**Bulletin 13 of Information Center of Indigenous Peoples of Altai Republic ''Birlik''**

**Right to information**

Choya District is a place of traditional living of Tubalars – small-numbered indigenous peoples of Altai Republic. Tubalars are an ethnic community of Turkic people which are considered to be one of the main groups of the Northern Altaians in scientific literature since soviet times. 520 representatives of small-numbered indigenous peoples of Altai Republic or 6 % of all population of the district live on the territory of Choya District. More than 200 people or 40% of all indigenous population are engaged in traditional trades: hunting and gathering of wild plants.

There are 6 communities of small-numbered indigenous peoples on the territory of the district. Hunting and wood harvesting are their main activities. The Community “Pamyat’” (“Memory”) is engaged in production of souvenirs, ethnic tourism and preservation of culture and art. There is the Tubalar Culture Center under the Choya Culture Department.

In 2007 specialists of the legal information center under the Central Library undertook sociological studies “Informational Needs of Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples”. The results showed that 70% of those asked (150 people were asked) declared presence of informational “vacuum”. There is nowhere they can get information about their rights to socio-economic and cultural development from. Every representative of small-numbered indigenous peoples as well as any other citizen should exercise his constitutional right to information. All problems of indigenous peoples start when they have to prove their national origin juridically. The Law «On the Guarantees of Rights for Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation» does not work in fact, and people know about the Law “On Territories of Traditional Nature Use of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation” only by hearsay. At present short-sighted bureaucrats use depressed in the last historical period civil responsibility and self-consciousness of small-numbered indigenous peoples to their advantage in order not to solve pending problems of socio-economic adaptation of these peoples in the world today. New paths of development of small-numbered indigenous peoples solve today the most urgent problems. This in turn is impossible without their recognition of the need to interact with the whole society. That is why establishment of the Information Center in Choya District – territory of traditional residence of small-numbered indigenous people of Altai Republic – is so necessary. Therefore regional public organization “Information Center of Indigenous Peoples of Altai Republic “Birlik”, director of “Birlik” Irina V. Solodukha and I made a decision to establish a representative office of the Center under the Central Library of Choya District. This office will carry out information, research, methodological, educational, organizational and cultural activities. It will make arrangements within the bounds of the project that will create optimal conditions for implementation of the Choya District’s small-numbered indigenous peoples’ right to information so that they can accomplish political, legal, social and humanitarian tasks. The office will encourage nature-oriented world-view, development of necessary personal qualities, including self-consciousness, comprehension, willpower, integration of society’s efforts and intensification of rights and freedoms protection activities of citizens in the society.

The main goals and tasks of our Center:

* rise of awareness of small-numbered indigenous peoples, heads of communities and leaders of human rights movement;
* arrangement of conditions for positive cooperation among public organizations, small-numbered indigenous peoples and public authorities; joining of their efforts to find constructive solutions of problems related to restoration and preservation of traditional living and economy.

Our objectives:

* dissemination of information about practical application of legislation to solve specific problems of indigenous population;
* dissemination of information about methods of effective teaching of law enforcement to heads of communities;
* arrangement of conditions for citizens’ recognition of significance of timely acquisition, conscious perception and necessary dissemination of socially important information.

To win objectives we will:

* arrange optimal conditions for ensuring small-numbered indigenous peoples’ constitutional right to information;
* ensure free access of consumer of information about small-numbered indigenous peoples to information resources of the Center on basis of current computer technology for their professional , learning, public and other activities;
* broaden collection of information resources (books, periodicals, electronic publications and other documents) related to small-numbered indigenous peoples;
* contribute to vocational self-determination of youths from among small-numbered indigenous peoples for national employment pool of the district;
* preserve historico-cultural heritage of small-numbered indigenous peoples and educate the rising generation on basis of national values;
* promote arrangement of favourable conditions for interethnic and interconfessional relations to development tolerance.

We hope that establishment of our center will help to raise legal culture of small-numbered indigenous peoples and republican and municipal authorities will feel their responsibility for traditional living of small-numbered indigenous peoples and federal and local legal acts will finally take effect on the territory of the district.

