

# BCS 100: Introduction to the Circumpolar North

## University of the Arctic

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### MODULE 4: Peoples and Cultures of the Circumpolar North

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#### Overview

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*Peoples and Cultures of the Circumpolar North* surveys people in the North, including minorities and settlers. Using a variety of criteria, this module describes the peoples of the North, making clear distinctions between settlement patterns, migration and assimilation of different ethnic groups. After an introduction to the peopling of the Arctic, we explore traditional subsistence economies of the taiga, tundra, and coast, and other adaptations to ecological and historical change. The module also discusses non-indigenous peoples, how they came to settle in such northern territories, and the emergence of market economies that coexist with traditional ways of life. Finally, we look at demographics and culture, and the role of urban centers in the North. There is a section at the end of the module for guided research into northern peoples and cultures today.

#### Learning Objectives

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1. Distinguish among the different cultures and ethnicities of peoples from the Circumpolar North.
2. Articulate the circumstances surrounding the historical arrivals of non-indigenous people living in the North.
3. Identify similarities and differences among the cultural groups in the Circumpolar North.
4. Describe how mixed economies have evolved along side the traditional livelihoods of different cultural groups in the North.
5. Portray non-indigenous contemporary culture in the North.

#### Required Readings

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*The Arctic as Homeland*, an introduction to the peoples and cultures who make the Arctic their home, by Piers Vitebsky at [www.thearctic.is/articles/overviews/homeland/enska](http://www.thearctic.is/articles/overviews/homeland/enska) (Read pp. 1-9). Posted with permission.

Schweitzer, Peter, Nikolai Vakhtin, and Evgeniy Golovko. 2005. *The Difficulty of Being Oneself: Identity Politics of "Old Settler" Communities in Northeastern Siberia*. Accessed October 29, 2009 at <http://www.siberian-studies.org> Posted with permission.

## Key Terms and Concepts

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- Aboriginal
- Culture
- First Nations
- Indigenous
- Métis
- Native
- Nomadic
- Subsistence

## Learning Material

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### 4.1 Peoples of the Circumpolar North

From the time that human beings first started living in northern climes, people have adapted with skill and resilience to the challenging environment and limited resources. Twelve thousand years ago, the northern world was just emerging from a vast ice cap that had made much of the Arctic and Subarctic uninhabitable for human life. However, portions of Asia and Alaska were never ice-covered and people were able to live in these areas following the animals that had themselves followed the rapid transformation of the landscape as the ice retreated. The oral traditions of many **indigenous** peoples declare that they have been in their northern homelands since time immemorial, or from the arrival of the first humans.

Most theories believe that continuous human settling in northern Eurasia started between 8,000 and 12,000 years ago, although some archeological discoveries are dated back to 30,000 BCE. In Eurasia there have always been cultural contacts with southern areas and different waves of migrations of southern peoples throughout history. According to the still-debated New World migration model, migration of humans from Eurasia to the Americas took place via Beringia, a land bridge that formerly connected the two continents across what is now the Bering Strait. These early Paleo-Americans soon spread throughout the Americas, diversifying into many hundreds of **culturally** distinct nations and tribes. The forebears of Indian peoples first came along the western and southern bounds of the glaciers, followed by the ancestors of the Inuit along northern coasts.

As early northern peoples followed the retreat of the glaciers and adapted to emerging northern environments, they developed technologies to subsist on local renewable resources at the forest or taiga edge, on the tundra, and along frigid coastlines. Northern peoples were often **nomadic**, following animal resources moving their tents in the summers to fishing or hunting grounds, and living in sod dwellings in the colder seasons. Typically such people chose their dwelling sites to maximize the presence of moose and elk in the taiga, caribou or reindeer at the forest edge, and seals or whales along the coasts. During centuries there have been climatic

and ecological changes in their environments, but northern peoples have always been able to adapt to these conditions.

Because of their **subsistence** lifestyle, northern cultures have been, by and large, egalitarian, with each member of the community contributing to the whole. Typically, each person had specific tasks: men in hunting and herding, and women in the preparation of food and clothing as well as the care of children. As they grew, children learned their tasks while the communities moved from one seasonal camp to another, absorbing their traditional knowledge as part of the seasonal round.

## 4.2 Settlers and Immigration

Although there are many indigenous people in the north, the majority of today's population hales from northern Eurasia (see Figure 1). Immigrants or settlers from southern states colonized the North over many centuries, with European people first moving to the North to seek a better life or freedom, long before the emergence of strong centralized nation states. Additionally, settlers colonized northern North America and Greenland where history is often divided into pre-contact and contact periods: the time before Europeans and after. However, in Eurasia this division is impossible; there have always been contacts between the northern, southern and western peoples and states.

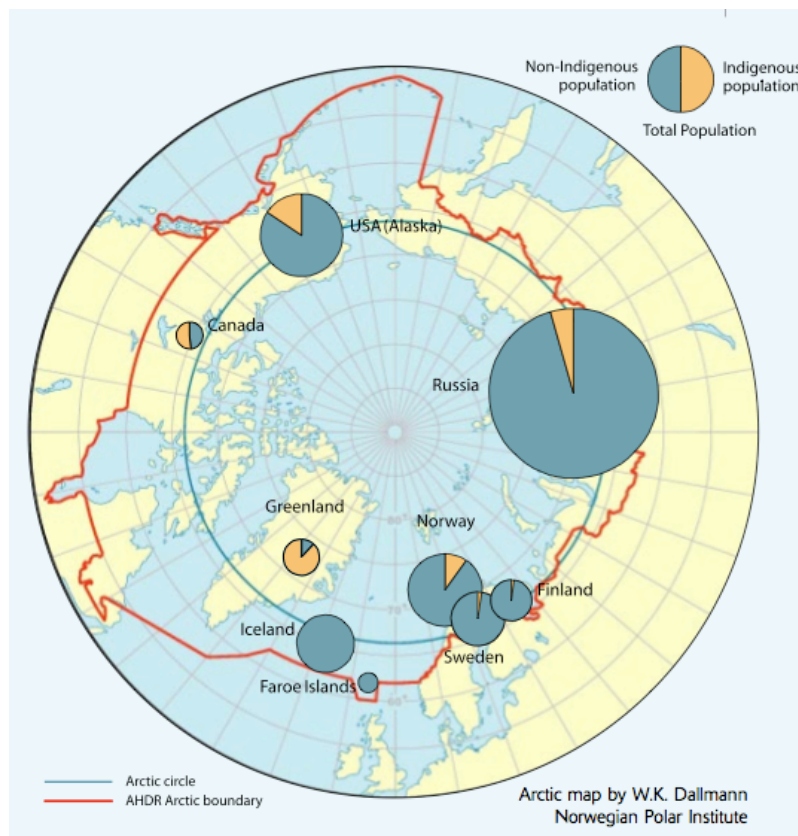


Figure 1: Percentage of Northern Population - Indigenous vs. Non-Indigenous.

