

TRADITION AND CHANGE ALONG THE RAILROAD

**(MOBILITY, RESOURCES AND IDENTITY
POLITICS IN THE BAM REGION)**

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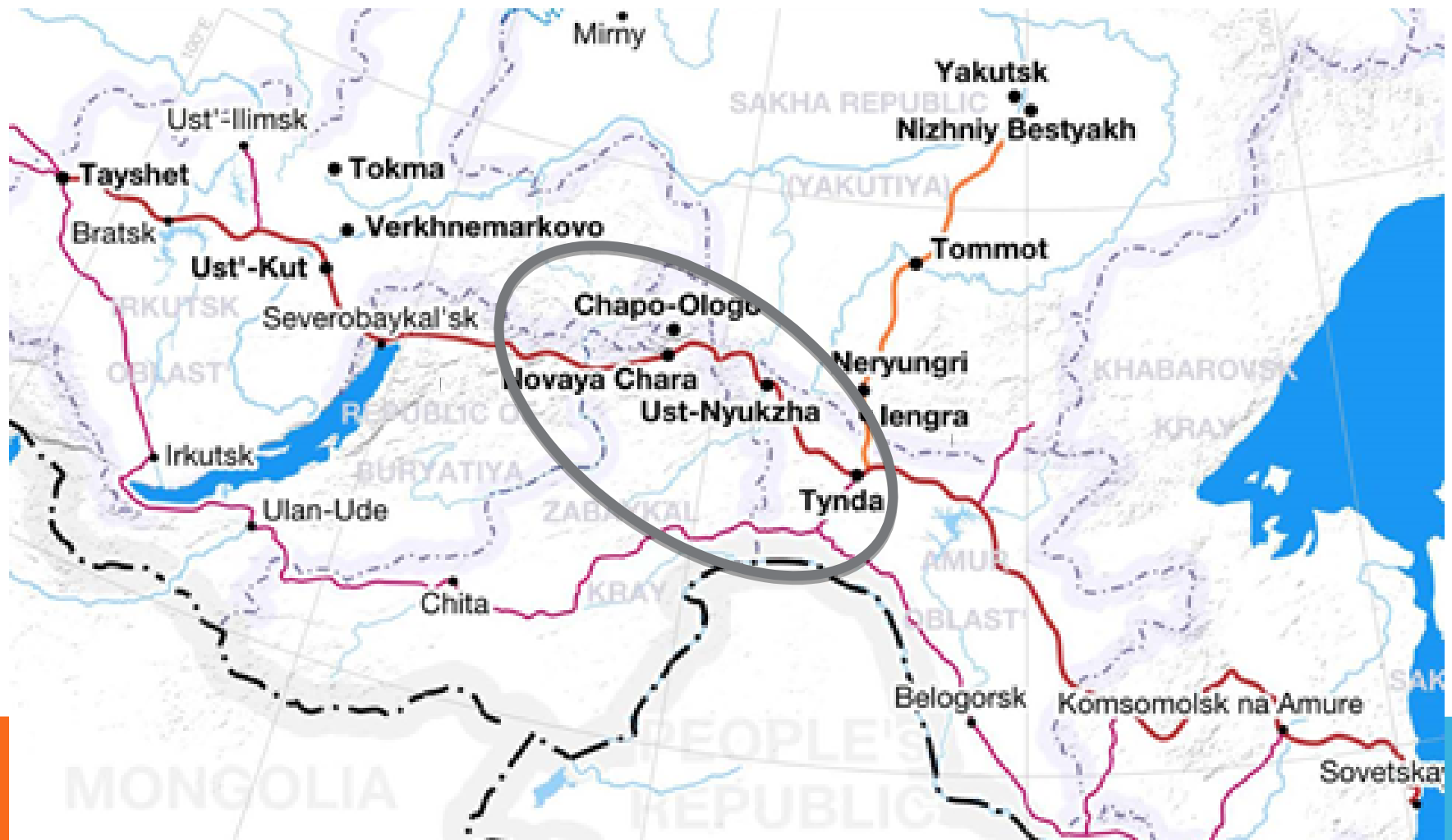
MAP OF THE BAM REGION



http://irkipedia.ru/content/baykalo_amurskaya_magistral

- **Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM)** – a northern railroad, constructed to develop untapped natural resources of East Siberia and Far East
- **BAM technosocial engineering:** social and environmental change, transformations of traditional land use and mobility
- **Focus:** entanglements of indigenous Evenki with the railroad and concepts of tradition from legal anthropology and identity politics' perspectives
- **Field research:** indigenous villages Chapo-Ologo, Pervomaiskoe and BAM cities Chara, Tynda in Zabaikal'skii Krai and Amurskaia Oblast'.