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**Nadezhda Markova**

**Reading the history through the lenses of centuries**

We are descendants of ancient Turkic peoples and we take pride in the fact that we live on the land which is an ancestral home of all Turkic peoples. Archeological excavations in Pazyryk may serve as evidence. Five big kurgans were found there. All of them were plundered in ancient times because of things made of precious metals. Pazyryk kurgans are famous in the world science and culture due to excavations of V.V. Radlov, archaeologist, ethnographer and specialist in Turkic philology, in 1865. Pazyryk is also famous for the big tufted carpet of 6.5 square metres, Pazyryk harp-D’adaan of 5 meters, the four-wheel chariot that people call “flying chariot”, etc. All these finds are exhibited in the Hermitage Museum St. Petersburg. All these finds prove that way of life, art and military science of that time were at a very high level. In his article “Pazyryk – Ancient Original Culture of Altaian Nomads” M.P. Zavitukha wrote, “Craftsmanship of Altaian artists in all areas of creative work is amazing up till now. Many generations perfected it on the basis of truly folk culture. The best achievements were not trade secrets of one or several masters. Altaian art is still at the top of composite art. Works by wood, bone and horn carvers arouse admiration. They could unconstrainedly place any story in the shape of articles. They fearlessly lengthened or reduced parts of animal’s body, twisted upper bodies and underparts. Ancient Alataian sculptors felt at home in all genres from flat relief, fillet to space figures.

Excavations of frozen kurgans in Gorny Altai revealed ancient original culture of Altaian nomads which undoubtedly produced an effect on all art of Scythian world. Works of Altaian masters are included in the treasure house of world art”.

And how do matters stand today? Telengits who live on the territory of Ulagan District are continuers of Pazyryk culture. In the district museum there is a unique copy of Pazyryc chariot which is made by local masters without a single nail. But these are just single facts. I wish there were as much such finds as possible. Because you know tourism grows at a rapid rate in our region. Many tourists “from far away” wish to have a rest at the Ulagan District’s bank of the Teletskoye Lake. And exactly on the way they see sights of the Pazyryk Hole. It would be even better if there was an ethnocultural park, an open-air museum or something to preserve kurgans in this Hole. Because it is no secret that tourists may handle local places of interest with disrespect. Public associations and communities play an important role in solving such problems.

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**Aleksander Tokoyekov**

**Ulagan. Telengit**

I want to begin my article with the history of my native land – Ulagan Settlement. There are many famous legends of Ulagan. The first legend says that once a son of a great khan drowned in the river and since then the river was called “uul akkan” (Ulagan). The second legend says that in the old days the Great Ruler – Ulu-Kaan (Ulagan) lived there. He was buried in one of the Pazyryk burial mounds which rich decorations made our Altai famous all over the world. Lush grass of alpine pastures rich in mineral salts, abundance of wild animals and wildfowl, lots of rivers and lakes rich in fish, plenty of berries, edible and medicinal plants, ore deposits – all these factors in the aggregate attracted nomad cattle-breeders and hunters here from times immemorial. High mountain ranges surrounding the territory of Ulagan District served as natural fortresses that helped the ancestors of contemporary residents of Ulagan to defend against intruders at that time. 253 years ago the majority of the population of Gorny Altai joined the Great Russia voluntarily. And it took Ulagan and Kosh-Agach Telengits 109 years to decide who they wanted to be with. And all the time they rendered tribute to both Russia and China. Our chiefs made a wise decision: in summer of 1864 two Telengit otoks (tribes) – Chuisky (Kyobyoksky) led by chief Chichkan and Ulagansky (Tyolyossky) led by chief Tadysh - adressed a petition to the Russian Emperor Alexander II for their affiliation with Russia. Kyobyoksky otok took out the Russian citizenship by the decree of the tsar of October 10, 1864. And then Tyolyossky otok took out the Russian citizenship by the decree of the tsar of January 12, 1865. Three generations changed since then. Maybe this is the reason why Ulagan Telengits managed to preserve unimpaired ethnographic features and morals and manners of nomad cattle-breeders, there is a specific peculiarity and originality in their traditions, customs and culture.

At present the district has an area of 18394 square kilometers; it is equal to the area of Brunei, Guadeloupe, Malta and Puerto Rico taken one with another. Our district is the second largest in the Altai Republic after neighbouring Kosh Agach District, and Altaisky State Reserve occupies almost half of the territory.

Ulagan Settlement is a district center. It was founded in 1765. It is 420 km far from the capital of the Altai Republiс Gorno-Altaisk. Altitude above sea level is 1230 m. The population density is less 0.6 per square kilometer. At the beginning of 2009 there were 12213 people in 13 settlements, that is there were 7 rural settlements in the district.

