



# Sakhalin Energy:

## Preservation and Promotion of Indigenous Languages

2019





Language is one of the most significant factors in ethnic identity. It plays a vital role in creating national character, and in preserving and developing cultural heritage.

For many years the global community has been paying close attention to language preservation, recognising the exceptional role of language in education, upbringing, identity, and the moral and spiritual ties between generations. In 1999, the UNESCO General Conference (the specialised educational, scientific and cultural organisation of the United Nations) introduced International Mother Language Day, celebrated every year on 21 February, to promote the key role linguistic diversity plays in sustainable development.

There are approximately 7,000 languages in the world today. Every two weeks one of them disappears, taking with it a part of human history and our cultural heritage. Indigenous languages spoken by only 4% of the world population account for 96% of linguistic diversity. According to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, 90% of all languages are endangered and included in the so-called Red Book of Endangered Languages.

The peoples who speak them have enormous potential. But it is becoming increasingly hard for them to maintain their traditional lifestyles and their national and cultural identity. To protect and promote indigenous languages, the UN General Assembly has proclaimed 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

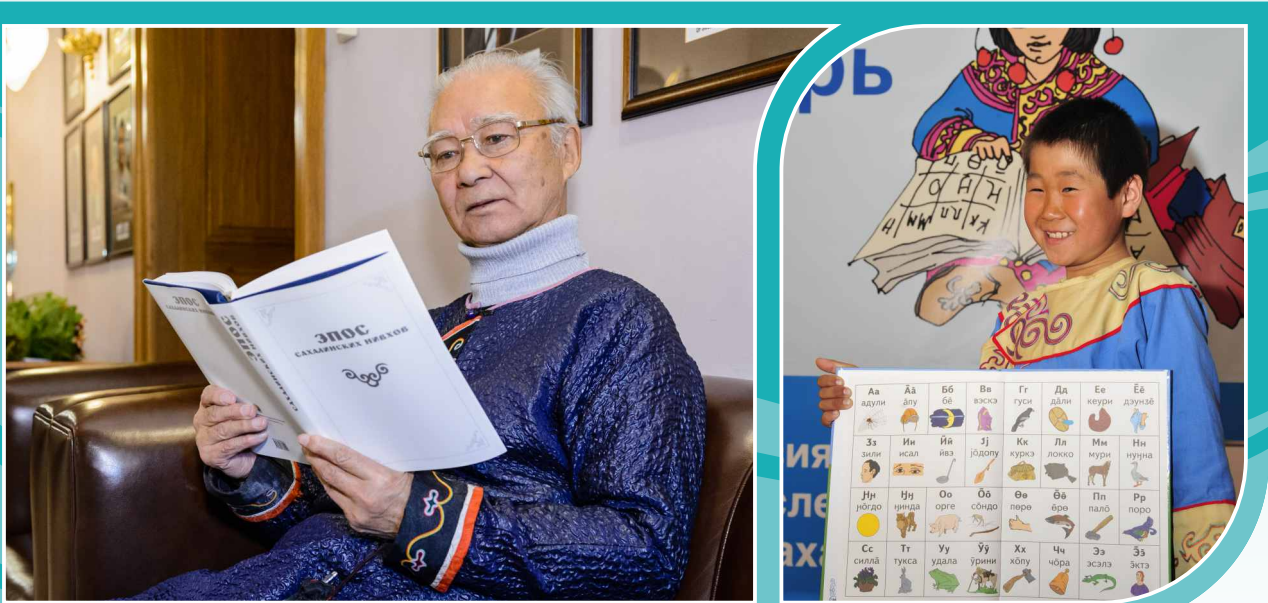




More than 190 peoples live in the Russian Federation, of which 40 are indigenous minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East. According to UNESCO, there are 135 extinct or critically endangered languages, including all the languages of the Sakhalin Indigenous Minorities (SIM).

Working alongside the government, linguists, ethnographers and cultural workers, enthusiasts too make a major contribution to linguistic heritage preservation. Commercial companies operating in areas where indigenous minorities have traditionally lived and worked also have a significant part to play. Socially responsible business must respect the rights of indigenous peoples and support their sustainable development by paying special attention to preservation of their traditional lifestyles, cultures and languages.

The common goal of the government, business and society is not only to join forces to protect endangered languages as an invaluable aspect of cultural heritage, but also to preserve their conceptual content, a reflection of the worldview and outlook of indigenous minorities.