Source: W.K. Dallman, Norwegian Polar Institute. *Arctic Human Development Report* Chapter 1, p. 19. [http://www.svs.is/AHDR/AHDRchapters/Englishversion/AHDR\\_Ch1.pdf](http://www.svs.is/AHDR/AHDRchapters/Englishversion/AHDR_Ch1.pdf) Posted with permission.

Taxes forced local peoples to capture increasingly large numbers of fur-bearing animals for trade and payment. The arrival of settlers, who also engaged in hunting and fishing or reindeer herding, often altered their livelihoods and settling modes from what they formerly practiced. To survive in new environments, settlers adapted many aspects of indigenous culture: clothing, means of transport, food, modes of hunting and fishing, as well as words borrowed from indigenous languages. Indigenous peoples also adopted many aspects from settlers and traders: textiles, foods, fishing and hunting implements; commercial fishing and whaling changed life for both indigenous people and settlers alike.

Northern peoples of all cultures historically lived on local renewable resources that provided food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and the means to trade with neighboring peoples. People also adapted with skill and resourcefulness to the conditions of the tundra, taiga, and northern coasts. In such extreme climates, nature sets the parameters for what resources can be used and how. In response, northern populations exhibit flexibility and are able to adapt easily to change. For example, traditional livelihoods have been affected by land use change, migration and immigration of foreign peoples, and more so today, by growth in industry, globalization and environmental change.

As settlers from farming and fishing cultures to the south populated northern Eurasia, mixed economies evolved with new activities introduced by settlers, who also adopted many indigenous practices. Settlers had to adapt their livelihoods in northern areas, with only a few groups able to sustain their previous livelihoods without substantial changes. For example, Norwegians adapted their fishing, sheep herding and dairy farming practices to climates north of the Arctic Circle, as well as to Iceland and Greenland. Mixed populations of Finnish settlers and Forest Sámi in Finnish Lapland developed a mixed economy of hunting, fishing and dairy farming alongside reindeer herding. Later, Finnish settlers to Norway, called Kvens, adopted sea fishing combined with small-scale farming. Some Sámi became farmers or combined small-scale agriculture with reindeer herding or hunting and fishing. Even nomadic Sámi had some sheep, as did some Nenets, the indigenous peoples from Russia as pictured in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Setting Up a Tent after Migration in the Tundra, Nenets Autonomous Okrug, May 2006.

Photo by Tuula Tuisku, Finland, module co-author.

Russian Pomors from the White Sea region engaged in fishing and sea mammal hunting, alongside cattle breeding. As Komi-Izhma moved north, they adopted reindeer herding from the Nenets, but still kept cattle in their villages. Conversely, some Nenets adopted a settled way of life from Komi. Russian settlers in northern Siberia hunted and fished but did not farm. Although they lived a settled existence, their lives were otherwise indistinguishable from the lives of the local **native** population. However, in North America and Greenland, agriculture is not possible in most northern areas, and there are no settlers with centuries-long adaptations to northern environments.

In the 20th century, industrialization resulted in significant transformations to ways of life, although people were able to maintain traditional livelihoods and have adapted to changing ecological, economic and political situations. Even today northern peoples are engaged in traditional livelihoods, which contribute strongly to peoples' identity as northerners. In many ways, the culture today in the North reflects an interesting mix of indigenous ways and European traditions.

### 4.3 Diversity among Northern Cultures

We now examine how and where people live and their different lifestyles. We first explore peoples of the tundra, followed by the taiga, coastal and inland regions.

#### *Tundra and Forest Tundra: Reindeer Herding and Caribou Hunting*

On the tundra, natural resources are scarce, but vast herds of reindeer and caribou migrate seasonally between tundra and taiga. In these northernmost reaches of the world, humans have learned to follow these migration routes for food, shelter, and clothing for subsistence, barter and trade. However, there is a significant difference between Eurasia and North America/Greenland. In Eurasia reindeer have been used as domestic animals and for transportation since ancient times. In North America and Greenland, caribou were never domesticated, but caribou hunting has been important to people's livelihoods. Dogs provided transportation, as they have for some people in northern Eurasia, as well. However, the number of dogs was very small, and people also walked long distances during their migrations or hunting trips. In Canada and Alaska, some Inuit groups have combined caribou hunting with sea mammal hunting.

From the 16th to 19th centuries in Eurasia, large-scale reindeer herding replaced reindeer hunting among many peoples of the tundra. Today people herd reindeer that are not fully domesticated but that graze freely on natural pastures. Reindeer herding or hunting did not provide all the required food, so fishing and small game hunting were necessary for subsistence.

All hunters and herders of the tundra have been nomadic to some degree, but not to the extent of reindeer herders who moved frequently because large herds require large pastures. Herders did not have any permanent dwellings; they lived in portable tents following traditional migration routes. Some hunters lived part of the year in permanent dwellings, and only seasonally in portable tents.

There were different kinds of migration for reindeer herders. Most often the herders migrated with their herds between open tundra on the coast and forest-tundra areas while intensively tending their herds. In other places the herders migrated between forest and mountains or mountains and seaside. However, in some places, migration routes have been curtailed due to pressures from

### Learning Activity 1: Reindeer Cultures

*Compare a reindeer culture from Eurasia with one from North America or Greenland.*

other ethnic groups or the imposition of state boundaries. In such cases, herders adopted new migration routes, for example, migrating only across the tundra or between mountains and forest. Additionally, as resource development increases with ease of access and new technological development, such traditional practices are now coming into conflict with industrial pressures.

#### *Taiga: Hunting, Fishing, Trapping, and Gathering*

The taiga is the largest biome in the world, where resources are more abundant than on the tundra. Taiga dwellers have primarily been hunter-gatherers who fish, hunt small and large game and gather wild food. Taiga dwellers typically had two or more dwelling places, depending on the season, the need for temporary or permanent shelter and the availability of resources.

In Eurasia many taiga hunters used reindeer for transport. People without reindeer used boats in the summer or dog sleds in the winter, but they also walked long distances. As on the tundra, hunting provided hides for clothing and shelter, but sometimes most of the food resources came from fishing. Gathering did play a significant role among some groups, while others did not use vegetation at all. In some areas fishing was more important than hunting. Very large territories are needed for this kind of subsistence, and if one resource becomes scarce, people adapt by exploiting other resources. However, subsistence economies face real economic distress in the face of external pressures.