There is an acutely continental climate in Ulagan District; summer is short and winter is long and cold. Absolute temperature in winter was 58 degrees below zero (January 2002), and on clear summer days it is up to 42 degrees above zero. Night frosts with hoarfrost sometimes continue until the end of July, after that night frosts start from the beginning of August. Thus frost-free season in the central part of the district lasts for 42-50 days on the average. The summer is cool in the considerable part of highland territory of the district, they say here “it is cool here for three months and it is cold rest of the time”. Most winters are with little snow. The wind blows the snow away in open territories. In well fenced from the wind places snow cover reaches 15-20 and sometimes 40 cm high. This year after 16 March there has been a heavy fall of snow in Ulagan District and the snow depth reached 90 cm. According to old residents such snowfalls were in 1945 and 1966. Uniqueness of nature and climate of Ulagan District is that one can watch in summer absolutely white sparkling glaciers as well as cedar forests, larch taiga, high-mountain steppe and ripe berries. All this attracts more and more tourists with each year.

Ulagan District takes one of front ranks for the beauty of its nature as well as for unsettled and slowly solvable land problems. Land is the most valuable and sacred thing for any people. If there is no land there will be no history and culture of Telengits. They fought great wars over land which lasted for centuries. And how do we treat the land problem today? Ulagan District is the only district in the Altai Republic where citizens had not exercised their right to shared lands. Yet 90 per cent of the population used to work at state and collective farms and they had to be given free shared lands as well as health-care and cultural workers and educationalists. And soon we can lose our right to land forever. The problem is that in 2003 the Legislative Assembly of the Altai Republic El Kurultai passed the law №15-7 saying if local residents and legal entities do not complete the formalities for their shared lands till 01 January 2010 they can automatically lose the right to shared lands. All unexecuted lands will automatically be under the authority of the Ministry of Property. This will give it the right to sell land parcels to residents of other districts by auction and we will not be able to take part in these auctions as we do not have such a lot of money. There was a situation in Chemal, Turackak and Maima Districts when representatives of Moscow and other cities of Russia rented lands for 49 years without asking local residents’ opinion. Local people were left short of haylands and when referring to the court they lost cases as everything was legal (though unfair). We should learn from mistakes of our neighbours to prevent such situation in our district.

Our district’s people have never invoked that right, but we still have some time. And what is the reason for that? Every resident of our district asks himself whether it is legal ignorance of our people or inability to assert their rights or administrative dereliction? In the neighbouring Kosh Agach District for example all those who worked in state and collective farms as well as in educational and cultural institutions and medical facilities were given shared lands.

I call on all residents of our district to think more constructively and put their mind on this urgent land problem. And if they will sell our lands by auction we will have nothing to pass on to our children. I think older people have been asking themselves that question for a long time, especially in recent five years when tourism became fashionable in our district. Let us be masters of our own Homeland while we have a chance to preserve and multiply.

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**Aidar Tazrashev**

**Kindness worse than theft**

I first faced problems of small-numbered indigenous peoples when I was a chairperson of public organization “Kogutei” in the late nineties. It was really hard to work at that time. Only telephone communication, no Internet, ignorance of laws on small-numbered indigenous peoples, lack of foreign language skills and many other reasons were obstacles to work. But nevertheless we had to make some steps and learn something with the help of our scientists-activists, such as Svetlana Tyukhteneva.

And then as fate willed Svetlana and I were delegated to International Forum of Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East in Stockholm (Sweden) for our eager activity in the field of small-numbered indigenous peoples’ rights. This trip was widely covered in the republican media.

And at that forum Olga Haritidi’s book about shamanism was discussed. Let me give you the short summary of the book. Olga Haritidi worked as a nurse in Novosibirsk. In summer like any other Novosibirsk residents she went to Turochaks District for her holidays. Here she met a female shaman, who told her she has all the makings of a shaman. Olga Haritidi left her job, moved to Turochak District and began to penetrate the secrets of the shaman. In her book she describes in detail her experience during her learning or, like, enlightenment.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union her book was accepted abroad as a "great discovery" and it was translated into several languages. With the fee she moved to Europe as if to further inquiry of that world-view. But that is not the point. The point is that we, representatives of indigenous peoples, learn about it while participating in various international events or we even do not learn about it at all. In recent years a lot of scientists, researchers and writers from different parts of the world have come to Altai. According to customs of our ancestors we meet guests no matter where they came from and what they came for. We tell them all our innermost secrets for free. And we do not know how all this information will be used indeed. Now of course everyone knows that all the scientists “from far away” make a lot of money using our invaluable sources of information. Some open up branch offices of various denominations here under the pretext of studying the Altai language, some work off their grants to education and some write books, etc. But we, indigenous peoples, who live on our land such a way of life that our parents and ancestors taught us, we sometimes do not even appreciate the value of culture we have.

