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## The Indigenous Languages of the North : A Report on Their Present State

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## The Indigenous Languages of the North: A Report on Their Present State

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The purpose of this paper is to provide realistic information on the present state of the languages of the North, their definition (language as opposed to dialect), realistic estimates of the total ethnic populations and of the number and age composition of speakers for each, and brief references to the individuals and institutions responsible for their study.

### 1. DEFINITION OF TERMS AND PROCEDURE

The scope of this report defines *Northern* languages on a combined geopolitical and genetic basis, as the following indigenous language groupings: Greenlandic Inuit of Greenland (Denmark); in Canada the Inuit language of Labrador, Quebec, and the Northwest Territories, the Athabaskan (Dene) languages in or partly in the Northwest and Yukon Territories; in the United States, all languages in or partly in Alaska (Eskimo-Aleut, Athabaskan, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshianic); in Russia the languages of those groups defined as the so-called 26 *Malye Narody Severa* (Small Northern Peoples, but here defined as about 40 still living languages): Eskimo-Aleut, Chukchi-Koryak, Itel'men, Nivkh, Yukagir, Ket, Tungusic, the Samoyedic and Ob'-Ugric branches of Uralic, but of Finno-Permian only Saami, including Saami in northern Europe (Finland, Sweden, Norway).

The report will *not* include large and/or outlying members of these families, such as Finnish, or Komi/Zyryan, or Mari/Cheremis, or any of the Turkic (Yakut, population over 300,000; Dolgan, considered a dialect of Yakut, or Tofalar, outlying to the south, though both are currently considered Small Northern Peoples), or Algonquian or Mongolian or Indo-European (Russian; continental Scandinavian, Icelandic, or Faroese), even though many of these may have long been spoken by settled populations in the same latitudes as those included here.

The report will include incidental information on extinct languages, i.e. those which have become extinct recently enough in this century or the last, that there is some record of them.

The term *language*, as opposed to dialect, is here defined as a form of speech not initially and "practically" intelligible to speakers of other languages without

learning or practice. It is recognized that there are many borderline cases, and cases where there may be no adult speakers without such practice with neighboring closely related languages. The level of differentiation here would in European terms consider Spanish and Portuguese two different languages, likewise vernacular Swiss German and High German, but not standard Swedish and (Bokmål) Norwegian, nor Russian and Ukrainian. As such, the definition and count of different languages may vary considerably from the traditional or official, especially in Eurasia, where the definitions are especially often based on an older state of linguistic knowledge and/or political considerations.

The *names* of the languages are those currently recommended for use in English, and are usually not the name of the language in the language itself. Sometimes important other names used in the literature are given, but not mere spelling variants. As the basic organization of the report is in terms of language families, the language family and/or branch name will be introduced in italics, and the recommended language names introduced in bold type. In several borderline cases, where a breakdown into languages is questionable or novel, both levels of name will be given in bold (e.g. Aleut, Haida, Nivkh, Khanty).

Except for a few cases in Alaska, none of the base or *total population* figures or figures for number of speakers of the language are based on actual person-by-person counts, but rather they are *estimates*, even—frankly—guesses and guesses about guesses. The base population figures are often estimates or guesses using official census figures only as a general guideline. For Greenlandic, Canadian Inuit, and most Alaskan languages, they are based rather closely and directly on the official censuses of 1991, as well as local 1991 counts for Russian Eskimo. However, for Canadian Indian and other Russian Northern minority groups, the official censuses (1991 and 1989, respectively) can be used only as a general guideline, to be rounded off, and to be supplemented by further information from other sources, as it is often very difficult to distinguish accurately the number of persons of a given indigenous origin and identity living in or near traditional territory from the number of “emigrants” living far from or peripherally to that territory, who are frequently urbanized, and/or of mixed ancestry. The number of such emigrants may often be quite significant (e.g. 50% again of the traditional population), whose identity may be considered more official than functional, and whose younger generations form an insignificant proportion of those who speak the language. In many cases a compromise has been made between the two types of figures

The term *speaker* is here reserved for active fluent speakers, not necessarily commanding a full range of the traditional vocabulary or even of the grammar, but able to converse with ease on a variety of topics and, above all, able—even if not likely—to raise their children speaking the language, and able to provide information for basic documentation of the language. This excludes then those only able to understand the language, or those with fragmentary or less than fluent ability (semi-speakers, except in the case of some very nearly extinct languages).

The number included who are not *native* speakers, i.e. who have learned the language as adults or in school, in the case of all or nearly all these languages, is very small indeed.

