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation Using Digital Technologies, 2022

For many centuries, it is the Russian language that has played a fundamental, strategically important role in cementing the unity of the Russian nation, in strengthening all-Russian civic identity and in creating a unique community of peoples in our country. According to the 2020 All-Russian Population Census, over 99.4% of the citizens of our multinational country speak Russian.

The Russian language plays a crucial role in terms of global integration, makes a huge contribution to the development of world culture and acts as one of the essential languages of interethnic communication, used by representatives of different cultures and religions for maintaining a common dialogue and building a shared future based on the principles of mutual respect.

Thus, Russian is one of the six official languages of the United Nations and its structures, an official

or working language of such international organisations as BRICS, WHO and others.

At the same time, Russian is the language of technology, science, culture, education and professional activity in the Commonwealth of Independent States. According to the latest data, about 260 million people in the world speak Russian, with most of them accounting for the CIS countries. Therefore, we attach great importance to the celebration of the Year of the Russian Language as the Language of Interethnic Communication in the Commonwealth countries in 2023.

As for the languages of the peoples of Russia as general, they are all characterised by different stages in terms of how deep they are researched and furnished and by different degrees of vulnerability and numbers of speakers. That explains why each language (including the

Government Hour in the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation with the participation of Igor Barinov, Head of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, 2023



languages of the small indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation) is approached comprehensively with special account for all its specifics.

Today, the multinational and multi-lingual Russian Federation¹ is:

- 74 languages used in the public education system;
- 74 TV broadcast languages;
- 63 radio broadcast languages;
- 504 newspapers published in 50 languages;
- 125 journals and almanacs in 31 languages;
- 57 languages in which thousands of book titles are published;
- over 22,000 native language teachers working in the education system;
- thousands of folk art performance groups promoting traditional folk and song heritage of the peoples of Russia.

Many experts believe that the Russian Federation has acquired a truly unique experience in preserving linguistic diversity, which may be of interest to many countries of the world. However, the progress attained gives no reason to dwell on what has been achieved.

We objectively assess the status of languages and see where additional work needs to be done. First of all, it is necessary to continue improving legislation, the system of state administration, with special attention to strengthening the staff training. Moreover, we need to involve non-governmental structures and support civic initiatives put forward by prominent public figures, language activists, IT specialists, and business representatives.

¹ Based on government statistics for 2022.

Undoubtedly, the future of our languages, and thus of our culture and of all the peoples of Russia in general, should be furthered with due account for modern realities, the challenges associated with globalisation and digitalisation. It goes without saying, that some languages are not fit for this situation, but still there are ways how to cope with this problem. The important thing is that Russian citizens demonstrate a growing interest in learning and using their native languages, in self-organisation within language communities, including within the framework of the My Mother Tongue Programme developed in 2019 by the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme in cooperation with the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre and supported by the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs.

Success in the preservation and development of languages depends on the active and sustained engagement of the peoples speaking these languages. The State remains their reliable and responsible supporter.

Contribution of the Russian Federation to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages

The International Decade of Indigenous Languages for 2022–2032, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly Resolution of 18 December 2019 on



Participants in the International Seminar on the Preservation and Promotion of Arctic Indigenous Languages, 2022

the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, envisages participation of all stakeholders, primarily the speakers of the languages themselves, in the intergenerational transmission of languages.

It is only natural that the Russian Federation being one of the largest multinational and multilingual countries in the world has become a vocal supporter of this initiative.

Our country's representatives took part in the UNESCO Regional Consultation Meeting for Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Transcaucasia (March 15-16, 2021), which resulted in the identification of priority development areas for this region within the framework of the International Decade. These were education, digitalisation and culture. The same thematic areas formed the basis of the federal plan.

The Russian Federation participated in UNESCO's regional consultative meetings for the Arctic region. This is an important area of activity, since more than 60% of the total Arctic

territory, which is home to more than half of the world's Arctic population, falls within Russia's Arctic zone.

Our country has actively participated in all meetings of the Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages, established by UNESCO in March 2021 to provide strategic guidance and work out recommendations for the organisation of the International Decade.

The Russian Federation made a number of constructive proposals while drafting the Global Action Plan for the Decade, which were taken into account in the final version of the document. As a result, the participating countries gained greater autonomy in the development of national action plans due to the possibility to independently determine national priorities and give consideration to local linguistic peculiarities.

It is worth noting that the Russian Government provides large-scale support for the implementation of

the Decade in our country, which contributed to the timely adoption of measures to localise and adapt the Global Plan of Action and create national coordination mechanisms.

Thus, Russia became the first UN Member State to form a National Organising Committee for the International Decade, which comprises the representatives of federal authorities, top regional officials, heads of relevant scientific and cultural institutions, representatives of the media and big business, and leaders of public organisations of small indigenous peoples of Russia. The Government of the Russian Federation has entrusted the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs with the coordinating role in the preparation and implementation of the Decade in Russia.

In accordance with the recommendations set forth in the Global Action Plan, National Organising Committee of our country has developed a Plan of Key Activities

Participants in the 8th meeting of the Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages, 2022



for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages to be held in the Russian Federation in 2022–2032, which has become the first planning document in the world to be adopted at the level of the national government. The plan has now been translated into English, French and Spanish and is available on the UNESCO Decade’s online platform in a special section created on the recommendation of Russia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, the Ministry of Culture of Russia, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of Russia, the Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East and Arctic, the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Russia, the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, the Federal State Statistics Service, leading institutions of science, education, culture, including the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Russian Academy of Education, the Federal Institute of Native Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation, the Russian State Pedagogical University, as well as business companies, state mass media, non-governmental associations of small indigenous peoples, and many other stakeholders are involved in the implementation of the federal plan. The Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme plays an active role in the organisation of the

National Plan activities with the participation of foreign experts.

The in-depth participation of representatives of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and the Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature in drafting the National Plan made it possible to fully comply with the essential guiding principle of the decade – “Nothing for us without us”, which highlights the pivotal role of indigenous peoples.

The Federal Plan consists of 6 sections and 64 paragraphs. The first section focuses on activities which are sought to improve public administration and interaction with civil society organisations; the second section is dedicated to activities in education and teacher training; the third refers to scientific activities; the fourth applies to activities in the area of digitalisation and culture; the fifth refers to activities in the area of book publishing and the media. Finally, the sixth section deals with information support for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages in the Russian Federation.

Our country regards as of fundamental importance the need to provide systemic support measures for all languages of the peoples of Russia, especially the most vulnerable languages of small indigenous peoples.

Activities to digitalise languages and to integrate them into the information and digital space, are essential for ensuring the sustainability of languages.

Participants in the High-Level International Conference “World Treasury of Mother Tongues: Nourish and Cherish. National and International Context, Policies and Practices to Preserve Indigenous Languages”, 2022



The Russian Federation, as a country with high potential in IT development, has every chance to become a world leader in the digitalisation of languages.

An ambitious task has been set to work with the regions to create and promote basic language technologies within this decade, namely:

- keyboard layouts, fonts;
- electronic dictionaries, spell checkers;
- machine translators, speech synthesisers and recognisers; search engines in the languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation.

In the context of a tense geopolitical situation associated with attempts by unfriendly countries to isolate Russia from international platforms, events that promote the establishment and strengthening of global partnerships are particularly relevant and important. One of such event is the high-level international conference to be held

biannually within the framework of the federal plan.

The first such a conference “World Treasury of Mother Tongues: Nourish and Cherish. National and International Context, Policies and Practices to Preserve Indigenous Languages” took place on July 5-7, 2022. It has become one of the world’s first high-level events to mark the opening of the Decade.

The conference was attended by international experts in the field of linguistic diversity development from more than 40 countries. The event was organised by the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme, the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO and the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation.



Northern
Women's
Forum, 2023

We believe that due to its established frequency, this conference can turn into one of the world's most authoritative expert platforms to exchange experience and present best practices in the field of preservation and development of indigenous languages.

The work of the Conference resulted in the adoption of its final document called the Moscow Declaration on Mother Tongues Preservation, presented by the delegation of the Russian Federation at the High-Level Launch Event of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on December 13, 2022.

Work continues on the localisation of the Global Plan of Action and the development and approval of regional plans of activities carried out within the framework of the International Decade. To date, 67 regions of the Russian Federation have ap-

proved these plans. Moreover, some regions have developed similar plans at the level of municipalities and districts, thanks to which we can speak of a truly unprecedented level of localisation that we have achieved. A quarter of the activities under the Federal plan are implemented together with the executive bodies of the regions.

We believe that both regional and local level activities which are closest to the people should be more targeted and therefore more visible. Obviously, one of the most important results of the work done locally should be the attraction of regional investment in the language sector. For this purpose, the federal plan envisages the adoption of similar documents and the creation of bodies in the country's regions to coordinate their implementation.

The results of the first year allow us to talk about the successful start of

the International Decade in Russia. This is clearly demonstrated by the number of relevant organisations registered from our country and the lists of events they published on the online platform of the International Decade (www.idil2022-2032.org). Thus, in 2022, organisations from 44 regions of Russia registered on the platform and posted information about more than 350 events held within the framework of the Decade. In the first six months of 2023 alone, the overall number of publications exceeded 600. For comparison, the result of the Russian Federation is tenfold higher than the total figures published by the other leaders of the list – Brazil, the United States and France. It is worth mentioning that the dedicated multilingual online platform supported by UNESCO is the main and primary tool for data collection, monitoring and evaluation of the UN Member States participation in the Decade.

This success is largely due to the clear system of co-operation and control established at all levels of government. The procedure for submitting annual reports to the Government of the Russian Federation allows for continuous monitoring, when necessary, promptly adjusting the situation on the ground.

The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North took an active part in the first year of the Decade. In 2022, the Association implemented a number of large-scale projects, including the 3rd Ethno Dictation in the native languages of the small indigenous minorities of

the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation with the participation of more than 730 representatives from Russian regions and abroad (February 14-21, 2022) and the 3rd All-Russian Congress of Teachers of Native Languages and Literature of Small Indigenous Peoples, which brought together 120 participants from 28 regions of the Russian Federation (Moscow, November 23-24, 2022).

The RAIPON IT team has been set up to develop and implement projects to support and develop languages in the digital space. About fifty young people from indigenous minorities are members of the RAIPON IT team.

On December 3-5, 2022, the Russian State University for the Humanities hosted the Second Strategic Session of the RAIPON IT team “Preserving the Languages and Cultures of the Small Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation Using Digital Technologies”.

The RAIPON IT team has developed and presented its flagship project, the AYANA software, which enables voice translation of words and sentences of the Russian-Evenki language pair with the function to understand and process natural language. This software can also be used for other languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. In September 2022, an agreement was signed between the AYANA project office, PJSC Norilsk Nickel, and indigenous communities



Arctic
Indigenous
Peoples
Summit,
2022

of the Taymyr Peninsula to create offline translators in 4 languages: Enets, Nenets, Dolgan, and Nganasan. There are plans to develop a database, to digitalise printed dictionaries and collect oral dialects and expressions to be added to the media console in electronic form.

The third book titled *The Voice of the North* was published compiling works of the winners of the Third Literary Contest organised by the Voice of the North Association, including a number of individual literary works submitted to the contest by writers from the North. Literary works by 44 authors in 21 languages and dialects of the peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East were selected from 64 submissions as recommended by the jury members for consideration. The authors' works have been translated into Russian and English.

On November 23-24, 2022, the Association, together with the NGO Assembly of the Peoples of Russia, with the support of the Federal

Agency for Ethnic Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, the Federal Institute of Native Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation, and the Charity Fund to Support Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, held the All-Russian Workshop "Novelties of Education Legislation in the Context of the Study and Teaching of Native Languages" in Moscow. The workshop focused on issues of ensuring support for indigenous languages in education, legal protection of the professional activities of native language teachers, organisation of educational and methodological support for ethnocultural education of children, increasing motivation to study languages, literature, history and culture of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation.

In order to further improve legislation on languages, Federal Act No.

International exhibition-fair "Treasures of the North. Masters and Artists of Russia"



219-FZ of June 13, 2023 *On amendments to the Federal Act on Education in the Russian Federation* was adopted, which is intended to provide the required conditions for small indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation to get preschool and primary general education in the places where they traditionally live and carry out their traditional economic activities.

Priority tasks in the field of preserving and supporting the languages of the peoples of Russia include the introduction of languages in the information space and the development and promotion of basic language technologies. An interactive atlas of the small indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East comprising data on the historical, cultural, social, anthropological and linguistic diversity of 40 small peoples of Russia was developed at the Russian State University for the

Humanities. The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is currently implementing the Arctic Council project *Digitalisation of the Linguistic and Cultural Heritage of the Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic*, aimed at preserving cultural heritage and creating conditions for better adaptation and promotion of the languages of the Arctic indigenous peoples of all eight Arctic countries in the digital domain.

The support for promotion of indigenous languages is fostered by a whole number of promising projects which include the development of the *Sam'kill* mobile app for learning the Sami language, the electronic dictionary of the Chukchi language, the multimedia project *Chukchi Lessons. Vetgav 3*, the *Taiga Fairytale*s online project, the multimedia Internet app *The Musical Merry ABC Book in the Yukaghir Language*, the online dictionary of the Mansi language, the Scientific and Educational Centre for the Development of the Nanai



III All-Russian Congress of Teachers of Native Languages, Literature and Culture of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, 2022

Language and Culture at the Amur State University of Humanities and Pedagogy, etc.

In 2022, the nomination *Best Teacher of Native Languages and Literature* was voted for the first time in the course of the All-Russian Contest *Teacher of the Year of Russia*. Sixty eight regions of our country were represented in this competition by the teachers of 30 different languages of the peoples of Russia. The Association of Teachers of Native Languages and Literatures of the Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East established special nominations for teachers of native languages and literatures of the indigenous minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation.

As far as the development and publication of educational and guidance materials for teacher training

and education are concerned, the Federal Educational and Methodological Association for General Education of Russia approved 66 model working programmes in 20 languages. It also developed teaching aids for courses of Russian intended to provide support to learners with a poor command of the Russian language, and compiled dictionaries and manuals on the native languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation.

In the field of culture, 130 books were added to the *Book Monuments* portal of the National Digital Library of Russia in 2022. As part of the *Big Tour* Programme of the All-Russian Touring and Concert Plan, 16 national theatres performed on tour in 12 regions of the country. The impressive 54 performances in the indigenous languages of the peoples of Russia were played. As part

Session
 “Languages
 of Indigenous
 Peoples of the
 North, Siberia
 and the Far East
 as the Basis of
 the Cultural
 Heritage of
 Multinational
 Russia”, 2023



of the *We Are Russia* Programme of the All-Russian Touring and Concert Plan, 44 national performance groups visited 72 regions of the country and performed 371 concerts.

In the field of book publishing and mass communications, in 2022, the meeting of the tendering committee of the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of Russia decided to provide support to 19 publications in 11 languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation and to 135 printed periodicals in 18 national languages.

The World Atlas of Languages is another flagship project launched by UNESCO in the framework of the Decade. It is intended to become an interactive and dynamic online tool that documents and features the most up-to-date and robust data on the status and situation of the world’s languages.

The intersectoral working group was set up at the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs to prepare materials from the Russian Federation for the World Atlas of Languages. The House of the Peoples of Russia being a subordinate structure of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, has been entrusted with the function of the main data entry operator. The data compiled on the languages of Russia is based on official statistics from the 2020 All-Russian Population Census as well as on the information provided by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation, the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media, and the Federal State Statistics Service. Scientific, expert and advisory support is provided by the Institute of Linguistics, the

Institute for Linguistic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Federal Institute of Native Languages and other relevant scientific organisations.

The intersectoral working group decided to gradually incorporate data on the languages of the peoples of Russia during the Decade. The members of the group defined a list of 78 languages to be included in the Atlas at the initial stage (the state language of the Russian Federation, state languages of the regions of the Russian Federation, languages with official status, languages of the small indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation).

It bears noting that the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, as the coordinating body, has managed to establish effective cooperation with the team of developers of the UNESCO World Atlas of Languages, which makes it possible to promptly resolve organisational and technical issues related to data entry and to receive the necessary expert and methodological support in a timely manner. Close and fruitful cooperation with the Atlas developers contributes to the presentation of objective information on the status of languages of the peoples of Russia.

Conclusions

Promotion of equal conditions for the development of languages and

cultures constitutes the backbone of the stability and harmony in society, and remains one of the essential prerequisites for the very existence of any multiethnic state. A prudent, multifaceted, humanistic language policy based on an inclusive approach serves as a solid guarantee that citizens will be able to use their native languages to fully tap their professional and personal potential.