Sakhalin Energy Investment Company Ltd. (Sakhalin Energy/company) operates one of the world's largest integrated oil and gas projects, Sakhalin-2, which includes a large-scale infrastructure for hydrocarbon production, processing and transportation. Sakhalin Energy is a globally recognised leader in the area of corporate social responsibility. Leading international and Russian experts have repeatedly highlighted its social and environmental programmes.

MAP OF SIM PLACES OF RESIDENCE AND SAKHALIN ENERGY ASSETS

Legend:

- Uilta
- Nanai
- Evenki
- Nivkhi/Nivkhs
- Piltun-Astokhskoye-B (PA-B) platform
- Piltun-Astokhskoye-A (Molikpaq/PA-A) platform
- Lunskeye-A (LUN-A) platform
- 1 Onshore processing facility
- 2 LNG plant
- 3 Oil export terminal
- Trans-Sakhalin pipeline system



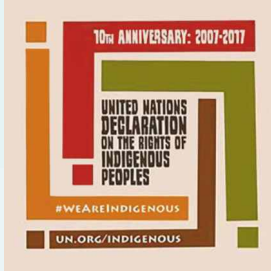
Respect and support for human rights, including the rights of vulnerable social groups, is an integral part of the company's activities. Sakhalin Island is home to approximately 4,000 representatives of the main indigenous ethnic groups: the Nivkhs, the Uilta, the Evenki and the Nanai. The company has committed to support capacity building and sustainable development of the Sakhalin Indigenous Minorities, as well as preserve their unique culture and languages.

Since 2006, the Sakhalin Indigenous Minorities Development Plan (SIMDP) has been the company's main programme for engagement with indigenous groups. Culture and education are among the top-priority areas supported by the company under SIMDP. Through these areas as well as other projects, the company helps promote indigenous people's linguistic rights along with the preservation and development of the SIMs' native languages.

**Linguistic rights** are one of the human rights aspects. In defining for itself the concept of linguistic rights, Sakhalin Energy is guided by Russian laws and international standards.



right of indigenous people to the preservation and development of native languages



right to establish and control their educational systems providing education in their own languages in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning

access to education in their own culture and provided in their own language



oral traditions and expressions, including language, as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage



*“Safeguarding” means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalisation of various aspects of such heritage.*

*Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage  
(adopted on 17 October 2003 by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation)*

The company supports the exercise of the linguistic rights of Sakhalin's indigenous peoples in the following areas:

1. PRESERVATION OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Dictionaries, texts written in accordance with standardised grammar and spelling rules of the national language, and use of native languages in various documents enhance the viability of the language. This is why the company, under SIMDP and other programmes, regularly supports the publication of books, textbooks and electronic materials that will be of use in the study and preservation of native languages as well as in the promotion of the SIMs' national culture. These publications include:

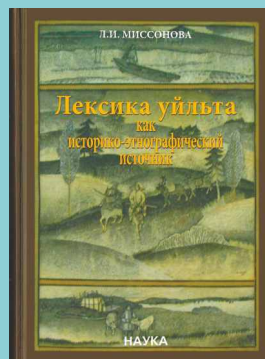
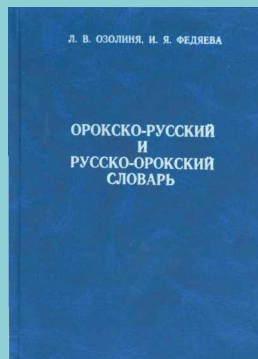
• Uilta language-learning aids

Until recently, the Uilta language existed only in oral form. The Uilta people (also known as the Oroki or the Orochen) are one of the smallest ethnic minorities of the RF. They live only on Sakhalin, and there are approximately 300 people (295 according to the 2010 National Population Census). As the number of native speakers dwindled to almost zero, it seemed that the Uilta language was doomed to extinction, and that the unique heritage of these people was to be irretrievably lost.

But the Uilta elders, scientists, linguists and Sakhalin Energy pooled their knowledge and resources. In 2003, the first Orok-Russian and Russian-Orok dictionary was published, and in 2008, the first Uilta-language alphabet book was released. The logical next step in efforts to preserve and document the Uilta language was the publication in 2013 of a fundamental work by Lyudmila Missonova, The Lexis of the Uilta as a Historical and Ethnographic Source, containing 7,500 dictionary entries arranged in topic and alphabetical order. The book includes examples of the use of ethnic vocabulary in Uilta folklore, which undoubtedly helps preserve the Uilta language and the oral traditions of the Uilta people.







