

Dmitrii Harakka-Zaitsev

Practical aspects of the preservation of primordial living environment. Votians` and Izhorians` Case: Dialogue people-authority-business.

In 2000 both Votians and Izhorians obtained status of the small-numbered indigenous people of Russian Federation. These nations historically inhabit the lands in-between important trade and cultural centers such as St.Petersburg and Narva and as well on a cross road of political and economic interests of the states. Also the traditional culture, mentality and self-identity differ in comparison with the indigenous people of the Russian North and Siberia such as Nenets, Hantys and Mansis, e.g. Nevertheless, it is clear that the special cultural features of Votians and Izhorians cannot be a cause of their rights and status denial.

To be the indigenous title-holder, what does it mean for such nations as Votians and Izhorians on current practice?

Our people have traditionally inhabited the territory of Soikinsky peninsula and Luga-river mouth and its neighborhoods (Vistino and Ust-Luga municipalities of Kingisepp municipal district of Leningrad Region, Russia). Nowadays they are dispersed in most of the villages of the above mentioned municipalities. They still preserve special attitude to the belief, reality, nature phenomena as well as traditional activities even the external influence is pretty strong at this part of the country.

The current situation with industrial expansion in that area has caused serious concerns among members of the community, local inhabitants, as well as cultural and social institutions with respect to the destruction of traditional natural environment, human rights, including rights to satisfactory and healthy environment and indigenous peoples' rights.

In spite of that the Votian and Izhorian communities demonstrates and express their openness for dialogue with parties interested in the industrial expansion at this area, people must deal with only "Zero option approach" in decision making and non-involvement of all parties in interest such as indigenous communities which in most of situations combines with lack of accurate information about plans and forecasts of authorities and business caused the issues of the indigenous people sustainable development which the must face to in almost defenseless position. It is obvious that this situation is producing different negative impacts.

The negative impact can be determined per several types which we have to focus on:

- Regarding ecosystem: serious anthropogenic pressure; destroying object of natural environment; inability of ecological balance restoration.
- Regarding social and cultural environment: migration and extraction of indigenous people from traditional and compact habitats; loss of family and national community connections; conservation of cultural heritage in isolation from traditional and natural habitat; social strain within national minority circle.
- Regarding self-identification and attitude to law: self-perception as a "superfluous people" and rule skepticism.

Thus, in these circumstances the further sustainable-development of communities, nations, and region is rather questionable.

One of the goals to initiate a constructive trilateral dialogue *people-authority-business* with a view to resolve this issue in accordance with both international norms and the legislation of the Russian Federation, to reconsider the decisions which were done in lack of transparency and without consideration of others interests and make a win-win solutions before any final decisions about the future of traditional territories are made.