The International Decade of Indigenous Languages will open new opportunities for drawing closer attention to issues related to the development of linguistic diversity and, above all, to support for the most vulnerable languages. Russia, which throughout its history has protected and preserved the languages of its peoples, stands ready to share its achievements in this field and to learn from the practices of other States.

The experience of the Russian Federation in the preparation and implementation of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages confirms the need for a comprehensive approach to nourishing the richness and beauty of mother tongues in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Global Plan of Action.

The future of all nations and the world at large will considerably benefit from our concerted efforts and active and constructive participation in the Decade's events.

REPUBLIC OF TATARSTAN



Interregional scientific and practical conference

Preserving and Promoting Mother Tongues in a Multiethnic State: Language Policy, Problems and Prospects

(June 20-22, 2022, Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan)

Organisers

- Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme
- Interregional Library Cooperation Centre
- Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tatarstan
- Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Tatarstan
- Marjani Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan
- Institute of Applied Semiotics of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan
- House of Friendship of the Peoples of Tatarstan

TATAR LANGUAGE: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



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Art



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Anthropology and
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International Relations,
Kazan Federal University

Introduction

The Tatars, the second largest ethnic group in the Russian Federation, reside compactly in the Volga River region, the Urals, Western Siberia and are dispersed throughout Russia's territory and in countries of near and far abroad. According to the 2020 Census, there are 4,713,669 Tatars living in Russia.

Among the peoples inhabiting Tatarstan, the Tatars rank first in terms of population. Nearly a century-long history of Soviet and post-Soviet

censuses has identified stable positive trends in population growth: while in 1926 the Tatar ethnicity amounted to 1,263,383 in the Tatar ASSR, in 2010 their number reached 2,012,571, and in 2020 – 2,091,175 people (which is 53.2% of the total population of the republic).

Tatar language: general characteristics

The Tatar language belongs to the Turkic language family, and is closely



Kazan
Kremlin

Tatar
women's
costume.
Lifestyle –
Cultural
Code ethno-
fashion
festival of
folk art and
decorative
and applied
arts



related to the Bashkir, Kazakh, Nogai, Karachai, Kumyk, Karakalpak, Uzbek, Turkmen, Azeri, Kyrgyz, Tuvan, Khakass, Chuvash, Yakut and other Turkic languages

Various linguists attribute Turkic languages to different language groups. Nevertheless, it is generally recognised that the Tatar language belongs to the Kypchak group of Turkic languages.

There are three major dialects in the Tatar national language, which in turn are distinguished by their own subdialects.

The Central (Middle) dialectal group is spoken predominantly by the Tatars living in the Republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, who are commonly referred to as Kazan Tatars or Volga Tatars. Their main location is the Volga River region and the Ural region.

The Western dialect is spoken by Mishar Tatars, who live mainly in Tatarstan, Nizhny Novgorod, Tambov, Voronezh, Ryazan, Penza, Sa-

mara, Ulyanovsk, Orenburg regions, Bashkortostan and Mordovia.

The Eastern dialect spoken by Siberian Tatars is widespread in Western Siberia: in the Tyumen, Omsk, Novosibirsk, Tomsk and Kemerovo regions.

The phonetics of standard literary Tatar is based on the Central dialect, while the grammar is drawn from the Western dialect. The vocabulary of the Tatar language is based on the combination of the Central and Western dialects, with the Eastern dialect contributing significantly to vocabulary enrichment – it is the source of unique terms not found in other dialects, mostly related to Siberian flora and fauna.

The basics of Tatar vocabulary derive from the words of Turkic origin denoting body parts, kinship relations, natural phenomena, flora and fauna, numerals, pronouns. There is also a significant layer of Arabic-Persian vocabulary.

The modern Tatar language has a considerable share of words of Russian origin. And while early borrowings were adapted to the Tatar language laws, since the beginning of the 20th century they are used without adaptation, in their original form.

History of the Tatar literary language

Over centuries-old history of its formation the Tatar literary language has acquired a whole number of specific features (vocabulary, phonetics, syntax, etc.) that are now common for the dialects spoken by the Volga Tatars, Urals Tatars and Siberian Tatars and distinguish them from other Turkic

Traditional furnishings of a Tatar house. Muslyumovsk Museum of Tatar Life



Ancient Tatar bracelet



languages. Throughout its history, the Tatar language has actively interacted with the languages of neighboring peoples and has been significantly influenced by Iranian and, in the Middle Ages, by Arabic and Persian (religious, education and cultural terms, etc.).

The Old Tatar language, used in its written form, has its roots in the literary language of the Golden Horde and by the middle of the 19th century gained considerable written technics.

The early 20th century saw the booming number of newspapers published in the Tatar language (in total, over 120 newspapers and magazines were published), which gave a major boost to unification of literary norms. It was exactly then that the formation of the modern Tatar national language, the successor of the Old Tatar language, was completed. It has become a major milestone in the development of the Tatar language and culture.

Writing

Throughout their history, the Tatars used several types of writing. The first is the Old Turkic runic script, the earliest monuments of which (inscrip-

tions on stones in the ritual complexes of ancient Turkic rulers) date back to the 7th-10th centuries. Runic writing penetrated into the Middle Volga region together with the Turkic-Bulgarian tribes and was used until the 12th century. Academician Vasily Bartold noted that the Turkic runic alphabet, with its 35 signs, was perfectly adapted to the Turkic language.

The Uyghur script has also played a significant role in the history of Tatar writing. The Uyghurs, one of the most ancient Turkic-speaking peoples, founded a whole string of states in the 8th-9th centuries in the territories of today's Mongolia and China. And their script was also used by the ancestors of modern Tatars, which is proven by the official papers certified in the Golden Horde which were written in the Uyghur script along with Arabic.

The adoption of Islam in the 10th century led to the



Yarlig (decree) of Khan Sahib Giray (1953), National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan

Tatar
book in
Arabic
script



spread of Arabic script-based writing, known scientifically as the Old Tatar script, to the entire Volga Bulgaria region. It was predominantly used by Tatars for more than ten centuries. The original Arabic script-based variant of the Old Tatar script called *Iske imlâ* (“Old orthography”) was used by Tatars till 1920. Then, some of Tatar intellectuals initiated reforms in the field of writing which resulted in adoption of *Yaña imlâ* (“New orthography”), regarded as the most fitted to the specifics of the Tatar language.

The accession of the Turkic republics to the USSR prompted them to switch to Latin-based alphabets. Following the decision to switch to the Latin alphabet made by the majority of delegates to the First Turkic Congress held in 1926, the Council of People’s Commissars of the Tatar ASSR adopted a special resolution of July 3, 1927, which recognised a Latin-based *Yan’alif* alphabet as the official alphabet of the Tatar language.

However, the *Yan’alif* alphabet did not last long. In 1939, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Tatar ASSR issued a decree to replace it with the Cyrillic alphabet, which with some modifications the Tatars continue to use up to now.

Current language situation

The Tatar language, the second largest language spoken in the Russian Federation, belongs to functionally developed majority languages with a high degree of vitality.

The overwhelming number of people living in Tatarstan considers Tatar their mother tongue and has a fair practical command of it. At the same time, the majority of the population of the Republic has a fairly high level of fluency in Russian. Like in Soviet times, interethnic communication takes place in Russian.

The Tatar language particularly prevails in rural areas, being the main language of communication, especially in settlements with a predominantly Tatar population. In urban areas Tatar is used less frequently in everyday communication due to the multiethnic composition of the urban population. The religion domain, which plays an important role in Tatarstan, uses Tatar, Russian and Arabic.

The choice of language of intra-family communication is determined not only by the nationality of family members. There is also a certain correlation with their social status (in a broad sense), level of education and other factors. In Tatar families, the role of the older generations, primarily grandparents, is significant in cultural transmission.

The Republic of Tatarstan follows a comprehensive approach to the preservation and development of the Tatar language in all socially and culturally significant areas:

- in education at all levels: pre-school, primary general, basic gen-

Marat Akhmetov,
Deputy
Chair, State
Council of the
Republic of
Tatarstan



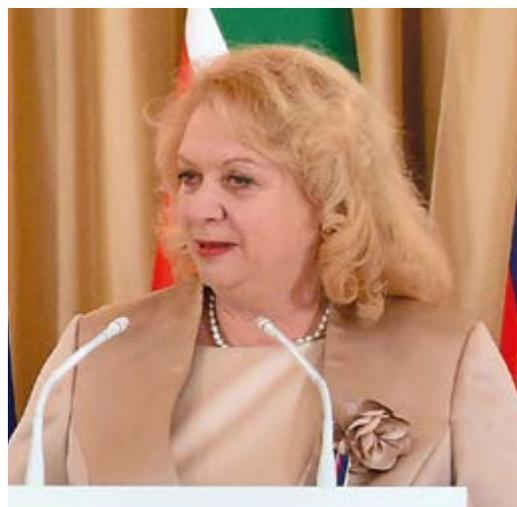
- eral, secondary general, secondary vocational and higher education;
- in the field of science (the main emphasis is on research in the field of the Tatar language and its functioning, as well as literary studies);
 - in the cultural sphere (theatres, libraries, museums, etc.);
 - in the mass media (a large number of periodicals are published in the Tatar language; television and radio broadcasting is carried out, including the 24-hour *Shayan TV* children's television channel in the Tatar language);
 - in book publishing (considerable attention is paid to the publication of fiction, scientific and popular science literature in Tatar, including for children's audiences).

Legislative support measures for the Tatar language

Tatarstan, as a multiethnic republic, ensures the preservation, development and promotion of the culture and languages of the Tatars and other ethnic groups living in its territory by implementing the relevant federal

laws and other strategic and concept documents, programmes and plans.

For these purposes the whole set of normative and legal acts regulating the functioning of languages and aimed at exercising the linguistic rights of the peoples living in the region has been developed. The Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan (enacted in 1992) sets the preservation and development of historical, national and spiritual traditions, cultures and languages as priority tasks for the State. Guarantees and safeguards of social, economic and legal protection of languages, irrespective of their status, are enshrined in the *Law on the State Languages of the Republic of Tatarstan and other languages in the Republic of Tatarstan* adopted in Tatarstan in 1992. The Law of the Republic of Tatarstan *On the Use of the Tatar Language as the State Language of the Republic of Tatarstan* of 2013 is aimed at ensuring the use of the Tatar language as a state language in the entire territory of the Republic of Tatarstan and protecting and developing Tatar linguistic culture and preserving the continuity of the historical traditions of writing of the Tatar people. The



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(Education
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Vakhitovsky
district of Kazan

provisions of normative legal acts at various levels regulating relations in education, culture and other spheres of society are also aimed at supporting linguistic diversity.

Since 1994, Tatarstan has consistently implemented various state programmes which foster the preservation, further research and development of the languages of the ethnic groups living in the Republic, including Russian and Tatar as state languages and as native languages. The State Programme *Conservation of the Tatar National Identity* sets out measures required to preserve Tatar culture and language. The implementation of the *Framework Concept for the Development of National Education in the Republic of Tatarstan until 2030* is aimed at improving the system of national education as an essential component of the preservation and development of national cultures and languages in the context of globalisation. The Republic's Plan of main activities within the International Decade of Indigenous Languages to be held in the Republic

of Tatarstan throughout 2022-2032 has been approved.

All normative legal acts are approved in two state languages – Russian and Tatar. The paperwork in the system of state and local self-government bodies of Tatarstan is also carried out in the state languages of the Republic.

National education in historical retrospective

The Tatar language has played a tangible role in the education and enlightenment of the peoples of the Volga region and Western Asia serving as a lingua franca for the Turkic peoples.

The madrassas built by Tatar entrepreneurs and philanthropists in different parts of Russia provided education not only to Tatar, but also to Bashkir, Kazakh and Kyrgyz children. The history of Tatar language teaching in schools and madrassas dates back to the Bulgar period. Following the adoption of Islam, Tatars were educated in these very institutions.

In the 1740s, according to the Depart-

Day of the Republic of Tatarstan, 2022



ment of Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Confessions of the Synod, there were 536 mosques. Each mosque had a school where Tatar was taught along with Arabic and Persian.

The Russian educational institutions started lessons of the Tatar language as an official subject since 1739 in Samara, since 1744 in Orenburg, since 1764 in Astrakhan, and since 1769 in Kazan. It is well known that Tatar was also studied in the Academic Gymnasium at the Moscow University. In 1778, the first Tatar language textbook *Alphabet of the Tatar language* by Sagit Khalfin was published.

In the 19th century, the Tatar language was included into the curricula of gymnasiums in Saratov, Tobolsk, Tomsk and other towns.

In 1921, the Tatar language was declared the state language in the Tatar ASSR. Since 1922, the study of the Tatar language has been compulsory in all secondary schools (including urban schools), vocational, party schools, remedial schools for workers and higher education institutions. Those years marked the drastic increase in the number of national schools and publication of textbooks in Tatar for all subjects. Much attention was paid to the training of teachers in higher educational institutions.

In the early 1990s, the Tatar language, along with Russian, got the status of the state language of the Republic of Ta-



Adymnar polylingual educational complex

tarstan, which resulted in greater number of Tatar-language schools opened in the region. Today, the number of hours for the study of Tatar language and literature is three per week (two hours for the study of the language and one hour for native literature).

Nowadays, the Republic has formed a system of national education, which comprises an extensive network of educational organisations implementing educational programmes with due regard for national diversity and the ethnocultural needs of the population.

During the 2022/2023 school year, Tatarstan boasts of more than 600 native Tatar language schools providing teaching of certain subjects in Russian; about 750 preschools with Tatar as the language of instruction and upbringing; and about 600 preschools with Russian as the language of instruction and upbringing which have Tatar language groups.

Since 2019, the Republic has implemented a unique project to create a network of polylingual educational complexes *Adymnar – the Path to Knowledge and Harmony*. They are

called to serve as a model of a modern school where competitive education is provided in compliance with the state educational standards of the Russian Federation and with the goals of the national project *Education*, with in-depth study of all the subjects in Russian, Tatar and English.

Educational organisations are provided with textbooks and teaching aids for native languages and translated teaching aids for other general education subjects.

Kazan Federal University provides training and advance training courses for the staff to work in educational and academic institutions and develops teaching and methodological manuals for the native (Tatar) language. Naberezhnye Chelny State Pedagogical University, Akmulla Bashkir State Pedagogical University and the Sterlitamak Branch of Bashkir State University also provide staff training courses.

The Ibragimov Institute of Language, Literature and Art of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan plays a prominent role in the research study of the Tatar language. For many decades the Institute has continued basic and applied research in Tatar language and literature.

The Institute as well as other creative teams have developed educational programmes, working programmes, federal working programmes and textbooks for *Native (Tatar) Language, Literary Reading in Native (Tatar) Language* and *Native (Tatar) Literature* for educational organisations with Tatar and Russian languages of instruction.



Publications
by the
Ibragimov
Institute of
Language,
Literature
and Art

It is also worth noting that the Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan envisages ensuring support in the promotion of national culture and language and in the preservation of identity to Tatars living outside Tatarstan. A number of academic and educational organisations work together in this field. Kazan Federal University and the Institute of Educational Development of the Republic of Tatarstan work jointly to improve the level of professional training and skills and of advanced professional training of teaching staff for educational organisations providing education in the native (Tatar) language and native (Tatar) literature, as well as teachers of the native (Tatar) language and native (Tatar) literature for educational organisations in other regions of the Russian Federation where the Tatars reside in compact settlements. Since 2013, the *Ana Tele* online Tatar language learning school has been available to everyone. The Institute of Educational Development of the Republic of Tatarstan successfully

develops the Salam educational and methodical complex for the subject *The State Language of the Republic of Tatarstan – Tatar Language* and also deals with improving the qualifications of teaching staff.

Tatarstan regularly hosts various festivals, republic-wide creative contests, fora, scientific and research conferences dedicated to the Tatar language and culture, as well as republican, interregional and international Olympiads in native languages, including the Tatar language, and educational camps with specialised language shifts for young students. Participants in such events immerse themselves in the communication in Tatar which promotes its popularity among young people.

Tatar science

The development of Tatar science has gone a rocky and long path. The origin of Tatar studies dates back to the second half of the 18th century,

the time when the scientific expeditions organised by the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1768-1774 prompted the systematic ethnolinguistic, historical and ethnographic research of the peoples of the Volga region, Siberia, Central Asia and the Caucasus, including the Tatars.

The Oriental Department opened in 1829 at the Imperial Kazan University served as the centre for studies of oriental cultures and peoples, especially Turkic, until 1855, when it was moved to St. Petersburg University. The 19th century brought about intensified studies of the Tatar language and literature and publication of ancient and medieval written monuments, alphabet books, grammars and Tatar language readers and dictionaries carried out by the University and other Muslim and secular educational institutions in Kazan.