- The Lexis of the Uilta as a Historical and Ethnographic Source («Уилта кэсэни эсинэни – тари горопчиду таккурапула кэсэ»), Moscow, 2013
- Uiltadairisu. Spoken Uilta (an alphabet book of the Uilta language), Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2008
- Orok-Russian and Russian-Orok Dictionary (Uilta-Russian and Russian-Uilta Dictionary), Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2003

#### • The Epic of the Sakhalin Nivkhs

The book was published as a result of many years of research conducted by Vladimir Sangi, the founder of the Nivkh national literature. The writer spent around forty years collecting, recording, systematising, and adapting folk tales, preparing word-for-word translations into Russian, writing detailed commentaries on the texts, and illustrating them.

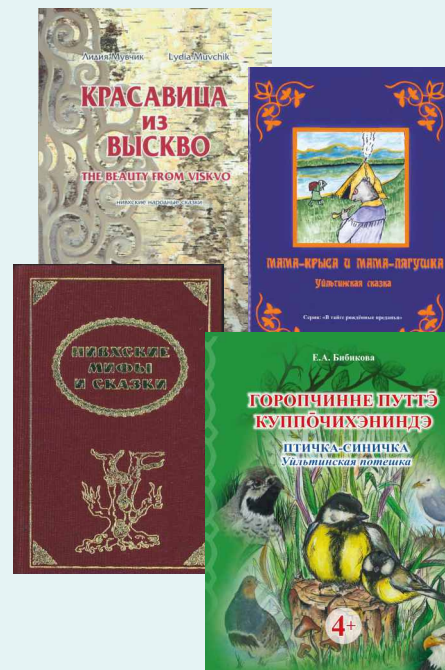
#### • Audiodisk of Vladimir Sangi's tales

The set contains two disks with tales in Nivkh and Russian and a collection of stories accompanied by illustrations created by children as part of the contest run to celebrate the writer's 80th anniversary in 2015. The five tales in Nivkh are read by Vladimir Sangi; in Russian tales are read by famous Russian actors.



#### • Materials on the Folklore and Culture of the Sakhalin Nivkhs

The collection includes original texts translated from Nivkh into Russian and recorded by Tatyana Ulita, a talented storyteller. An interesting feature of the book is that it is accompanied by a CD which contains songs, onomatopoeic words, tunes played on musical instruments, legends, myths and tales in Nivkh performed by the storyteller.



- Little Blue Tit, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2017
- Granny Kalrik's Tales and Stories, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2016
- Audiodisk of tales and book by V. M. Sangi in Nivkh and Russian, Moscow, 2016
- Mother-Rat and Mother-Frog, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2014
- The Epic of the Sakhalin Nivkhs, Moscow, 2013
- Materials on the Folklore and Culture of the Sakhalin Nivkhs, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2011
- Quiet Songs of the Ancestors (A collection of Nivkh folk songs), Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2007
- Digital copies of audio recordings of folklore from E. A. Kreinovich's archive, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2008
- Tales of the Northern Country for the Children of Sakhalin (A series of Nivkh tales), Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2006–2007
- «Нивхгу мролф тор» (Ancient Nivkhi Traditions), Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2007
- A Beauty from Vyskvo, Nakhodka, 2004, etc.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL LANGUAGES

One of the most important projects involves developing a sense of social and public identity among the Sakhalin indigenous minorities. In collaboration with the office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Russia, the foundational documents of the UN (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) were translated into the SIMs' languages, with an audio recording of the Declarations by native speakers also provided along with digitised versions of the recordings. As these documents contain a great deal of new vocabulary, the project facilitates the formation of neologisms, which stimulates the development of the language.





With the company's support, contribution and cooperation, activities for language development are being organised and projects are being implemented aimed at stimulating the development of folk music, linguistic and folklore research, and the publication of books devoted to oral folk tradition and the history of the SIMs. Events involving native speakers, presentations of published books, etc. are also being organised. The company encourages representatives of the SIMs to take part in educational activities such as academic conferences, exhibitions, workshops, etc.