#### *Coast: Maritime Adaptations*

Along Arctic coasts, many northern peoples had a more settled way of life, with semi-permanent dwellings to maximize fishing, sea mammal hunting at the ice edge or in open water, as well as gathering along the coast and inland. Because maritime resources are often quite rich, coastal peoples did not travel as extensively as taiga or tundra dwellers, relying largely on dogs or boats for transportation. Sleds and boats were designed for particular purposes, such as open water hunting of walrus, or ice edge hunting for seal. Coastal peoples often bartered seal oil and hides for reindeer hides and meat, as in the case of coastal and inland Chukchi, who used barter and marriage to meld their respective clans and share resources. The territory the coastal people used on the land was small, with the main focus of their activity on the sea.

Coast sea mammal hunters and fishermen in Eurasia include the Yupik, Chukchi, Sámi, Nenets, Pomors, Norwegians and Kvens, and in North America, the Inuit peoples. Today, the fishing industry still remains a tremendous source of wealth for many coastal communities.

## **4.4 Indigenous Cultures of the North**

Indigenous people are defined in a variety of ways, depending on the state making the definition, which often carries legal weight or international status. Although indigenous people populated the north long before settlers, indigenous people represent minority populations in most countries with

the exception of Greenland, and Nunavut in Canada (see page 15 of the *Arctic Social Indicators Report (2010)*).

Other ethnic minorities in Eurasia include settlers, whose ancestors arrived in northern territories centuries ago, as well as settlers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In North America and Greenland, European settlers did not arrive in northern regions until the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the exception of Scottish and French trappers who married Cree, Ojibwa, Saukteaux, and Assiniboine women, the offspring of whom are known as **Métis**.

Northern regions have always been sparsely populated, but they are now also urbanized. In the 20th century, bigger settlements and cities were built for the extraction of nonrenewable resources and to extend administrative control over northern territories. Furthermore, indigenous peoples and settlers were re-located in new settlements, forcibly in some cases in the Soviet Union or Canada, or for economic reasons in Scandinavia. Thus, today in many northern regions, urban populations prevail over rural and remote populations.

While the North is defined at length in this course, here we provide examples of minority populations in three northern regions:

- Scandinavia: provinces of Nordland, Troms and Finnmark in Norway; Norrbotten in Sweden; and Lapland in Finland, as well as the status of rural and urban Sámi outside these regions.
- Russia: the Russian definition of north is very broad, covering territories well south of the Arctic Circle but which have a cold climate, permafrost or are difficult to reach. Here we include tundra and northern taiga areas.
- North America: Canada's territories and the United States as represented by the state of Alaska.

## **Scandinavia**

While the Sámi are officially indigenous in Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Russia, the term *indigenous* is defined differently in each of the four countries. In Finland, Norway and Sweden being Sámi depends on self-identification and language. The Sámi Parliament Act 1996 from Finland also includes a provision that a person can be a Sámi if they descend from a person recorded as Lapp in tax records and census registers.

The Sámi Council, which is the international Sámi organization for all Sámi, has declared a common definition,

*"We, Sámi are one people, united in our own culture, language and history, living in areas which, since time immemorial and up to historical times, we alone inhabited and utilized"* (Sámi Political Program 1986/Sámi Council statements).

While this statement provides a unifying definition and overarching mission for the Sámi Council, the different national definitions lead to many practical and political difficulties in daily life for Sámi. Still, the Sámi themselves have the right to define who has the right to vote in each country's Sámi Parliament election, although not all Sámi have taken advantage of their right to vote.



These different definitions also result in different population counts. There are arguably between 80,000 and 115,000 Sámi depending on the definition, and whether urban Sámi or expatriate Sámi are being counted. In Norway, the estimate is between 50,000 and 80,000, 20,000 in Sweden, 8,000 in Finland, and 2,000 in Russia.<sup>1</sup> Figure 3 provided a map of different populations.

Sámi are in the minority nearly everywhere they live, and it is difficult to determine the number of Sámi in municipalities and provinces in Sweden, for example. In Finland's "Sámi home area", Sámi constitute the majority only in Utsjok, while in Norway, Sámi form the majority in Kautokeino, where 85-90% of the population speaks Sámi. The number of Sámi is also high in neighboring Karasjok.

From the time of the Iron Age, the Sámi have been involved with European trading systems, and Norwegians have lived in the Troms area since 200 CE alongside Sámi. There have been Swedish farms along the Umeå River by the Gulf of Bothnia for centuries. By the tenth century Norwegian settlements also expanded into Finnmark Province. By the Middle Ages, Finnish-speaking farmers were displacing or assimilating Sámi hunters, who adapted to the new culture and livelihoods or were pushed into more northern and inland areas. Encouraged by the Swedish state in the 16th century, Finnish settlers made their way into northern regions even though this was north of the "Lapland border", which had originally been drawn to keep farmers out of Sámi territory. Looking for a better life in the north, these Finnish settlers often married Sámi, forming a new Finnish-speaking mixed population. Finns also migrated from northern Finland and Sweden to northern Norway to escape hunger and poverty. During the second half of the 19th century, Finns even settled the northwestern coasts of Kola Peninsula alongside Norwegians.

Today, in Norrbotten the Finnish-speaking population is called Tornedalians and their language is called "meän kielä," while in Norway, Finnish settlers are called Kvens. Today in both countries, the languages of Tornedalians and Kvens have minority status, although these Finnish settlers were the objects of forced assimilation policies in Norway and Sweden, as were Sámi. Like other minorities, it is difficult to estimate the number of Tornedalians, but it is estimated that they number 150,000-175,000. The number of Kvens is estimated to be 10,000 to 15,000. Both Tornedalians and Kvens claim that they should also be considered indigenous.

When state administrations took a more active role in northern regions, newcomers often found settlers strange and the local culture backward. In the 20th century there were new migrants from southern areas because of industrialization and stronger administration. These new northern residents still have their roots and connections in the southern parts of the country, rather than in the North, and in northern livelihoods like settlers.

Scandinavian cities in the north are small. The biggest is Tromsø (65,000), while most cities have populations between 10,000 and 50,000. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a great migration from the north to the southern areas due to the lack of jobs in northern areas, leaving many smaller villages empty.