In 1921, the Academic Centre of Tatar Peoples' Committee of Education was established, which, among other things, dealt with the imple-



Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan

mentation and coordination of academic research in Tatar studies. The institutionalisation of Tatar studies triggered its multipronged development, including in such areas as history, ethnography, linguistics, folklore and literary studies.

In 1939, the Tatar Research Institute of Language and Literature (now the Ibragimov Institute of Language, Literature and Art of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan) was inaugurated. Since that time it has evolved into a leading academic institution with a special focus on research in the humanities (in the field of Tatar language, literature, arts, and the history of the Tatar nation). The Institute currently continues systematic work in all these areas.

Kazan State University (since 2010 renamed as Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University) and Kazan State Pedagogical Institute (since the 2011/2012 academic year it has become part of the University) have im-

mensely contributed to the development of Tatar studies. Thesis Boards for the defense of candidate and doctoral theses in Tatar language, literature, folklore and history worked here, and monographs in these fields were regularly published.

Such prominent scholars as Alexander Bessonov, Kayum Nasyri, Vasily Bogoroditsky, Galimjan Ibragimov, Gibadullah Alparov, Latyf Zalyai, Dilara Tumasheva, Fuat Ganiev, Vali Khangildin, Vakhit Khakov, Fagima Khisamova, Flora Safiullina, Edham Tenishev and many others are known for their research in the field of the Tatar language.

The establishment on 30 September 1991 of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Tatarstan contributed to extended research in the history, language, literature and culture of the Tatars.

The Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan is home to the

Meeting of the Head of the Republic of Tatarstan Rustam Minnikhanov with the scientific communit



Institute of Tatar Encyclopedia and Regional Studies, which is one of the leading centres of encyclopedic research in Tatarstan and the Russian Federation. The Marjani Institute of History and the Khalikov Institute of Archaeology are leading academic centres in such research areas as history and ethnography of the Tatar people, as well as in archaeological research. The Institute of Applied Semiotics is responsible for incorporating the Tatar language into computer technologies and creating national computer-based text corpora and computer support systems for the Tatar language.

Along with the research centres in Kazan, it is worth noting the tangible contribution to the development of Tatar studies by higher educational institutions of Yelabuga, Naberezhnye Chelny, Zelenodolsk, Ufa, Sterlitamak, Tyumen and Tobolsk.

Several thesis boards currently operate in the Republic. Candidate and doctoral theses on Tatar language, literature, folklore, history, archaeology, etc., are regularly defended.

Nowadays, Tatarstan boasts of a great number of publications of scientific journals *Bezne miras* (Our Heritage), *Fanny Tatarstan* (Scientific Tatarstan) in Tatar, and *Tatar Archaeology*, and *Scientific Tatarstan* in Russian, as well as *Gasyrlar avazy* or *Echo of the Ages* and *Tatarika* published in both languages, etc.

Media in the Tatar language

Back in the early 20th century Kazan became one of the first provincial

cities in Russia to start publishing newspapers and magazines.

In 1905, the first four Tatar language newspapers went to press in St. Petersburg – *Nur* (Ray) and *Ul-fat* (Friendship), in Kazan – *Kazan Mukhbire* (Kazan Herald) and in Uralsk (now Kazakhstan) – *Fiker* (Thought).

According to the Russian Book Chamber, in 2021, about 30 magazines and 170 newspapers were published in Tatar in the Russian Federation.

Today Tatarstan has 26 magazines and about 90 newspapers published in the Tatar language. The core of the Tatar press in the Republic is made up of 43 district newspapers with a total one-off circulation of 67,000 copies.



Ak Yul
magazine,
1913

The major republican TV channel, TNV, has been broadcasting in both Tatar and Russian since its foundation in 2002. From 2009 to 2022, four Tatar-language channels were launched in Tatarstan, three of them broadcast-

Ekiyat
Tatar State
Puppet
Theatre



ing 24/7. These are the information and cultural channel *TNV-Planeta*, *TMTV* and *Maidan* music channels and *Shayan TV* children's channel. The Tatar-Bashkir music channels of Bashkortostan (*Tugan Tel* and *Ma-Tur TV*), the Muslim Tatar-Russian *Huzur TV* are also available. There are several district television stations which broadcast in Tatar and Russian.

According to 2017 data, 46 radio stations broadcast in the Republic, with 11 (which accounts for 24%) broadcasting in Tatar. As of today, six of the total 40 radio stations currently available in Kazan broadcast in Tatar.

The *Official Tatarstan* information system includes 102 information resources which are maintained in the Tatar language. Tatar-language content represented in these resources includes mainly news and statistical information.

Such Internet resources as *intertat.ru*, *Tatar Inform* news agency, *Tatar Today*, etc. are the most popular.

Culture

Tatar literature, being genetically intertwined with the ancient Turkic literature, stems from the centuries-long traditions, forged in different periods of its development: in the times of the Golden Horde, Volga Bulgaria and the Kazan Khanate, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.

The romantic poem *The Tale of Yusuf* (1233) by Kul Gali (about 1183 – after 1233) is appraised a landmark masterpiece of the Bulgarian period of Tatar literature.

The beginning of the 14th century is marked by the works of Qutb (*Khosrov and Shirin*, 1342), Sayf-i Sarayi (*Gulistan bi't Turki*, 1394, *Suhail and Gulderson*, 1394), Hafiz Khorezmi (*The Book of Love*, 1353). These works laid the foundation of the artistic heritage of the Tatar people and attest the high level of development of spiritual culture.

The literature of the period of the Kazan Khanate (the second half of

the 15th and the first half of the 16th centuries) reveals the era of national literature, associated with the individuation of Turkic peoples. This period brought about the works of the famous poet, seyid and diplomat Qol Sharif, Kazan khan and poet Muhammad Amin, and such poets as Muhammad Sharif, Umme Kamal and Muhammadyar.

The early 20th century saw a special period in the development of Tatar literature with the works of the classics of belle-letters published in large numbers: Ğabdulla Tuqay, Fatih Amirkhan, Galiyasgar Kamal, Majit Gafuri, Nazip Dumavi, Zarif Bashiri and many others. In 1900–1916, 20 printing houses in Kazan published 5154 Tatar books with a total circulation of nearly 40 million copies. About 75% of all Tatar books were published in Kazan and the rest in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Ufa, Orenburg, Troitsk and Uralsk.

At present, more than 300 writers, who are the members of the Union of Writers of the Republic of Tatarstan,

create in their native language. The budget of the Republic annually allocates funds for publishing books in the Tatar language.

Literary magazines *Kazan utlary* (Lights of Kazan), *Argamak*, *Maidan* (Square), *Bezneñ miras* (Our Heritage), etc. are published.

State Tatar theatres stage plays in the Tatar language: the Galiyasgar Kamal Tatar State Academic Theatre, Karim Tinchurin Tatar State Drama and Comedy Theatre, Ğabdulla Kariev Tatar State Children’s Theatre, *Ekiyat* Tatar State Puppet Theatre, Naberezhnye Chelny State Tatar Drama Theatre, Menzelinsk Tatar State Drama Theatre, Almetyevsk Tatar State Drama Theatre, Nizhnekamsk State Tatar Drama Theatre, *Nur* Ufa State Tatar Theatre, Tuymazy Tatar State Drama Theatre and Orenburg State Tatar Drama Theatre. In addition, there are plenty of folk theatres and amateur performance groups, which also contribute to the preservation of their native language.



Tatar
Folklore
Song and
Dance
Ensemble
“Sardaria”

Diploma of the UNESCO Information for All Programme delivered to Radik Salikhov, Director of the Marjani Institute of History (right), 2022



Conclusions

At present, the Tatar language is characterised by a high degree of vitality. Addressing the indicators suggested by UNESCO for determining the level of vitality of any language, we can draw the following conclusions:

- Language is transmitted across generations, which is evidenced by both statistics and sociological research;
- The total number of native speakers (and their share in some other regions of the Russian Federation) is relatively high, the areas of usage of the Tatar language in the Republic of Tatarstan are numerous (it is used in education and science, in production, in the mass media, in administration and legislative spheres);
- Media, both print and online, are available, including through the

wider use of the Tatar language in computer technologies;

- Educational and methodological complexes, manuals for studying the Tatar language and teaching in Tatar, as well as teaching aids, dictionaries, grammar and reference books are published;
- The Tatar language is recognised as the state language in the Republic of Tatarstan, and the right to use the Tatar language, as well as other languages in Russia, is guaranteed by federal legislation.

At the same time, there is a need to regularly update and expand the scope of measures aimed at maintaining the usage of the Tatar language in all spheres of life as the state language in the Republic of Tatarstan and a mother tongue for Tatars regardless of their place of residence.

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Experts of the
My Mother
Tongue
Programme in
Kazan, 2022



REPUBLIC OF KHAKASSIA



Interregional scientific and practical conference

Language Policy in the Republic of Khakassia in the Context of the Goals for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages

(September 30 – October 1, 2022, Abakan, Republic of Khakassia)

Organisers

- Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme
- Interregional Library Cooperation Centre
- Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Khakassia
- Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Khakassia
- Domozhakov National Library of the Republic of Khakassia
- Katanov Khakass State University
- Khakass Research Institute of Language, Literature and History

KHAKASSIA – THE LAND OF ANCIENT CIVILISATIONS



Yury SAGALAKOV
Deputy Minister of Education
and Science of the Republic of
Khakassia

The Republic of Khakassia is a region of the Russian Federation with an area of 61,569 square kilometers and is part of the Siberian Federal District. Khakassia borders Krasnoyarsk Krai in the north and the east, the Republics of Tyva and Altai in the south, and Kemerovo Region in the west.

The settlement of Khakassia began in the Palaeolithic period, and the first state emerged here in the 4th–3rd centuries B.C. By the mid-1st century B.C., the ethnic core of the ancient Khakas had formed in the Yenisey valley.

In 1727, the conclusion of the Burinsky Border Agreement between Russia and China resulted in acquisition by the Russian Empire of all lands north of the Sayan Mountains. After the October Revolution, Khakas Uyezd was formed as part of the Yenisey Province. In 1926, it was transformed into the Khakas District, which triggered the national state building of Khakassia. On October 20, 1930, Khakas District was subsequently transformed into Khakas Autonomous Oblast, which on July 3, 1991, was transformed into Khakas SSR within the RSFSR. In



Yenisey
River

1992, the Khakas SSR was renamed as the Republic of Khakassia.

During the period prior to the October Revolution, the terms *Minusinsk Tatars* and *Achinsk Tatars* were used to refer to the indigenous population of the region. The First Congress of the Indigenous Peoples held on March 6, 1917, decided to apply Khakas as a common collective name for these groups.

The Khakas live in all federal districts of Russia and in cities of federal significance. According to the 2020 All-Russian Population Census, the Khakas people account for 61,365 in the Russian Federation, and 55,144 in the Republic of Khakassia (10.3% of the region's population). Khakassia is a multiethnic region, being home for more than 100 ethnicities living together.

Khakas language

The Khakas language (also known as Xakas tili), the ethnic language of the Khakas people, belongs to the Khakas (Kyrgyz) group of Turkic languages of the Altai language family. It has a history of more than 1200 years.

Samples of ancient Turkic runic writing were found in the valley of the *Uybat River* in Khakassia. Re-



The Great Salbyk barrow – a monument of the Tagar culture (V–IV centuries B.C.)

searchers suggest that this script was created on the basis of a separate South Yenisey runic alphabet, which was used in the ancient Khakas state. Runic writing was widely used in the territory of the Khakas-Minusinsk Basin for more than 500 years.

The history of contemporary Khakas writing is divided into three stages: 1) 1924–1929 – use of an alphabet based on the Russian script; 2) 1929–1939 – switching to a Latin-based alphabet; 3) since 1939 – return to an alphabet based on the Russian script. The current Khakas alphabet contains all Russian graphemes and six additional specific symbols: ч, ҕ, ҕ, Һ, і, ö, ӱ.

Current language situation in Khakassia

By early 21st century, experts assessed the language situation in the Republic as fairly favorable in terms of the level of attention given to the Khakas language by the state authorities, organisations and institutions, and as questionable one in terms of the number of people speaking colloquial Khakas language.



Petroglyphs of Boyarskaya Pisanitsa, a monument of artwork of the Tesin transition period (3rd–1st centuries B.C.)

Nowadays, the share of the indigenous population of Khakassia speaking their native language accounts for nearly 49.5%, including 39.2% of urban population and 54.6% of rural population. The overwhelming majority of the Khakas are bilinguals, who are now increasingly using Russian in all spheres of life. The processes of such a linguistic shift are driven by the demographic situation, weakening of the role of the native language due to the break-up of traditional linguistic groups as a result of the expansion of rural settlements, and changes in traditional forms of economic activities.

At the same time, it is worth noting certain positive changes stemming from the deliberate public impact on linguistic processes. Studies show that the overwhelming majority of the indigenous population inherently continues adhering to their own roots. Thus, more than 80% of the indigenous people of the region, including 64.8% of those living in urban areas and 87.5% in rural areas, identify the Khakas language as their mother tongue.

The choice of the Khakas language as a means of communication is driven mainly by the monoethnic composition of families, social identity and education background.

In rural areas, Khakas serves as an important communication means for people of the older generations, striving to pass down their native language to their children and grandchildren. Raising the level of native language proficiency among the younger generation is a prerequisite for the functional development of the Khakas language.

Legislative support for native languages in the Republic of Khakassia

The Article 69 of the Constitution of the Republic of Khakassia and Article 3 of the Law of the Republic of Khakassia *On the Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation Living in the Territory of the Republic of Khakassia* (1992), recognise Russian and Khakas languages as the official languages of Khakassia.



Cityscape of Abakan, the capital of Khakassia

In addition to the above-mentioned normative legal acts, the functioning, preservation and development of the native languages of the peoples living in the Republic are governed by:

- The Law of the Republic of Khakassia *On Small Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation in the Territory of the Republic of Khakassia* (2009),
- The Law of the Republic of Khakassia *On Education in the Republic of Khakassia* (2013).

In 2013–2016, the *Concept for the Development of Multicultural Education in the Republic of Khakassia*, as well as state programmes *Development of Education in the Republic of Khakassia* and *Regional Policy of the Republic of Khakassia* were adopted. The Government of the Republic adopted a whole set of relevant resolutions establishing the Council of Representatives of Indigenous Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Khakassia (2012), the Council for the Preservation and Development of the Khakas Language, Culture and Development of Ethno-Tourism under the Government of the Republic of Khakassia (2018) and the Terminology Commission under the Government of the Republic of Khakassia (2020).

In 2021, the Republican government approved the *State Programme of the Republic of Khakassia on Preservation and Development of the Khakas Language*, and in 2022, it adopted the *Plan of Major Activities for the Period 2022-2032 to hold The International Decade of Indigenous Languages in the Republic of Khakassia*.

These legislative measures resulted in higher status of the Khakas language, its wider social functions and its growing role in the social and cultural life of the region.

Teaching and learning the Khakas language as the backbone of its development

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Khakassia has a Department of Science and National Education, which is responsible for promoting the Khakas language as a distinctive feature of the system of education of the region.

Khakassia has created all the necessary conditions for learning the Khakas language in full compliance with current federal public standards in education.

As of the beginning of the 2022/2023 school year, lessons of the Khakas language in various forms were provided in 90 preschool educational organisations (52% of the total) and in 158 general education organisations (58% of the total), including 31 preschool groups.



Teaching the Khakas language in preschool

The number of children learning the Khakas language exceeds 14,500, of which 40% do not belong to indigenous ethnicities. This figure demonstrates the specific role of the education system of the Republic in bringing up harmoniously developed and socially responsible people with a special focus on linguistic, spiritual and moral values, historical and ethnic cultural traditions.

Indigenous children account for more than 3,500 in preschool educational organisations, where more than 49% are educated in their native languages.

The Khakas language programme for preschool educational organisations is supported with teaching aids and materials in the Khakas language intended for children aged 3 to 7 years old in a set of guidance materials for teachers, as well as with illustrated training aids.

The number of indigenous schoolchildren exceeds 10,400, with more than 80% (in 2016 this share was 63%) studying their native language on subjects like *Native languages and literary reading in native languages* and *Native language and native literature*.

Schools implement model programmes on the Khakas language and literature developed for general education institutions with native language classes (for those speaking their native language and for learning in the native language). The programmes are provided with textbooks for all grades (from 1 to 11) (27 titles in total), which are registered on the new federal list of school textbooks. One of the achievements of the re-

publican education system is the availability of basic and advanced level textbooks for grades 10-11.

