



Russia

Introduction

The Indigenous Udege people, one of the 48 indigenous peoples officially listed and recognised in Russia [1], inhabit the Ussuri taiga – temperate forest on the Sikhote-Alin mountains, located between the Sea of Japan to the east and the Chinese border to the west. This area contains the highest biodiversity in boreal Asia, including the flagship Siberian tiger and other rare and endemic species of fauna and flora – *panax ginseng*, Korean pine, *schizandra chinensis*, *eleuterococcus*, velvet tree, and salmon and bird species. [2] Unfortunately, the proximity of China and Japan means that there is great demand for these biological resources. Udege traditional areas face the rapid expansion of external logging, hunting, salmon fishing and mining operations. [3] As such, the Udege suffer from competition over the resources that sustain their livelihoods.

The poor state of environmental protection and enforcement since the 1990s has only compounded the problem with growing legal and illegal logging, mining, oil-gas pipeline development, unsustainable hunting and poaching, and fishing and harvesting of non-timber products in order to meet the

demands of the Chinese and Japanese markets. This has benefited the new Russian oligarchs.

The Udege tribe, descendants from the ancient Mongolian-Chinese empires of the middle ages, include around 2,500 people, spread over the Russian Far East (RFE). [4] Some of them live around Northern Sikhote-Alin in Khadarovsk territory, but most are in Primorsky, in about 20 legal entities known as tribal or nomadic communes (“obschina”).

Russian law formally recognises the existence of indigenous territories [5] and grants native peoples special hunting [6] and fishing [7] rights. However, there is a serious discrepancy between formal rights and law enforcement and management in practice, leading to deep conflicts around indigenous priorities. Regulations regarding indigenous privileges are overly complicated, unclear, and often changed without informing the communities.



Fishing on Bikin River. BROC/CIC

The CCRI worked with three Udege communities in Primorye inhabiting the Iman, Bikin and Samarga river valleys. The assessment process included regular bilateral contacts with community leaders, field visits, and a round table discussion with indigenous leaders and the deputy governor, which led to the adoption of a road map. A full-day capacity building workshop for leaders of the three communities then took place at the Iman municipal centre. This was followed by a conference in Vladivostok in September, which included a report back from the Fostering Community Conservation Conference held in Durban in August. This conference included the development of submissions to fora such as the forthcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) summit in Paris in December 2015.



Community Conservation Resilience in Russia

The Udege have become an essential part of the entire forest ecosystem over the centuries—along with the charismatic Siberian tiger, they are an important link in the forest food chain. Wild meat and fish are important to Udege tradition and play a key role in their diets, and this livelihood strategy has been found to be environmentally sustainable. [8] Even though the Udege increasingly live in rural towns and grow vegetables and farm cattle, dependence on forest, fish and wildlife remains the core of their livelihoods.

Because the men are often away for long periods hunting and fishing, women have equal rights to men and play a significant role in dealing with officials, regulations and documents. They tend to be much more aware of legal details and specific problems of fish and wildlife use and management and often fulfil leadership positions in communes and associations. However, the Udege people's traditional territories are facing escalating and destructive resource use, and they are losing their struggle to control and conserve the resources that sustain their livelihoods. [9]

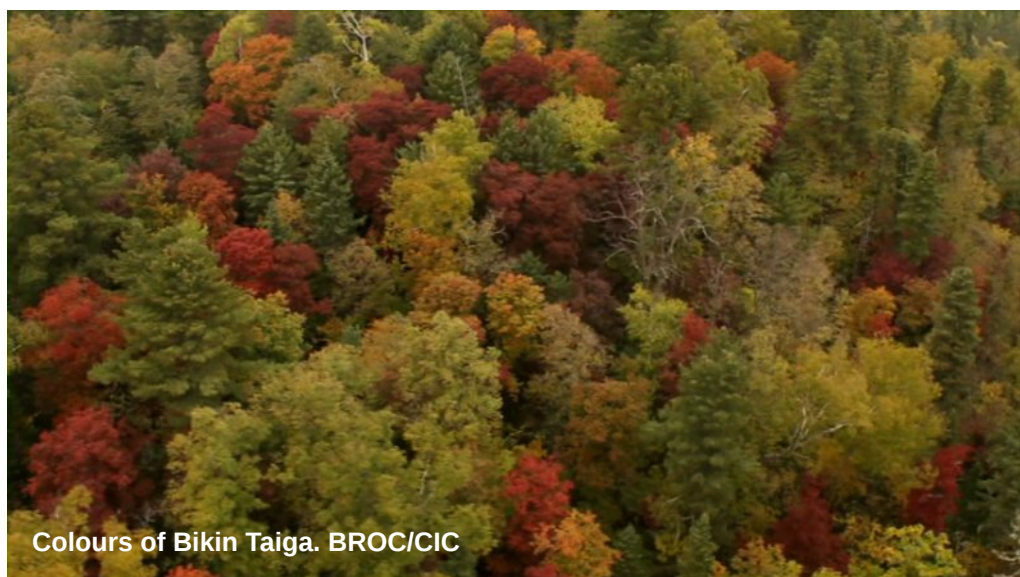
The main external threats identified by the communities include the absence of recognised land rights and the overexploitation of fish and wildlife resources by poachers, especially the overharvesting of salmon stocks by commercial fishing fleets, which has led to a serious decline in salmon resources. Government authorities often react