BAM REGION: FIELD SITES



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

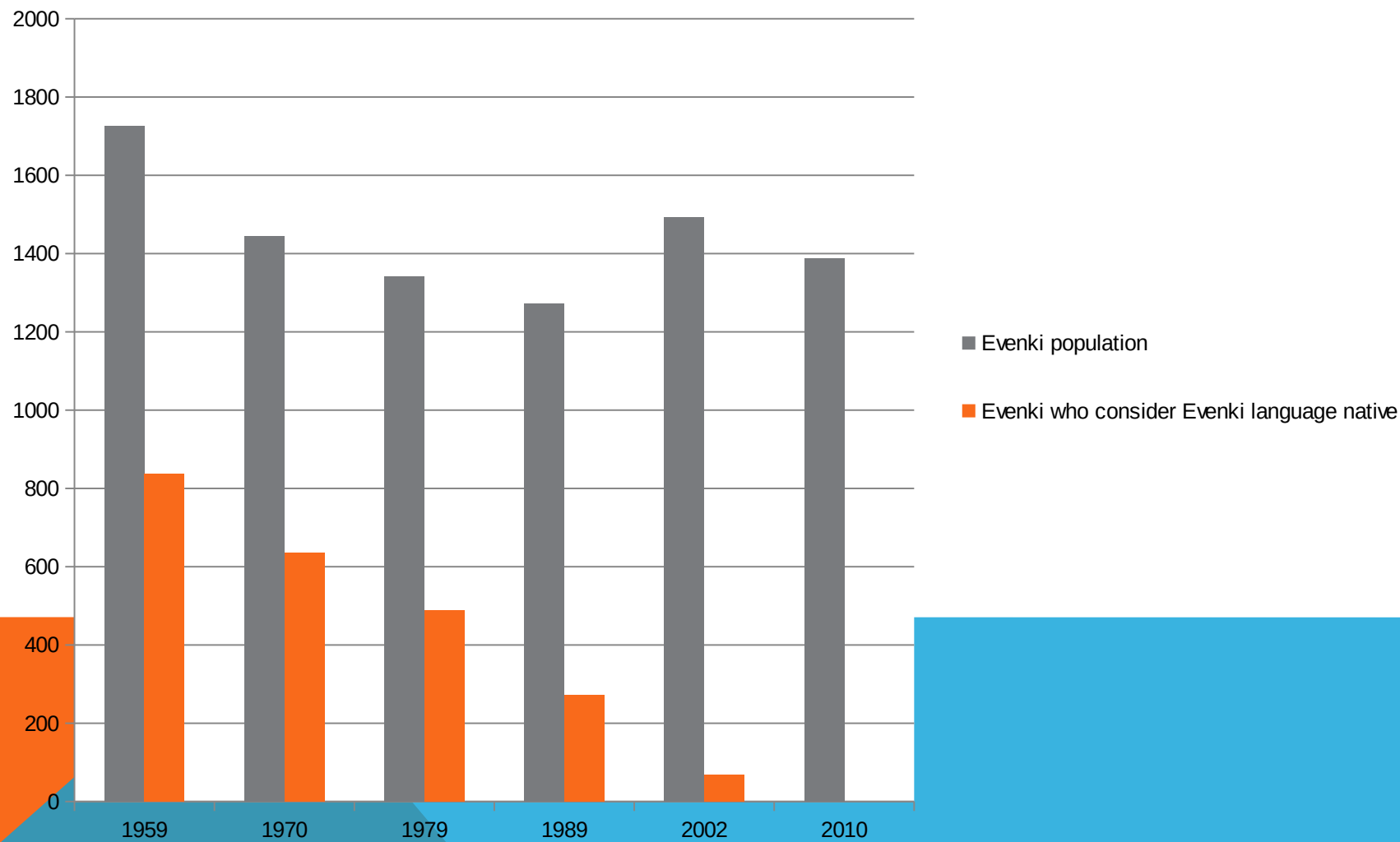
- What are traditional lifestyles and land use practices of indigenous Evenki people?
- How has «tradition» been constructed in indigenous movement and identity politics?
- Which social and environmental impacts had the BAM on indigenous livelihood and mobility?
- What are perceptions and stakeholder relations around new industrial projects and resource extraction?
- Which local visions and projects of community development involve indigenous people's traditional knowledge and culture?