In addition, a model programme on Khakas language and literature for general education institutions of the Republic of Khakassia with the Russian language of instruction for grades from 1 to 9 (for those who do not speak their mother tongue) was approved, together with appropriate teaching aids.

Every year about 20% of schoolchildren in grades 9 and 11 volunteer for taking the state final examinations (state final certification) on the subjects *Khakas language* and *Khakas literature*.

Monitoring research in the Khakas language is conducted in grades 4 and 9. Over three years, the quality of proficiency in the Khakas language among the fourth grade schoolchildren has improved from 74% to 96% in the programmes for general education institutions with native languages of instruction (for those who speak Khakas); and from 79% to 89% in the programmes for general education institutions with Russian as the language of instruction. The proficiency level in the Khakas language in 9th grades exceeds 74%.

The participation of schoolchildren in the annual regional Olympiad in Khakas language and literature named after Mikhail Borgoyakov, the first Doctor of Sciences in Philology in Khakas linguistics who made a significant contribution to the development of the Khakas language, is another opportunity to assess the quality of education and identify and

Teaching aids in the Khakas language



support talented children. Diplomas of the Olympiad give special rights and additional points for admission to higher education programmes (bachelor or specialist degree) at the Katanov Khakas State University in 2023.

Since 2020, a contest has been held to award one-time payments to parents (legal representatives) of children speaking Khakas when enrolling the first grade.

Educational and methodological support for the implementation of Khakas language programmes

Khakassia is currently implementing a Road Map for the publication of textbooks and teaching materials in Khakas for the period up to 2025. The *Scientific and Methodological Council on School Textbooks* has been established under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic. The Ministry has dele-

gated its prerogative to develop and publish textbooks and teaching aids in Khakas to the Torosov Khakas Book Publishing House.

The Publishing House was founded in 1931 and since that time has played a leading role in publishing books in the Khakas language. It is also entrusted with assessing and shaping the ethno-cultural needs of the population and taking respective measures to address them.

From 2020 to 2022, the Publishing House released nearly 90 titles of literature in the Khakas language. Over the period from 2018 to 2022, the circulation of educational literature increased by almost 46 times – from 1.5 thousand to 69.3 thousand copies.

The publishing project *Yes, We Are from There – from the Depths of Centuries*, founded by Vladislav Torosov (1936–2018), a prominent social and state figure of the Republic, Chair of the Republican Council of Elders of the Khakas people (2003-2017),

remains the most popular among the population of the region.

The Publishing House also maintains two literary and art magazines in Khakas for children: *Tigir Khury* (Rainbow) and *Kuniyek* (Little sun) with a total annual circulation of 2,000 copies. Digital versions of textbooks and teaching aids, a school audio dictionary and a Russian-Khakas keyboard driver are available on the publisher's online platform.

Staff support for the implementation of Khakass language programmes

More than 530 teachers are engaged in the implementation of Khakas language programmes, with more than 230 teachers working at the preschool level, 206 – at the elementary general education level and 94 – at the primary and secondary general education levels.

The teachers worthily represent the region at federal professional contests and competitions, including contests for the award of the best teacher of native language and literature. Over the past three years, more than 35 teachers have become winners and finalists of such competitions.

The authorities of the Republic implement measures of state support for teachers in the form of additional payments to their salaries. The Government of the Republic of Khakassia awards premium on a competitive basis to teachers showing high professional excellence in teaching the Khakas language. Within the frame-

work of public-private partnership, teachers are rewarded with prizes from the Gratitude Charity Fund for Social Support in Education, Culture and Healthcare.

The Khakas Institute for Education Development and Professional Development provides scientific and methodological support to teachers. The regional model of teachers continuous professional skills development includes multilevel additional educational programmes aimed at the professional development of teachers in present day conditions.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic, the Institute organises the All-Russian scientific and practical conference “Traditions and Innovations in the Implementation of the State Language Policy of the Russian Federation in the Sphere of Education and Science in the Regions of Siberia and the Far East” and the Interregional Conference “Cultural Heritage of the Peoples of Russia as a Foundation for the Upbringing of the Younger Generation”.

Staff training for the implementation of programmes in the Khakas language is organised at Katanov Khakas State University. The Department of Khakas Philology prepares bachelors of Pedagogical Education in the fields of Khakas language and literature, History, English language, Russian language, Primary education and Preschool education.

In accordance with a resolution of the Government of the Republic, the Ministry of Education and Science is entrusted with organising employer-sponsored education of specialists.

Students receive monthly additional payments to their scholarship. Over the past five years, more than 35 employer-sponsored specialists have been trained, 20 of them for pre-school organisations and elementary schools, and 15 for primary and high schools.

Teachers of the Department of Khakas Philology conduct classes in disciplines related to the general theory of language, text and literature, as well as to the theory and aspects of Khakas language and speech, literature and folklore, and to methodology and project activities, to the culture and history of the Khakas people, to the theory of other Turkic languages and literatures. The disciplines are taught in Russian and Khakas.

The Department of Khakas Philology has developed a Master's programme (Philology. Khakas language, literature, culture) and a postgraduate programme with more than 120 students.

In addition, training courses in elementary education (allowing teaching Khakas) are provided at the

Chernogorsk College of Intersectoral Technologies and funded out of the budget of the Republic.

Scientific Development of the Khakas Language

The study and collection of lexical materials on the Khakas language were initiated during the first scientific expeditions organised by the Russian Academy of Sciences in the years of rule by Peter the Great and dispatched to Siberia to collect comprehensive material for the purposes of natural-historical research of the Russian Empire. The first edition of the bilingual Khakas-Russian dictionary *Khakastar orys tillairininiur* sös pichigi, edited by N. G. Katanov was published in 1928.

In 1944, the Khakas Research Institute of Language, Literature and History was established as a subordinate research institution of the republican Ministry of Education and Science, with the main focus on the Khakas

Staff of the Khakas Scientific Research Institute of Language, Literature and History



language in its research. The Institute organised a number of expeditions to the places of compact settlement of Khakas people, which resulted in the publication of the *Khakas-Russian Dictionary* (1953), the *Russian-Khakas Dictionary* (1961), and the *Khakas-Russian Dictionary* (2006).

Today, more than 20 dictionaries have been published, including the *Concise Khakas-Russian Phraseological Dictionary* (2000), the *Russian-Khakas Dictionary of Linguistic Terms* (2001), the *Dictionary of Synonyms of the Khakas Language* (2012), the *Dictionary of Oronyms of Khakassia (geographical denominations)* (2001), the *Reference Dictionary of Lexical-Semantic Groups of Khakas Verbs (Verbs of speech and movement)* (2013), the *Reference Dictionary of Lexical-Semantic Groups of Khakas Verbs (Verbs of mental activities)* (2016), the *Conceptual Dictionary of Verbs of Behavior in Khakas and Tuva Languages* (2017), the *Khakas-Russian and Russian-Khakas Thematic Dictionary* with two sections “Man” and “Flora and Fauna” (2020). The significant research work by Khakas lexicographers has crowned the publication of the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Khakas Language* (Volume I. A-P, 2020), which contains more than 5,000 entries.

For more than two thousand years the Khakas have created unique and rich folklore, embracing a vast array of genres: poems of Khakas heroic epic, fairy tales, ancestral and genealogical legends, historical legends, myths, songs, works of ritual poetry, shamanic incantations, and children folklore – fairy tales, nursery rhymes and lullabies, etc.

The first printed accounts of the Khakas folklore date back to the first half of the 18th century and are associated with the names of researchers who traveled to Siberia as part of scientific expeditions of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Nikolay Katanov, the outstanding Khakas scientist and orientalist, was the most prominent collector of the Khakas folklore.

The Khakas Research Institute of Language, Literature and History maintains a manuscript collection of texts of various folklore genres accumulated for many years. The regularly conducted regional expeditions result in better understanding by researchers of the extent of preservation of folklore and traditions of the people. During traditional rituals associated with childbirth and weddings, the Khakas utter the words of blessing and good wishes, begging for prosperity, abundance and good luck for themselves, their families and the kinship. *Takhpakh*, which plays an important role in the culture of modern Khakasses, is regarded as a prevailing popular genre. Unfortunately, the folklore singing tradition is fading away due to the technical advances.

The Institute also boasts of an impressive collection of works by the founders and classics of modern Khakas literature, including Vasily Kobayakov, Andrey Kuzugashev, Alexander Topanov, Mikhail Kokov, Nikolay Domozhakov, Nikolay Tiniykov, Karkay Nerbyshchev, Mikhail Kilchichakov, Mitkhas Turan, Andrey Khallarov and others.

The scientific development of the Khakas language is supported by the Terminology Commission under

the Government of the Republic of Khakassia, which considers the use of Khakas as the state language of the Republic in the activities of regional state authorities, local self-government, public organisations, enterprises and institutions of Khakassia. New terms and vocabulary entries are added to terminological dictionaries of the Khakas language. The enrichment of the lexical system of the Khakas language is accompanied with the creation of names of organisations, institutions and agencies in Khakas, and active use of the applied component of scientific research, which leads to the expansion of the social role of Khakas as the state language of the Republic of Khakassia.

Scientific research of the ethnolinguistic and cultural heritage of the Altai-Sayan Region

The Institute of Humanities and Sayano-Altai Turkology (IGISAT) focuses primarily on conducting fundamental and applied scientific research in relevant issues of studying, preserving and promoting the ethnolinguistic and cultural heritage of the Altai-Sayan Region.

The Institute has created innovative educational products which obtained state registration, including the app *KIZI/PERSON Khakas-English and English-Khakas Digital Thesaurus* and the software and database for the *Khakas-Russian-English electronic dictionary*.

The study *Cognitive and Ideographic Aspects of Reconstruction of a Human Image According to Languages*

of Indigenous People of Siberia (on the Example of the Khakas, Buryat and Khanty languages by Maria Chertykova was selected as one of the projects funded by grants from the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (2019–2021). The study served as a basis for the comparative *Ideographic Dictionary of Synonyms of the Khakas, Buryat and Khanty Languages*, which comprises about 7,500 words and word combinations.

The Institute of Humanities and Sayano-Altai Turkology continues the study *Dynamics and Prospects of Language Interaction in the Republics of Southern Siberia*, launched in 2020 with the financial support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research. The main objectives of the project include identifying the specifics of development and possible future status of national-Russian bilingualism in the context of linguistic patterns of people speaking the second state languages – Altaic, Tuvan and Khakas. The results of the project are summarised in the monograph *Languages of Southern Siberia in the Dynamics of Social Context*.

The annual scientific conference on Preservation and Development of Indigenous Languages and Cultures of Siberia, held at IGISAT since 2005 and aimed at finding ways to preserve linguistic and cultural diversity and support minority languages and cultures, taking into account Russian and foreign experience, plays an important role in the development of linguistic and cultural research.

The bilingual research programme *Khakas Cultural Codes and Identity*, which is implemented by IGISAT

and available in English, is open for participation of foreign researchers.

Since 2011, the Regional Turkology Centre of the Republic of Khakassia has been in operation at IGISAT, which coordinates the activities by research, educational and cultural organisations dealing with the research, preservation and development of Khakas language and culture.

Promotion of the Khakas language in the field of culture of the Republic of Khakassia

Cultural heritage represents the most important part of patrimony of Khakassia and the Khakas people. Language as a tool of passing the accumulated knowledge, traditions and experience from one generation over the next one is most vividly manifested in culture.

The library system is called to play a special role in preserving and promoting the Khakas language. The Domozhakov National Library, being the largest book depository and serving as a public information and cultural and educational methodological centre for library local history, boasts of library holdings of 7,100 items in the Khakas language (1.5% of the total library stock and 20.6% of the total local collection).

The collection of rare and valuable books amounts to 1300 copies and includes collections of textbooks in Khakas language dating back to 1930-40s; and the collection of books published in the Khakas language based on Latin script; private owner's collections of rare editions, many of

which have autographs, inscriptions, notes, and as such are of special value for the historical and cultural heritage of Khakassia and are regarded as objects of scientific research.

Digital library's collection of documents in the Khakas language belonging to the national heritage are represented in several collections:

1. *Textbooks in the Khakas language of the 30-40s of the 20th century* (alphabet books and grammar books of the Khakas language, spelling exercise books, textbooks for adult illiterate people, books for reading – translations of textbooks of Russian literature).
2. *Belles-lettres in translations into the Khakas language* (fiction literature by Russian and foreign authors translated into Latin-based and Cyrillic-based Khakas language in 1930-40s).
3. *The Khakas folklore* (compilations of tales, myths, fables, proverbs, riddles, legends and fairy tales).
4. *Literary and Artistic Almanacs of Khakassia* (copies of literary and art almanacs with works of the pio-



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National
Library

Larisa
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Deputy
Minister of
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of Khakassia



neers of Khakassian literature and poems of aspiring poets published in the 1940-90s).

5. Collections *Literary Khakassia*, *Science of Khakassia*, *Newspapers of Khakassia* (formed on the basis of license agreements concluded by the library with authors or copyright holders. All collections contain documents in Russian and Khakas).

The Domozhakov National Library is quite active in promoting the culture of the peoples living in the Republic through various forms and methods of work, including those based on information technologies (book exhibitions, scientific and practical conferences, meetings with writers, book presentations, days of national cultures, etc.). The library holds such events not only on its premises, but also organises retreat and virtual events, including online.

The library holds a whole string of events which have become a sort of brands, including the interregional

scientific and practical conference “Domozhakov Readings”; the Inter-regional Festival of Sayano-Altaic Book; the interregional event Literary Meetings in Khakassia; the Republican dictation in the Khakas language *Töreen tilim – Khakas tilim!* = *I love my native language!*, the Art Nearby online project, introducing cultural and artistic figures of Khakassia; the annual professional forum of public libraries of Khakassia *Bibliofestival*, etc.

The work experience accumulated by the library has been repeatedly presented at regional and interregional professional and scientific fora.

Municipal libraries also hold book presentations; organise book and virtual exhibitions and meetings with the Khakas language writers.

The House of Writers of Khakassia, established in the Republic, is called to support the Khakas language writers and promote their books. Over the past five years, the House of Writers has published more than 20 titles of books in Khakas and eight titles in two languages (Russian and Khakas). These books are the most popular among readers.

In Khakassia, for eight years now, famous writers have been honored annually with prestigious literary awards of the Head of the Republic of Khakassia – the one named after Moisey Bainov (for poetry) and the other named after Nikolay Domozhakov (for prose). Since 2022, the title *People’s Writer* has been awarded in the Republic, with a monthly supplement to the pension.

The Republic is implementing a unique project that has no match in Russia, namely an interregional sum-

mer literary camp for gifted young people aged 18 to 35, bringing together writers from Khakassia, Tyva, Yakutia, Tomsk and Irkutsk regions and Krasnoyarsk Krai.

Young writers and poets visit the literary museum together with their mentors. Master classes, meetings with members of the Union of Russian Writers, thematic lectures and discussions of literary works, excursions and concerts constitute only a part of the summer camp events held on the premises of the Kilchichakov Literary Museum. *The Anthology of Young Authors* is published on completion of the summer camp work.

Literary contests serve as one of the most effective working methods to identify and support literary talents of the Republic. Since 2020, the Republican Literary Contest of Fiction Literature in Khakas and the Contest of Literary Translations have been held.

It is also worth noting that in 2022, the first state programme of the Republic of Khakassia *Preservation and Development of the Khakas Language*,

developed at the request of the Head of the region, was implemented. The above-mentioned literary contests in 2022 were held within the framework of this state programme.

It is also important to note that the Portal of National Literatures¹ has a page *Khakas language*, which contains works of Khakas writers and their translations, together with professional biographies of authors.

On May 17, 2022, the House of Writers of Khakassia hosted the presentation of the *Complete Anthology of Contemporary Literature of the Peoples of Russia*. The presentation of the fifth volume of the Anthology, dedicated to literary journalism, took place in the House of Writers of Khakassia on September 14, 2022. The Anthology includes translations into Russian of publicistic texts written by 134 authors in 45 indigenous languages of our country. Khakassia is represented by the works of four classic and contemporary publicists: Mithas Turan, Karkay Nerbyshev, Natalia Tabakova and Alexandra Karamchakova.



Republican
Museum
and Cultural
Centre

¹ The portal <https://rus4all.ru/>, dedicated to the national literatures of the peoples of Russia, was launched in June 2019. It presents contemporary works in 59 literary languages of Russia and their translations into Russian in the genres of "poetry", "children's literature" and "prose". In the future, it is planned to post interlineary texts. The portal also contains information on current events in the world of national literatures.

Ulger Song and Dance Ensemble



The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Khakassia and all its subordinate institutions pay special attention to the use, support and promotion of the Khakas language.

