



Местная общественная организация  
Таймырского Долгано-Ненецкого муниципального района  
«Ассоциация коренных малочисленных народов Таймыра Красноярского края»  
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Mr Thomas Nilsen,  
Editor-in-Chief of the Barents Observer Magazine

Dear Mr. Nilsen,

Your publication carries an article titled, "Indigenous peoples call on Normickel's global partners to demand environmental action" in which the head of the Batani Foundation, Pavel Sulyandziga insults the indigenous residents of Taimyr, our communities, as well as the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North on the Taimyr Peninsular in the Krasnoyarsk Territory.

We do not know what projects the Batani Foundation and its chairman are involved in. We are sure that he should not make public statements about Taimyr and the indigenous residents of the area without knowing us and not communicating with us.

Let me remind you of the norms of international law. Article 18 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states: "Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures...". And let me right here recall the words from the Preamble of the Declaration, "Affirming that indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such." The peoples of the Primorsky Territory in the Far East, to which Mr. Sulyandziga belongs, are clearly different from the indigenous peoples of Taimyr, therefore he must treat us with respect and recognize our right to make decisions through representatives elected according to our own procedures. These procedures are over thirty years old. All our congresses are held publicly and transparently with representatives-delegates from all the villages of Taimyr and the tundra taking part in the election procedures. We do not close ourselves off from mass media journalists.

We did not elect Mr. Sulyandziga as our representative the way we elect heads of our communities and chairpersons of associations. Taimyr and the indigenous residents of Taimyr are beyond the competence of Mr. Sulyandziga.

We consider offensive the accusations of Mr. Sulyandziga against the indigenous peoples of Taimyr that some companies bribe us, pay for loyalty and force us to paint a rosy picture.

We consider it natural to cooperate with big business for the sake of preserving the culture, languages, crafts and traditional nature management of the Nenets, Dolgans, Nganasans, Evenks and Enets living on the Taimyr Peninsular. Funding by a large company of projects for the development of everyday life, crafts and culture of the indigenous peoples

and payment of compensation is a generally accepted world practice, and this does not mean that someone buys someone else's loyalty or soul. And we are very offended to hear such words from Mr. Sulyandziga, an Udege who has nothing to do with Taimyr.

Article 8, Paragraph 4 of The Federal Law "On guarantees for the rights of the indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation" reads: "Indigenous peoples ... have the right to receive ... from organizations of all forms of ownership ... material and financial resources necessary for the socio-economic and cultural development of indigenous peoples, protection of their original habitat, traditional way of life, economic activity and crafts".

We know how to defend our rights and we also know how to build a dialogue. We agree on activities and means that create for us new trades, jobs, housing, sales of goods, and textbooks in the languages of Taimyr. The relationship with Norilsk Nickel, with which we have lived and worked for 85 years, did not always suit us. There were problems, but we solved them together. After the diesel oil spill, we see positive changes in policy and approaches to interaction with the indigenous minorities of Taimyr. The company has entered into agreements with the associations of the indigenous peoples of Russia, the Krasnoyarsk Territory and Taimyr, and together with the communities and the Association of the indigenous peoples of the Taimyr Peninsula has developed a five-year development program for 2 billion rubles, which includes funds for the construction of new houses in the villages, for transport means, for the development of community crafts, and for assessment of commercial resources, fish and deer. All these obligations are fixed in a quadripartite agreement of the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation, the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the Krasnoyarsk Territory, the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North on the Taimyr Peninsular in the Krasnoyarsk Territory with the Norilsk Nickel company. The Coordination Council of Indigenous Peoples established under the leadership of the Norilsk Combine will monitor and determine how efficiently the allocated funds will be used. We expect to plan the development of the community economy and the infrastructure of the villages in team with the company. And we have already received Norilsk Nickel's consent.

In addition, 51 communities, farms and families that fish in the Pyasina River received compensation for damage to traditional environmental management in the amount of 177 million rubles. Is it that their loyalty is paid this way, by the logic of Mr. Sulyandziga?

The letter of complaint, which was organized by Mr. Sulyandziga, is also signed by our community member Gennady Schukin. The Amyaksin community headed by him received the largest compensation from Norilsk Nickel in December last year, more than 30 million rubles. Nevertheless, Mr. Schukin, being the editor of the Aborigen-Forum website, supports in this letter the idea that the indigenous peoples of Taimyr are deprived of any help. Perhaps it would be better to think about how to spend the money received for the benefit of the members of their communities and to bring these funds to ordinary members of the community? Mr. Schukin sometimes tries to advertise himself as a 'representative' of the peoples of Taimyr! We might not be against it but let him at least once hold a general meeting of his public organization to hear reports and elect new management bringing together representatives of all villages, as we do. Let him at least once deliver a report on his activities. It would have been good in the past twenty years to see him at least once visit the Dudinka Orphanage, where indigenous orphans live, or the Dudinka Boarding School, or the Taimyr College.