The *number of speakers*, is often even more difficult to estimate than the base population. With a few exceptions (extremely low numbers, where the figure usually ends with a digit other than zero), this is based not on a person-by-person count, but on a further estimate from the base population figure. In the case of Greenlandic and Canadian Inuit, and all Alaskan languages, this may be done village by village, but often in the case of Canadian Indians (a complex blend of "community" and "band" and "reserve" populations) and of Russian groups, the estimate may be made mainly from general ethnic population figures. Though for these Canadian and Russian groups official census figures of the number of speakers are available (for Canadian Indians only partially, and without full breakdown by language, especially as defined in this report, thus also many of the Russian groups), these figures for number of speakers are often highly subjective and inaccurate—in Canadian cases often much too low and in Russian often much too high. In fact, survey results based on people's own evaluations of their Native language skills or use generally reveal more about their attitudes than about the sociolinguistic facts. Only individual testing and observations of whole community populations is likely to evaluate the realities of language status accurately. Instead, in what for us is the next best and only practical procedure, the figures here for number of speakers are usually estimated from reports about age of youngest speakers, together with regional population-pyramid structures (e.g. typically those over age 65 at 4%, those over age 20 at 50%). In this way some estimate can be made even from reports as vague as "only the very oldest" or "most adults but not children", on a village-by-village basis where possible.

This type of estimate is possible because in most communities, or even areal groups of communities, there is a rather uniform pattern that abandonment of the indigenous language by a given bilingual generation of parents (speaking English or Russian or Scandinavian or Finnish to their children) takes place broadly across a community more than on a family-by-family basis, such that in a given community, practically all those over, say, the age of forty, and practically none of those under the age of thirty, will be speakers of the indigenous language, and that such a "cut-off" age-band will separate even older and younger siblings of a family. This is usually true of small compact languages. The larger or more widespread the language, the more complex the situation may be, so where necessary and possible differentiation for stronger or weaker maintenance will be made by dialect or area.

Virtually all the languages included here have been studied to some degree. By *study* here is meant not recent incidental investigation by linguists for theoretical use, for example, but *documentation* of the language for its own sake. In the case of most languages here the easiest criterion with a broad range of evaluation is the coverage of the lexicon, in a sense the most open-ended task, where evaluations on

coverage will often be given here in the terms “fragmentary”, “considerable”, “extensive”, and “comprehensive”, where those might be loosely characterized as up to 30%, 50%, 75%, and above 90% of the lexicon, respectively. (The term “complete” is not used, and could be appropriate only for languages now extinct.) One other criterion is especially important here, that the transcriptions be observationally adequate phonologically, not often the case in older work, especially for American languages, and certain Asian ones, e.g. Ket, with distinctions unfamiliar to the European ear.

Some further general statements can be made here, that the study of Eurasian languages is generally older and more often very comprehensive compared to American, especially so of Saami and other Uralic, long in contact with and of special interest to Europeans, compared e.g. to Athabaskan in Canada and Alaska, where contact is much later, linguistic work proportionately less, and the phonological system more unfamiliar to Europeans, such that early work is also more inadequate.

Often the term “studied” must be severely qualified in that the extant documentation of a language, however copious, is not *secured*. There are many languages for which the most important documentation is unpublished, unduplicated, in private possession, especially a scholar’s family heirs, all too likely to be lost. This is especially true of Russia and some European work, less so in Canada and especially Alaska. The imminent risk of such loss is thus also an urgent concern.

Aside from the national censuses and individual works or personal communications for specific languages or language groups, a single most important work deserves mention as useful for the whole area—and in fact for the whole world: Barbara F. Grimes, ed. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Twelfth Edition, Summer Institute of Linguistics, Dallas 1992, which has many relevant independent estimates of populations and numbers of speakers, here taken into consideration especially for some Canadian Indian and Russian groups. I shall mention here two other reference works of special importance. *Arctic languages: An awakening* (UNESCO 1990) has excellent information for U.S., Canada, and Scandinavia, but that for the Soviet Union is very disappointing and the statistics are generally no better than the official. An extremely important recent compendium most useful to remedy that defect is the *Krasnaya Kniga Yazykov Narodov Rossii* (ed. V.P. Neroznak, Institut Yazykov Narodov Rossii, Moscow 1994, hereafter referred to as *Krasnaya Kniga*), which came just in time for the present version of this report.

Finally, only a few names of individuals and institutions responsible for the study and cultivation of their language are given, generally those most current and/or located most closely to those language areas. Many important names are omitted, but the references given here should be adequate leads to put the user in touch with the network of those involved.

## 2. THE LANGUAGES

We shall take the languages up first by language family, then by country or political subdivision, all in a broadly West-to-East order, starting with Greenlandic and ending with Saami.

The *Eskimo-Aleut* language family is very broadly distributed entirely across the American Arctic. It consists of two branches, Aleut and Eskimo, and Eskimo itself is divided into two branches, Yupik and Inuit. The diversity and origin of the family (and all Yupik and Aleut) is at the western end, at the Bering Strait and Sea.