Thus, one of the main responsibilities of the Chitigen Khakas Drama and Ethnic Music Theatre and the Topanov Khakas National Drama Theatre is to preserve and promote the Khakas language. Performances for adult audience in the repertoire of the Chitigen Theatre are run in the Khakas language, while children plays are currently being translated in Khakas.

National theatres of the Republic are actively touring, paying special attention to showing performances in the Khakas language in settlements with compact residence of the indigenous population, and successfully presenting performances and concert programmes in the Khakas language at all-Russian and international festivals. The Republic declared 2021 the Year of the Khakas Epic, which was reflected in the repertoires of the local theatres.

The Chaptikov Khakass Republican Philharmonic Hall is engaged in systematic and meticulous work to preserve traditional musical art and to promote traditions of epic storytelling.

It has become a tradition for the Ulger song and dance ensemble and the Kyan suzy Khakas folk dance ensemble to tour Khakassia with performances in the Khakas language.

Kadyshev National Centre of Folk Art supports the activities of the folk art clubs, provides organisational support for holding national holidays and major festivals and contests aimed at supporting and promoting the Khakas language. Each year, on September 4, the Day of the Khakas Language, the people of Khakassia enjoy a gala concert performed by the best artists and creative teams of the region.

In 2022, seeking to support performers of Khakas folklore and traditional throat singing (khai), the Law *On Titles of Honor of the Republic of Khakassia* was amended to establish the titles of honor of *People's Khajji*

(*Master of Khai*) of the Republic of Khakassia and *People's Storyteller of the Republic of Khakassia*. In addition, with a view to encouraging performers of the Khakas epos, the Government of the Republic established the Kurbizhekov Award in the amount of 500,000 rubles.

In accordance with the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Khakassia, a grant in the form of a subsidy is awarded to legal entities, individual entrepreneurs and natural persons to create drama plays in Khakas for theatre performances.

Promotion of the Khakas language in the mass media

Traditional mass media play a pivotal role in the promotion of the Khakas language.

The republican newspaper *Khakas Chiri* has been published in Khakas since 1927. For all its history, it has promoted the development of the Khakas literary language and the culture of speech, and has always been in the vanguard of linguistic processes in the region, allotting its pages for discussions on spelling rules, terminology, and ways of enriching the Khakas language vocabulary. All those

working in this newspaper promote word creation, introduce new notions and terms using the word-formation resources of the native language, as well as tracing and direct borrowing through the Russian language.

In addition to articles on social and political issues, information, analytical and other socially relevant materials, the newspaper publishes special adds-on intended for various age groups and interests of readers, namely *Khola Pyrgyҫakh* for children of preschool age; *Noga nogayahhtar* for primary and secondary schoolchildren and *Chiyit Tus* for young people (topics of career guidance, employment, security), and *Tan Solbany* devoted to literature.

The Khakassia State Television and Radio Company is the largest digital media in the territory of the Republic. Its annual broadcasting time is 686 hours, where almost half of airtime (278.68 hours) is devoted to national programmes. The *Khabarlar* news programme in Khakas, being the hallmark of the Republic, covers the current news of Khakassia presented in reports in the native language on weekdays at 09:00 am on the *Russia 1* Federal TV channel. Programmes dedicated to the history, traditions, culture and



Speakers and experts at the conference "Language Policy in the Republic of Khakassia in the Context of the Goals for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages", 2022

Olga Domozhakova, Head of the Department of Science and National Education of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Khakassia, in national costume at Mount Kÿntag (Mountain of the Sun)



national identity of the Khakas people are also broadcast. National television programmes are available for urban population and people living in the most remote places of the region.

The history of television in Khakassia has seen more than 60 years and just from its very inception it has broadcast not only in Russian, but in the Khakas language as well. The time and duration of programmes, their focuses and production techniques have changed, but the television has invariably sought to promote the Kha-

kas culture by broadcasting various thematic programmes in the native language. Today, the staff of the National Television and Radio Company carries on the traditions laid down by their predecessors during the Soviet period of television in Khakassia. They implement new technologies in their work to produce programmes in Khakas, seeking to make news programmes as interesting as possible.

Conclusion

The implementation of the state language policy in the Republic of Khakassia with regard to the Khakas language is consistent with the federal agenda and has been quite successful so far. The results in consolidation of efforts made by executive authorities, institutions, public organisations and proactive campaigners in the ethnocultural development of the region become noticeable.

State programmes and public projects are implemented, the Khakas language is taught and studied, national holidays are held, and Khakas literature is published.

Today, language activists focus on the development of the Khakas language, its digitalisation and expansion of its use, as well as on the formation of ethnocultural, regional and all-Russian civic identity of the population of the Republic.

Khakassia is a region characterised by harmonious and peaceful coexistence of various ethnic groups, which are united by their will to preserve the historical and cultural heritage, traditional spiritual and moral values of the multiethnic people of Russia.

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Borgoyakova,
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KHANTY-MANSI AUTONOMOUS AREA – UGRA



Interregional scientific and practical conference

Language Policy in Ugra: Preservation of Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples

(October 24-25, 2022, Khanty-Mansiysk, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra)

Organisers

- Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme
- Interregional Library Cooperation Centre
- Government of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra
- Ob-Ugric Institute of Applied Research and Development

SUPPORT FOR THE NATIVE LANGUAGES OF THE INDIGENOUS MINORITIES OF THE NORTH IN THE KHANTY-MANSI AUTONOMOUS AREA – UGRA



Victoria SPODINA
 Director of the Ob-Ugric Institute
 of Applied Research and
 Development

General information

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra is the major oil and gas region of Russia and one of the largest oil-producing regions in the world.

Ugra, located in the territory of the West Siberian Lowland, stretches from west to east for almost 1,400 kilometres. It ranks 9th in Russia in terms of area (534,801 square kilo-

metres). The population of the region is 1,729,472 inhabitants. The administrative centre is Khanty-Mansiysk, and the largest city is Surgut.

Today’s Ugra is a place of special culture and history. The first tribes of early man appeared in the vast territories stretching from the Ural Ridge to the Ob-Yenisey watershed in the Paleolithic period (10-15 thousand years ago). The accounts of the peo-



Nature of Ugra

Traditional
reindeer
sled racing



ples called Ugra are first mentioned in the *Tale of Bygone Years* (1096). According to this document, in the 11th century the *midnight* Ugra was located on the western slopes of the Ural Mountains, and the Southern Ugrians moved in the 9th century from east to west along the Dnieper steppes. These are two paths of formation of the ethnogeny of the Ural Ugrians: western (Hungarian) and north-eastern (Khanty-Mansi).

Today, Ugra is a multiethnic region, with more than 120 nationalities living in its territory. The indigenous population is represented by three ethnic minorities – Khanty, Mansi and forest Nenets – amounting to about 2% of the total population. It was the self-designations of the two major ethnic groups of peoples of the North – Khanty and Mansi – that gave the region its name.

Languages and writing of the indigenous peoples of Ugra

The Khanty and Mansi languages belong to the Ugric group of the Finno-Ugric language family, which to-

gether with Samoyedic makes up the Uralic language family. In terms of phonetics, morphology and vocabulary, the Mansi language is the closest to the related Ugric language of the Hungarians. The Khanty and Mansi, except for small peripheral groups, live in the basin of the Ob River, from the name of which they are also called Ob-Ugrians, and their languages are called Ob-Ugric.

The territorial fragmentation of Khanty and external influence by various neighboring languages (Tatar, Nenets, Evenki), as well as the presence of the Samoyedic and Yeniseic substrates in the territory now occupied by this people, were the main reasons for the formation of a significant number of dialects and subdialects of the Khanty language (according to different classifications – from 13 to 18), which are so different that they can often be hardly understood by other dialect speakers. The Mansi language used to have four dialect groups in 17th-18th centuries, and nowadays there are only two: northern and southern. Linguists distinguish five dialects and seven subdialects within them, some of which have virtually disap-

peared by now. The linguistic barrier resulting from dialectal diversity is so big that the question of creating a literary language has not yet been finally resolved.

Currently, the Khanty writing exists only in four dialects: Kazym, Shuryshkar, Surgut and Vakhov; and the Mansi writing includes two dialects: Sosvi and Verkhnelozvi. This situation hinders the teaching of the Ob-Ugric languages (which is organised in secondary schools in Ugra and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area, and in teacher training colleges in Khanty-Mansiysk and Salekhard).

Until the early 20th century Khanty and Mansi, like many other peoples of the North, did not have their own writing system. The first Khanty words were recorded in Russian historical chronicles and documents, which date back to the 16th-17th centuries. Since 18th century missionaries in Siberia attempted to educate the aboriginal peoples in literacy. Certain wordbooks and dictionaries of the Mansi language were known since the early 18th century. In 1897, the first Khanty alphabet in the Obdorsk dialect was created, and the first alphabet book in Mansi was published in 1903.

The Khanty and Mansi script was developed in the early 1930s, first on the Latin basis, and from 1937, on the Cyrillic script. The transition to the Russian script attributed to the need to preserve the scientifically based phonemic principle. However, the use of Russian graphemes failed to fully reflect the phonetic uniqueness of the Ob-Ugric languages. The new Khanty alphabet lacked symbols for specific sounds. The Mansi alphabet

also did not have appropriate graphic symbols for all sounds. This affected adversely the entire learning process of both languages.

In 1979, the Ministry of Education of the RSFSR adopted an improved alphabet of Mansi practical writing containing 44 alphabetic letters; which is still in use today. In 1990, an improved phonemic-based alphabet for all dialects of the Khanty language was developed. At the same time, many existing variants of the Khanty writing used the syllabic principle of graphics borrowed from the Russian language, which creates problems and contradictions that need to be urgently resolved.

Considering the need to improve the graphical basis of the Khanty language, in 2018, during the visiting session of the Council for Interethnic Relations in Khanty-Mansiysk, chaired by Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Governor of Ugra Natalia Komarova proposed to amend the federal legislation in order to regulate the issues of approving the graphical basis – alphabets, spelling and punctuation rules – of the languages of the indigenous minorities of the Russian Federation.

Language Policy of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra

UNESCO experts classify the Khanty and Mansi languages as endangered. In this regard, the Government of Ugra pays the outmost attention to preserving minority languages in its territory. The advanced experience of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area

Khanty-
Mansiysk –
the capital
of Ugra



in preserving native languages and harmonising interethnic communication is highly recognised at the federal level. It is no coincidence that for several years the region has remained the leader in the implementation of the state national policy, including issues related to the sustainable development of indigenous peoples.

Ugra is one of the leading regions of the Russian Federation in terms of the level of the developed legislative framework on the indigenous peoples of the North. Today, there are more than 700 normative legal acts in force in Ugra that govern all the aspects of life of the indigenous peoples of the North. Among them the following regional laws were adopted (the first in the Russian Federation):

- *Law On the Languages of Small Indigenous Peoples of the North Living in the Territory of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra (2001)*, which sets out measures to support the national (native) languages of the small indigenous peoples of the Autonomous Area (Khanty and Mansi) by state authorities and local authorities of municipalities of

the Autonomous Area and is aimed at preserving and developing the traditional culture of these peoples.

- *Law On the Folklore of Small Indigenous Peoples of the North Living in the Territory of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra (2003)*, which governs relations in the preservation, study, use and promotion of the folklore of the indigenous minorities of the North living in the territory of the Autonomous Area, with the view to fostering cultural diversity, exercising the right of indigenous minorities to preserve and develop their national and cultural identity, protecting, restoring and preserving their indigenous environment and traditional lifestyle, and promoting their folklore-based traditions.
- *Law On Supporting Mass Media Publishing (Producing) in the Languages of Indigenous Minorities in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra (2004)*.

Policy measures by the public authorities of the region aimed at preserving, studying and developing the languages

of small indigenous peoples are set forth in the *Concept of Sustainable Development of Small Indigenous Peoples of the North of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra* (2011), which places special emphasis on ensuring the rights of indigenous peoples to study their native language, literature and culture, taking into account national, regional and ethnocultural features, and creating conditions for the active use of these languages in social life.

In 2011, the Scientific Coordination Council for the preservation of the native language and traditional culture of small indigenous minorities of the North of Ugra was established to coordinate the activities of state and social institutions in the implementation of projects to preserve the language, culture and traditions of indigenous peoples and to improve their education.

The *Law On Education in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra*, adopted in 2013, sets as one of its priorities the creation of conditions conducive to the study of native languages, literature and culture of the Khanty, Mansi and Nenets peoples, as well as other ethnocultural courses in the public and municipal educational organisations.

In 2020, the *Concept for Development of the Ethnocultural Education System in Places of Traditional Residence and Traditional Economic Activities of Small Indigenous Peoples of the North of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra* and the *Action Plan (Road Map)* to implement it in 2020–2024 were approved. The Concept provides for establishing an ethnocultural education system to foster the individual and cognitive development of students from the indigenous minorities of the North with a focus on

the preservation of national uniqueness, traditional way of life, formation of civic and national identity, cultural values of the indigenous minorities of the North of the Autonomous Area in places of traditional residence and traditional economic activities.

2021 marked the adoption of two State Programmes in the field of education of small indigenous minorities of the North: *Development of Education* and *Sustainable Development of Small Indigenous Peoples of the North*, which are aimed, inter alia, at ensuring access to quality education that meets the requirements of innovative economic development and the revival and development of the distinctive culture, language and crafts of small indigenous minorities of the North.

The Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area became the first among the regions of the Russian Federation to establish a specific institution for the representation of small indigenous peoples of the North in the legislative body, the Assembly of Representatives of Small Indigenous Peoples of the North (1996). The Assembly, whose priority is to protect the interests of the indigenous peoples of the North, works on a whole set of issues requiring legislative recognition which range from social, economic and cultural development to protection of the indigenous environment, traditional lifestyle and traditional economic activities of the indigenous peoples of Ugra.

Current language situation in Ugra

The results of monitoring studies conducted by the Ob-Ugric Institute

of Applied Research and Development in 2021 indicate that the average number of those who know and understand and speak their native languages in the region amounts to 60.5% of total population of indigenous minorities of Ugra:

- fluently (can express their thoughts, speak, read and write fluently, understand the speech of others) – 30.8%;
- elementary level (understand the speech of others and can use simple phrases) – 11.1%;
- passive level (understand the speech of others, but hardly, if ever, speak) – 18.6%.
- 39.5% of respondents do not know their native language.

The efforts of the Ugra Government and the Department of Education and Science of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area to preserve and promote native languages have resulted in the following positive trends:

- Over the last 3 years, the number of respondents who wished to learn their native language has increased by 4.5%;
- The number of those wishing their children and grandchildren to be able to read and write in their native language increased by 7.4%;
- The absolute majority of respondents (87.5%) spoke in favor of preserving their native language;
- The number of respondents who recognise the language of their people as their mother tongue is much higher than the number of respondents

who actually speak it. It is the high level of ethnic self-consciousness of small indigenous peoples of Ugra that allows preventing ethnic assimilation;

- Language clubs are set up, which is especially important for languages with interrupted intergenerational transmission. Classes are conducted according to the master-student methodology, which is quite effective for teaching mother tongues;
- Since 2022, a completely unique phenomenon has been observed in Ugra, with some individual activists seeking to develop their own Personal Language Programmes, which imply a deeper immersion in their native language and culture environment to improve linguistic and cultural proficiency and knowledge of the ethnocultural values of their ethnicity (*Bear Games*, traditional rituals and holidays, religious performances and cults, etc.),
- The entire network comprising more than 30 development centres and *Numas Yunt* (Intellectual Games) playgrounds is currently created, where everyone can join



Actors of the Solntse (Sun) Theatre of Ob-Ugric Peoples

traditional games of the indigenous peoples of the region while getting acquainted with game terminology and folklore works in the Ob-Ugric languages. Projects in this area have been supported with a grant by the Governor and the Department of Education and Science of Ugra. It is also worth noting such trends as parents willing to add dictionaries, folklore collections, children books in native languages to their family libraries; and the growing family traditions to preserve, promote and study native languages, etc.

Ensuring the preservation and support of the indigenous languages of Ugra

Education

In the territory of Ugra, teaching in educational institutions is conducted in Russian (state language), and the courses of native languages (Khanty, Mansi and Nenets) are available in 24 general education organisations located in areas of compact residence of small indigenous minorities of the North. Of these, 3 schools provide courses in native languages as an academic discipline. A total of 1,565 children from the small indigenous minorities of the North study their native languages (at the request of their parents). 13 preschools set up groups providing educational environment for the study of native languages. The groups are attended by 179 children from the small indigenous minorities of the North.

Three supplementary education institutions also provided mother tongue classes.