by limiting hunting and fishing opportunities for the Udege, who already lack natural resources. Social and political marginalisation, and not understanding the regulations, trigger frequent conflicts between communes and government inspectors, turning Udege into criminal poachers and prey for inspectors.

Legal and illegal logging forms another serious threat for the livelihoods of Udege communities. Specific threats to the Samarga and Bikin community include bad infrastructure, which make it hard for them to bring non-timber forest products (NTFP) and salmon to the market. The 'Udege Legend' National Park was created on the Iman River to support Udege culture and livelihoods. However timber businesses, dependent local officials and hunters succeeded in replacing an Udege-friendly person with a former inspector for the director's position. As a result Udege people themselves are now banned from entering the park, which is seriously harming their traditional hunting practices.

Another important external impact is ignorance about boreal forests and their communities in most forest-related schemes established under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other conventions.

The main internal threats identified include a lack of capacity to fully understand relevant hunting and fishing regulations. This leads to frequent conflicts, both with law enforcement authorities and internally, as indigenous and non-indigenous individuals in one community are subject to different privileges. Another serious threat is the loss of traditional knowledge, language and customary practices, especially amongst the youth. Moreover, many young people, especially women, choose to stay in cities after completing their education, causing a generational gap. Due to lack of employment and opportunities, there are few people between the ages of twenty and thirty in traditional communities.



Colours of Bikin Taiga. BROCC/CIC



Preliminary Conclusions and Recommendations

After a series of consultations and workshops in which were included indigenous communities, leaders of the Russian Far East and colleagues from the Global Forest Coalition, a road map for the region has been formulated:

First, to pass regional regulations with indigenous participation, providing prioritised access to specified volumes of fish and wildlife resources for indigenous communities. Additionally, to regularly monitor the environmental conditions in indigenous territories. Thirdly, to support the self-governance of communities through the creation of indigenous councils under the regional and municipal governments of Primorye. Furthermore, to address the main social problems in the communities including education, medical services, power supply and infrastructure.

In addition to this, the community initiated further recommendations to support community resilience and conservation. Recommendations include strengthening policies and strategies to prevent overexploitation of salmon stocks and including indigenous representatives in working groups that establish fish and wildlife quotas. There is also a need to address illegal and unsustainable logging and create special rules to cut Korean pine for Udege traditional boats and wood for tribal needs. There should be a training program for young Udege on traditional resource management practices and related skills that contribute to economic livelihoods. They also

called for the creation of the Bikin National Park as a co-managed protected area with effective indigenous participation and the correction of federal legislation; and to recreate the indigenous division in the Udege Legend National Park and ensure its management complies with the law. Communities need to be educated about existing biodiversity and about current regulations in fishing and hunting, and governmental agencies need to properly recognise, respect and support indigenous conservation practices, traditional knowledge and related privileges.



Udege boat on Bikin. Yuki Mikami Taiga Forum/CIC



Beekeeping is popular with the Udege, Russia CCRI.
Yuki Mikami Taiga Forum/CIC



Testimony

Testimony by Nadezha Selyuk, Vice Chair of the Primorye Association of Indigenous People at the Workshop, 27 July 2015. "Russian law formally acknowledges the existence of indigenous territories, but in practice no specific territory has been recognised. Indigenous peoples live there, can hunt and fish, but they have no tenure at all. Our experience collaborating with national parks authorities caused low trust in that model of conservation, until our rights to take part in territorial management are legally granted. We hope the new Bikin Park will do this for all national parks. There should also be an indigenous fund for protection of traditional knowledge and culture with an indigenous council under a federal programme."



Hearings on Bikin national park model, Udege town of Krasny Yar, March 2015. BROCC/CIC

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