EVENKI PEOPLE

- Population: over 35000 in Russia, 500 Evenki - in Kalarskii District and 800 - in Tyndinskii District.
- Residence: majority - in “ethnic” villages, intelligentsia - BAM towns, 10% nomadic population - in taiga.
- Occupation: state sector, indigenous communities and cooperatives; SME and extractive companies; subsistence



EVENKI POPULATION DYNAMICS IN ZABAIKAL'SKII KRAI



TRADITIONAL LAND USE

- Traditional activities (hunting, small-scale reindeer herding, fishing), based on spiritual connection with land, nomadism, protective strategies of resource use (Sirina 2002)
- Evenki customary law: no borders, no property on the land (Suslov 2000)
- Kolkhoz period: “traditional industries” subsidized by the state, providing employment, land owned by the state
- Since late socialism: alienation of lands to industrial projects
- 1990s – designing traditional land use territories to protect traditional activities (Zadorozhniy et al., 1995)

TAIGA LANDSCAPES

Summer reindeer pastures

View of the Lake Saku



Suylban River in midsummer



TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Small-scale reindeer herding



White “sacred” reindeer



**Using Reindeer for
Transportation during
Hunting**



Milking a Doe Deer



TRADITION AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

- **Socialist construction: “invention” of tradition in opposition to culture and modernity in campaigns for illumination of illiteracy, cultural “enlightenment” and collectivization of “backward” peoples of the North (Slezkine 1994)**
- **Soviet modernization and nation-building: Evenki as part of the Soviet people and state, primordial identity construction (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003)**
- **Post-Soviet indigenous movement: since the 1990s, indigenous rights agenda in public discourse, first organizations (Pika et al. 1996)**
- **Contemporary legal status: “indigenous numerically small peoples of the North” as a category, “traditional way of life” and “traditional activities” as the main criteria; federal “ethnic” laws on indigenous rights, territories and enterprises “*obschinas*” adopted in 2000s (Novikova 2002)**
- **Evenki: ethnic identity and culture, establishment of**

BAM: TECHNOLOGICAL ENGINEERING

- **Late socialism project: 1974 – launch of construction, last megalomaniac Communist industrial project exploiting USSR's natural resources for propagandistic and economic reasons (*Ward 2009*)**
- **Infrastructure: BAM with sidetracks built for transportation of mineral resources and cargo in 1974-1984; 4500 km., over 200 stations, including 65 towns, side-tracks leading to mines**
- **Passenger connection: 1-2 trains per day, recently introduced inconvenient schedule and prohibition to use industrial trains as a form of infrastructural violence (*Rogers and O'Neil 2012*)**