During the training course at Information Center “Birlik” I have discovered a lot of interesting and useful things. People who care about the fate of their people and who want to know and enjoy their rights and teach them to others were there at the training course. On behalf of all interns Iwant to express many thanks to our curator, head of the Information Center “Birlik” Irina Solodukha for the knowledge that we have received there. I hope we will always cooperate, no matter what organization we will be working at. And I wish the other participants to work harder, learn and face up to challenges.

**Khamida Tadina**

**Let us keep our sacred springs**

Healing springs (arzhan-suu) treatment is practiced among Turkic and Mongolian people from time immemorial. Arzhan Chakyr is a cold spring; it is located 20 km away from Yazula Village, Ulagan District. The spring has its source from a mountain. People come and pray to arzhan-suu twice a year: in June-July (this time is called “agash buri djazharza) and in August-September (agash buri sargarza). This arzhan is used only by residents of Yazula. Usually they spend one or three days by the spring. A family or several families prepare for the trip in advance. On the eve of the trip they store food: bake tertpek, prepare fresh talkan. They always take a brick of green tea - Kalka tea. They specially prepare kaimak (clotted cream).

When they arrive at arzhan-suu they light a fire near the spring and send one of their members to fetch water from arzhan-suu. Every head of the family drinks three sips of water from arzhan before they make tea. They tie djalama to the spring before taking first sips. By that time they lay out products on a clean cloth. Heads of families treat the fire to freshly made tea. Then they pour the milk into cups and sprinkle it with wooden spoons 3 times in the direction of the arzhan and around the hearth. All present turn their face to the spring and carry out murguul (consecration) 3 times.

After the meal they go to the arzhan and pray to it by every djalama, they are tied near the spring, and drink water from it three times. Then they begin to wash. After washing they are sure to drink tea. Before leaving they put buttons, white coins (copper is not allowed) in the arzhan and bow to it. One or two people stay by the fire until it goes out. When putting coins and buttons in the arzhan it is obligatory to bow to it with respect.

I want to note that almost all traditions and customs of ancestors are preserved in Ulagan District. It is cultivated since childhood. And it is necessary to speak native language at home. We are proud of our parents for our appropriate upbringing by right. And we must give this culture to our children and grandchildren, so that they continue the "way" of their ancestors. Preservation of traditions and customs is a duty of every representative of indigenous people. And we, the present generation, should do our best to preserve them.

**Khamida Tadina**

**Tele, Telengets, Telengits**

Billions of people have spoken and are speaking Turkic languages. From snowy Yakutia to Central Europe, from Siberia to the heat of India. Even in Africa there are settlements where Turkic language sounds.

The Turkic world is great and unusual. Turks are the most numerous people in it. They live in Turkey, a large country known all over the world. It is known for its people, ancient traditions, high and unique culture. Thousands of books and articles were written about it.

And one cannot tell much about Tofalars who are only a few hundred people in number. They are little known. They live in remote Siberian taiga in two or three villages. But probably it is Tofalars who preserved the oldest and purest Turkic language. Their life had flowed for centuries with almost no communication with other peoples. So nothing had cluttered their language.

It was Turkic language that sounded here as far back as in ancient times. The Chinese were one of the first to hear it. It was the Chinese who first wrote the word "turk" - "tyukyu" that means "hard", "strong" in their language. The Altaians were northern neighbours of the Chinese and they had an amazing appearance. They had blonde hair and blue eyes and distinguished themselves in strength and military skill. And the Chinese called the Altaians “tele”, but not all of them – only those with "familiar" appearance who were dark-haired and brown-eyed as the Chinese.

Today “tele” are represented by Telengits, indigenous people of Kosh-Agach and Ulagan Districts who make 2368 people of the whole population of Altai Republic according to 2002 census. They differ in their mentality, character, way of life, dialect, etc. The world-famous plateau "Ukok, where Ukok Princess Oochy bala, Pazyryk kurgan and many other historic kurgans were found, is situated on their ancestral land. And this land is also famous for its healing springs - Arzhan suu, such as Boguzun (Kosh-Agach District). And the most characteristic of all is that this ethnic group is very strong in creativity at the genetic level.