Olympiads in native languages and literature among schoolchildren are held annually at regional and municipal levels in all dialects of native languages.

Since 2020, Ugra has been implementing an educational project called *Nomadic Camp Preschool*, which is called to provide children with preschool education without leaving their traditional places of residence. This project has contributed to wider availability of digital education to children in the remotest nomadic camps of Ugra.

At present, there are 7 nomadic camp preschools with more than 40 children aged 3 to 7 years old. Prior to the work in the project, teachers who are native language speakers and native culture bearers were trained on the Digital Educational Environment of Preschool Organisations.

The project provides for the creation of conditions for the development of a new form of preschool education for children from indigenous minorities of the North living in the remote territories of Ugra, through the use of distance information and learning technologies based on the participation of parents in educational activities.

When choosing a form of remote learning for a certain time period, at the request of parents (legal representatives), students are enrolled in general education organisations and get access to the educational platform. During the entire school year, children learn the material and perform tasks in accordance with their individual study plans. Both

Participants
of the
Frontal
Dictation in
the Khanty,
Mansi and
Nenets
languages



online consultations with teachers on selected subjects and online distance learning classes are organised in the course of training.

Since 2015, as part of the celebration of International Mother Language Day on 21 February, Ugra has conducted the Frontal Dictation in the Khanty, Mansi and Nenets languages under the motto *Mother Language is Motherland*. The main purpose of this educational event is to promote and strengthen incentives to study the native languages of the indigenous minorities of the North. Every year more than 1000 people – school-children and their parents, students, teachers and retirees, scientists, workers and employees – take this dictation to test their proficiency of their native language both in traditional in-person and online formats. The text of the dictation is translated in all dialects and subdialects of the languages of the indigenous minorities of Ugra. The geographic scope of the event expands gradually, with locations in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area, Sverdlovsk Region, etc. joining the event.

In Ugra, teacher training courses in native languages and literatures of the

indigenous minorities of the North are carried out on a regular basis both in educational organisations of the Autonomous Area and beyond. Khanty-Mansiysk Technological and Pedagogical College provides secondary-level vocational training in *Preschool Education* and *Primary Education* with the study of native (Khanty and Mansi) languages. Nizhnevartovsk State University has launched Master degree *Khanty Philology* courses entitling the graduates to teach native languages and literatures of the indigenous minorities of the North.

More than 20 Ugra students from the indigenous minorities of the North are studying at the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia on the basis of employer-sponsored education contracts in the field of native language, literature and culture.

Science

The effective combination of scientific research and practical applications represents the major trend in the current strategy for the development of the region's scientific cluster and increasing the role of languages of the indigenous minorities of the North.

The Ob-Ugric Institute of Applied Research and Development was established in Ugra over 30 years ago, which is now the only specialised institution in the region dealing with research and preservation of Ob-Ugric and Samoyed languages and traditional culture, collection and recording of folklore, providing scientific and methodological support to educational institutions in the field of teaching native languages.

The Institute is called to provide the representatives of Ugra indigenous minorities with the opportunity to independently conduct scientific research in their intangible cultural heritage, so to say “from within the culture”. At present, researchers from the Khanty, Mansi and Nenets make up about 80% of the Institute’s scientific staff. The results of scientific research are reflected in monographs, folklore collections, anthologies, teaching aids, dictionaries, didactic materials and scientific articles. In total, over 400 titles of scientific works

have been published by the Institute over 30 years.

The Institute’s website is a large electronic resource on the Ob-Ugric languages, on literature, culture and history of small indigenous peoples of the North. For example, the section *Folklore Depository of Ob-Ugric and Samoyed Peoples* contains over 3,000 hours and over 6,000 cards of unique folklore texts in the languages of Ugra indigenous peoples together with translations into Russian, scientific commentaries and other data about informants, etc.

The Institute publishes a scientific journal *Vestnik Ugrovedeniya (Bulletin of Ugric Studies)*, which is indexed and archived in the main science-metric databases (Scopus, Web of Science, etc.) and is included in the Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI). In addition, the Institute is a member of the CrossRef partnership and the Association of Scientific Editors and Publishers (ASEP).



Surgut
State
University

Khanty
holiday
Raven
Day



Culture

Cultural institutions that carefully preserve the traditions and folklore of the Khanty, Mansi and Nenets play a tangible role in supporting and promoting the languages and cultures of Ugra indigenous peoples.

All libraries of Ugra have collections in the languages of the peoples of the North.

The repertoire of the professional *Solntse (Sun) Theatre of Ob-Ugric Peoples* acting in the region includes performances based on works of local writers and folklore stories.

Since 2017, the District House of Folk Art has been running the Bear Games School, where children and adults can study not only the specifics of traditional rituals, but also the Khanty language under a master-student language learning programme. Competent masters of folklore of small indigenous peoples of the

North are invited to give classes. The three-day programme implies a full immersion in ritual-based activities with performances of songs, dances and skits in Khanty, experts give their comments on the scenario of the rituals and songs with explanations of norms of behavior and content of the plot. Such methodological assistance allows preparing successors in the ritual traditions.

The District School of Masters in making and playing musical instruments of the Ob-Ugric peoples represents another large-scale project that has been implemented by the House of Folk Art since the mid-1990s with the view to preserving and transmitting the instrumental culture and festive and ritual traditions of the Khanty and Mansi peoples. As part of the project, expeditions have been organised to collect folklore, which is now being digitised and transcribed for subsequent publication. Every



State
Museum of
Fine Arts,
Khanty-
Mansiysk

year, specialists from cultural and educational institutions get training at the practical seminars in making and playing musical instruments of the Ob-Ugric peoples. The District School of Masters has provided such training courses for hundreds of young and talented children, who now work in cultural and leisure institutions and either are leaders of folklore groups or professional actors.

The work of the digital resource base *Register of Objects of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Peoples of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra (Ugra-Heritage)* serves as the most important indicator of activities in the field of preservation and promotion of language and traditions in performing arts. The Register is designed to create conditions for the preservation and development of intangible cultural heritage of the peoples of Ugra. The implementation of various projects aimed at preserving languages and, consequently, folklore is assisted by genuine bearers and connoisseurs of folklore invited as experts. It is with them that outreach and research work is carried out to

identify and study objects of intangible ethnocultural heritage.

There are 10 ethnographic museums in the Autonomous Area, which are situated in close vicinity to the areas of compact settlement of the indigenous peoples of the North, which facilitates the in-depth studies and transmission of their traditional culture.

The Torum Maa open-air ethnographic museum is a unique systemic institution for preserving and promoting the historical and cultural heritage of small indigenous peoples of Ugra. Founded on the initiative of representatives of ethnic intellectuals, for 35 years the Museum has been the most important part and the shining beacon of the successful experience of presentation of traditional culture in the context of contemporary urban environment and sound balanced policy in the field of formation of interethnic relations, promotion of population's identity and an attractive image of the city, region and the entire country.

The Museum, while studying, preserving and transmitting the material and spiritual culture of the Ob-Ugri-

ans, holds the open air reenactments and presentations of major annual holidays and rituals of the Ugra peoples. The traditional lifestyle, culture, customs, traditions and crafts are presented in various programmes and projects, temporary exhibitions implemented by the Museum on a permanent basis with different categories of visitors, including in the Khanty and Mansi languages. The Museum incorporates the first literature museum of Ugra, namely the Memorial Cabinet-Museum of the first professional Mansi poet and writer Yuvan Shestalov, which actively transmits the creative works by representatives of indigenous peoples of the North at its literary readings, in digital and creative projects.

The Torum Maa Museum organises the high-profile International Research Conference “Siberian Ugrians in the Necklace of Subarctic Cultures: Common and Unique”, called to explore the ways of integration in the study, preservation, promotion and public presentation of Khanty and Mansi culture by museums and research institutions. The Conference

is held once every five years with the support and under the auspices of the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO.

Mass media

Ugra has a well-developed network of printed and electronic mass media in indigenous languages.

The first publications in Khanty appeared in the newspaper *Ostyako-Vogulskaya Pravda* back in 1934. Today, two newspapers are published in national languages in Ugra: *Khanty Yasang* (in Khanty, since 1957) and *Luima Saripos* (in Mansi, since 1989). The newspapers are published twice a month and are available with Russian translation in the online media *Khanty Mansi Mir* (www.khanty-yasang.ru).

Children’s magazines are also published: *Khatlye* in the Khanty language and *Vitsam* in the Mansi language. In addition, mass media-related projects in native languages are implemented on the basis of the creative industries media cluster. One of such projects is maintaining audio versions of the *Khanty Yasang* and *Luima Saripos* newspapers. The project is of particular value for the visually impaired and for those who understand but cannot read their native language. The project offers new opportunities for the speech-based teaching of native languages.

Khanty - Mansiysk broadcasts television and radio programmes in the

Archaeopark
open-air
cultural and
historical
complex



Khanty language as part of news and information programmes. Since 2021, TV programmes in native languages have been broadcast with subtitles in Russian in the form of a ticker.

The Ugra TV and Radio Company broadcasts the children's programme *Yugorika* twice a month, engaging teams and authors from different towns and villages of Ugra. This TV project is aimed at promoting the culture of indigenous minorities of the North and drawing attention to the preservation and promotion of linguistic heritage.

Weekly and monthly news programmes in the Ob-Ugric languages, as well as cultural and educational programmes dedicated to the life, traditions and culture of the indigenous peoples of Ugra are broadcast in the regional inserts of the federal *Russia 1* TV channel. Journalists of the national broadcasting channel travel to remote villages and nomad camps, to the places of traditional settlement of the Ob-Ugric people, and meet with speakers of native languages and native culture bearers.

The Yugoria radio station broadcasts weekly programmes *Rot Yasang* (in the Khanty language) and *Tarnq Tur-sue* (in the Mansi language).

Languages in book publishing

Book publishing constitutes one of the major factors conducive to the preservation of native languages. Nu-



Publications in the languages of the indigenous peoples of Ugra

merous editions of scientific, educational, teaching and methodological literature are actively published in Ugra. Priority projects include the compilation and publication of dictionaries (thematic, orthographic, phraseological, toponymic, dialect and pictorial, etc.), as well as collections of folklore. In 2019, the first Concise Mansi-Russian Dictionary with an online application for students of grades 1-4 was published.

Special attention is paid to publishing literature for children in four dialects of the Khanty language (Kazym, Surgut, Vakhov and Shuryshkar) and two dialects of the Mansi language (Northern and Verkhnelozvi). Editions of fairy tales for children in native, Russian and English languages, supplemented with concise illustrated dictionaries and coloring pages are the most popular and in high demand in educational institutions.

All the literature published in Ugra is distributed free of charge among the

Ugra
singer Vera
Kondratieva



educational institutions and libraries of the region as part of a social project.

Indigenous languages of Ugra in cyberspace

The Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area is actively developing communication channels in social networks, which transmit the Khanty and Mansi languages through various formats (posts, videos, messages, online courses, etc.). In order to promote the Khanty language and folklore, eight groups have been created with the number of subscribers exceeding 5,000 people, which are as follows: *I love the Khanty language (Start loving it too)* – a virtual club for those who wish to study their native language; *Khānty pa mānschi* – a community for communication in the Khanty language; *Ma Khanty; Kāntəx yoχ/Kəntəx yax/Eastern Khanty; Ma yasnem* – a native word (online courses in folklore with the focus on the Khanty language); *Pupi hot; Khatlye; Shay kem yasəh*. These are organised by language activists, media representatives, bloggers, experts, public figures living not only in urban areas, but

also in places of traditional settlement (ethnic villages, nomad camps).

Prospects for the preservation, revitalisation and development of the Ob-Ugric languages

It should be noted that the efforts of the public authorities of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area, made in the course of implementation of regional programmes, have largely shaped upward trends in the preservation of native languages in education, science and culture, and have triggered the actions by language activists, the national community, and civil society as a whole.

At the same time, the language situation in the context of urbanisation and globalisation remains worrisome for some polyethnic regions; therefore, priority actions for the next decade have been identified in Ugra to revitalise minority languages.

In education, the development of educational, teaching and methodical, popular science publications, collections of folklore, children's literature with the use of modern technologies of augmented reality, allowing integration of information in the form of audio presentations by means of QR codes, is especially relevant for the processes of language development. New creative educational products will bring added value to the further development of languages and cultures.

In science, the task of documenting languages, with due account of their dialectal diversity, has been set.

There are plans to prepare dialect dictionaries and atlases of Khanty, Mansi and Nenets, and to create corpora of the Ob-Ugric languages. Digital technologies enable creation and implementation of the authentic language environment for a growing number of native speakers, while fostering the perception of language as an important element of self-identification and as an integral part of the culture of each people in the today's world.

In culture, the need for fostering the broader use of the Ob-Ugric languages during mass entertainment and cultural events with participation of native speakers, for supporting the creative work of Ob-Ugric writers and the publication of their works remains to be addressed.

In mass media, the priority is to create conditions conducive to the development and wider scope of distribution

of periodicals in the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, especially publications for children; and to broadcast thematic television and radio programmes dedicated to the culture and arts of indigenous peoples and also to the people who became a part of the history in the region.

In book publishing, special attention will be paid to the publication of children's and youth literature in native languages and translations into native languages of world and national classics.

In the social sphere it is necessary to actively position low-resource languages in public networks as a means of mainstream communication, to enhance the engagement of native speakers in the activities aimed at preserving and fostering their languages, and to promote the use of native languages as an intra-family means of



Alexey Zabozaev, Deputy Governor of Ugra, and Dorothy Gordon, Chair, Intergovernmental Council for the UNESCO Information for All Programme

Participants of the Conference “Language Policy in Ugra: Preservation of Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples”, 2022



communication. These activities will contribute to wider language environment.

Integration of all community members into language processes will serve as the indispensable prerequisite for successful implementation of Ugra language policy in addressing an important and immediate priority which is to ensure normative and legal regulation of issues related to the approval of unified alphabets, spelling and punctuation rules of the native languages. As the Governor Ugra Natalia Komarova says: “*Such a decision will definitely be the one that will allow eliminating one of the long-delayed*

tasks”. And one can find it difficult to disagree with these words, because then the linguistic and cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples of the North will no longer be vulnerable, and with due attention and support of the state authorities it will receive a new impetus in its development in today’s world. Much has been done in Ugra to make every resident, regardless of their ethnicity, feel comfortable and look with confidence into the future. The well-being and prosperity of each living in Ugra serve as an indicator of systematic work aimed at preserving the national heritage.

Maria Vagatova (Voldina), the first Khanty poetess and storyteller



Natalya Komarova, Governor of Ugra, and Yeremei Aipin, Chair, Assembly of Representatives of Indigenous Minorities of the North



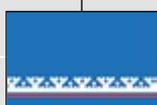
Stepan Kechimov, President, Union of Reindeer Herders of Ugra

Evdokia Rombandeyeva, specialist in the Mansi language, and Adama Samassekou, Founder and Executive Secretary, African Academy of Languages



Representatives of national folk groups

YAMALO-NENETS AUTONOMOUS AREA



Interregional scientific and practical conference

Regional Language Policy in the Context of the Goals for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages

(October 31 – November 2, 2022, Salekhard, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area)

Organisers

- Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme
- Interregional Library Cooperation Centre
- Government of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area
- Scientific Centre for Arctic Studies

LANGUAGES OF THE PEOPLES OF YAMAL: PRESERVATION AND SUPPORT



Lyubov VOZELOVA
Researcher, Scientific Centre for Arctic
Studies

Introduction

The Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area, one of the largest constituent entities of the Russian Federation in terms of territory, is part of the Urals Federal District. The territory of the Autonomous Area is located in the Arctic zone in the north of the world's largest West Siberian Plain and occupies an area of more than 750,000 square kilometres. The capital of this stable and dynamically developing region is Salekhard, the only city on the Arctic Circle. The total population of Yamal as of 1 January 2022 is 552,117 people.

Indigenous peoples and languages of Yamal

The Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area is one of the most multinational regions of Russia: representatives of more than 112 ethnic groups and nationalities live here, including four peoples speaking the languages of the Uralic family: Nenets, Khanty, Selkups and Komi-Zyryans. The first three of these ethnic groups are classified as small indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation.

According to the results of the 2020 census, the number of small-num-



Polar
Urals

Yamal
from a
bird's eye
view



bered peoples in Yamal reached 48,932 people, of whom the Nenets make up 72.1%, the Khanty 23.5% and the Selkups 4.4%. The traditional nomadic way of life is practised by 17,900 people (5,136 families). Despite administrative and territorial fragmentation, the peoples retain their traditional and cultural potential.