We do not know the other people who signed the letter, it is also unclear why they sign letters on behalf of a territory they do not know and speak about problems they do not understand. Apparently, they do this to simulate activity and care, trying to earn a reputation of social activists.

The indigenous communities of Taimyr have many real problems. These are medical care, transport accessibility, quotas for fishing and hunting for wild deer, restrictions on fishing for many valuable species of fish. All this reduces the income of the communities.

We do not need any public figures outside Taimyr to arrogate the right to speak on our behalf. This is not help, but an attempt to gain fame at the expense of other people's problems.

Our Taimyr is larger than two Norways in area, it hosts more than 10,000 indigenous residents, five indigenous peoples including the Nenets, Dolgans, Nganasans and Enets, our communities have different ways of farming, different climate zones, different economies and trades, different markets for products and an almost complete absence of industry throughout the territory. This involves the developed reindeer husbandry in the west, reindeer husbandry and hunting in Khatanga in the northeast, fishing on the Yenisei, Kheta and Pyasina, mainly hunting in the Avam tundra. This involves different peoples – the Nenets in Karaul, Nosk, Tukhard in the west and in the tundra, Dolgans in the north in Khatanga and on the Pyasina River, Enets in the north near the Yenisei and in Ust-Avam on the Pyasina River, Nganasans in Ust Avam and Volochanka on the Kheta River. There are territories and communities that historically gravitate towards Dudinka and Norilsk, there is a Dolgan Khatanga with villages connected by a common Dolgan culture with the neighboring Anabar District of Yakutia, there is Dikson, where mostly Russians live.

It should be said that the heads of some communities do not live in Taimyr, but in Norilsk, because for us this is a large sales market, and not just a source of problems, as strangers write. Imagine, dear Mr. Nilsen, that we do not only expect help from someone, as Gennady Schukin writes, but we are also manufacturing goods, integrating into the modern economy and looking for access to the market, including in other areas. Many villages in Taimyr are many hundreds of kilometers away from each other and are connected only by helicopter flights, sometimes by winter roads, or by year-round river navigation from Dudinka downstream along the Yenisei - the cargos of community members and residents of the villages are delivered by Norilsk Nickel ships. The ice-free port of Dudinka, the modern airport of Norilsk, the highway from Dudinka to Norilsk are important for us - all this was built by Norilsk Nickel and we recognize its infrastructural contribution to the development of Taimyr and the crafts of the communities.

On the Taimyr Peninsular there are just two villages inhabited by an ancient indigenous people, the Enets, whose number is a little more than 200. Preservation of the culture of this people is one of the priority tasks of the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North on the Taimyr Peninsular in the Krasnoyarsk Territory. In 2018, Norilsk Nickel financed the creation of the first ABC book of the Enets language and the development of the Enets writing and grammar by the Siberian Federal University. We told the UN about this project.

Our Taimyr is a complex and ethnically diverse world, a huge territory with its own special problems and interests of its residents. You cannot judge about this area in a stereotyped manner and publish stereotyped opinions.

Last year, the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North on the Taimyr Peninsular in the Krasnoyarsk Territory, together with the Arctic Development Project Office, initiated an ethnological expertise to assess the impact of the diesel oil spill on the ethnological environment, on the traditional use of natural resources by communities. This work was carried out with the support of Norilsk Nickel and became a precedent for Russia. Today, together with leading institutions such as the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology named after N.N. Miklouho-Maclay, Research Institute of Arctic and Indigenous Minorities Problems, we continue research to obtain a complete and comprehensive picture of the factors of sustainable development of the Taimyr indigenous minorities. The results of these studies will become the basis for further dialogue and interaction with big business in the field of preserving and developing the culture, crafts and traditional way of life of the indigenous peoples of Taimyr. There is no such experience anywhere except Taimyr!

Dear Mr. Nilsen, we ask you to take into account the opinion of the indigenous people of Taimyr, the chairpersons of the communities, the Association of Indigenous Peoples of

the North on the Taimyr Peninsular in the Krasnoyarsk Territory and not allow people who are not related to our land, insult us and substitute their opinion for ours, talk about the fictitious problems of Taimyr, ignoring what is really important. We have the right to speak on our own behalf about our lives and problems and do not need impostors pretending our defenders. There is no need to portray us as inept, incapable to organize interaction, demand and receive compensation for environmental and ethnological damage when it is actually caused, participate in the modern market and defend our rights.

We also ask you to convey to Mr. Sulyandziga that we ask him to publicly apologize on the pages of your publication, or stop writing about Taimyr, which he knows nothing about. Come to Taimyr yourself and communicate with us directly if you want to know how we live and where we really need support.

Head of the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North on the Taimyr Peninsular  
in the Krasnoyarsk Territory



G.I. Dyukarev