BAM INFRASTRUCTURE

BAM station, Novaia Chara



BAM station, Tynda



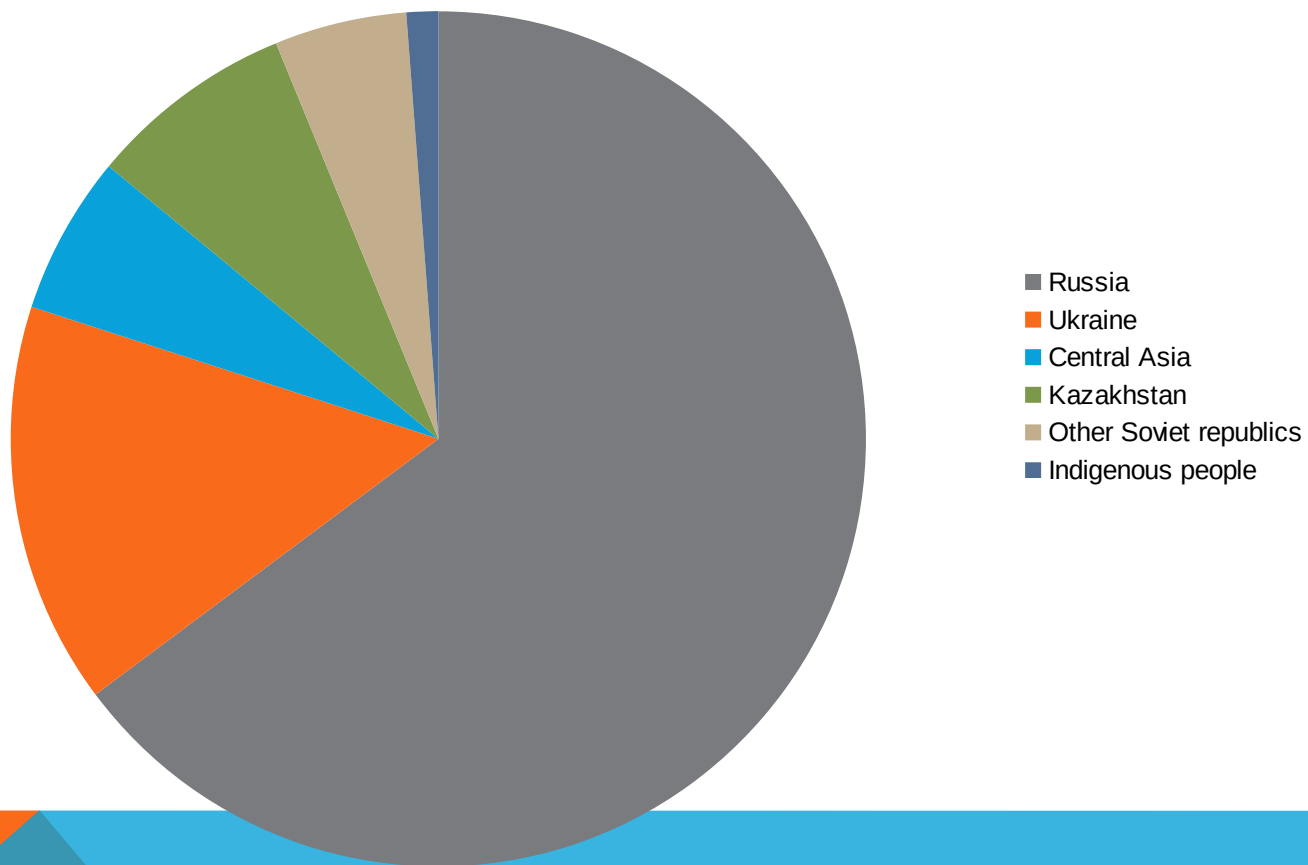
Transportation of cargo



BAM: SOCIAL ENGINEERING

- **“Building site of the century”: a ground for Soviet nation-building policies; exposure of indigenous population to multicultural environment**
- **BAM builders (*bamovtsy*) emerged as a distinct group from the first migrants, people in their 20s and 30s, drawn to the region by ideological and economic stimuli (Argudiaeva 1987); current majority population**
- **Post-soviet migrants coming with the BAM: shift/seasonal workers from former USSR and China, working in trade, services, transportation**
- **Evenki people involved in geological prospecting and early stages of construction as porters; later on completely excluded from industrial projects (Anderson 1991)**
- **60% Evenki expected positive changes from**

Population along the BAM in 1984, %



SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

- **Techno-social networks: railroad infrastructure overlapping “social meshworks” (Ingold 2011) of indigenous kinship and exchange relations and connecting BAM cities with Evenki ethnic villages and taiga settlements**
- **Mobility: integration of railroad into local mobility regimes of different groups – herders, village residents, shift workers along with “traditional means” of transports (i.e. reindeer)**
- **Perceptions: BAM as “industrial monster” (Fondahl 1998), ambiguity of remoteness/connectivity; drawbacks and benefits of living “off the road”**
- **Environment: pollution and destruction of Evenki pastures, hunting grounds, and sacred places; depletion of hunting game and fish due to poaching**
- **Land use: reindeer herders changing migration routes to protect animals from noise and poachers; hunters traveling longer distances; loss of deer, spread of shift**

MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION

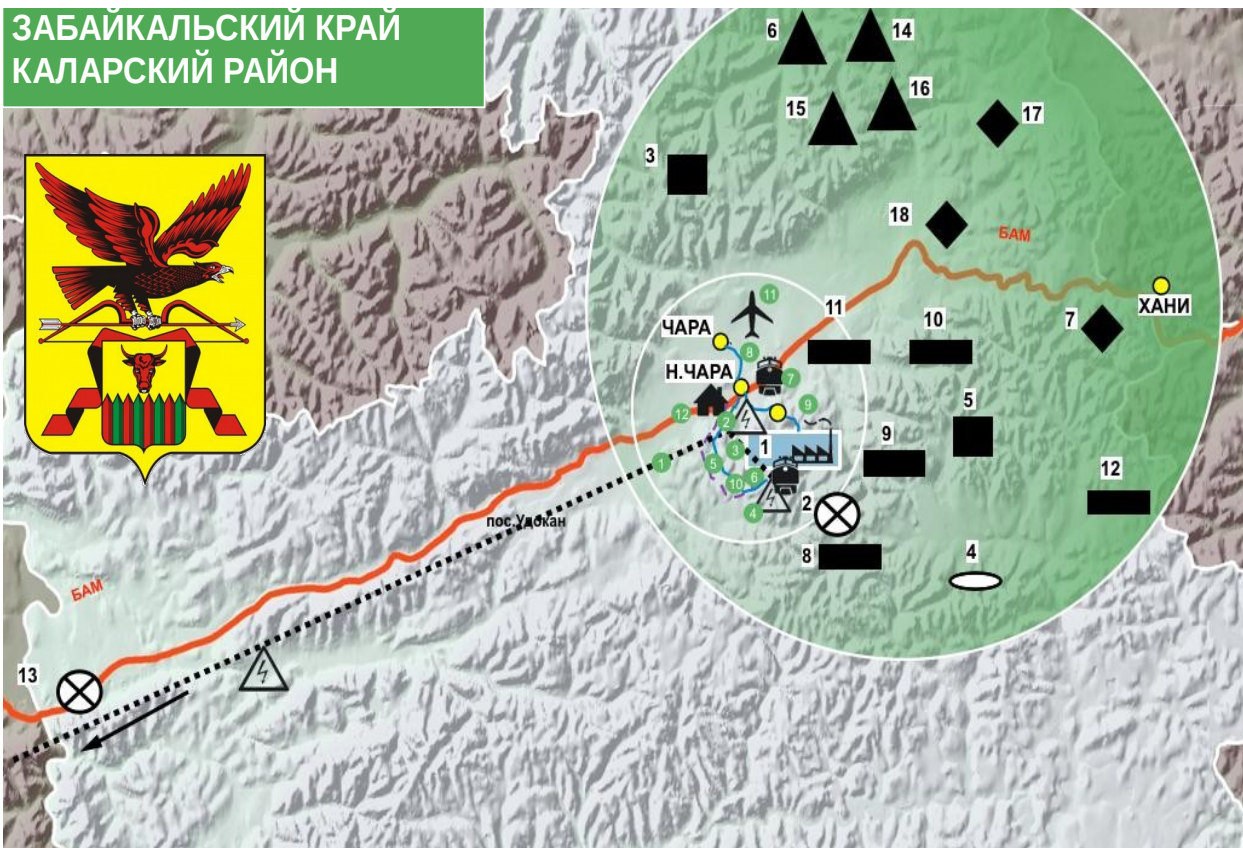


BAM AND MINING

- **Mineral deposits in operation: Udokan copper, Apsat coal in Zabaikal'skii Krai in gold mines Amurskaia Oblast', more prospected and assessed**
- **Largest Russian companies in the region, private-state investments; plans for construction of a mining and processing industrial complex**
- **BAM modernization: from 2014 - construction of the second track and new side lines (Strategiia razvitiia 2008)**
- **Impact assessments: public hearings and surveys register indigenous people's ecological and economic concerns over uncontrolled companies' activities and lacking community development programmes (SRK Consulting 2013)**

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

ЗАБАЙКАЛЬСКИЙ КРАЙ КАЛАРСКИЙ РАЙОН



МЕСТОРОЖДЕНИЯ

1. Удоканское
2. Чинейское
3. Апсатское
4. Катугинское
5. Читкандинское
6. Нижне-Сауканское (сев.)
7. Голевское
8. Правоингамакитское
9. Сакинское
10. Красное
11. Ункурское
12. Бурпалинское
13. Шаманское
14. Сулуматское (северное)
15. Нижне-Сауканское (южн.)
16. Сулуматское (южное)
17. Пуричиканское
18. Курунг-Уряхское

УСЛОВНЫЕ ОБОЗНАЧЕНИЯ

- Байкало-Амурская магистраль
- строительство и реконструкция автодорог
- восстановление железных дорог