Ulagan district is a little homeland of the Honored Artist of the Russian Federation I. Ortonulov, kaichy-teller A.G. Calkin and many others.

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**Khamida Tadina**

**The land of Telengits is rich**

Ulagan district is one of ten districts of Altai Republic. Telengits, one of indigenous peoples of Gorny Altai, live and lead traditional way of life here. Many tourists from different cities and regions of Russia and abroad come to the district every summer to admire cultural and historical monuments, sacred places, healing springs, rivers and lakes.

The district is known for world famous historical monuments of Pazyryk culture (VI-IV centuries B.C.), monuments of the Middle Ages - Chelushman irrigation system, etc.

Our rivers are tumultuous, their waters rush among rocks and boulders in deep valleys with rounded gentle slopes and cliffs. The Cholushman and Bashkaus Rivers with countless large and small tributaries are major waterways of Ulagan District.

The Cholushman River originates from the spurs of the southern part of the Shapshalsky mountain ridge and falls into the Lake Dzhulu-Kyol which is located at an altitude of 2200 m above sea level. Then the river takes off from this lake and carries its waters somnolently down the mountain tundra, and then, sandwiched between rocks, its stream rushes down the Cholushman valley roaring to the Lake Teletskoye. At this stage the river is tumultuous with the daunting rapids, canyons, cascades and waterfalls. The total length of the river is about 200 km. Its name comes from the telengit words "Chyolushken" ("worm"). And from the height of the surrounding rocks the river bears a strong resemblance to a meandering worm indeed. The Cholushman’s tributaries are also rich in waterfalls falling from cliffs and making affecting spectacle. The largest cascading waterfall of Gorny Altai – Uchar – is situated near the mouth of the Chulcha River, the right tributary of the Cholushman.

The Bashkaus River is the second largest river of the district. It originates from the eastern part of the Kurai Range and has a length of 219 km. The name of the river originates from the ancient Turkic phrase “Basky-őgÿs” (“bashky” - basic, separate, “őgÿs” - river). Locals transformed this ancient name into Bashkős, Bashkush, Bashkaus in the course of time.

The Chuya River is the largest tributary of the Katun River. It flows over the territory of Chibit Village. The Chuisky highway stretching from Novosibirsk to Mongolia is named after this very river.

Lakes are also an essential element of the district’s geographical landscape. The largest number of lakes of the republic is on the territory of Ulagan District. They number in about three thousands, 2560 of them are on the territory of the Altaisky State Nature Reserve. It is here where the largest lakes of Gorny Altai and Western Siberia – the Teletskoye Lake (Altyn-Kyol) and the Dzhulu-Kyol – are situated. According to a well-known legend about the origin of the name of the Altyn-Kyol Lake (Golden Lake) a local hunter Chokul found the gold nugget as big as the horse's head in a lean year and he could not exchange this gold for a cup of barley. Desperate in his attempts to get food in exchange for this gold Chokul climbed the mountain with great difficulty and threw the gold nugget into the lake. Locals began to call that lake Altyn-Kyol (Golden Lake) since then, and they began to call the mountain towering above the lake Altyn-Tuu (Golden Mountain). Russian Cossacks called the lake Teletskoye when they came here in 1625 from the Kuznetsk Fortress and levied tribute on local telengits, among which the clan of Tyolyoses was in the lead. The Teletskoye Lake is the second largest in Russia by volume, after Lake Baikal.

The Lake Dzhulu-Kohl ("Fat Lake") is located at the junction of ridges Shapshalsk and Chikhachev in the upriver areas of the Cholushman River at an altitude of 2200 m above sea level. According to legend the lake got its name because it abounds in extremely fatty fish. In Soviet times there was a cannery on the bank of the lake. Now it is a part of the Altai State Nature Reserve. At 11-13 km of the Aktash-Ulagan highway the so-called "Dead Lake" extends for 2735 meters on the left hand. Locals call it Chyoibyok-Кyol, which means "Extended Lake” in Telengit. The lake is called "Dead" because unlike other surrounding stocked lakes there was no fish and waterfowl in it until recently. At present they let the trout and peled fry into the lake. In case of their successful growth the lake will probably change its dark and frightening name to a more lyric one. There are many lakes further along the Aktash-Ulagan highway. The Sorulukyol Lake is the largest of them. It is 4000 m in length, 1350 m in width and 1812 m above sea level. The lake is named after the Sorulu Valley ("the valley with a tiny brook"), this beautiful lake is in its bottom. The Lake Uzunkel (Uzun-Kyol) is 1985 meters above sea level. It is the second largest lake of the Aktash-Ulagan highway’s pass. It is 800 meters wide and 3000 meters long. Probably the lake got its name Uzun-Kyol ("Long Lake") for it. The Kedyelukel Lake (Kedyelyu-Kyol) is very picturesque. It is situated at the very pass. There is a legend about the name of the lake. According to this story, once, a man’s plait – kedyee – was thrown into the lake. Until recently, unbaptized local adult males shaved their hair and left only a plait – kedyee – on the back of their head and decorated them with beads or glass buttons at the end. This spectacular lake was named after this kind of a man’s plait.

