Nomadic environmental camps for Evenki children: experience and development perspectives

Yuri Sleptsov¹, Anna Neustroeva², Tuyaara Shergina², Alina Kozhurova², Anna Permyakova³, and Maxim Alekseev³

¹Institute for Humanities Research and Indigenous Studies of the North of Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 1, Petrovskogo street, Yakutsk, 677027, Russia
²North-Eastern Federal University in Yakutsk, 2, Lenina avenue, Yakutsk, 677000 Russia
³Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), 33, Lenina avenue, Yakutsk, 677007, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the Russian Federation

Abstract. The relevance comes from the fact that the article deals with the most important problem of educating children of small indigenous peoples of the North on the basis of their traditional way of life, native language and original ethnic culture, convincingly argued by quotations from the visiting session of the Presidium of the State Council when discussing the problems of indigenous peoples of the North, 'The concept of sustainable development of small indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation', which stresses that 'difficult natural and climatic conditions, vulnerability of traditional way of life and small size of each of the peoples of the North conditioned the necessity to form a special state policy regarding their sustainable development, which provides for systematic measures on preservation of original culture, traditional way of life, and original habitat of these peoples.'

1 Introduction

Daily life in the harsh natural and climatic conditions of the Arctic has formed a special system of life support among the Evenki (Lamut), one of the most important elements of which was the knowledge of nature and man. Their degree of development and specificity was determined by the practice of a fishery and nomadic way of life. As with other peoples of the north, the Evenki until recently had no written language, so the accumulated knowledge and experience were passed from generation to generation orally [1].

The Evenki are one of the small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North in Eastern Siberia and the Far East. Early ethnographic and scholarly studies referred to the Evenki as the Lamut.

According to the 2010 census, the number was 22383 people, of whom in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) - 15071 people [2].

* Corresponding author: seva_may@mail.ru
The Evenks are settled in Kamchatka and Khabarovsk Krais, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Magadan Oblast, and in the Chukotka Autonomous District.

As a result of ill-conceived policy in the USSR in the 1950-60's of the XX century, the events happened that significantly influenced nomadic indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East. Forced transfer of the nomadic way of life to the settled way of life interrupted continuity of generations, on bringing up of children in the traditional way of nomadic life. The families were artificially cut off from each other: men grazed domestic reindeer in the mountains, and women lived in settlements with their children. Many children were torn away from their parents, they lived and studied in boarding schools far away from their parents.

Meanwhile, the preservation of folk culture traditions determines the content of social work with the family in its immediate environment, creates the basis and conditions for effective patriotic education of the younger generation [3].

2 Materials and methods

In the Evenki folk pedagogy, the main role is given to the family, as it concentrates the wealth of content, forms and methods of the system of ethno-education of children.

Its essence is that the child, as a family member interacting with the social and natural environment, finds with the help of adults' adequate ways and means of survival, takes part in all the activities of the family community as much as possible. In the process of this activity, his or her personality is socialised. "Greenhouse" conditions are created for children's upbringing; they learn and acquire everything they need in life through activity.

The children occupied a special position in the family. The Evenki were especially soft in their attitude to children. They loved the children very much, not dividing them into their own and others. Therefore, there was no adult Evenki who could not refrain from caring for a child.

Children were brought up in great obedience to their parents. One seldom sees the Evenki beat their children [4].

With the Evenks, any guest entering a tordoh had to shake hands not only with the adults, but also with all children, as long as they learnt to walk. They evenki greeted infants by rubbing their cheeks or tickling the back of their heads [5].

We can vividly see any from the life described by the first Evenki writer, N.S. Tarabukin. All of his friends said that the writer, while not having children of his own, was very fond of strangers. Wherever he was, he was always surrounded by children. His follower V.D. Lebedev wrote about it: "... leaning on fresh impressions of childhood, on imagination of children, he tried to waken in them a thirst for knowledge. For example, he invented collective games, told unfictional stories about remarkable people, sang songs, talked to children as equals, and then suddenly composed catchy quatrains impromptu himself, these verses were immediately picked up and sung by children". [6].