### Publications

- Plants Used by the Indigenous Minorities of Sakhalin and the Amur Region, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2015
- The foundational documents of the UN in the languages of the Sakhalin Indigenous Minorities, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2012–2014
- The Nivkh Dif (a monthly newspaper in the Nivkh language), Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 1999–2002



### Events

- Mother Tongue, a conference for children and young people in the languages of the SIMs, 2018
- Native Language Revitalisation Project, 2015
- 1st International Symposium in the Languages of the Indigenous Minorities of the Far East, 2014
- 'The Current State of the Literature and Arts of the Peoples of the North': Conference, 2012
- A regional workshop for the Nivkh language teachers, 'Modern Study Aids and Techniques for Teaching the Nivkh Language', 2009



## 3. PROMOTION OF NATIONAL LANGUAGES AS VEHICLES FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Efforts to revitalise a language must be constant and comprehensive. It is necessary not only to preserve and develop the language, but also to promote and support it by creating the necessary conditions and interest in studying it. To promote the languages of Sakhalin's indigenous peoples, various activities are held not only in the Sakhalin Region but also across Russia and internationally.



Meeting with the students, researchers, and teaching staff of the Institute of the People of the North of the Herzen State Pedagogical University, St. Petersburg, 2015



Roundtable: 'Preservation and Promotion of the Cultural and Linguistic Heritage of Sakhalin Indigenous People (the Nivkhs)', Paris, 2015



Sacral Festival P'itul (Chir An), Nogliki, 2013



Digital version of Vladimir Sangi's tales (Russian State Library), Moscow, 2015



Exhibition: 'The World of the Nivkhs', Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, St. Petersburg, 2015, 2016



'The Soul of the North': readings by writers and poets from the indigenous minorities of the Russian North, Siberia, and the Far East, Moscow, 2015





To support, promote and increase the prestige of the languages of Sakhalin's indigenous peoples and to draw public attention to the importance of preserving linguistic diversity and stimulating interest among SIMs in studying their native languages, a series of visual promotional materials was produced (postcards, bookmarks with poems printed on them, jigsaw puzzles, etc.). The company also issued a series of corporate souvenirs authored by members of the SIMs using the motifs of Sakhalin's indigenous peoples.



• **'12 Months on the Island of the Sunrise': 2014 calendar**

The names of the months in the calendar are given in all four SIM languages, with a description and explanation of these names in Russian. Each of these names is associated with a natural phenomenon or a national tradition of Sakhalin's indigenous people, shown in the illustrations to the calendar. While preparing it for publication, the company invited native-speaking elders and linguists from the Institute of the People of the North of the Herzen University to act as experts.

• **'The World of the Nivkhi': 2016 calendar**

The calendar contains illustrations which depict Nivkh traditions, lifestyle and customs associated with various seasons on Sakhalin. The historical and cultural section of the calendar explains the details and purpose of various elements in the picture, points out characteristic features of the traditional Nivkh lifestyle in various seasons and gives viewers a window on early Nivkh history. One unique feature of the calendar is its small magnets which reproduce the pictures and are located next to the detailed descriptions of the images.



• **'Year of the Nivkhs: from A to Z', 2019**

The calendar was produced to support and promote the Nivkh language as one of the key factors in the preservation and evolution of Nivkh culture.

The modern Nivkh alphabet was created by the well-known writer and public figure Vladimir Sangi on the recommendation of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, and was brought into use by the Russian government on 29 June 1979. The alphabet has been used worldwide.

The illustrations are the work of Vasily Solovyov, an Uilta artist whose unique works help people explore the traditional lifestyle of Sakhalin indigenous minorities and discover the incredible beauty of the largest island in the Russian Federation.



By implementing projects in the field of culture, education and preservation of the cultural heritage of indigenous people, the company is contributing to global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in September 2015 by the UN General Assembly.

The Sustainable Development Goals are the result of unprecedented large-scale consultations with all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples. Most of the SDGs will only be achieved if solutions are found to many urgent problems faced by indigenous peoples, keeping in mind the complexity of these problems and the key principle of the SDGs: respect and promotion of human rights.

Moreover, in implementing progressive standards and initiatives to tackle the issues faced by indigenous peoples, Sakhalin Energy strives to take measures to support indigenous peoples, including its languages preservation programmes and projects which contribute to SDG 11 ('Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable'), and 11.4 in particular ('Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage').



*Sakhalin Energy strives to be the leader in sustainable development, taking into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals*