The Nenets are the largest people of the Far North of the Russian Federation. Their linguistic situation is relatively stable, as the language is passed on from parents to children and is actively used in the family, and their nomadic lifestyle contributes to the preservation of the language in traditional economic spheres. The Yamal, Priural, Gydan, Taz, and Nadym dialects of the Tundra Nenets language, as well as the Pur dialect of the Forest Nenets language, are widespread in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area.

The traditional occupations of the Yamal Khanty are reindeer herding, fishing and hunting. Language transmission from

parents to children is preserved primarily in families living in nomad camps.

The Khanty language is a young written language. Compared to other Finno-Ugric languages, it is characterised by pronounced dialectal fragmentation. There is no single literary language, which can be explained by a high degree of inter-dialect differences.

The Khanty language on the territory of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area is represented by two dialects – Shuryshkar and Priural, belonging to the Western group of dialects. The Shuryshkar dialect is the official language of radio, television and newspapers in Yamal, and native language and literature textbooks for general education institutions of Yamal are also published in it.

The Selkups living in the southeastern part of Yamal, as well as in the border settlements of the Krasnoyarsk Krai, speak the northern (Taz-Turukhan) dialect of the Selkup language. Today, it is still spoken (albeit limitedly) by representatives



Traditions
of reindeer
breeding
on Yamal



Settlement
of the
indigenous
peoples of
Yamal

of the older and middle generations, while young people use their native language much less frequently.

In general, all three languages of the indigenous minorities of the North, spread on Yamal, are in danger of extinction and are preserved primarily by the older generation (the latter is also true for the dialects of the Trans-Ural Izhma Komi). Young people maintain their language skills where their traditional way of life, primarily reindeer herding, remains stable (to a greater extent among the Nenets, to a lesser extent among the Khanty and Selkups).

The use of the indigenous languages of Yamal in the mass media contributes to their preservation and development, to the maintenance of folk art, traditional culture, and to the promotion of the protection of the ancestral habitat, traditional ways of life, economic activities and crafts of the small indigenous minorities of the North.

These languages are used in programmes on district and municipal television and radio, newspapers and magazines, and scientific, journalistic, artistic and educational literature.

Preserving and supporting the languages of the indigenous peoples of Yamal

Legislative support and activities of local authorities

The Charter of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area (1998) and the *Law On the Native Languages of the Indigenous Minorities of the North in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area* (2010) set out the objectives of preserving the national identity of the peoples, including support

Salekhard,
the capital of
the Yamalo-
Nenets
Autonomous
Area



for folk arts and crafts, regional and local national-cultural autonomies, and support for the study of national languages and other ethnocultural subjects in educational institutions. The Law defines the concept of native languages, the procedure for their use in the mass media, and the conduct of official business in native languages in places of traditional residence of small indigenous minorities of the North. It touches on the issues of the region's cooperation with other constituent entities of the Russian Federation in the sphere of native languages protection and development.

The mechanism for submitting and considering proposals on the use of native languages in the names of geographical objects, road and other signs and inscriptions in places traditionally inhabited by small indigenous minorities is determined by the relevant Resolution of the Yamal Government (2012).

The following legal acts are also aimed at realising the guarantees of preservation and development of the languages of the indigenous minorities of the North:

- *Law On the Folklore of the Indigenous Minorities of the North in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area (2007);*
- *Resolution of the Administration of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area On the Establishment of the Expert Council in the Field of Folklore of the Indigenous Minorities of the North in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area (2008);*
- *Resolution of the Government of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area On the Legal Regime of the Objects of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Indigenous Minorities of the North of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area (2011);*
- *Resolution of the Government of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area On State Support of Folklore Activities of the Indigenous Minorities of the North in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area (2012),* which provides for targeted support in the form of grants and special awards to masters of folklore genre, bearers and performers of folklore, and national creative unions.

As part of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) in Yamal, the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area Government Order of April 01, 2022, adopted a regional plan with 48 key events and activities. Taking into account current trends, the plan puts special emphasis on such priority areas as digital empowerment, language technologies, freedom of expression and media development.

The Government of Yamal has several executive bodies directly involved in language development. The main one is the Department for the Affairs of the Indigenous Minorities of the North in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area, which assists the indigenous minorities of the North in preserving and developing their native languages, as well as in popularising their use. The Department implements the State Programme for the Preservation and Sustainable Development of the Indigenous Minorities of the North in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area, which

includes the *Preservation of the language and cultural values of the indigenous minorities of the North in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area* as a separate line of action.

The following activities are being carried out under this line of action:

- grant support and special awards in the field of folklore activities of the indigenous minorities of the North for creating, preserving and promoting the cultural values of these peoples;
- participation of the region's representatives in ethno-cultural events at regional, interregional, all-Russian and international levels;
- holding regional and municipal events to promote the traditional culture of indigenous minorities of the North (folklore festivals, holidays, competitions, exhibitions, publishing projects).

In 2022, a competition among young people aged 18 to 35 for the best author's project in the field of folklore and native languages of the



Reindeer Herder's Day, Tarko-Sale

indigenous minorities of the North using information and communication technologies or illustrative material was launched. The first prize winners were young Yamal residents who created a collection of comics in the Khanty language and a sound recording studio of ancient Nenets folklore works.

Since 2018, an annual video contest *We Speak Our Mother Tongue* has been organised in conjunction with the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

Sphere of science

The Scientific Centre for Arctic Studies, established in 2010, plays a major role in the development, preservation and promotion of indigenous languages in Yamal. It is the only scientific institution in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area.

The Centre's Regional Studies Sector conducts research in linguistics and folklore studies, making a significant contribution to the preservation and development of native languages, literature and traditional cultures of Yamal's indigenous minorities in the context of globalisation.

Every year the Centre conducts linguistic and folklore-ethnographic expeditions aimed at collecting material in areas densely populated by the indigenous peoples of Yamal.

The preservation and study of Nenets, Khanty and Selkup folklore is one of the priority areas of regional policy.

Thus, in 2020, a digital folklore collection was created on the basis of the Scientific Centre for Arctic Studies to preserve, study, popularise and use the folklore of the indigenous peoples of Yamal.

The staff of the Regional Studies Sector are experts in the field of traditional and modern culture of the indigenous peoples of Yamal, history, language, literature and oral folk art. They take an active part in the preparation and publication of textbooks and teaching aids in native languages, develop interregional Olympiad tasks in native languages, culture and literature.

The Scientific Centre for Arctic Studies publishes collections of folklore in native languages, monographs and essays. In particular, the Dialectological Atlas of Uralic languages spoken in Yamal, the Dictionary of Hydronyms of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area, and the Russian-Nenets Dictionary by Maria Barmich were published with active participation of the staff of the Regional Studies Sector.



Opening of the conference "Regional Language Policy in the Context of the Goals for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages", 2022

Education

A distinctive feature of the Autonomous Area's education system is a large number of boarding schools (there are 25 of them), which educate children from families leading a traditional way of life. In these full-day institutions, conditions as close as possible to home have been created for children who are separated from their parents throughout the school year. The educational plans of these boarding schools include the study of native languages and the promotion of native culture and traditions.

In the 2022/2023 school year, the study of native languages is organised in 40 general education establishments for 5,303 students on a voluntary basis. At the level of primary general education, 2,249 students study their native language, 3,017 students study it in basic general education and 37 students study it in secondary general education.

In general education organisations of Yamal, 4,193 students from among the indigenous minorities of the North study the Nenets language, 866 study the Khanty language, 167 study the Selkup language and 77 study the Komi language.

Since 2013, 9th-graders in Yamal have had the right to take their native language and native literature as a final exam of their choice. Every year the number of those wishing to test their knowledge of the subject grows. The opportunity to take the State Final Examination in native language and native literature encourages students to actively study these subjects.

Teachers of boarding schools take into account ethno-pedagogical traditions of the society and national-regional specifics when developing programmes of courses, subjects, disciplines (modules). As part of PE courses, national sports (sledge jumping, wrestling and national games) are studied. Within the Health and Safety course, pupils acquire skills in orienteering in the tundra and survival techniques in the extreme conditions of the Far North. Traditional crafts of small indigenous minorities of the North and applied arts are also studied in technology lessons. Optional and elective courses make it possible to introduce children to professions common in the tundra and forest tundra regions (making fur clothing and footwear, beadwork, bone carving).



A lesson in a Khanty school

All boarding schools are implementing ethnocultural programmes (practical classes in elective courses on *Ethnotechnology* and *Reindeer Breeding*, national holidays, pre-primary education, etc.).

Learning kits on native languages (Nenets, Khanty and Selkup) for grades

1-9, textbooks for grades 1-5 on the Komi language (Izhma dialect), and textbooks for grades 2-7 on native (Nenets and Khanty) literature have been developed and published.

In 2018, Nenets and Khanty language textbooks for grades 1-4 were included in the federal list of textbooks.

The Arctic Olympiad, an interregional academic competition in local history and native languages, which has been held since 2006, plays a special role in preserving the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North in the education system of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area. The Arctic Olympiad attracts pupils from state, municipal and non-state educational organisations of Yamal and other constituent entities of the Russian Federation who study local lore and native languages. The main goals of the Olympiad are to identify and support talented and gifted students, to promote local history education, and to create conditions

for studying, preserving, protecting and promoting the languages of the indigenous minorities of the North. The Olympiad is organised in the nominations *Arctic Local Lore* and *Native Languages of the North* (Khanty, Nenets and Selkup) in two stages (municipal and interregional).

Over 670 students took part in the Olympiad over the period of its organisation. The winners and prize-winners of the interregional stage of the Olympiad receive a prize from the Governor of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area to support talented youth as part of the implementation of the *Education* priority national project.

An important measure to improve the education of indigenous children is the organisation of competitions for native language teachers and boarding school teachers. For example, since 2021, the Yamal Native Language Teacher professional skills competition has already been held twice in

Lyceum in the city of Gubkinsky



order to disseminate innovative educational technologies in the teaching of native languages. The winner of the regional stage of this competition takes part in the All-Russian *Best Mother Tongue and Native Literature Teacher* professional competition announced by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation.

As part of the Regional Pedagogical Excellence Contest, a special nomination was established for pedagogical staff of boarding schools in the Autonomous Area.

In order to train qualified teachers to work in places of traditional residence and economic activity of small indigenous minorities of the North (nomadic teachers), work is being carried out with indigenous students studying at the Herzen State Pedagogical University in Saint Petersburg. In order to provide additional support to postgraduate students and degree candidates from among the indigenous minorities of the North, Yamal holds a competition for grants from the Governor, which can be used to pay for travel to scientific conferences and forums, publish scientific articles and organise scientific expeditions.

The Regional Institute for Education Development publishes the *Yamal Education* magazine with articles on the most interesting and advanced methods and developments of the teaching community of Yamal. Some articles are published in native languages.

The education system of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area, along with traditional methods, uses the most advanced technologies and creates comprehensive conditions for

the preservation, development and promotion of the languages of the indigenous minorities of the North living here.

Mass communication and book publishing sector

In Yamal, support and development of printed and electronic media distributed in the languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation is carried out as part of the implementation of the subprogramme *Development of Mass Media and Printing* of the State Programme of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area *Implementation of Regional Policy for 2014–2024* by the Department of Internal Policy of Yamal.



Khanty girl in traditional clothes

In 1998, the Directorate of Programmes of the Peoples of the North was established on the basis of the *Yamal-Region* state television and radio company to produce programmes in the Nenets and Khanty languages, as well as in the Komi language. The programmes *Severnny kolorit* (about

the culture, customs and traditions of the indigenous peoples of the North living in Yamal) and *Yasavey. Nomad of the 21st Century* (about outstanding personalities, representatives of indigenous peoples with a difficult fate) are broadcast in Russian.

The Department for Indigenous Minorities of the North Projects publishes content on social networks and a YouTube channel under the unified brand *EthnoArctic*. Currently, the department's team prepares 360 minutes of TV programmes and 100 minutes of podcasts in the languages of the peoples of the North every month.

The autonomous non-commercial organisation Yamal-Media publishes newspapers in native languages: *Nyaryana Ngerm* with a children's supplement *Myniko* in the Nenets language and *LUKH AVT* with a supplement in Khanty. The circulation of *Nyaryana Ngerm* is 3,616 copies, *LUKH AVT* – 1,340 copies. The newspapers are distributed on the territory of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area by subscription. People living outside Yamal can receive these publications electronically. The newspapers cover the life of small indigenous peoples of the

North, their customs and traditions, and help the younger generation to learn their native languages.

The Department of Internal Policy of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area supports the publication of works created in the languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation, including translations into and from Russian, as well as their placement on the Internet.

Publishing projects in native languages are supported on a regular basis. Books by indigenous northerners find a great response from readers, are added to the library collections of city, district and school libraries, and are used as teaching aids for lessons in native languages and literature.

Cultural sphere

The National Library of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area is undoubtedly the main custodian of printed works in the Nenets, Khanty and Selkup languages. The core of its collection is formed by publications in the native languages of the indigenous peoples of the region (research works, monographs, dictionaries, works of fiction, including collections of fairy tales and legends).

Since 2016, the National Library together with the Department for Indigenous Minorities of the North of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area has been holding an annual dictation in the indigenous languages of the Yamal North *Our Language is Honed by Centuries* on February 21, International Mother



Publications for children in the indigenous languages of Yamal

Participants
of the
dictation
Our
Language
is Honed by
Centuries



Language Day. The dictation gathers all those wishing to test their knowledge of their native language, and the number of participants is constantly growing: in 2023, about 1,000 people in all municipalities of the Autonomous Area took part in it. In addition, events aimed at promoting local history publications, presentations of books by Yamal authors, online recitation contests, thematic book exhibitions, creative meetings with writers, and interactive classes for children are organised within the interdepartmental project *Culture of the Peoples of Yamal*.

In order to preserve and popularise indigenous languages and culture, the portal *Khorey Literary Map of Yamal* is functioning to unite the literary community of the region. The electronic resource is digitised and actively updated with fiction, folklore, popular science literature, including in the languages of the indigenous peoples of Yamal. The portal allows providing a wide audience with open access to works.

The Local Centre of National Cultures is working hard to preserve and promote native languages and culture. The project *Folklore Les-*

sons: Living Motifs of the Northern Land and the interdepartmental project *Culture of the Peoples of Yamal* are implemented for children and young people in schools and preschools, and days of cultures of different peoples are held. Various holidays, contests, festivals, etc. are organised jointly with public organisations of the Autonomous Area.

The international ethno-festival *Soul of the Tundra* annually brings together true connoisseurs of indigenous culture and traditions, representing the original culture of the Nenets, Selkups, Khanty in a folk art competition. The aim of the ethno-festival is to preserve and develop local folklore traditions of the peoples of the North, their tangible and intangible cultural heritage, to revive artistic craftsmanship of the indigenous population in modern conditions, as well as to establish creative contacts with regions and countries where representatives of the northern peoples of the Arctic live.

Yamal's national collectives, such as the governor's national song ensemble *Seetei Yamal*, the ethnic music ensemble *Minlei*, the folklore group *Vy'sei*, the bright and original soloists Nyadma Nyarui, Ekaterina Salinder and Valentin Valgamov, are actively engaged in cultural activities. The soloists and groups, whose repertoire includes many songs in national languages, annually take part in all kinds of folklore festivals and holidays.

Public organisations and activists

There are 14 public organisations of small indigenous minorities of the North operating in the Autonomous Area.

The Khanty national cultural autonomy *Pulngavat* has implemented a number of projects aimed at preserving the culture and language of its people. The target audience of project activities are both adults and children – ethnic Khanty people living in cities and losing knowledge of their native language and culture. The projects include the Khanty ritual holiday *Lung Kutap Khatl* (Midsummer Day), a theatrical production *Fortress Evet Soim* (Maiden Creek) based on an ancient Khanty legend, and an ethno-cultural summer camp *Khanty Yasngev Shavilev* (Let's preserve our mother tongue).

Izyvatas, a Yamalo-Nenets regional public movement of Komi-Zyryans, actively supports the native language by organising events as part of the Days of Culture of the Komi-Zyryan people, works with young people to preserve traditional culture and language, and maintains a page on the VKontakte social network in Komi and in Russian.

The activists of public associations play a vivid role in the policy of preserving and developing native languages in Yamal.

Conclusion

Most often, among the reasons for the transition of small-numbered peoples of Russia to the majority language, researchers point out the influx of Russian-speaking population, the mixed composition of the population of settlements, the policy of strengthening settlements, education in Russian in schools, the disintegration of traditional economy, the growing number of interethnic marriages, as well as the lack of motivation to learn the language even where it is theoretically possible. All these factors are also characteristic of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area. A linguistic environment, comprehensive scientific research, linguistic and ethnographic expeditions, modern teaching techniques, appropriate curricula and manuals are extremely important for learning and mastering native languages. It is also important that the language is learnt continuously – from preschools to higher education institutions.