The **Inuit** branch of the Eskimo Language family could be considered a single language, a very extensive chain of dialects (about 16) that has expanded from the Bering Strait to East Greenland, linked by inherent mutual intelligibility through all contiguous dialects, but with little (initial) mutual intelligibility from one extreme to the other. (West Greenlanders and Alaskans can learn to "get along" conversationally in a matter of weeks of good practice.) This dialect chain often is broken up on a somewhat artificial and political basis into Greenlandic, East Canadian, West Canadian, and Alaskan. The total population is about 91,000 in Greenland, Canada, Alaska, and Russia combined (not counting 2,000 to 3,000 urbanized emigrants in Alaska, and perhaps 5,000 in European Denmark). Of the 91,000 about 75,000 are speakers of the language.

In Greenland the total Greenlandic population is about 47,000, divisible into three very distinct dialect groups, which border on being different languages: (1) East Greenlandic, 3,000, all speakers; (2) West Greenlandic, 44,000, nearly all speakers, except for a decreasing group of under 1,000 Greenlanders at Nuuk whose mother tongue is Danish; (3) North Greenlandic, 800, all speakers, in the Thule District, linking Greenlandic with Canadian. Total about 80 communities (of population over 10).

In Canada the total Inuit population is about 30,000, of whom 24,000 are speakers. In Labrador perhaps a few children (at Nain) speak the language, but youngest speakers average over age 20. In Northern Québec and the Northwest Territories to the Central Arctic (borderline Gjoa Haven, Spence Bay, Resolute), the language is well maintained by over 90% of the population, but in the West (Coppermine and beyond) only parental or (further west) only grandparental generations speak the language. In Canada the language is called Inuktitut (Inuktitun, Inuttut), and (east of Coppermine) the term Eskimo is disliked. Nine dialects are generally recognized. Total of 54 villages or communities.

In Alaska the total Inuit (locally Inupiat) population is 13,500, of whom about 3,500 speak the language. Age of youngest speakers varies from twenties in Shungnak, Ambler, Kobuk, to fifty in Nome and Kotzebue. Four dialects are recognized. Total of 33 villages in North Slope, Kobuk and Seward Peninsula regions of Alaska.

In Russia the only Inuit-speakers by 1948 were 6 individuals of the population

of Ratmanov (Imaqtiq, Big Diomedé) Island in the Bering Strait. That was evacuated to Naukan in 1948 (and Naukan in turn to three separate locations in St. Lawrence Bay in 1958). Of that group and their descendants, there may be perhaps one or two speakers still. In Russian their language has been called the *Imaklikskiy dialekt*. It is the same as that of Little Diomedé, Alaska.

All extant Inuit dialects have been studied, some quite comprehensively, including e.g. West Greenlandic, which has extensive literature and literacy beginning in the 18th century. Comprehensively documented also are eastern Canadian dialects, North Slope Alaskan, less well so East and North Greenlandic, and some western Canadian.

Major centers for the study of Greenlandic are the Ilisimatusarfik (Greenland University) at Nuuk (R. Petersen) and the Institut for Eskimologi at Københavns Universitet (M. Fortescue). For Canadian Inuit the most active center is the Département d'Anthropologie at Université Laval, Québec, (L.-J. Dorais); for Alaskan the Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks (E. MacLean, L. Kaplan), the Arctic Sivunmun Ilisagvik (E. MacLean) and the Commission on Inupiat History, Language and Culture of the North Slope Borough, in Barrow (E. Wilson).

The *Yupik* branch of the Eskimo language family consists of four languages: (1) Alutiiq, (2) Central Alaskan Yupik, (3) Naukan, and (4) Central Siberian Yupik, all closely related as an interrupted dialect chain linked in that order.

(1) **Alutiiq** (or Sugpiaq—partly obsolescent name; or Pacific Gulf Yupik, or Suk—strictly academic names, the people calling themselves in English “Aleut”), is spoken in two major dialects, Chugach in Prince William Sound and Kenai Peninsula tip, and Koniag on Kodiak Island and the Alaska Peninsula as far west as Stepovac Bay, in twenty villages, all in Alaska. Total population (not counting over a thousand urbanized in Anchorage) 3,000, of whom 400 are speakers, the average youngest ranging from late twenties at the tip of the Kenai Peninsula to fifties or even sixties on Kodiak Island.

(2) **Central Alaskan Yupik** is spoken in southwestern Alaska along the coast from Bristol Bay to Unalakleet on Norton Sound, and in communities inland up the Nushagak, Kuskokwim and Yukon Rivers. Total population (not counting a significant number, perhaps 5,000, urbanized in Anchorage) is 21,000, of whom about 10,000 are speakers. In perhaps 17 of the 64 villages (down from 25 in 1982—to give some impression of the continuing rate of loss), along the central coast and up the Kuskokwim River, all generations including children speak Yupik, but in Bristol Bay, Yukon Delta, and City of Bethel, and on Nunivak Island, average age of youngest speakers varies from twenty to forty.