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<sup>1</sup>Samiskt Informationscentrum Sametinget. No date. Accessed October 31, 2009. <http://www.samer.se/1536>



## Russian Federation

In the Russian Federation there are now 45 official indigenous peoples, of whom 40 live in the territory officially defined as North. A person's ethnic identity is defined by birth. If both parents belong to the same ethnic group, the child belongs automatically to this ethnic group; but in mixed marriages, parents can choose the child's ethnicity. Ethnicity is stated in registration papers, but not in internal passports, as was the case in the Soviet period. According to the legal definition a population is indigenous if the population

- Numbers fewer than 50,000 people
- Resides in the traditional territory of their forebears
- Preserves a traditional lifestyle, economy and trades
- Perceives themselves as an independent ethnic entity.

A traditional lifestyle derives from ancestral experience with natural resources, social organizations, living, and is based on distinctive culture and customs, emphasizing long-term, ecologically balanced use of renewable resources (Table 1). Other native minorities do not have official indigenous status because they number more than 50,000 (Table 2). Also note the percentage change in the population between census counts. Although there are many minorities that are increasing, for the most part, the populations are falling.

**Table 1: List of Indigenous Peoples of Siberia and Far East in the Russian Federation**

| Indigenous Name      | Census 2002 | Census 1989 | % Change |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| Aleut                | 540         | 644         | -16.15   |
| Alutor               | 12          |             |          |
| Chelkantsy           | 855         |             |          |
| Chukchi              | 15,767      | 15,107      | 4.37     |
| Chulimtsi            | 656         |             |          |
| Chuvantsi            | 1,087       | 1,384       | -21.46   |
| Dolgan               | 7,261       | 6,584       | 10.28    |
| Enets                | 237         | 198         | 19.70    |
| Eskimo, Yupik, Inuit | 1,750       | 1,704       | 2.70     |
| Evenk                | 35,527      | 29,901      | 18.82    |
| Evens                | 19,071      | 17,055      | 11.82    |
| Itelmen              | 3,180       | 2,429       | 30.92    |
| Kamchadal            | 2,293       |             |          |
| Kerek                | 8           |             |          |
| Ket                  | 1,494       | 1,084       | 37.82    |
| Khanty               | 28,678      | 22,283      | 28.70    |
| Koryak               | 8,743       | 8,492       | 2.96     |
| Kumandin             |             | 3,114       |          |
| Mansi                | 11,432      | 8,279       | 38.08    |
| Nanai                | 12,160      | 11,883      | 2.33     |
| Negidal              | 567         | 587         | -3.41    |
| Nenets               | 41,302      | 34,190      | 20.80    |

|                |        |        |        |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Nganasan       | 834    | 1,262  | -33.91 |
| Nivkh          | 5,162  | 4,631  | 11.47  |
| Oroch          | 686    | 883    | -22.31 |
| Orok, Ulta     | 346    | 179    | 93.30  |
| Sámi           | 1,991  | 1,835  | 8.50   |
| Selkup         | 4,249  | 3,564  | 19.22  |
| Shor           | 13,975 | 15,745 | -11.24 |
| Soiots         | 2,769  |        |        |
| Taz            | 276    |        |        |
| Teleng         | 2,399  |        |        |
| Teleut         | 2,650  |        |        |
| Tofalar        | 837    | 722    | 15.93  |
| Tubalar        | 1,565  |        |        |
| Tuva-todzhints | 4,442  |        |        |
| Udegey, Udege  | 1,657  | 1,902  | -12.88 |
| Ulchi          | 2,913  | 3,173  | -8.19  |
| Veps           | 8240   | 12,142 | -32.14 |

Source: Data from the All-Russian Census 2002, <http://www.perepis2002.ru/>, and Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, <http://www.raipon.org/>. Table compiled by module co-author Tuula Tuisku.

**Table 2: List of Minority Peoples of Siberia and Far East in the Russian Federation**

| Minority Name   | Census 2002 | Census 1989 | % Change |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| Altay           | 67,239      | 69,409      | -3.13    |
| Buryat          | 445,175     | 417,425     | 6.65     |
| Karelians       | 93,344      | 130,929     | -28.71   |
| Khakassian      | 93,344      | 124,921     | -25.28   |
| Komi            | 293,406     | 336,309     | -12.76   |
| Komi-Izhma      | 15,607      | ---         | ---      |
| Siberian Tatars | 9,611       | ---         | ---      |
| Tuva            | 243,442     | 206,160     | 18.08    |
| Yakut-Sakha     | 443,852     | 380,242     | 16.73    |

Source: Federal Bureau of National Statistics, <http://www.gks.ru>, All-Russian Census 2002, <http://www.perepis2002.ru>. Table compiled by module co-author Tuula Tuisku.

In the European part of northern Russia, Russian peasants settled along the northern rivers and coasts of the White Sea as early as the 11th century. Today's Archangelsk Oblast and coast of the White Sea became Russian, as these settlers assimilated the local population. Their descendants are called Pomors, who also settled on the Kola Peninsula and in Nenets territory, although they did not assimilate the local Sámi or Nenets populations. Pomors also made trading trips to Siberia and actively participated in the conquest of Siberia.

Early traders traveled to get furs in the White Sea region, while tax collectors from Novgorod were collecting yasak (fur taxes, or tributes) from northern inhabitants. Novgorodian traders and tax collectors continued further northwest to Sámi territory, east to the Komi, and finally north to Nenets territory integrating these northerners into the fur trade and forcing them to pay tribute.

Russia conquered most of Siberia and Far East in a single century starting in the late 1600s. Russian fur hunters, traders and peasants followed soldiers. The fur hunters and soldiers married local women forming a new, mixed Russian-speaking population. The settlers established small and isolated communities on big northern rivers: the Lena, Yana, Kolyma, Indigirka Rivers for example. Although settlers lived in permanent villages, their lives did not differ significantly from the local native populations.

The 19th century brought new waves of settlement, when political exiles, criminals, and administrators were sent especially to southern Siberia. These settlers from European Russia did not consider old settlers Russian, because of their mixed local culture and old Russian dialect with local native words.

During the Soviet period, the settlement of Siberia took on new dimensions with millions of Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians, as well as other ethnically diverse populations, moving to new industrial cities in the North. From the 1920s to 1950s some labor camp prisoners remained after their prison time, as did many free settlers seeking jobs and better lives. After the 1950s, the Soviet state attracted people to the north by higher salaries and earlier pensions. These settlers are often called newcomers because they were not born and raised in the territory, and because they maintained their southern “homes,” where they intended to return after retirement. However, many of them stayed, and their children and grandchildren, who were born and raised in the area, considered the north to be their real home.