Most large lakes of the district (from 0.3 km in diameter upwards) are populated with fish: osman, peled, whitefish, trout, carp, etc. There are taimen, grayling, minnow, Siberian whitefish (herring), Pravdin whitefish (sprat), perch, pike, bream, burbot, Siberian dace, Siberian stone loach, spotted sculpin, Siberian sculpin and others in the Teletskoye Lake, the Cholushman and Bashkaus Rivers and their tributaries.

There are more than a dozen of well-known healing springs in the district. The largest spring is in Chibit Village. Its water is rich in calcium and is close to mineral water Essentuki. The healing spring Adyshtu is rich in hydrogen sulfide. This spring is in 3 km up the mouth of the Cholushman River, on its right bank. Other popular healing springs are Mandilu, Azalu, Byrkan, Kabak-Taiga, Kyzyl-Tash, Tuzhar, Kandu-Airy, Sukbak, Tumchuk-Sayar, Beltir, Kaya-Bazhy, Kuluzun, Kara-Suu (Ulu-Oidyk).

The district’s flora is very rich and diverse. Forests cover vast areas and alternate only with ranges, alpine meadows and mountain tundra. Conifers – cedar, spruce and larch - form the balk of forests. The predominance of one or another kind of trees depends on the absolute height and climatic conditions of the territory. Besides above-mentioned kinds of trees there are also leaf-bearing ones, such as birch, poplar, aspen, silver fir (river basins of the Bashkaus and the Cholushman).

Underbrush is rich in various shrubs, mainly berries: blackcurrant, redcurrant, sea buckthorn, Alpine blackcurrant (grows on rocky slopes), mountain ash, bird cherry. There are a lot of blueberries and cranberries in the woods and strawberries (wild strawberries) and raspberries in meadows (in Chelushman Valley).

Gathering of berries and pine nuts brings significant revenue to local population. Harvesting of medicinal plants, such as snowdon rose, Paeonia anomala, red root (Hedysarum neglectum Ledeb), cinquefoil, large-leaved saxifrage, St. John's wort, etc., is also popular. In total there are over one hundred of plants used in traditional medicine in the district, many of them are endemic and included into Red Data Book, such as astragalus, Ophris, motherwort, saw-wort. In the crevices of cliffs there are outgrowths containing medicinal bitumen (mumio) – a valuable drug.

The rich wildlife of the district is determined by the diversity of landscape and rich flora. There are over 70 species of mammals, over 320 species of birds, 10 species of reptiles and amphibians on the territory of the district. Among large predators there are bears, wolves, gluttons, lynxes. In the upriver areas of the rivers Cholushman and Bashkaus there are rare species of cats - snow leopards (Irbis) and manuls (Pallas’ cat), and also Altai mountain sheep - argali.

Fur-bearing animals of the district are sable, squirrel, hare, otter, mink, badger, fox and marmot. Cloven-hoofed mammals are represented by several species such as elk, Siberian stag, reindeer, Siberian roe, ibex, mountain sheep (argali) and musk deer. In recent years total number of musk deer, Siberian stag and brown bear has critically reduced because of increased worldwide demand for the products of oriental medicine.

Animal breeding is the main activity of Telengits. They breed yaks as well as sheeps, goats, horses and cattle. But few people keep them. They also gather berries, mushrooms, pine cones, deciduous dry antlers of Siberian stags. Furring also brings a good income.

