

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
18th Session
New York, USA, 22 April – 3 May 2019
Agenda Item 5 (Discussion on the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages)

Sva telt! Esteemed Madam Chair,

I want to express my gratitude to the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples and the Tribal Link Foundation for making my participation in the Permanent Forum session possible.

My name is Dariya Egereva, and I am Selkup. I am attending this session as a representative of the Tomsk Region Association of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples.

In this International Year of Indigenous Languages, we must admit that the Selkup language is hardly supported at all. There is not a single school in Tomsk Region where the Selkup language is taught, even as an optional course. There are only three people left in the Tomsk Region who are fluent in their native language. With support from Tomsk State Pedagogical University, Selkup language courses are now conducted in the regional center. Native speakers in cooperation with scholars have gathered materials for publishing a picture dictionary and a grammar reference book, but, unfortunately, there is no money for the publication of these books. There are no allocated paid positions for Selkup language teachers in any part of the North of Tomsk Region where small-numbered indigenous peoples reside. The work that teachers do rests entirely on their shoulders. There is not a single school in Tomsk Region where the Selkup language is taught, even as an optional course. The Selkup language is taught only as part of an organization's social activities, which requires funding from additional sources. Applications for financial support for the language (to conduct courses and/or publish textbooks) are sent to award competitions everywhere. Applications are sent to the "Presidential Grants Fund" on a regular basis, but — unsuccessfully. It is important to point out that financial support is granted only to the projects where indigenous peoples are considered as an object of research. Means of supporting languages, other than public financing in subsidized regions, do not exist. There are no funds, large enterprises or social investments. There is not a single school in Tomsk Region where the Selkup language is taught, even as an optional course. There are no textbooks, no didactic literature. An alphabet book was published 25 years ago but has not been reissued since then. Lesson plans are typed up by volunteers, but they do not have enough money to cover all the expenses.

In accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 13, Clause 1, and Article 14, Clause 1, we urge you to help us to exercise our right to revitalize and develop our language. We recommend developing an effective system for supporting languages, including innovative programs and approaches, and to establish fixed support for languages in the regional budget plan, which entails publishing textbooks and establishing paid teacher positions. We also recommend providing geography, history and social studies textbooks with translated toponymic and hydronymic names to popularize indigenous languages. Moreover, we draw your attention to the fact that language is a part of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge; therefore, all activities to conserve and revitalize the language should be carried out in partnership with native speakers, their communities and organizations.

Svak!

Thank you for your attention!