The indigenous populations in Russia’s northernmost regions vary from 0.2% in Murmansk Oblast to Chukotka’s 30.8%. In the Sakha and Komi Republics, figures do not include Sakha and Komi, who make up 33.4% and 25.2% of the population. In northern areas, the situation is better than other regions of Siberia and the Far East, where indigenous people compose only from 0.1 to 2.9% of the total population.

In Eurasia, populations of Finns, Norwegians, Russians, and Swedes are not distinguished from newer settlers although they have a strong local identity. However, in the last census of 2002, Pomors were counted separately, and some groups of settlers are now claiming indigenous status. Both Pomors and Komi-Izhma claim their economies are natural resource-based and similar in lifestyle to the neighboring Sámi and Nenets.

Today, there are big urban settlements almost everywhere in the North. In northern parts of the Russian Federation there are several cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, like Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Vorkuta, Ukhta, Yakutsk, and Norilsk. Cities with populations of more than 50,000 include Apatity, Pechora, and Magadan; those with more than 10,000 include Inta, Naryan Mar,

### Learning Activity 2: Guided Research

*Compare people in the region in which you live with another region in the Circumpolar North. Discuss how the people live in this region, whether they are indigenous or are descendants from Europe or Asia, and what livelihoods they practice.*

Anadyr, and Salekhard. Most of these cities are new, established in the 20th century for extraction of non-renewable resources. The populations consist of settlers and their children and grandchildren.

Many Russian rural settlements are also large, and the Russian census includes information about urban and rural populations. In Evenkia the rural population is higher than the urban. In Chukotka, Nenets Okrug, and Taimyr the rural population is over 30%. However, in Yamalo-Nenets, the rural population is only 16.6%. Most rural settlements have populations less than 1,000; generally, the population is highly concentrated in urban and rural settlements.

## North America

### United States (Alaska)

In North America, a population is generally regarded as indigenous if ancestry can be traced to a period prior to contact with European colonizers and settlers. Alaska, as part of the United States, makes an official census every ten years and identifies Native Americans, but is inconsistent about tribal designations. In Alaska, the work tallying native populations and native language speakers has been done largely by the Alaska Native Languages Center at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, resulting in very good figures with an emphasis on language affinities, rather than official definitions (see Figure 3).

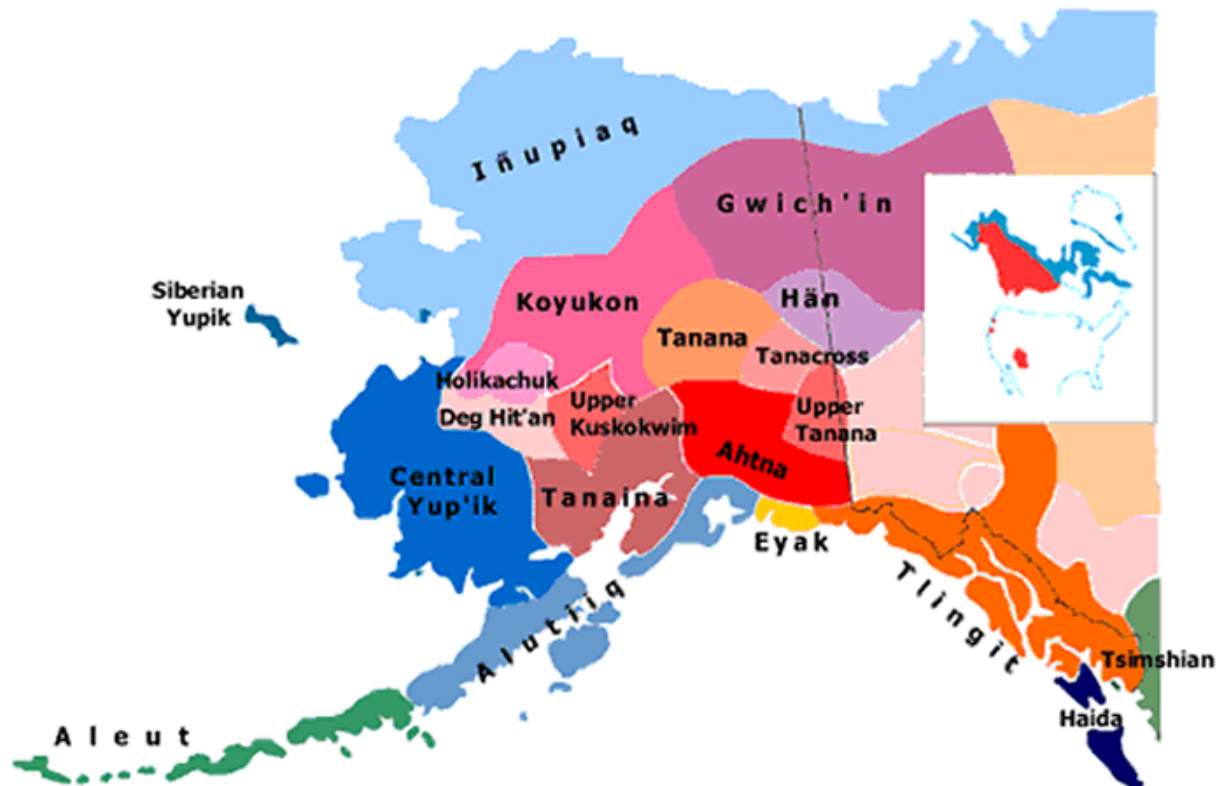


Figure 3: Alaska Native Languages Map

Source: Krauss, Michael, Gary Holton, Jim Kerr, and Colin T. West. 2011. Indigenous Peoples and Languages of Alaska. Fairbanks and Anchorage: Alaska Native Language Center and UAA Institute of Social and Economic Research. Online: <http://www.uaf.edu/anla/map> Creative Commons.

Russians first colonized Alaska in the 18th century and sold it to the United States in 1867. Traders and whalers were also the first contacts for indigenous people in this region. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, missionaries and teachers, and later administrators, arrived in Alaska. The gold rushes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also brought people who settled in the area. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century oil exploration, mining, administration and state services brought new people to the northern areas of North America.

In Alaska there is only one city with a population over 100,000: Anchorage with 278,700 people. There are three towns with more than 10,000 people, and many smaller settlements some of which have populations fewer than 100 people.

## Canada

The Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 specifies that the Aboriginal Peoples in Canada consist of three groups – Indians, Inuit, and Métis. The term **aboriginal** is a legal term that is entrenched in the Canadian Constitution (1982) Section 35(2) and includes Indian, Inuit and Métis (United Nations Development Program 2008). Figure 4 shows the native language families, which form a portion of the definition of aboriginal peoples in Canada.



