

## Indigenous Peoples, Climate, the Arctic

For the world's Indigenous peoples, the connection with nature and our Earth is clear. Nature and Indigenous peoples are one. Damage to nature is our pain, a pain in the heart. Our entire existence has been bound up with Nature since ancient times. We strive to preserve all that has been passed down to us by our ancestors and to pass it on to future generations.

Recently, there has been an increase in the extraction of natural resources on our lands. For example, in the Murmansk region, three major mining projects are planned.

The first is the development of the Fedorova Tundra platinum group metals deposit by the company [Fedorovo Resources](#). The company has already claimed that no traditional activities are carried out on these lands, which is not true.

The second is the [Kolmozerskoye lithium](#) deposit. A new company, Polar Lithium, was created by two major industrial companies—Norilsk Nickel and the state corporation Rosatom. This deposit is located on lands currently used for traditional activities like reindeer herding. These lands will be forever lost to my people, the Sámi. Since lithium is in demand for military industries in Russia, the development of this deposit is being accelerated. Polar Lithium is conducting so-called "consultations" with the Sámi people. The company created a website and engaged international experts, but this is merely the appearance of dialogue and adherence to FPIC—or Free, Prior, and Informed Consent—principles. In reality, it is not a dialogue at all, but a mere bulletin to the Sámi people about the destruction of their lands. It's a dialogue "with a gun to the head."

The third project is the [Polmostundra lithium deposit](#). Arctic Lithium, a joint venture between TD Halmek and the Chemical and Metallurgical Plant (CMP), has quietly promoted its project in Polmos Tundra since acquiring development rights in 2023. According to the company's website, Arctic Lithium's mission is to produce high-quality lithium products with respect for the environment and to promote sustainable development. However, the website does not specifically mention the Sámi or provide an environmental impact assessment. The Kola Sámi have expressed concerns about the environmental impact and the threats to reindeer pastures posed by this mining project, which risks further encroachment on their ancestral lands. The Voronya River, adjacent to the deposit, is an important fishing resource for the Sámi, known for its diverse fish populations. Nonetheless, Arctic Lithium has not engaged in meaningful dialogue with the Sámi.

<https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/triangle-extraction-kola-peninsula/>

I cannot overlook the example of wind turbines. In the Murmansk region, 57 massive wind turbines have been installed without any consultations with the Indigenous Sámi people. Here's a quote from a [Russian media](#) outlet:

"The curious thing is that the Kola wind farm is not only a source of electricity but also a spectacle. The wind farm is located along the road connecting the federal highway 'Kola' with the Serebryanskaya hydroelectric plants and the ancient Pomor village of Teriberka, which attracts over 50,000 tourists annually. They all travel along this road and can admire the wind turbines soaring over the horizon. It's a majestic sight!" Thus, with the stroke of a journalist's pen, a Sámi settlement became a Pomor village. And for tourists, it is a spectacle. For us, it's the pain of destroyed reindeer pastures—our land!

A similar situation exists in Norway. Recall the Fosen case. In 2021, five years after construction began and a year after completion, Norway's Supreme Court declared the wind farm illegal. Yet, the turbines still stand.

The so-called development of the Russian Arctic occurs with blatant violations of international law. What are the consequences for Indigenous peoples? We lose our lands, nature is destroyed, and we lose the ability to engage in traditional activities. Without this, we vanish! Are we ready to sacrifice people for the prosperity of oligarchs and state-affiliated businesses? Preserving Indigenous peoples is our primary task. That is why we must take effective measures, but these solutions must be developed and discussed together with Indigenous peoples, based on international law and with respect for their customs and uniqueness.

What does "dialogue" look like today? Here's an example:

On June 5, 2022, an event in the form of consultations on the Kolmozero lithium deposit was held in the village of Lovozero with the Sámi and local residents. Galina Shebut, head of the Lovozero village council, said:

"Perhaps the answer will interest patriotic citizens of our country; I think they are now the majority. I am an ordinary resident of this country, like most. Is this production, which has now been initiated, part of import substitution in connection with current events? The population must understand how important it is in the current moment." Let me explain: "current moment" in Russia refers to the war in Ukraine. Thus, we see authorities openly stating that this production is essential for Russia during the war in Ukraine.

At the same meeting, two leaders of the Sámi movement, Alexander Slupachik and Andrey Zhvavy, criticized the project. Subsequently, they were forced to leave Russia and seek political asylum in Norway. We must not stand aside and watch as rights are violated with the help of state-affiliated, untrustworthy representatives of Indigenous peoples.

What is happening in Russia now, and how has the war in Ukraine affected Indigenous peoples? Frankly, in the totalitarian state of Russia, citizens have no rights. Yes, we see representatives of Russia's Indigenous peoples speaking at international platforms, praising the situation. There is an organization, RAIPON, created in the 1990s to defend Indigenous peoples' rights. But it has

now turned into a so-called GONGO— or government-organized non-governmental organization—completely controlled by the authorities, the FSB, and industrial companies. Investigations have been conducted into its activities. <https://icpr.international/archives/1028>  
<https://arctida.io/ru/projects/oni-rabotayut-na-bлаго-verhushki>

In late July 2024, the [Ministry](#) of Justice added 55 organizations to the register of extremist entities. These include organizations of Russia's Indigenous peoples on international platforms, like the International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia (ICIPR), and the news agency "[Indigenous Russia.](#)" Their new extremist status will significantly complicate their work in Russia—citizens interacting with them may face criminal charges.

On November 22, 2024, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation [declared](#) the international organization Forum of Free States of Post-Russia, established as a public movement in Poland in 2022, to be terrorist.

It includes 172 subdivisions organized by national and regional principles. The list also includes organizations such as the [International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia.](#)

I'll conclude with a quote from the film "The Kautokeino Rebellion":

"Some things are hard to talk about, but silence leads nowhere. We must speak and try to understand, even when there is no hope. Hope does not die—it moves to new hearts, like a spring wind bringing the scent of summer."

Thank you for your attention,  
Andrey Danilov, Sámi