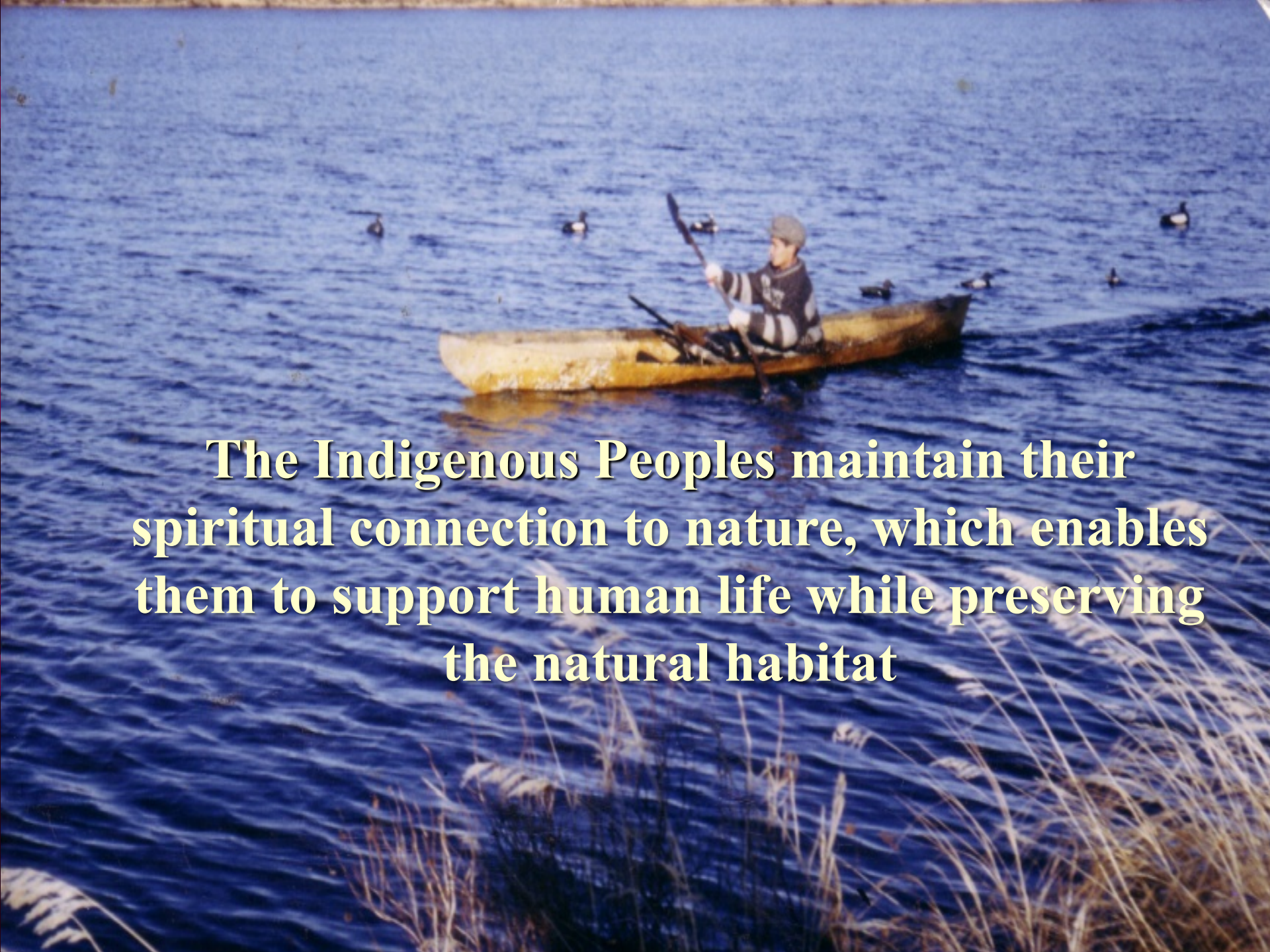


The role of indigenous peoples of the North and their associations in environmental protection in the North and the Arctic

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A photograph of a person in a yellow canoe on a blue lake. The person is wearing a grey cap and a dark long-sleeved shirt with white stripes on the sleeves. They are holding a paddle. Several ducks are swimming in the water around the canoe. In the foreground, there are some dry, brown reeds or grasses. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

**The Indigenous Peoples maintain their
spiritual connection to nature, which enables
them to support human life while preserving
the natural habitat**

Being an integral part of nature, it is only fitting for the small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North to play a special role in resolving its pressing environmental issues.