That is why we consider N.S. Tarabukin was not only the first Evenki writer, but also a teacher. His story "My Childhood" is devoted to children, their upbringing in the family. In this story, if you read carefully, a whole system of raising of children in the family is developed. The children were not isolated from adults, they were constantly under the supervision of an older family member, grandparents. The children were not kept and were not restricted in any way possible.

Nikolai Tarabukin recalls:
"There were rocks all around. And as I laughed, the rocks kept responding and resonating. I didn't know I had gone so far away...";
"I went into the woods to a glade. The forest seemed to darken and turn green. I went into the deepest part of the forest...". [7].
These examples show that the child enjoyed relatively large freedom, he could walk freely around the camp, go far into the mountains or into the forest. Rude and cruel treatment of children was condemned by custom. Parents usually never used punishments (flogging, food deprivation, etc.).

In the family, children received the life school necessary for living in the harsh conditions of the North and learnt household and hunting skills developed over the centuries.

Girls were educated by their mother and adult sisters. Boys stayed at home with the girls until they were 7-8 years old. From 7-8 years old boys were taken by their elders to neighbouring hunting and deer-herding. Since 14-15 years old boys could go hunting by themselves - roosting for hares and partridges. They sometimes took part in hunting big game.

Upraising of children was going on during daily household activities and while hunting somehow unnoticed by the children themselves. There are no special talks, moral teachings.

### 3 Results

Depending on his successes in hunting, the boy's authority in the family grew. Successes were noted by the forest, but at the same time, children's weaknesses, laziness, and stubbornness were constantly frowned upon and ridiculed. Those who had done wrong were given an insulting nickname. A child who was given such a nickname did all he could to get rid of it. By hurting a child's self-esteem (most of the educational activities boiled down to this), parents achieved a zealous attitude to the assigned tasks.

Game, physical exercises, competitions, folklore, labour, customs, and rites regulating the upbringing of children - all this forms the basis for the development of children of the northern nomads [8].

Various prohibitions related to customs and beliefs played a great role in the formation of children's worldview. These prohibitions imperceptibly formed a peculiar code of conduct of the man of the taiga and tundra [9].

Proceeding from the life requirements, the education of children at Evenks took a special role as their life in harmony with the severe northern nature depended on it.

The first nomadic camp, Neltenke (with the Even, "Sunshine"), was organized in 2000 at the Choloi reindeer herding station in the Momskiy region.

The premise was that Evenki started to lose their native language. Many Evenki people noted that the Evenki language in the textbook did not meet their requirements, that is, the textbook used the Olsk (Magadan) dialect of the Evenki people, which in no way suited the Moma Even. The artificially created textbook has created an artificial Evenki language, which is difficult for Evenki from different groups to digest. In this case, it is better to apply the American experience of work among the Indians; each group accordingly creates its own textbook of the native language.

### 4 Discussion

Being among the Evenks in the reindeer-herding herds, I noticed that the Evenki language is not used in everyday life, but it is preserved in the reindeer-herding brigades. So, I came up with the idea of artificially creating living conditions for the Even, a nomadic way of life.

At that time, I addressed a request for help to the Minister of Education of Yakutia Evgeniya Mikhaylova and the Minister of Affairs of the Peoples of Yakutia Alexander Ishkov; having listened to all arguments they agreed to help.

In the first camp, the children of relatives of reindeer herders who roam in the reindeer herd were invited, which also played a positive role. The reindeer herders willingly taught the children various methods, techniques and little tricks of nomadic life.
The children learnt the Evenki language for 1-2 hours, with further learning taking place during work, play, and meals. The emphasis was put on teaching the Evenki language not by a textbook, but by everyday language used in everyday life. Ekaterina Gerasimova, an educator and poet, helped me with this. She not only taught the native language, but also different national games, since children of different ages, from 7 to 15 years old, were enrolled in the first camp, which had a total of 18 schoolchildren. The next year there were 19 children. The experience of the first nomadic camps showed that the most optimal number was 12-15 children. This is due to constant rerouting, where adults have to take children's luggage along with their equipment.

