

**СОВЕТ СТАРЕЙШИХ ХАКАССКОГО НАРОДА
ELDERS COUNCIL OF THE KHAKASS PEOPLE**

**INFORMATION FOR THE 7TH UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON
INDIGENOUS ISSUES, NEW YORK APRIL 21 – MAY 02 2008**

Delegation of the Elders Council of the Khakass People attending the 7th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues expresses deep appreciation to the Forum for the opportunity to attend and take part in the working of the 7th Session.

Khakass are a small nation consisting of 85.000 people are indigenous inhabitants of southern Siberia. Our ancient nation has more than 3000 years of history. During the ancient times our people populated huge swaths of southern Siberia between the river Angara in the north to the western Sayan mountains in the south to the river Irtysh on the East. Current our people are concentrated on a much smaller piece of land called Khakass-Minusinsk depression.

Throughout history various states were formed on our land. 1000 BC the first state in the North Asian was formed by our ancestors – Enisey Kyrgyz which lasted until the 13th century of our era. From 13 to 17 century our land was a province of the Genghis Khan Empire. Beginning in the 18th century we were conquered by Russian Empire and lost our statehood until the late 20th century when it was restored during the Soviet Union breakup.

Currently over 600.000 people live in the Republic of Khakassia of which only 12 % or less than 67.000 are actually Khakass. We are an indigenous minority on our own land and consequently are facing great difficulties in preserving our language, customs, traditions and culture

These problems have become particularly acute in the last 10-15 years when a forced suppression of the Khakass language became a semi-official policy in the republic. It takes various forms such as cutting state financing for books and magazines published in our language, native language school books some of which have not been republished for over 25 years but have to be published anew every 4-5 years.

Last ten years at the beginning of the school year we are missing more than 1/3 of the Khakass language school books while school books in Russian language are freely available. Several municipalities made attempts to close schools that teach in Khakass language all together. Khakass schools in rural communities are falling apart and many are in emergency conditions.

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We are also concerned about our environment because of the aluminum production on our land. Cancer rates have risen threefold in the last 20 years since the smelters started working.

Thousands of years of Khakass history left a rich cultural heritage to the contemporaries. Archeological monuments on our land are counted in the thousands. It is not an accident that Khakassia is known around the world as an "archeological paradise". We are trying to

Restore several unique sites that are a world cultural patrimony, such as a unique Hun palace from the first century AD that was discovered and excavated by a world famous Khakass archeologist Kyzlasov right after the World War 2.

Elders Council of Khakass People is currently financing and is looking for additional development funds to:

- Support publishing existing publishing house that puts out books and magazines in the Khakass language.
- Create a multi-media center that will produce programming for the local cable channel in the Khakass language including children programs
- Expand a very successful program that concentrates on the indigenous way of animal herding and land cultivation

Once again we express our deep gratitude to the UN for the creation of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and for the opportunity to attend this very important event.

Chairman of the Council
Vladislav Torosov