Sergei Bobryshev, Expert of the My Mother Tongue Programme, Commercial Director, ParaType Company



Panorama of the city of Gubkinsky



Participants in the conference "Regional Language Policy in the Context of the Goals for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages", 2022

Ob River



KARACHAY-CHERKESS REPUBLIC



Interregional scientific and practical conference

Preserving and Promoting Mother Tongues in a Multiethnic State: Problems, and Prospects for the Development and Implementation of Regional Language

(December 2-3, 2022, Karachayevsk, Karachay-Cherkess Republic)

Organisers

- Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme
- Interregional Library Cooperation Centre
- Ministry of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic for Nationalities, Mass Communications and Press
- Aliyev Karachay-Cherkess State University

LANGUAGE SITUATION IN THE KARACHAY-CHERKESS REPUBLIC



Khanafy KHASANOV
Deputy Director, Karachay-Cherkess
Republican Book Publishing House

General information

The Karachay-Cherkess Republic is a constituent entity of the Russian Federation and is administratively part of the North Caucasus Federal District. The Republic, with an area of 14,277 square kilometres, is located in the foothills of the North-Western Caucasus, bordering the Krasnodar Krai in the west, the Stavropol Krai in the north, the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria in the east, and Georgia and Abkhazia in the south, and stretches along the Main Caucasus Ridge. The capital is the city of Cherkessk.

One of the striking distinctive features of Karachay-Cherkessia is its ethnic diversity, with prominent domination of the five largest ethnicities: Abazins, Karachays, Nogais, Russians, Circassians, who have been defined as *republic-forming*. They account for more than 94% of the total population of the Republic, which in 2021 was 469,000 people. The languages of these five peoples are defined by the Constitution of Karachay-Cherkessia as the state languages of the Republic, and Russian is also proclaimed the language of inter-ethnic communication and official language of administration.



Foothills
of Mount
Elbrus

Cathedral Mosque, Karachayevsk



Russians make up the majority of the population in the town of Cherkessk and two districts (Zelenchuksky and Urupsky), Karachays prevail in the town of Karachayevsk and four districts (Karachayevsky, Malokarachayevsky, Prikubansky, Ust-Dzhegutinsky), Circassians - in two districts (Adyge-Khablsky and Khabezsky), Abazins and Nogais – in Abazinsky and Nogaisky districts respectively.

In confessional terms, Sunni Muslims make up the majority of the population of the Republic with Orthodox Christians representing the second largest religious community. There are also small communities of representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church and Protestant organisations.

The basic preconditions for the modern statehood of the peoples of Upper Kuban stem from the process of their accession to the politi-

cal, legal, cultural and economic space of Russia, which began in the first half of the 19th century. During the tsarist period, national administrative and territorial entities (districts, counties, precincts) were established for the mountain Muslim population of the region. The abolished power of the feudal nobility was replaced by a system of mountain self-government in the form of collective bodies and elected officials. In the last third of the 19th century, the introduction of



Karachay elders, 2nd half of the 19th century



Children with books in front of a mosque. Aul Kart-Jurt, 1917

a system of secular education among the mountain population gave rise to a layer of national intelligentsia.

The experience of self-government and the presence of an educated layer of population played a crucial role in the realisation of the right of peoples to self-determination within Russia after the fall of the Tsarist regime. It was based on the territory of the two mountainous districts that had existed during the tsarist's times – Biberdovsky and Khumarinsky. After the establishment of Soviet power in 1920, they were transformed into two new districts – Elburgansky (as part of the Batalpashinsky district) and Karachayevsky (as part of the Gorskaya ASSR). On the initiative of the local elites of both districts, supported by the Russian-Cossack population of Upper Kuban, the Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Oblast (KCAO) was formed in 1922. However, following its disintegration in 1926, the Russian Batalpashinsky District (which existed until 1931), the Karachayev Autonomous Oblast

(abolished in 1943 due to the deportation of the Karachays) and the Circassian National District, transformed in 1928 into the Circassian Autonomous Oblast were created on its territory. In 1957, after the return of the Karachays from the places of deportation to their historical homeland, the Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Oblast was restored, and in 1991 it was transformed into the Karachay-Cherkess Republic.

Languages and writing in historical retrospective

The population of Karachay-Cherkessia comprises ethnic communities whose languages belong to different language families: Indo-European (Russians, Ukrainians, Ossetians, and Armenians), Altaic (Karachays, Nogais), Caucasian (Abazins, Circassians).

Before accession to the Russian Empire, Arabic prevailed in the religious life of the indigenous peoples of the

region and in the business correspondence of their nobles. In addition, the so-called North Caucasian Turkic (called “Tatar” in Russian sources of that time) based on Arabic script was also used in correspondence. Monuments of epigraphy and business epistolary testify that local peoples used Arabic-based script to some extent from the 16th to the beginning of the 20th century.

Accession to Russia led to the active penetration of the Russian language into the life of the mountain population of Upper Kuban. In 1845, a regimental school was opened in the village of Batalpashinskaya (modern Cherkessk), where first children from mountain families were taught Russian. The Russian language was used as the office language by mountain villages’ administrations established in the 1860s, as well as in secular schools opened for the mountain peoples from the late 1870s.

taught both in religious educational institutions (madrassas, mekteb) and in secular ones (as part of the *Muslim Doctrine* course).

In the first quarter of the 20th century, national alphabets of indigenous peoples were created on the basis of Arabic script. It was in this Arabic-based script that the first printed national books were published: the first Karachay alphabet book (1916), the first newspapers in Karachay (1919) and Circassian (1924), more than a dozen books in Nogai (1926-1928).

Since 1928, the alphabets of the mountain peoples of the region were switched to the Latin-based script; and since 1933, on its basis the first periodicals (in the form of separate pages of the regional newspaper) were published in the Abazi and Nogai languages.

Finally, in 1938, all national alphabets were switched to the Cyrillic-based alphabet, which is used up today. However, nowadays, the Karachay, Nogai and Circassian Diasporas of Turkey still issue printed publications (periodicals, books, and teaching aids) in their native languages using the Latin alphabet.

Residents of the mountain village of Tereze. 1936



At the same time, up to the 1880s inclusively, the Arabic language was partially used in local document circulation (resolutions of mountain villages assemblies and courts, metric records), and up to 1920 it was

Current language situation

The areas of use of literary native languages currently cover mainly school education (where mother tongue is studied as a subject) and culture (national theatre, literature, mass media). Therefore, representatives of national intelligentsia and

national movements believe that the status of the national languages of the Republic as state languages is still a nominal fact, as they are not in use in official, business, scientific, legal and other important areas of life. And in terms of their mass usage, native languages are limited to being used as colloquial languages serving the intra-family and economic household relations.

The globalisation processes, especially in the information and cultural spheres, have resulted in adverse impact on the linguistic environment of the indigenous peoples of Karachay-Cherkessia. Experts indicate that today the vocabulary of students and schoolchildren (especially in urban areas) is getting poorer at a catastrophic rate. Not more than 10% of them can coherently express their thoughts in a pure literary language without parasite words, slang, borrowings and macaronisms. Young people's speech is characterised by wrong speech and stylistic norms, loss of semantic links, incorrect use of phraseological locutions and even phonetic distortions.

According to sociological surveys conducted among representatives of the four indigenous peoples of the Republic, as of 2021 the ethno-linguistic situation was as follows. Command of native languages is most often quite good: 71% read, write and speak their native language fluently, 20% have some diffi-



Building of the Government of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic

culties in speaking and writing, and 7% have significant difficulties (the weakest knowledge of the language is noted in the group of respondents aged 20-29, where only 65% speak the language fluently). Among the major factors hampering better command of their native language, the respondents mentioned: lack of TV programmes in their native languages (32.2%), lack of the language in professional communication (31%), shortage of books and magazines (30.1%), shortage of educational institutions with studies of languages (28.2%). According to the respondents, the media (59%) and cultural organisations (55%) have the most positive influence on language learning, followed by educational organisations (32%), national associations (31%) and public authorities (30%).

State support for linguistic diversity in Karachay-Cherkessia

The activities of the republican authorities in the field of language policy are based on the provisions of the *Law on the Languages of the Peoples of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic* of 1996. It guarantees not only equal rights of the peoples of the Republic to preserve and develop their languages, but also their support by the State (Art. 2), and their economic, social and legal protection (Art. 3). It also stipulates that the publication of republican newspapers, magazines and belles-letters, and the broadcast services of republican television and radio programmes shall be carried out in the state languages of the Republic (Art. 21).

The Law on Education in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, adopted in 2009, stipulates that in primary and secondary general education establishments where instruction is given in Russian, the state languages of the Republic – Abazi, Karachay, Nogai and Circassian – are taught from the first grade as a compulsory subject for native speakers (Art. 2.6). In addition, Karachay-Cherkessia, in accordance with treaties and agreements (including international treaties of the Russian Federation), provides assistance in obtaining basic general education in their native language to representatives of the indigenous peoples of the Republic living outside its territory (Art. 2.4). It also enshrines the right of Russian citizens living in the territory of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic to receive basic general education in their native language and to freely choose the language of instruc-

tion within the limits provided by the education system (Art. 2.2).

The *Law on Certain Issues in the Sphere of Education in the Territory of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic* of 2013 stipulates that the introduction of compulsory courses in native languages in primary and secondary education organisations “should not affect the number of hours allocated for the study of other compulsory subjects, but should be sufficient for their study” (Art. 6).

Karachay-Cherkessia participated in the Federal Target Programme *Strengthening the Unity of the Russian Nation and the Ethno-Cultural Development of the Peoples of Russia* (2014-2022), within which activities aimed at supporting language diversity were carried out.

The State Programme *Implementation of the State National, Confessional and Information Policy in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic* (2019-2023) is among other things aimed at fostering the production of printed materials in the languages of the peoples of Karachay-Cherkessia.

Participation of civil society institutions in the protection of native languages

National public organisations of the Republic initiate and hold festivals and Olympiads in native languages and literature, set up groups for additional courses in native languages, and publish works of national literature.

In addition, with the support of the Ministry of the Karachay-Cherkess

Republic for Nationalities, Mass Communications and Press (as part of the implementation of paragraph 21 of the *Strategy of the State National Policy of the Russian Federation*), each year they implement projects to preserve the Abazi, Karachay, Nogai, Russian and Circassian languages, including through symposia, conferences and round tables (the Bemurzov Readings, the Tabulov Readings, etc.), the publication of books and magazines in native languages, and the production of cultural and educational programmes.

In Karachay-Cherkessia, the state-level organisational, consultative and legal support is provided to relevant projects implemented by national associations, which are also represented in the consultative bodies (public councils) of agencies directly involved in addressing the issues of preserving native languages. In 2018, it was de-

cidated to set up a working group under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic engaging representatives of the society with the view to drafting proposals on the preservation and promotion of the languages of the peoples of the region and on interaction with educational organisations on the issue of studying native languages in schools. In the same year, the heads of public national organisations (*Къарачай Алан Халкъ*, *Адыгехъасе*, *Апсад-Гыил*, *Ногай Ел*) at the general meeting decided to establish a commission on the study, development and preservation of the national languages of the indigenous peoples of Karachay-Cherkessia.

National organisations react vividly to the developments in language situation, cooperating with the State in preserving the linguistic culture of the region's ethnic communities, making further proposals on expanding the scope of use of native languages as a measure to forestall their possible extinction, and switching some school subjects to teaching in native languages.

Mother tongues in education

The Republic currently has about 180 general education organisations of all kinds and types (about 55,000 students), including 14 gymnasia and 5 lyceums. There are also several organisations of secondary and higher vocational education, including two state higher educational establishments, which are Aliyev Karachay-Cherkess State University in Karachayevsk and North Caucasian Humanitarian and Technological Academy in Cherkessk.

A Karachay
in a national
costume



View of
Uchkulan
village in
Karachayevsky
District



The rural schools in the region have set up more than 60 centres for digital and humanitarian education *Growth Point*, where children have the opportunity to study various subjects with the aid of modern high-tech equipment.

At the same time, the problems of teaching native languages persist due to the shortage of specialists, the poor qualifications of a large part of the available teaching staff (largely due to the underdeveloped material and technical base for teachers' professional development), low salaries and, consequently, low motivation of teachers.

Different quality level of the existing (in limited numbers) textbooks, shortage of experts capable of developing teaching and methodological aids, and underfunding of textbook publishing become more apparent. Teachers indicate the insufficient number of teaching hours allocated to the study of native languages. The

lack of a real choice of educational programmes in such subjects as *Mother tongue and literary reading in mother tongue* (primary general education level) and *Mother tongue and mother tongue literature* (basic general education level) and of respective teaching methods remains one of the considerable challenges.

Spheres of transmission of native languages (press, media, culture)

The Karachay-Cherkess Book Publishing House (founded in 1923) is the oldest sectoral institution in the region. It publishes works of literature, national folklore, textbooks and teaching aids, as well as scientific works on the philology of native languages in the five official languages of the Republic.

Since the 1920s and 1930s, the following republican newspapers, founded

by the Government and the People's Assembly (Parliament) of Karachay-Cherkessia have been published in the five official languages: the *Day of the Republic*, *Kyarachai*, *Cherkes Kheku*, *Abazashta* and *Nogai Davysy*.

In addition, over the years, state support was provided to the publication of children's magazines in the same five languages: Abazi (*Maramyz*), Karachay (*Ilyachin*), Russian (*Orlyonok*), Circassian (*Leg'upyk'u*) and Nogai (*Ma'mete-kei*, its editorial office has the status of a national state budgetary institution).

Theatre groups of the Republic make a tangible contribution to the preservation and promotion of native languages. In addition to the Russian Theatre, which has been functioning since pre-war times, national theatres were established in the post-Soviet period: in 1992 – the Karachay and Circassian Theatre, in 2000 – the Abazi Theatre, and in 2015 – the Nogai Theatre. The theatres contribute to absorption by young people of all the richness and unique identity of their native language, classics of native literature and drama.

Scientific support

Experts at the *Karachay-Cherkess Institute for Humanities Research* develop theoretical and applied aspects of the study, preservation and development of native languages. They have prepared and published dictionaries that are still used in educational and scientific practice, such as the Russian-Abazi (1956), Russian-Nogai (1956), Nogai-Russian (1963), Russian-Karachay-Balkar (1965), Abazi-Russian

(1967), Karachay-Balkar-Russian (1989), Nogai-Russian (2018) dictionaries. Over the past few years, monographs on syntax, morphology, semantics, lexicology of native languages have been published.

The Republican Institute for Advanced Training of Education Workers has published more than 50 titles of textbooks in the native languages of Karachay-Cherkessia.

The specialists of the Institute of Philology and the Faculty of Education of the Aliyev Karachay-Cherkess State University carry out research in various aspects of applied and theoretical issues. These issues are also high on the agendas of annual events organised by the public authorities of the Republic. For example, the topic of native languages in the context of identity was covered in October 2022 at the Round Table "Mechanisms of Affirmation of Russian Identity and Civil Accord of the Multinational People of the Russian Federation: Regional Aspects".

Conclusions and outlook

The information and data obtained in the course of regional and federal studies show certain positive trends in learning native languages, conducive to fostering a tolerant attitude towards ethnocultural otherness; to stable interethnic relations in educational institutions and professional groups; to meeting the ethnocultural needs of Russian citizens, and to the formation of knowledge and skills of traditional material and spiritual culture. According to experts, by maintaining the primary role of the native language as an indispensable

attribute of ethnic identity, its wider use contributes to the formation and strengthening of Russian civic identity. Legal framework providing guarantees for the preservation of native languages and a prudent language policy in general serve as important prerequisites for loyalty to the Russian state.

The following areas for addressing the challenges in preserving native languages in Karachay-Cherkessia can be highlighted:

- further improvement of the regulatory (legislative) framework of language policy at the federal and regional levels,
- promotion of public-private partnerships in terms of developing language policy programmes and monitoring their implementation,
- formation of a system of scientific, educational and methodological support for language policy at regional and municipal levels,
- state support for the most promising and advanced projects aimed at learning and promoting native languages: in the arts (e.g. national cinema industry), media-based educational resources, mass communications, etc.,
- development of incentives for young people to learn their native languages, with the support of the State, public organisations, national businesses, and promotion of wider use of these languages in the press, arts, tourism, etc., when feasible,
- wider use of alternative forms of children’s learning of native languages (organisation of summer language camps and so on).

Obviously, the scope of practical work is not limited to only these areas. Some tangible efforts to develop interregional integration seem to be required to address all the existing problems faced in the field of preserving native languages.

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