



## International seminar 'Articulations of indigenous culture 2021' within the Russian-Japanese program 'Sustainable development: environment, resource development, intercultural education'

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## International seminar ‘Articulations of indigenous culture 2021’ within the Russian-Japanese program ‘Sustainable development: environment, resource development, intercultural education’

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On February 18, the Zoom platform hosted an international online seminar, ‘Articulations of Indigenous Culture,’ led by professors Jeffry Gayman from Hokkaido University (Japan) and Lena Sidorova from North-Eastern Federal University (Yakutsk, Russia).

The seminar was attended by students of the courses of Associate Professor N.K. Kharlampieva ‘The Arctic in the modern political system: interstate relations and research methodology’ of the Master’s program ‘World politics and Ethnic Neighborhoods’ of the CORELIS program, St. Petersburg State University.

Young researchers and representatives of the indigenous peoples made reports on the role of language in shaping the space of the world’s intercultural map. Li Wentin, a student at Hokkaido University, spoke on the politics of minority languages in China’s southern regions. Valentina Belolyubskaya, the head of the ‘Even society’ of Yakutia, presented a more in-depth report on this topic in the context of Yakutia.

Further, Fujuni Yohei, Associate Professor at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Hokkaido University Fujuni Yohei, discussed the exposition of the Ainu people at the state museums of their native Hokkaido Prefecture. Having studied the National Museum of the Ainu and the Hokkaido Museum’s expositions, the Nihoro Exchange Center, the researcher identified the characteristic features of the representation of the Ainu in the context of Japanese history and society. The most striking, from his point of view, are (1) the suppression of the participation of the Ainu in the development of modern Japan (the expositions tell about the Ainu of the distant past, but not about the contemporary time); (2) the colonial discourse in the representation of the relationship between the Japanese and the Ainu (creating the image of a kind, civilised enlightened Japanese, taking care of the ‘unreasonable’ native Ainu); (3) the regulation of the representation of the Ainu by the Japanese authorities without the participation of representatives of the indigenous minority. The speaker drew a direct parallel between the Japanese case and the discussion around the ‘white man’ legacy for non-Western civilisations. According to Fujuni Yohei, popular culture’s portrayal of the Japanese-Ainu relationship is identical to that of the ‘white man’ with the natives in

Western culture: the heroic image of a strong coloniser is opposed to weaker and innocent natives who are waiting to be rescued. At the end of his speech, the speaker expressed hope for the change in the representation of indigenous peoples and an equal dialogue between the Japanese and the Ainu people.

No less interesting were the reports of the students of the Hokkaido University, Japan. Dollin Ashleigh, a Hokkaido University graduate student, gave a talk entitled 'From a tool of destruction to a workspace of interaction and dialogue: why indigenous media have the potential to transform mainstream media industries and technologies'. In her research, Ashleigh theoretically substantiated the importance of developing and implementing the principle of indigenous storytelling – an approach in which media products, such as films, are structured and told based on the rationality and worldview of a particular indigenous community. From the author's point of view, this will allow representatives of indigenous peoples, often located both globally and locally on the periphery of the media field, to find a voice and express themselves and their pressing problems directly, in a form not distorted by the Orientalist optics of 'white' media. An essential feature of this approach is the therapeutic property that allows members of the indigenous community to create a media product to relieve and overcome the individual and collective trauma that originated in the era of the Western colonial rule using widespread methods and technologies of media production. However, the indigenous media products made to put in order the socio-psychological state of the indigenous community members should not be profit-oriented.

Valentin Viktorovich Khristoforov – editor-in-chief of the republican newspaper of indigenous peoples of the North 'Ilken' in Yakutia, in his report 'The voice of indigenous small numbered peoples of Yakutia: Ilken newspaper' spoke about the situation of the indigenous peoples of the North. He emphasised the challenges related to funding for various projects and, in particular, for the newspaper's regular publication. However, the newspaper is just one platform for the representatives of the indigenous peoples of the North to publish on the different aspects of their culture. In 2020, together with the Sakhapechat Internet portal, the Ilken multimedia portal was launched. The first test launch took place on February 13 – on the Day of the Mother Language in Yakutia.

A speech by Kayano Shiro, Ainu, Director of the Ainu Museum, Pipaushi Radio, Biratiri Ainu language community, aroused great interest. He said that about 400 people listen to the radio, which is aired once a month and run by volunteers. The Ain's times newspaper supports the Ainu language. He expressed regret that in Taiwan the government supports all forms of media for the Japanese who have remained there, while the Ainu do not have their own television.

The seminar participants took part in the discussion of the problems of indigenous peoples in their countries and expressed their opinion on the importance of continuing the preservation and restoration of languages as an element in the identification of peoples and their territories.

The organisers from the Hokkaido University provided a simultaneous translation of Russian, Japanese and English for participants from different parts of the world. We thank the head of the course Nadezhda Klimovna Kharlampieva for the opportunity and preliminary assignments for writing essays on specific topics.