(3) **Naukan**, formerly of the village of Naukan on East Cape, Chukchi Peninsula, Russia (only), was removed to three communities in St. Lawrence Bay in 1958. The Naukantsy are now mainly in Lavrentiya, Lorino, and Uëlen, together with Chukchis and Russians. Total population 400, number of speakers 70, most

or all over age forty.

(4) **Central Siberian Yupik** (St. Lawrence Island Yupik in Alaska and *Chaplinskiy dialekt* in Russia), spoken in the two communities on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, and in four communities on the facing southeast corner of the Chukchi Peninsula, Russia. Total population 2,000, of whom perhaps 1,300 speak the language. Of the total, about 1,100 are St. Lawrence Islanders in Alaska, of whom nearly all speak the language, and 900 live in Russian Chukotka, of whom perhaps 300 speak the language, the average age of the youngest speakers there being 25–30.

A third Eskimo language (a fourth counting Imaklikskiy Inuit) of the Chukchi Peninsula, Russia, which may be a fifth Yupik language, but more likely is a sub-branch coordinate with Yupik, or a third branch of Eskimo, is **Sirenik**, the old language of the village of Sireniki, almost completely replaced by Chaplinskiy, and now extinct. The last fluent speaker of Sirenik, Wye, died in January 1997.

Comprehensively documented of this group of Eskimo languages are especially Alutiiq, Central Alaskan Yupik, and Central Siberian Yupik, for which there are significant literatures, and comprehensive published dictionaries and/or lexical files. Less fully documented are Naukan and Sirenik; Some final further documentation of Sirenik was done with Wye by N.B. Vakhtin and D. Orr.

For Alutiiq and Central Alaskan Yupik the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks is the main center of study (J. Leer, S. Jacobson, E.I. Reed); for Central Siberian Yupik both the Alaska Native Language Center (S. Jacobson, D. Orr, M. Krauss) and the Paleoasiatic Sector, Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg (N.B. Vakhtin and E.V. Golovko). The latter institute is also the center for the study of Naukan (Golovko) and Sirenik (Vakhtin), now also in close collaboration with the Alaska Native Language Center.

**Aleut** is a single language spoken in ten villages on the tip of the Alaska Peninsula, Aleutian Islands, and Pribilof Islands, Alaska, in two dialects, Eastern Aleut and Western Aleut, the latter now represented only in Atka, the other western subdialect, Attuan, being now practically extinct as such. In the 1820s Aleuts were moved to the Commander Islands, Kamchatskaya Oblast', Russia; Atkan was established on Bering Island and Attuan on Copper Island. The total Aleut population is about 2,500, of whom about 300 speak the language. In Alaska the total population is 2,000 (not counting a very significant number, at least 1,000, urbanized in Anchorage, Seattle, and elsewhere), and on the Commander Islands (now all concentrated at Nikol'skoe on Bering Island), locally at most 300 (1989 USSR census 644). Of the 2,000 Alaskans perhaps 300 speak Aleut, the youngest almost all over age forty-five or fifty-five except for the 50 speakers of the Western dialect, Atkan, where the youngest speakers may be in their twenties. Of the Commander Island Aleuts the number of speakers may be about 15, probably all over age sixty. About 5 of those speak Bering Island Atkan and the other 10 speak



**Copper Island Attuan**, a form of Attuan that is interestingly and stably creolized with Russian, so much so that it should therefore be defined as a separate language.

Alaskan Aleut is comprehensively documented, especially by K. Bergsland of the University of Oslo, working closely with the Alaska Native Language Center, which houses the most comprehensive collection of Aleut language materials; Commander Island Aleut is also documented, though less extensively so, by Golovko and Vakhtin at the Paleoasiatic Sector, Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, also working closely with Bergsland and the Alaska Native Language Center.

The other major Northern language family (as here defined) of North America is the *Athabaskan* (in Canada more often called *Déné*). This is a family of over thirty languages, of which 19 are in or partly in Alaska and/or the Yukon and Northwest Territories of Canada. These are the following:

In the Northwest Territories: Chipewyan, Dogrib, and Slavey.

(1) **Chipewyan**, spoken in the Mackenzie District of the Northwest Territories, and more in northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, from Churchill on Hudson's Bay west to Great Slave Lake. The total population is very approximately 6,000, of whom perhaps 4,000 speak the language, including the children in some places. There is a considerable amount of documentation of Chipewyan, but extensive modern lexical work and dialectology are lacking.

(2) **Dogrib** is spoken on and to the north of Great Slave Lake. Of a total population of 2,400 nearly all speak Dogrib, including children, making Dogrib the most strongly retained of all northern Athabaskan languages. Extensive documentation is available, but systematic comprehensive lexical coverage is still lacking.

(3) **South Slavey** (formerly Slave or Slavey), is spoken on Great Slave Lake, Mackenzie River and drainage in Mackenzie District, northeast Alberta and northwest British Columbia. Population is about 3,600, of whom perhaps 3,000 speak the language, including children in most communities.