Figure 4: Canadian Native Language Families, 16th to 18th Centuries

Source: Natural Resources Canada. <http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca> Public Domain.

**First Nations**, Inuit and Métis have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. While Canada also makes decennial censuses and keeps careful counts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations, it does not distinguish between tribes in the provinces south of the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel and those in the territories north of the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel.

Explorers came first to northern Canada seeking a Northwest sea passage to Asia starting in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century came fur traders, who set up trading posts. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the gold rush brought new people to the Yukon, and missionaries established churches. Overall, the majority of non-indigenous people arrived in the 20<sup>th</sup> century seeking employment and the riches of a frontier.

Northern Canadian cities include Whitehorse, which contains one-third of the whole population of the Yukon Territory. The city of Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories accounts for 47% of the territory's entire population. There are a few settlements with 2,000-3,000 people and many more that have fewer than 1,000. In Nunavut, the capital city Iqaluit hosts 17% of that territory's population at 4,897 people.

#### **4.5 Contemporary Culture**

If you conducted a simple Internet search using the words *northern*, *culture* and the country in which you were interested, you would invariably find a long list of cultural resources pertaining primarily to minority and indigenous peoples. For example, the first resources listed on the Internet for Sweden, Norway and Finland have to do with the Sámi. Similarly, hits on the Internet for northern culture in Canada largely have to do with aboriginal traditions. While this is likely the case because of the long northern tenure of such groups, northern culture today is becoming increasingly diverse and includes many non-indigenous customs and traditions derived from historic settlers from Europe and Asia. Additionally, new cultures continue to emerge and evolve with the tide of migration to the North today.

When thinking of northern culture, many people do not immediately picture the ballet or theatre. Yet, the North is home to contemporary culture that includes a wide range of dance and theatre, movies and cinema, food and festivals, literature, and musical talents that range from the opera to rock. In many cases, such art forms reflect northern indigenous characteristics and are a mix of southern traditions as adapted to life in the north. It is interesting to examine how Northern cultures have evolved over time and how they have been influenced by human, environmental and economic evolution. The following provides a brief look at the diversity of culture in the North.

Ballet, opera and classical music are performed all over the world, and, of course, in the North as well. One of the most prominent and long-running theaters was built in Saint Petersburg, Russia and can trace its origins back to 1783.<sup>2</sup> The Mariinsky Theatre (pictured in Figure 5 as it appears today) is not only an architectural marvel but also has hosted some of the most famous performances over the last two centuries.

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<sup>2</sup> See the Mariinsky Theatre home page at: <http://www.mariinsky.ru/> for details)





Figure 5: Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariinsky\\_Theatre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariinsky_Theatre) Public Domain.

In spite of a fire in 1811 that gutted the theatre, then the Bolshoi, it was restored and opened to feature *Apollo and Pallas in the North* and the ballet *Flore et Zéphire*.<sup>3</sup> Performances run daily and tickets can be purchased online.

Also with respect to architecture as a demonstration of culture, the Katuaq Cultural Centre in Nuuk, Greenland was inspired by its northern surroundings. The Danish architects, Schmidt Hammer & Lassen of Århus, Denmark worked to develop a building that fit the landscape and reflected the northern lights and the play of light on snow (see [www.katuaq.gl](http://www.katuaq.gl)). Katuaq was opened in 1997 and now hosts many cultural events and engagements and is home to an impressive art collection (see Figure 6).

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<sup>3</sup> See the history page at: [http://www.mariinsky.ru/en/about/history\\_theatre/mariinsky\\_theatre/](http://www.mariinsky.ru/en/about/history_theatre/mariinsky_theatre/)





Figure 6: Katuak Cultural Centre in Nuuk, Greenland.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Katuag2008.JPG> Public Domain.

The internationally recognized Tromsø International Film Festival is a significant cinematic event in northern Norway. It is held annually in Tromsø in January, and the theme for 2011 is “Frozen Land – Moving Pictures.” Additionally, there is a special and popular sidebar category, “Films from the North,” for shorts and documentaries that feature strong northern connections to the Barents region and other circumpolar areas. Films from the 2010 festival included “Exhaling Music” by Trond Eliassen and “Poems along the Fjord” directed by Trond Brede Andersen.

Film is also popular in Iceland and Sweden, the latter of which is home to famous Swedes such as Ingmar Bergman, Greta Garbo, Max von Sydow, Liv Ullman, Anita Ekberg, and Ingrid Bergman. Similarly, there is an Icelandic film industry that produces full-length feature films, such as “Breaking the Waves,” “Cold Fever,” and “Angels of the University.” Today the Icelandic Film Centre promotes Icelandic filmmakers within the international film industry by providing financial support.

There are many festivals hosted throughout the Circumpolar North that feature everything from rock music to the aurora borealis. One of Finland’s best-known events is the Jutajaiset Festival in Lapland in Rovaniemi, which is a festival of Lappish youth societies that seeks to “forward traditions and create new culture.” This event is a stunning example of how culture evolves and how the traditions of the Sami people have influenced modern northern culture. Similarly, the Festival of North Norway, held annually in Harstad, provides a forum for musicians and artists featuring local and international talent. The festival is one of the most important in the region and has been drawing thousands of visitors and participants since 1965 to enjoy dance, theatre, art and a wide range of music.

There are also festivals that celebrate northern nature, such as the Bald Eagle Festival in Haines, Alaska, that is home to one of the world's largest gatherings of bald eagles. The festival features the release of a rehabilitated eagle, photographic contests and exhibitions, excursions, food and entertainment. Additionally, the festival celebrates the importance of the bald eagle to indigenous cultures.

The Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous is a northern gathering that celebrates the Klondike Gold Rush, which occurred in the 1890s. The word *sourdough* refers to a settler from the south that successfully survived the first harsh Yukon winter. The festival is held in February and includes events, such as flour packing, axe toss, chainsaw chuck, dog sledding and skijoring. With such diversity it is easy to see how traditions and cultures have mixed, not only among indigenous people but also among immigrants to Canada's north from other circumpolar countries.

## 4.6 Summary

In Eurasia the coming of settlers had different effects on indigenous peoples. Settling of Finnish, Norwegians, Swedes, Russians, and others was sometimes followed by withdrawal of the indigenous populations, assimilation into the dominant population and sometimes a merger to a new mixed population with a new kind of culture. In some places two or three ethnic groups co-existed in the same territory for centuries, but they used different resources. They interacted, yet maintained their traditional livelihoods and unique cultures. In other places, new ethnic groups occupied fishing and hunting grounds of the indigenous populations forcing them to move farther into the forests and tundra. In some places, indigenous peoples assimilated groups of settlers.