Необходимые работы:

1. Строительство ВЛ 500 кВ «Нижнеангарская – Чара»,
2. Строительство ПС 500 кВ «Чара»,
3. Строительство ВЛ 220кВ «ПС «Чара» – ПС «Удокан»

RESOURCES AND IDENTITY POLITICS

- State policies and legislation trends: new ethnic policy (O strategii 2012), withdrawal of norms protecting indigenous rights to resources (Yakel' 2012)
- Local identity politics – construction of social and ethnic boundaries as a process organized around struggle for resources involving local elites (i.e. Sokolovskii 2012).
- Intergroup relations: negative stereotypes of BAM builders and migrants among indigenous people vs. public construction of a marginal image of Evenki and traditional lifestyle by companies
- Stakeholders: alliances btw. local administrations and companies: essentialist interpretations of tradition as a ground to deny indigenous rights to resources and lands; indigenous leaders' rhetoric of tradition in striving for compensations

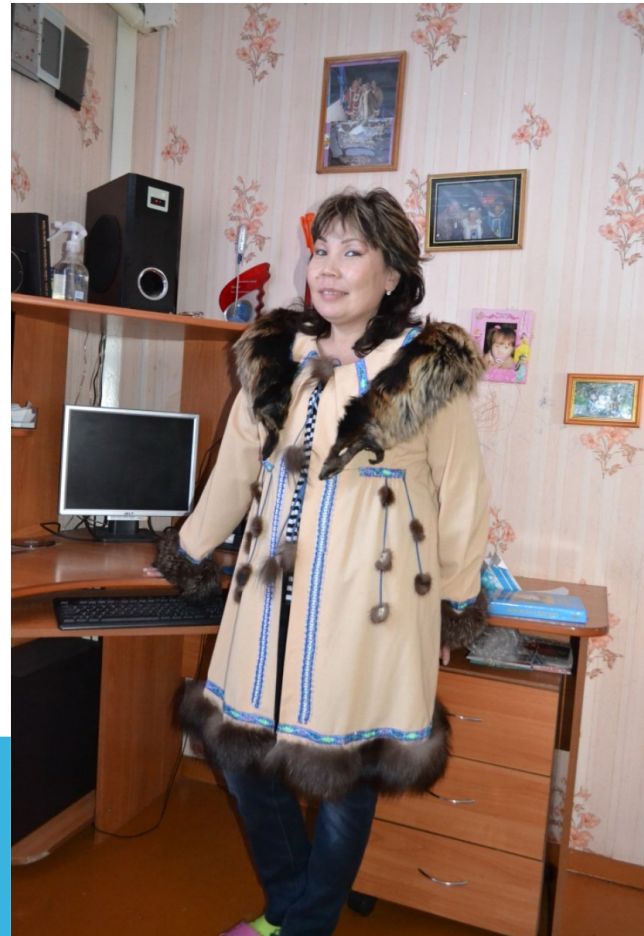
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- **Resource curse (Behrends et al. 2011) of the BAM: local communities increasingly dependent on the railroad and mining**
- **Local budgets: revenues from cargo transportation and small-scale “voluntary” companies’ support; revenues from resource extraction – to federal budget**
- **Community development agenda: sustainability and traditional (Evenki) culture as part of companies’ and administrations’ PR campaigns; climate change issue absent**
- **Investment projects: designed by administrations and indigenous leaders, commercial reindeer herding, protected areas and ethnic and ecotourism promote “tradition” as a brand**
- **Small-scale tourism business: Evenki “ethnic village” in Pervomaiskoe, “ethnic settlement” in taiga in Kalarskiy District; provide small profits and employment, but lack management and investments in infrastructure**

In local administration, Chara



Specialist on Evenki culture in ethnic dress, Pervomaiskoe



CONCLUSIONS

- BAM construction: a large-scale Soviet modernization project, which has significantly transformed traditional livelihood of the local indigenous population
- Social change: population inflow, intensive culture contacts, integration of railroad in mobility regimes, technosocial networks
- Environmental impacts: disturbed animals' habitats, polluted hunting grounds and pastures, resource depletion
- Planned infrastructures and resource extraction: ambiguous attitudes, competition between stakeholders, marginalization of indigenous minority, tradition as a tool of identity politics
- Community development: ethnic tourism and potential application of traditional knowledge and skills

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