We would like to separately dwell on various Evenki games. The game with stones attracts special attention. Children made a semblance of a nomadic structure out of stones of various sizes and colours, where reindeer and people were separately located, exactly recreating the hierarchy of the Evenks. Through this game children learned about the order in a nomad camp, where and how the clan head, reindeer herders, their families and dwellings should be located, how the reindeer should pasture, etc. This visual way is more understandable to children. With the help of the game, they learned to know the unwritten laws of the harsh nomadic life [10].

In addition, the children learnt how and where to store meat. It is noteworthy that the Evenks never made iceboxes, but still managed to preserve and not spoil the meat. The main condition to preserve fresh meat is to hang the meat on stakes and store it this way. The meat is first treated with smoke until it has been covered in a protective layer. Snow leopard, deer, and bear meat is known to be very dietary - it quickly gets a protective coating which prevents flies from laying eggs, and the meat is thus preserved for a long time. In the same way, finely sliced snow lamb meat is prepared, or should I say dried. If the dried meat is dipped in water, it will regain its original qualities.

Children learned many other wisdoms of nomadic life from their mentors, which will undoubtedly come in handy in their future life.

During the camp' operation it was revealed that we didn't take into account that Evenks are great masters of fur crafts and didn't teach the girls to sew. We also discovered a paucity of materials concerning the Evenks, on teaching customs and rituals, as well as materials on toponymy concerning the Momi region. Since Evenki culture is gradually assimilated, the knowledge and use of folk games has disappeared from everyday life or is not used. In order to fill the gap, a number of research works have been carried out, resulting in various publications concerning customs, rituals, and toponymy of the Momi region, descriptions of games have been collected and used in the subsequent work of nomadic camps. It is necessary to take into account this factor when establishing nomadic camps.

As a result of the consultation in 2001 with Nikolay Bryzgalov, headmaster of the Indigirskaya secondary school, a nomadic ecological camp "Maranga" ("Rainbow" from Even) was established at the school. Biologists and paleontologists were interested in the results of the camp. Bones of the woolly rhinoceros were found, as well as plants, which, according to the canons of biology, were not supposed to grow in these places. Here a huge role played by the scientific director, head of the Department of Ecology at YSU, P.A. Gogoleva, and the head of fieldwork, Darya Borisovna Gerasimova, then head teacher of the school.

In 2002, having generalized the experience of two camps of various directions, a project to organize a nomadic ethnoecological camp Garpanga ("First Sunbeams" from Even) was developed. Here previous developments with Professor Oktavii Tolstikhin came in handy; on his recommendation, the Moma Route project was developed (from Sasyr village up the Tirektakh river to Marble Mountain in the Moma National Nature Park).

During my first visit to Sasyr, many residents were sceptical of my proposal, expressed distrust, and were convinced that the idea was inexpedient. But there were enthusiasts who
genuinely wanted to open the camp. The future participants were selected from schoolchildren from Ulakhan-Chistaya Secondary School, as the teachers had been chosen long before my arrival. These people are really enthusiasts of their work, they are fervent defenders of the preservation of the culture and language of the Evenks, Zoya F. Sleptsova - the head of the bands: the adult "hek'u" and children's "Songachan", Zoya S. Sadovnikova - a teacher of national sewing at school. It was decided that Zoya Fedorovna will be engaged in studying culture, with elements of training to dance, Zoya Stepanovna - in national sewing and studying of the Evenki language, her husband Ilya Mikhailovich, as a sportsman, will be engaged in household works and sports trainings.

On 15 July the Garpanga camp came into operation. At first the route was as follows: village Sasyr - lake Kuoluma, it was an exam before the most difficult - basic, as a result of which two children refused to participate in the project subsequently. The other 16 children waited until I arrived and our epic began.

Marble Mountain has its real name "Yuryung Taastakh" ("Mountain with white stones" from Yakut) and the second name is the "Solnechnoye" deposit. Back in the olden days, people noticed the unusual whiteness of the mountain's stones, geologists later told of the marble, and so the Marble Mountain was born. The mountain consisting only of marble, it is not evenki a mountain, but a whole massif, the reserve of marble on modest calculations amounts to more than 10 billion cubic meters.