Ethnic migrations have always taken place. Some ancestors of today's indigenous Siberian and native peoples expanded their living territory largely, while others lost their territories. For example, ancestors of Nenets expanded into the territory of Enets and Nganasan, whereas the Evenk assimilated several different ethnic groups when they expanded their territories farther east and southeast. Yukagir lost their living territories to Chukchi and Komi-Izhma moved from the Nenets territory to Western Siberia and Kola Peninsula.

To survive in new environments settlers had to adopt many aspects of indigenous culture: upper clothing, means of transport, food or modes of hunting and fishing. Similarly, new dialects emerged that included words specifically from indigenous languages to describe new situations, weather phenomena, products, etc. At the same time, indigenous people adopted many aspects from the settlers and traders including textile clothes, food items, and new fishing and hunting equipment and methods.

The peoples and cultures in the Circumpolar North are diverse and complex. Where one group tells a story of being the original peoples in a region, other ancestries claim the same and can be traced back centuries. In Eurasia, long-term settlers have co-existed with indigenous peoples for centuries living on renewable resources. The 20<sup>th</sup> century clearly

### Learning Activity 3: Guided Research

*Select a cultural activity practiced in any one of the Circumpolar North countries today and examine its European, Eurasian or Asian origins.*

changed the lives of both groups, bringing new people to live in the region. These activities will likely continue long into the future as people migrate and seek new lifestyles and experiences. As this occurs, the North and its people will continue to adapt and merge, as well as celebrate their traditions and cultures while creating new customs and practices.

## Study Questions

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1. Describe four defining and different characteristics of indigenous, traditional, and non-indigenous peoples of the Circumpolar North.
2. Compare the migration of settlers in North America to the settlers and minority peoples in Eurasia.
3. Portray the diverse nature of northern cultures using two different ethnic groups from either majority or minority populations.
4. Give examples of the traditional and mixed economies for three groups in the Circumpolar North.
5. Demonstrate the inclusion and practice of indigenous culture into contemporary northern culture.

## Glossary

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**Aboriginal:** In Canada, the term Aboriginal is a legal term in the Canadian Constitution (1982) Section 35 (2) and includes Indians, Inuit, and Métis.

**Culture:** There are dozens of definitions of culture. Here two of them. Culture can be defined as “the collection of rules, values, and attitudes held by a society which allows people to communicate, to interpret behavior, and to attach shared meaning to behavior or events” (Laliberte 2000:567). According to anthropologist Robert Murphy (1989:26), culture is “an integrated system of meanings, values, and standards of conduct by which people of a society live and which is transmitted between generations through socialization.”

**First Nation(s):** A term that came into common usage in the 1970s in Canada to replace the word "Indian," which some people found offensive. Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists.

**Métis:** People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree.

**Native:** Various used to describe peoples who belong to a particular place, both indigenous and settlers.

**Nomads:** People, who have no permanent home, but move according to the seasons. Some nomadic people move constantly, having their home with them, while others move according to the seasons. Pastoral nomads are people whose subsistence is based on domesticated animals and who migrate with their herds.

**Subsistence:** There are many definitions for subsistence. Here we use the term to describe activities of people to survive with reliance and close contact on the natural environment. Subsistence has changed throughout history. In pre-historic times people lived on the nature, not producing more than they consumed; today, subsistence economies are also linked to commercial systems.

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## Supplementary Resources

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### Resources for Circumpolar Peoples and Cultures

#### INTERNATIONAL

Aleut International Association, <http://www.aleut-international.org/>. The organization was formed to address environmental and cultural concerns of the extended Aleut family whose wellbeing has been connected to the rich resources of the Bering Sea for millennia. Russian and American Aleuts are separated by distances, borders and the International Date Line but united by the great Bering Sea and the North Pacific.

Arctic Athabaskan Council, <http://www.arcticathabaskancouncil.com/>. The Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC) is an international treaty organization established to represent the interests of United States and Canadian Athabaskan member First Nation governments in Arctic Council fora, and to foster a greater understanding of the common heritage of all Athabaskan peoples of Arctic North America.

Arctic Council, <http://arctic-council.org> . The Ottawa Declaration of 1996 formally established the Arctic Council as a high level intergovernmental forum to provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.

Arctic Indigenous Languages, <http://www.arcticlanguages.com>. This website aims to be a resource that strengthens Arctic indigenous languages. It includes background papers and articles related to indigenous languages, video clips of Arctic indigenous people explaining how important their languages are to them, and descriptions of current best practices in the protection and revitalization of indigenous languages.

Arctic Portal, <http://new.arcticportal.org/>. This website is really an online library for the work of the Arctic Council, including reports, videos, webcasts, newsfeeds, and more. It is a good starting place for any research project.

ArcticStat, <http://www.arcticstat.org/>. ArcticStat is a permanent, public and independent statistical database dealing with the countries, regions and populations of the Circumpolar Arctic; it was designed to facilitate comparative research on Arctic socioeconomic conditions. IWGIA (International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs), IWGIA supports indigenous peoples' struggle for human rights, self-determination, right to territory, control of land and resources, cultural integrity, and the right to development.

Gwich'in Council International, <http://www.gwichin.org/>. The Gwich'in Council International (GCI) was established as a non-profit organization in 1999 by the Gwich'in Tribal Council in Inuvik, NWT, to ensure all regions of the Gwich'in Nation in the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Alaska are represented at the Arctic Council, as well as to play an active and significant role in the development of policies that relate to the Circumpolar Arctic.

Indigenous Peoples at the Arctic Council, <http://www.arcticpeoples.org/>. This site is the gateway for the international indigenous groups that are permanent participants at the Arctic Council, as well as a source of current news and videos.

Inuit Circumpolar Conference, <http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/index.php?Lang=En&ID=1>. Founded in 1977 by the late Eben Hopson of Barrow, Alaska, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) has flourished and grown into a major international non-government organization representing approximately 150,000 Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka (Russia). The organization holds Consultative Status II at the United Nations.

RAIPON (Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North), <http://raipon.org/Default.aspx?alias=raipon.org/english>. RAIPON is a public organization that has as its goal the protection of human rights, defense of the legal interests of indigenous

peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, and the assistance in solution of environmental, social and economic problems, and the problems of cultural development and education. Sámi Council, [www.Samicouncil.net](http://www.Samicouncil.net). The Sámi Council is a voluntary Sámi organization (a non-governmental organization), with Sámi member organizations in Finland, Russia, Norway and Sweden. Since its foundation in 1956 the Sámi Council has actively dealt with Sámi policy tasks. For this reason the Sámi Council is one of the indigenous peoples' organizations which have existed longest.