This article is drawn from “History Ulagan District"

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**Rodion Chuu**

**My remote wooden village**

I was born in Gorno-Altaisk. When I was a little girl, my parents moved to Verkh-Isha Village in Maima District of Gorno-Altaisk Autonomous Oblast. Thenadays there were four families in Verkh-Isha and our family was the fifth one. Gradually they began to move to Urlu-Asrak Village, because there was an eight-year school, a hospital and a shop there. Our family also moved. In Urlu-Aspak there was a farm of the big Kyzyl-Ozyok state farm. My parents worked hard all there life at the farm. Then the Biryulya state farm was found. During perestroika the state farm was liquidated. Hundreds of people, who have worked all their life at the farm and had broken their health, lost their jobs. People began to drink.   
Youth had nothing to do in the village, and young people had to go to the town to look for a job. But in the town after they had got jobs they faced the housing problem. Many of them could not solve it and returned to the village where unemployment and drinking were awaiting them. Today indigenous peoples have no rights on their land. Our land is leased for 49 years to strange Muscovites, and we are left with nothing. People in the village do not know the land laws. Pensions, child benefits and the salaries of government-financed organization employees are the primary income of the villagers. We also live at the expense of personal subsidiary plots and vegetable gardens. But I think soon we will lose this income as well. I really want our local government to turn its face to the people.

**Vera Tadykina**

**Feeling at home remember you are on a visit**

Altay is one of the most beautiful corners of our green planet. Sometimes I think it is paradise here. Here there are blue sky, twinkling stars at night, high evergreen mountains and crystal pure rivers that sing beautiful songs about eternal Altai. Good people who protect and preserve the beauty and the mystery of eternal Altai live here. They are taciturn, proud and frank by nature. Sometimes I think that nature has created people of its own kind. Altai keepers honored nature from time immemorial and did not allow themselves to desecrate sacred places. Although there are no temples built for spirits of mountains. The idea of God for Altaians is the presence of the human soul in the heart. We have never liked rich and choosy self-lovers but we appreciated and liked modest and noble people.

I am writing all this to make people who come to our beautiful corner know our character, habits and respect us. I resent the officials’ assertion that today we should develop tourism when they do not create conditions for this. Visitors go out of their mind because of the beauty of our corners and begin to make beasts of themselves. They litter where they stay and they stay wherever they like to. There are no specially designated sites for them. They do not know that the little patch of meadow they trampled provides food for a local resident for a month.   
High-rankers who have long ago forgotten that there is a villager who has only himself to depend on can not understand why they argue and fight for such a small land. Those guests who arrive for the second time begin to feel masters of themselves and become impudent, they say it is not our first time. A man who has lived here all his life and who protects the heritage of his ancestors has to put up with it. They climb sacred mountains, pollute springs, tie various rags to trees without understanding all of this, write their initials on stones of mountains. Not every good master can bear it. Take this case, for example, a guest makes meticulous preparations before he is going to visit a respectable man. He will try to find out what he likes, how to behave in his house, what to keep still about. One should draw conclusions from this.

**Darya Kuruskanova**

**Forgotten story**

Time marches on, power changes but problems remain. Someone dies, children are born, and this is the law of nature. There are a lot of problems but I cannot be indifferent to the problem of alcoholism among children, schoolchildren, students and women. Yes, I know that it is much in papers and on TV, but at post-perestroika times the problem is more actual than never before. Everyone knows how to fight it, authorities adopt programs at federal and regional levels, but no one can help.

I do not want to blame, justify or what is more teach someone to live, but I just want to write a simple story my grandmother once told me, a simple story about people and the old days.

Indigenous peoples of Altai are very courageous and reserved people by nature. And they have a positive feature – they never leave a person in need. This is the fundamental law of taiga. Our traditions and world outlook work on it. All our traditions and life are so closely connected with nature that sometimes you think who is leading. When you honor the nature you achieve harmony in your soul, and you should not lose touch with nature. Contempt and hatred violbreaks evetything and people begin to lose control and they are at each other's throats and forget that they are part of nature and of each other.

Probably it is the custom that people cannot live without war on earth. War is the worst thing in the whole wide world, when a MAN kills a man. It mainly affects women and children. And one begin not to live but survive in such terrible times. There is poverty, misery and hunger around and you do not know whom to help and whom to talk to. They worked from dawn to dusk and had time to raise children. Children were not divided into "our" and "another’s", all of them were children. They helped each other with all they could.