The Garpanga camp was located under the mountain. It was the location where Sleptsov Nikolai Ilyich, director of the Iskra state farm, established a sound base for the exploitation of marble. With the arrival of the market economy, the base was abandoned, and all the cookers in the houses were stolen.

To raise future specialists for Moma Park and the district itself, as elsewhere, it is necessary to develop in children a love of their native land. By instilling love for it, we preserve the future generation so that once they graduate, they stay to live and work in their homeland. Nothing good comes from accustoming northern children to city life but from spending time in urban camps. Here, they do not learn the love of their homeland, here they are taught the love of an idle and sweet life, and not the hardships that are still unknown to the immature souls of children.

We have to decide who to help, either the urban dwellers who live in comfort and do not contribute to the preservation of the language or those who live in less comfortable rural conditions, who not only contribute to the preservation of their native language and way of life, but also preserve the most northern type of animal husbandry - reindeer breeding.

During the initial period of the camp, children often reminisce about their relatives, and there are times when they wish to return home. At first, children get tired, but with time they adapt to the nomadic life. Already in winter, children often think of summer camp, forgetting fatigue and difficulties, and many want to go to camp again. Despite the age difference, they become friends. Children who have passed through the sieve of camp, when they grow up, achieve a lot, as our recent campers proved.

Working in the first period is not easy as everywhere many children have never been away from their parents and therefore find it hard to adapt to the new environment. Therefore, this factor should be taken into account first of all in the initial phase of the camp. The first transitions are uncomplicated and close in terms of remoteness. The extremes of life teach the children lessons, and we teach them how to behave in certain situations. Children should know the first basics of nomadic life, they should know how to handle a rifle and radio, orientate themselves in terrain, know how to ride on deer.

One of the main tasks of the camp is to learn the language, culture and customs. Here, of course, old-timers and native speakers of the language and culture play a huge role. In this we were helped by nomads living near the camp. For example, the Tarkov and Sleptsov families lived near us. Dmitry and Akulina Tarkovs are old residents of the area. As one of
the Evenki elders, Dimitry showed us many things, showed us where and how to go in various places, showed us the most convenient places to camp, and their wife Akulina Pavlovna guided us through the berry fields. Agraphena Sleptsova taught her children how to process reindeer skins, through her we kept in touch with the village. Her son Pyotr, as an experienced reindeer herder, taught the boys the skills of commercial hunting.

Many of the children noticed that the Momi National Park is not sufficiently protected. They were all perplexed that unorganized tourism is developed in the region and their village does not receive additional income. Taking advantage of the poverty of the local population, many visiting tourists were hired to hunt a rare species of animal, the snow ram (chubuka), and other species.

The children eagerly learnt their native Evenki language and danced, and the children were happy to point out that it was unusual and just beautiful in nature. So, they danced their national round dance "Seedye" on the top of the mountain, which was very inspiring for the children. The national costume and the surroundings really go together very well and complement each other.

Every evening after the route, the diaries were checked and special notes were taken. We learnt how to make a proper herbarium and describe the area. At the camp's term end, all the children wrote an essay about the camp and one and all wished that the camp would continue next year.

Herbarium of children was defined by scientists-geobotanists, the main work was executed by candidate of science Vera Zakharova, the head of herbarium of the Institute of biological problems of Cryolitozone of SB RAS. The material interested scientists because there are very few materials from the northern regions, especially from protected areas.

5 Conclusion

At the end of the camp term, a television programme "Nomadic Ethno-Ecological Camp "Garpanga"; a book by Sleptsov Y.A. "The Mom Route of Ethno-Ecological Camp "Garpanga"; a book by Zoya Sadovnikova "Reviving the Ancestral Traditions"; several articles in national newspapers; and a national calendar based on photo materials were shot by the project leader.

The experience of nomad camps, held annually, has shown only the good side. One of the demonstration results was that out of 12 children who participated in the Maranga nomadic camp, 8 children have subsequently become certified teachers, who work in rural areas, reflects the positive experience of the Maranga nomadic camp. Many of the participants, having grown up, are eager to contribute.

References

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