## ALASKA

Alaska Inter Tribal Council (AITC), <http://www.aitc.org/> AITC is an indigenous tribal government council supporting economic community self-sufficiency and self-sustainability.

The Alaska Native Language Center was established by state legislation in 1972 as a center for research and documentation of the twenty Native languages of Alaska. Its clickable language map is the source for considerable linguistic and cultural materials on Alaskan Natives. <http://www.uaf.edu/anlc/>

## CANADA

Aboriginal Canada Portal, <http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/en/index.html>. The Aboriginal Canada Portal is your single window to First Nations, Métis and Inuit online resources and government programs and services.

Aboriginal Communities in Canada, [http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/community/site.nsf/GE\\_landingpage\\_en.html](http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/community/site.nsf/GE_landingpage_en.html). Maintained by Aboriginal Canada. Information for each community can be accessed by clicking on that community once you have installed GoogleEarth and the Aboriginal Community layer.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/index-eng.asp>. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) supports Aboriginal people (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) and Northerners in their efforts to: improve social well-being and economic prosperity; develop healthier, more sustainable communities; and participate more fully in Canada's political, social and economic development - to the benefit of all Canadians.

## RUSSIA

The Arctic Network for the Support of the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Arctic (ANSIPRA) <http://www.npolar.no/ansipra> is an information and communication network linking Russian indigenous peoples' organizations with international institutions and organizations alarmed about the future of the indigenous peoples of the Russian North. ANSIPRA's main goal is to spread information and to mediate contacts, but it also assists in project.

L'auravetl is an Indigenous Information Center by Indigenous peoples of Russia aiming to improve the abilities of indigenous communities to fully participate in Russian multicultural society and diminish discrimination of indigenous people. The center provides a mechanism to indigenous communities of Russia (however remote and isolated they might be) to speak to the outside world and to each other in their own voices. <http://www.indigenous.ru>.

## SCANDINAVIA and GREENLAND

The Encyclopedia of Sámi Culture, [http://www.helsinki.fi/~sugl\\_smi/senc/en/johdanto.htm](http://www.helsinki.fi/~sugl_smi/senc/en/johdanto.htm). The objective of this project is to compile and systematize information about the Sámi - the indigenous people of northern Europe - across national frontiers. The project aims to create on the Internet a wide-ranging electronic data bank in Finnish, English and later also in Sámi.

Greenland, <http://www.iwgia.org/sw15466.asp>. Greenland is a research focus for the International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs

## NON-INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Barents Portal, <http://www.barentsinfo.org/>. The BarentsInfo.org portal contains general information about the Barents Region (the northernmost counties of Norway, Sweden, Finland and North-West Russia).

Izvatas, <http://izhma.ru/http://www.izvatas.ru/>. Izvatas is the association of the Komi-Izhma living in different regions of northern Russia.

Norwegian Kven Association, [http://www.kvener.no/index.php?option=com\\_contact&Itemid=3](http://www.kvener.no/index.php?option=com_contact&Itemid=3). The Norwegian Kven Association aims to strengthen Kven identity and use in Norway. The website has information on Kvens only in Norwegian and Kven languages. Some information about Kvens in English may be found at <http://home.online.no/~solhanse/kvhist1.htm> and <http://en.allexperts.com/e/k/kv/kven.htm>

Pomor Renaissance, <http://www.pomorcpp.org/org/?org=6&show=about>. The national cultural center, Pomor Renaissance, is a non-government organization of the public movement of Pomors. Its aim is to gain the status of indigenous people for Pomors.

Tornedalian Association in Sweden, <http://home.swipnet.se/str-t/index.htm>. This website represents residents in the Tornio River Valley. Its main task is to promote the local dialect, Meän Kieli, in Sweden. It has information only in Swedish and Tornedalians. On the Internet you can find information in English: <http://en.allexperts.com/e/t/to/tornedalians.htm>

## REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL

*Each region has its own website, which provides information about the economy, history, legislation and population of the area. Sometimes information is only in a local language.*

Alaska, <http://www.alaska.gov/>. Official website of government of the state of Alaska.

Archangelsk Oblast, <http://www.dvinaland.ru/>. Official website of the Archangelsk Oblast.

Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, <http://www.chukotka.org/en/main/>. Official web page of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug.

Evenk Autonomous Okrug, <http://www.evenkya.ru/eng/>. Official webpage of the Evenk AO.

Finnmark <http://www.finnmark.no/>. Official website of Finnmark Province.



Khanti-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, <http://www2.admhmao.ru/english/index.htm>. Khanti-Mansi Okrug official website.

Lapin liitto, <http://www.lapinliitto.fi/englanti/index.html>. Website of Lapin Liitto provides statistical information in English.

Murmanskaya Oblast, <http://gov.murman.ru/>. Official website of the Government of the Murmansk oblast. Murmanskaya Oblast, <http://2004.murman.ru/history/index-eng.shtml>. This website provides basic information about Murmansk Oblast in English and Russian.

Nenets Autonomous Okrug, <http://www.adm-nao.ru/>. Official website of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug.

News from Yamal, <http://www.yamal.org/news-in-english-.html> Website of Sever-Press provides information and news also in English.

Nordland, <http://www.nfk.no/>. Official website of Norland Province.

Norrbotten: <http://www.bd.lst.se/fakta/default.aspx?propID=10005044>. Official website of Norrbotten's province.

North-West Territories, <http://www.gov.nt.ca/>. Official website of government of North-West Territories.

Nunavut, <http://www.gov.nu.ca/>. Official website of government of Nunavut Territories.

Puolen lapin kansalaisverkko, <http://www.plappi.fi/index.php?id=2331>. Puolen lapin kansalaisverkko is a project in eastern and northern Lapland to promote electrical net services and to build common portal in cooperation with people in the area. Provides information in English.

Republic of Sakha-Yakutia, <http://www.sakha.gov.ru/main.asp>. Website of the Republic of Sakha-Yakutia.

Republic of Sakha-Yakutia, <http://www.yakutia.org/> . Unofficial webpage of Sakha-Yakutia Information about Sakha-Yakutia in English.

Troms: <http://www.troms-f.kommune.no>. Official website of Troms Province.

Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, <http://www.yamal.ru/>. Official website of Yamalo-Nenets AO.

Yukon Territories, <http://www.gov.yk.ca/>. Official website of government of Yukon Territories.