The traditional resource use practices developed by them proved optimal for the territory, as did their indigenous culture enabling their integration into their habitat.

The whole indigenous peoples' history shows that their traditional practices of natural resource use have helped our country preserve the immense expanses of the North relatively untouched.

*«We are part of our land
and our waters»*

In the Russian Federation, the legislation on the rights of small-numbered indigenous peoples owes its development largely to environmental issues. The second half of the 1980-s saw the growth of USSR's environmental movement, under whose auspices indigenous peoples started uniting to protect their lands as the basis of their subsistence.

In 1989-1990, the movement took institutional shape by forming the regional and the all-Union associations of the peoples of the North.



From the onset, environmental rights had a special place in the system of indigenous peoples' rights



**Indigenous peoples' environmental rights include: the right to a clean and
favourable environment, the right to complete and verifiable
information on the condition of the natural environment**



**the right of access to lands, territories and resources, and
right to traditional use of natural resources, including reindeer
herding, fishing, hunting, and gathering.**

With active participation of Northern indigenous peoples' organizations, the environmental rights of the peoples of the North gradually became enshrined in the regional law since 1990 and in the federal law since 1992.

According to the legislation of the Russian Federation, the criteria for classifying them as Indigenous peoples of the North are:

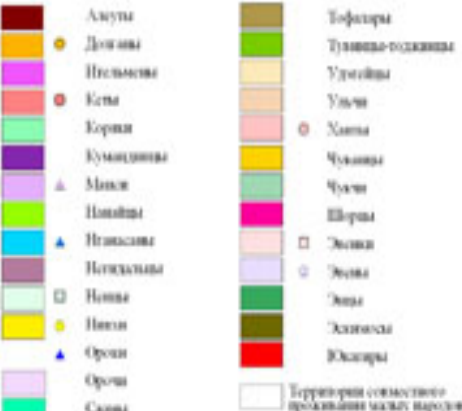
- number less than 50,000 people;
- live on the traditional territories;
- preserve traditional livelihood;
- independent ethnic self-identity.



North indigenous peoples of Russia

**40 indigenous groups;
total population is around 240,000 people;**

**34 regions of Russia where they live;
2/3 territory of Russia;**



The right of access to resources and lands has a special significance for indigenous peoples and their survival.



The term “territory of traditional natural resource use” (TTNRU) appeared in the Russian legislation, enshrined in Federal Law on 2001,

On beginning TTNRUs were initially included in the designated conservation areas (DCAs).

Most of the territory of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is preserved land – 37% of it is DCAs and 53% TTNRUs.