A woman, a mother who lost her son or husband did not know how to treat spiritual wound. But nobody went on a drinking jag. But grief is grief and one cannot escape from it; it was strictly prohibited to cry in the evening and at night as that could attract "evil spirits" to the house. And probably it was that time when the expression "turn black with grief" appeared. Words are no help in sorrow but in every family and every clan there were respected people. Seeing that she was very ill he made a new pipe, sewed a pouch, filled it with tobacco and came to the woman’s house. He sat by the hearth, lighted up his pipe and told: "I know that sorrow eats you from within. And in such a difficult time you need something to treat the soul.   
There are two evils in the world: they are alcohol and tobacco. As I am an elder I give you this pipe so that you can ease your grief somehow. If you choose the latter, then you will lose the respect and defame our family, and you will not be able to give your children a start in life". So the woman began to smoke. If a girl or a woman was smoking for no special reason (this never happened as a rule), she was accused of drawing terrible fate upon herself and not everybody would venture to marry her because she was labeled an unclean woman (kokymai bala).

I think if people could cope with difficulties and did not became drunkards in those difficult and terrible years then now we need to revive our traditions and customs and decide this growing problem in Russian society with their help.

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**Galina Shurova**

**Ideas of present and future**

There are two settlements on the opposite sides of the Lake Teletskoye in Turochak District, Altai Republic. Artybash Settlement is on the right lakeside and Iogach Settlement is on the left one. They are connected by a bridge over the Teletskoye Lake and the Biya River.

The Teletskoye Lake is considered to be one of the most beautiful spots of Gorny Altai. Peculiarity of climate, rich flora and fauna and marvelous combination of high mountains and clearest water surface create inimitable in its beauty natural complex that attracts the multitude of tourists. There are lots of camping sites on the territory of Artybash and Iogach Settlements. Many of them disregard engineering requirements, sanitary codes and all, such as “Zolotoye Ozero (“Golden Lake”), “Edem” (“ Eden”), “Stary Zamok” (“Old Castle”), “Zhemchuzhina” (“Pearl”), “Serebryany Bereg” (“Silver Shore”), “Yurtok”, “Istok” (“Source”), “Taiga”, “Tursib”, etc.

There are no filter beds on the territory of Artybash Settlements and in Iogach Settlements there is an unauthorized refuse tip where hard and liquid wastes of all camping sites are being collected. The refuse tip is 500 meters out from the source of the River Biya. When snow is melting or it is pouring with rain the wastes are washed down to the River Biya and pollute drinking fountains of the villagers. By the way they live 100 meters out from the refuse tip and they graze cattle there too. Cattle have been known to perish from poisoning there. An unauthorized refuse tip is one of the reasons of such unpleasant incidents.

Camping sites’ activities pollute the environment on the territory of Tubalars’ traditional residence and economic activities. Tubalars obtain no compensation for material damage. Although one cannot asses his health at terms of money.

Indigenous communities of Artybash Settlements more than once brought up the question of biological wastes that were dumped into the lake. They once turned to the President. But the problem is still unsolved. Stream of holidaymakers from other regions of Russia including free-wheeling ones increased. Increase in the number of boats causes oil pollution of the lake. On the one hand local people got a chance to earn money, but on the other hand wild tourist infrastructure on the lake leads to environmental problems and disturbs the biobalance of environment. On Altaisky State Reserve’s initiative they established the Non-Commercial Partnership “Teletskoye Lake Council” to solve the above-mentioned problems. Boris Sapkin, chairman of the Community Council “Biya”, represents small-numbered indigenous peoples – Tubalars, Chelkans, Kumandins and Shors.

The question of establishing of Tubalars’ traditional land use area is left open to date.

The problem of preservation of the language, traditions and customs of Tubalars is also urgent. Now some indigenous representatives in our settlement resolve problem of land and forest in their favour, few think about the future when we will sell land and cut down the sacred tree – cedar and what will we carry down and will we remain as an ethnos hereafter. Five years have passed since they decided on building of the cultural center in Artybash Settlement. The building did not start yet and there are several reasons for that. In the first place the administration of the settlement has long prevented from assigning and official registration of a land parcel. In the second place communities activities are not concerted with each other.

They adopted the Republican program on development of small-numbered indigenous peoples in 2009-2015. It is only a part of numerous problems of Tubalars living in these “perspective” and “developing” settlements. And they number in the infinite number. Indigenous communities play an important role in solution of problems ranged between small and global ones. And I hope communities and local administration will weigh the situation, come to terms and arrive at a solution of these problems interfering with development and preservation of vanishing peoples.

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**Denis Eduyekov**