(4) **North Slavey** (formerly Hare, Bearlake, and Mountain), is spoken in the Mackenzie District, along the Mackenzie River from Ft. Norman north, around Great Bear Lake, and in the Mackenzie Mountains. Total population is about 1,600 of whom perhaps the majority, say 900, speak the language, including children in some communities.

North and South Slavey are sometimes considered a single language which could be called Slavey or Déné or Mackenzian. South Slavey and Hare have extensive coverage, especially grammatical, Bearlake and especially Mountain much less. Systematic modern lexical coverage is not yet comprehensive.

The Department of Education, Government of the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife, is a center for Chipewyan, Dogrib, North and South Slavey language work, but mainly for educational programs and materials. Scientific or academic documentation is currently carried out mostly by individual scholars at distant

Canadian universities, for Slavey and Dogrib, especially Keren Rice, Department of Linguistics, University of Toronto, and Leslie Saxon, Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria.

In the Yukon territory: Kaska, Tagish, and Tutchone.

(5) **Kaska** is spoken in the southeast corner of Yukon Territory at Ross River and Watson Lake and in northern British Columbia at Lower Post. Of a total population of about 900, perhaps 400 speak the language; the youngest speakers are approaching middle age except at Ross River, where they may be somewhat younger.

(6) **Tagish** was the language of the south central Yukon Territory and northern British Columbia, centering around Carcross, spoken by those Athabaskans who had not become monolingual in Tlingit. They are not counted as ethnically distinct from the (400 or so) Indians of that Tagish group, and there are now only two elderly remaining speakers of Tagish Athabaskan, who are also fully fluent in Tlingit. The language is quite distinct from its neighbor to the west, southern Tutchone, but similar to Kaska and especially Tahltan Athabaskan to the southeast, on the other side of the interior Tlingit incursion area.

(7) **Southern Tutchone** is spoken in the southwestern corner of Yukon Territory, with Whitehorse, Aishihik-Champagne-Klukwan, and Kluane-Burwash area. Of a total population of perhaps 1,400, there may be up to 200 fluent speakers, the youngest of which are in their forties or fifties.

(8) **Northern Tutchone** is spoken across the central area of the Yukon, in the Mayo-Stewart, Selkirk-Pelly, Carmacks and White River areas. Of a total population of perhaps 1,100, there may be up to 200 fluent speakers, the youngest of which are generally in their thirties or forties.

Northern and Southern Tutchone have until recently been considered a single language, and are closely related, but mutual intelligibility between them is limited.

Kaska, Tagish, Southern Tutchone and Northern Tutchone are languages situated entirely or centered mainly in the Yukon. Extensive modern work in these has been done mainly at the Yukon Native Language Centre (J. Ritter, Director), Government of the Yukon Territory, Whitehorse. The centre's work has been especially educational, and full systematic documentation of these Athabaskan languages has been less of a priority, with the partial exception of Tagish.

The following three Athabaskan languages are in both the Yukon Territory and in Alaska: Kutchin, Han, and Upper Tanana.

(9) **Kutchin** (Gwich'in, in Canada also Loucheux) is spoken in the Northwest Territories (Arctic Red River, Fort McPherson, Aklavik and Inuvik), as well as the northern Yukon (Old Crow) and in northern Alaska (six villages: Arctic Village, Venetie, Fort Yukon, Chalkyitsik, Circle, Birch Creek), with a total population of about 3,000 (1,500 in the Northwest Territories, 400 in the Yukon, and 1,100 in Alaska). Of these about 700 may be fluent speakers of Kutchin (300 in the Northwest Territories, 100 in the Yukon, and 300 in Alaska). The youngest speakers are at Arctic Village and at Venetie, in their twenties; elsewhere they are

older, average age thirty to fifty years. In Canada, work on Kutchin (especially educational) is carried out at the Yukon Native Language Centre (Ritter) and Government of the Northwest Territories (W. Firth). The Arctic Red River dialect is divergent and conservative, but has relatively little modern documentation. At the Alaska Native Language Center (J. Leer, L. Garnett, K. Sikorski, K. Peter) there is extensive documentation, at least for Alaskan dialects.

(10) **Han** is spoken in the Yukon Territory at Dawson and in Alaska at Eagle, with significant dialect differences. The total population is about 300, with 250 in Canada and 50 in Alaska. There are about 15 speakers of the language, 7 or 8 each in Canada and in Alaska, of only the oldest in Canada, while the youngest in Alaska are in their forties. Considerable but not extensive documentation has been carried out at both the Yukon Native Language Centre and the Alaska Native Language Center.

(11) **Upper Tanana** is spoken mainly in Alaska, at Northway, Tetlin and Tok, toward the Canadian border, and also at Beaver Creek in Yukon Territory, Canada. The total population is 340, with about 300 in Alaska and 40 in Canada. There may be 115 speakers, 105 in Alaska and 10 in Canada, the youngest of which are in their twenties at Tetlin, older elsewhere. Considerable but not extensive documentation has been carried out at both the Alaska Native Language Center and Yukon Native Language Centre.