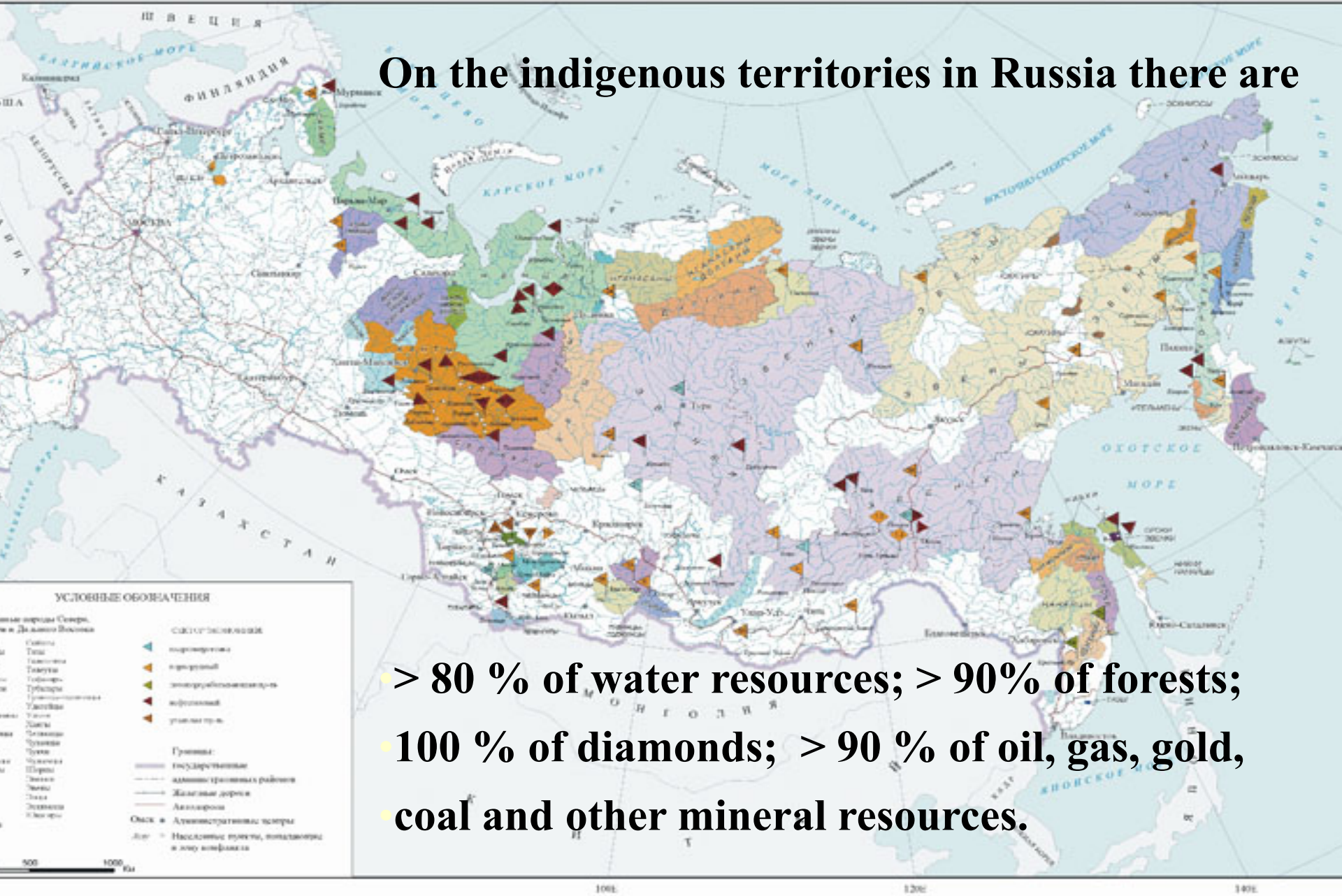
Yakutia is home to 5 indigenous peoples of the North: the Evenki, Even, Dolgan, Yukaghir, and Chukchi (totaling about 40 thousand people).

A detailed illustration of a large herd of reindeer running across a snowy, open landscape. The reindeer are depicted in various shades of brown and grey, with prominent antlers. They are moving from left to right, kicking up small clouds of snow. The background shows a flat, snow-covered plain under a pale, overcast sky.

21 districts and 71 municipalities are considered as areas of compact settlement of the indigenous peoples of the North in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

On the indigenous territories in Russia there are

- > 80 % of water resources; > 90% of forests;
- 100 % of diamonds; > 90 % of oil, gas, gold,
- coal and other mineral resources.



Among the factors undermining indigenous peoples' environmental rights are climate change, the cutting of forests, fossil extraction, building of oil or gas pipelines, seizure of traditional lands and sacred places, development projects, agricultural programmes, etc.



At the initiative of Yakutian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) adopted a number of relevant laws (“On Ethnological Expert Assessment” (2010), “On the Protection of Indigenous Habitats, Traditional Lifestyles, Livelihoods, and Trades of the Indigenous Peoples of the North in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)” (2011), and “On the Responsible Use of Subsoil Resources on the Territory of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)” (2018).

A young child stands in the center of the frame, wearing a thick, white parka with brown fur trim around the hood and cuffs. The child's face is slightly red from the cold. The background is a vast, flat, snowy landscape under a pale sky. In the distance, there are some wooden structures and other people, suggesting a remote settlement or research station.

**In the recent years,
come into focus**

**the Arctic has
for Russia.**

**In 2020 the law “On the Support of
Entrepreneurship in the Arctic Area of the
Russian Federation” was adopt.**

When the bill was presented in 2018, we were seriously concerned, as initially it only envisaged economic and financial support to the industrial exploration of the territories.



Meanwhile, in 2018-2020 we had a number of big industrial disasters, including

- the 2018 large-scale pollution of the Lena river caused by the washed-out dams of the ALROSA diamond miners and**

- the 2020 disaster in Norilsk – one of the largest petrochemical leaks in the Arctic ever (> 20 thousand tonnes), threatening the Arctic ocean ecosystems.**

It was the IPN communities that raised the alarm and drew the attention of the public, media and government to these catastrophes.

This forced the authorities to incorporate our proposals to law:

- on reinforced environmental control,**
- damage compensation to IPN communities,**
- social responsibility of industrial companies.**



The indigenous peoples remain at the frontline of the Arctic environment protection.

Ensuring decent living for the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of Russia and protecting their environmental rights in line with international standards must be among the priorities for federal- as well as regional- and local-level authorities.