The following eight Athabaskan languages are spoken exclusively in Alaska:

(12) **Tanacross** is spoken at Tanacross, Healy Lake and Dot Lake on the middle Tanana River, below Upper Tanana. It was formerly considered a dialect of Upper Tanana, and was recognized as a distinct language in the 1970s. The total population is 220, of whom 65 speak the language; youngest speakers generally are in their thirties. Considerable coverage is at the Alaska Native Language Center, but Tanacross remains one of the most weakly documented of Alaskan languages.

(13) **Tanana** (sometimes called Lower Tanana, in some academic literature), is now spoken only at Nenana and Minto on the Tanana River below Fairbanks. Significantly divergent dialects of the Chena River area at Fairbanks and of the Salcha and Goodpaster River area above Fairbanks became extinct in 1976 and 1993, respectively. The Athabaskan population at Minto and Nenana is 380, of whom about 30 speak the language, the youngest approaching sixty. Considerable to extensive documentation of the Minto-Nenana and Salcha dialects has been carried out at the Alaska Native Language Center (J. Kari, M. Krauss), but documentation of the extinct Chena dialect is quite fragmentary.

(14) **Upper Kuskokwim** (sometimes Kolchan, some academic literature only) is spoken at Nikolai, Telida and McGrath, in the Upper Kuskokwim River drainage. The language was recognized as distinct in the 1961. The total population is 160, of whom 40 speak the language, the youngest averaging age thirty. Considerable documentation has been done by R. Collins and B. Petruska, partly in connection with the Alaska Native Language Center.

(15) **Koyukon** is spoken along the Yukon River in central Alaska from Kaltag

to Beaver, and along the Koyukuk River, in eleven villages. Total population is 2,300, of whom 300 speak the language. Average age of the youngest speakers ranges from thirty-five or forty to sixty. Comprehensive grammatical and lexical documentation as well as extensive text production has been carried out at the Alaska Native Language Center (E. Jones, J. Kari).

(16) **Holikachuk**, formerly of the village of Holikachuk on the Innoko River, now moved to Grayling on the Yukon, was recognized as a separate language (from Koyukon) in the 1970s. Total population is 200, of whom perhaps 12 are speakers, of whom probably all are over age sixty. Extensive but not comprehensive documentation has been carried out at the Alaska Native Language Center (J. Kari).

(17) **Ingalik** (Deg Xit'an, Deg Xinag) is the language of Shageluk and Anvik, and of the Athabaskans at Holy Cross, below Grayling on the Yukon River; and formerly of a segment of the Kuskokwim River just above the Stoney River. Total population is between 250 and 300, of whom at most 40 speak the language, the youngest being at Shageluk, in their fifties. The divergent and unstable Kuskokwim dialect is nearly extinct, with three or four remaining speakers. Extensive but not comprehensive documentation of Ingalik has been carried out at the Alaska Native Language Center (J. Kari).

(18) **Tanaina** (Dena'ina, Russian Kinayskiy) is the Athabaskan language of the Cook Inlet area, with four dialects, on the Kenai Peninsula, Upper Inlet area above Anchorage, and coast and inland of the west side of Cook Inlet, including Lake Clark and Lake Iliamna, and Stoney River, in seven villages. The total population is 900 (not counting some urbanized "emigrants" in Anchorage, actually in the center of Tanaina territory), with up to 75 speakers. The very youngest of these are in their twenties at Lime Village (population 35) on the Stoney River, elsewhere the youngest speakers are in their fifties and sixties, and the Kenai dialect is nearly extinct. Comprehensive documentation is available at the Alaska Native Language Center (J. Kari).

(19) **Ahtna** (in Russian Mednovskiy) is the language of the Copper River (above the Eyak at its mouth), and the upper Susitna and Nenana drainages, now in eight communities (including Cantwell, west of the Copper River drainage). The total population is about 500, with perhaps 80 speakers, the youngest averaging in their fifties or sixties. Comprehensive documentation is available (in print) at the Alaska Native Language Center (J. Kari).

**Tsetsaut**, the Athabaskan language of the Portland Canal area, borderline to southwest Alaska and British Columbia, became extinct ca. 1930. It had been fragmentarily documented by Boas in 1894.

**Eyak** is not an Athabaskan language, but is a coordinate sub-branch to Athabaskan as a whole in the Athabaskan-Eyak branch of the Athabaskan-Eyak-Tlingit language family. Eyak was spoken in the 19th century from Yakutat along the south central coast of Alaska to Eyak at the delta of the Copper River and by the

twentieth century only at Eyak. It is now represented by perhaps 50 persons of mixed blood who would acknowledge part Eyak ancestry, and by only one remaining speaker, born 1918, living in Anchorage. Comprehensive documentation of Eyak has been carried out by M. Krauss of the Alaska Native Language Center.

**Tlingit** is the language of the coastal area of southeastern Alaska from Yakutat south to the Canadian border at Portland Canal, and of an inland extension through northwestern British Columbia into the southcentral Yukon Territory between Tagish and Kaska northward. The total population in Alaska is close to 10,000 in 16 communities, and about 1,000 in Canada, mostly in the Yukon Territory, for a grand total of about 11,000. The number of fluent speakers is perhaps 500 in Alaska and about 75 in Canada. Age of the youngest speakers both in Canada and Alaska averages sixty to sixty-five, except in Angoon, Alaska, where the youngest speakers may be approaching fifty.

Comprehensive documentation of Tlingit has been carried out at the Alaska Native Language Center (J. Leer), including coverage of inland Tlingit (in cooperation with the Yukon Native Language Centre), and of the southernmost and most significantly divergent and conservative Tongass dialect (one remaining speaker). Tlingit proves to be genetically related as a separate branch coordinate with the Athabaskan-Eyak branch of the Athabaskan-Eyak-Tlingit language family.

**Haida** is the language of the Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia, and, since the 18th century, also of the southern half of Prince of Wales Island, Alaska. On the Queen Charlotte Islands Haida is spoken at Skidegate and Masset, and in Alaska at Hydaburg, Kasaan, Craig, and by a number of Haidas in the city of Ketchikan. The total population is perhaps 2,200, with 600 in Alaska and 1,600 in Canada. Of the latter about 500 are Skidegate or **Southern Haida**, with borderline mutual intelligibility with **Northern Haida** of Masset and Alaska, which could thus be considered a separate language. The number of fluent Haida speakers is about 15 in Alaska, perhaps 30 for Masset, thus not more than 45 for Northern Haida, and about 10 for Southern (Skidegate) Haida; thus 55 Haida speakers altogether. Probably all fluent Haida speakers are over sixty, and most are over seventy.

Haida, all dialects, especially both those in Canada, have been comprehensively documented by J. Enrico, partly in conjunction with the Alaska Native Language Center. The genetic position of Haida is controversial, some comparativists considering it related to Athabaskan-Eyak-Tlingit, but Alaskan scholars consider the genetic relationship unproven, Haida thus an isolate.

The *Tsimshianic* language family is represented in Alaska by minorities of two languages, **Coast Tsimshian** at (New) Metlakatla on Annette Island in southernmost Alaska, since 1887, and by the closely related Nisga- (or Nass)-

Gitksan in a former village on the Alaskan side of Portland Canal. The Coast Tsimshian number about 4,500, of whom 1,300 live in Alaska (mostly New Metlatkatla, some in Ketchikan). Of these perhaps 500 speak Coast Tsimshian, including not more than 70 in Alaska. The youngest in Alaska average age sixty or seventy, while the youngest in some Canadian communities may average a generation younger. **Nisga-Gitksan** (Gitksan a closely related dialect socially considered a different language, spoken only in Canada) is represented in Alaska as dispersed urbanized descendants of a group once located at Tombstone Bay on the Alaskan side of the Portland Canal, probably fewer than 100, including perhaps 5 speakers, and in the Canadian interior Nass and Skeena River area by 5,400 people, including 2,500 of the Gitksan dialect, with a possible total of 1,000 speakers, most of whom must be middle aged or older. A third Tsimshianic language (or perhaps a very divergent dialect of Coast Tsimshian), identified in the 1970s is **Southern Tsimshian** (or Sgu: xs or Old Klemtu), found only in Canada at the southern end on the coast at Klemtu, is nearly extinct, remembered only by two or three individuals.

Scholars most responsible for the linguistic documentation of Tsimshianic languages are mainly dispersed far from the area: B. Rigsby at University of Queensland, Australia; J. Dunn at the University of Oklahoma; and especially M.-L. Tarpent at Mt. St. Vincent University, Nova Scotia.

From this point on the American Northwest Coast we now move to the Far Northeast of Asia, to the languages in or predominantly in what we shall here usually call simply Russia.

The *Chukotko-Kamchatkan* language family consists of Chukchi-Koryak, a dialect complex that may be divisible into four languages, Chukchi, Kerek, Alyutor, Koryak; and Itel'men, the only surviving member of the Kamchatkan language group. The genetic relationship between those two groups has been seriously questioned.

The **Chukchi** (Chukotskiy) language is spoken throughout most of the Chukchi National District, and in the northeast corner of the Yakut Republic, Russia. Dialect differences are relatively minor. Total population is 15,000, with at most 10,000 speakers. Amongst the more settled groups few or no children speak the language, the age of the youngest speakers averaging twenty-five to thirty-five; amongst the still more nomadic groups all adults and to some extent children speak Chukchi.

**Kerek** is academically though not politically recognized as a separate language, intermediate between Chukchi and Koryak-Alyutor. It was spoken along the coast between Capes Navarin and Alyutorskiy, Chukchi and Koryak National Okrugs. The total population is perhaps 400, but the language is now nearly extinct, with 2 elderly speakers, at Meynipil'gyno.

**Koryak** is the language of most of the northern parts of the Koryak National District and (Chavchuven dialect) parts of the neck and interior of the Kamchatka Peninsula. The northern dialects may also be quite divergent, with limited mutual

intelligibility, and some of the northern dialects of Koryak may well shade into some of the southern dialects of Chukchi, in such a way as to make the Chukchi-Koryak distinction at least partly artificial. Total Koryak population according to the census reports approaches 9,000, of whom perhaps 54% speak Koryak. From these figures first must be subtracted those for Alyutor (see below), leaving a total Koryak population then of about 7,000, with 3,500 speakers. As only a few children now speak Koryak (at least some Chavchuven on Kamchatka; J. Bobaljik, p.c. 1994), and many adults below middle age may not, a more realistic figure may be 2,500 for Koryak speakers.

**Alyutor** is the language of the coasts of the neck area of the Kamchatka Peninsula, including Karagin Island, probably with significant dialect differentiation. Alyutor is academically but not politically recognized as a separate language from Koryak; it may well differ from Koryak more than Chukchi does. In the absence of official census breakdowns it is difficult to estimate the size of the Alyutor population, which is perhaps about 2,000 (of the 9,000 Koryak total). The number of speakers is of a still lower proportion, perhaps about 200, as few under age fifty are likely to be active speakers.

**Itel'men** (Western Kamchadal) is spoken now only in several villages on the central west coast area of the Kamchatka Peninsula. It is the only remaining language (West Kamchatkan) of the family of three that were the indigenous languages of the peninsula (**South and Northeast Kamchatkan** became extinct in the early part of the twentieth century). Itel'men is the preferred name. Though the term Kamchadal has been widely used in the literature, that is now reserved locally for the mixed ethnic population, none of which speaks Itel'men. This is largely an artificial distinction, however, since most of the Itel'men no longer speak the language either. Though the census reports show a total population of 2,400 (a startling increase over that of a decade before, 1,400), of whom 510 spoke the language, more realistic figures must be total population of 1,500, of whom well below 100 (70, p.c. J. Bobaljik) speak the language. A large proportion of these is at Kovran, where intergenerational transmission of the language lasted distinctively longest.

The main center for the study of Chukotko-Kamchatkan languages has been the Paleoasiatic Sector of the Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg. Official literatures have been produced for Chukchi and Koryak, briefly in the 1930s also for Itel'men, and those three languages have been fairly extensively documented, but Kerek and Alyutor only fragmentarily so. Specialists at the Institute are A. Zhukova and T.V. Sidorova for Koryak, A.P. Volodin for Itel'men and Kerek; for Alyutor and Chukchi I.A. Murav'eva, Department of Linguistics, Moscow University.

The *Tungusic* languages of the Russian Republic constitute the larger part of the Tungusic branch of the Manchu-Tungus language family, found also in China and Mongolia. Here we shall deal mainly with those languages found in or partly in the

Russian Republic. Though some of these are found as far south as the 44th parallel (area of Vladivostok; latitude of Oregon and Monaco), they are all officially counted in the 26 Small Northern Peoples, so are included here. The language identifications in terms of mutual intelligibility are rather different from the official and customary ones, following in part Juha Janhunen (p.c. 1991), whose help in this matter is here gratefully acknowledged.

**Even** (in earlier literature *Lamut*) is spoken over a large and discontinuous territory scattered from interior Kamchatka across the southern Magadan district to the Arctic shores of the Yakut Republic, interspersed with and outnumbered by Yakut, also to some extent overlapping with Evenk. Total population in census reports 17,000 (a notable increase in total population, of 37%, over the reports of ten years before, with even a 6% increase in number of speakers), of which 7,500 are speakers, in any case probably not including many children, and an average age of youngest speakers by now approaching the thirties.

The "Arman'skiy dialect" near Magadan, now presumably extinct, was perhaps distinct enough from the rest of Even to be considered a separate language.

**Evenk** (or Evenki, in earlier literature *Tungus*) is spoken over a very large and discontinuous territory from interior Sakhalin and the southern Okhotsk shores of the Khabarovsk Oblast' westward to the Transbaikalian and across the Yakut Republic to the Evenk National District, and west again in some pockets beyond the Yenisey River itself, about 2,200 miles from Okhotsk. Thinly and unevenly scattered, and interspersed over this distance especially with Yakut, is a total population of 30,000, of which 9,000 speak Evenk. Children in some areas, especially in the Amur-Chita-Khabarovsk region [ATKINSON 1997], speak the language, but elsewhere the average age of the youngest speakers must be well into the thirties.

Across the Amur River in China (in the northeast and northwest parts of Heilongjiang Province and Inner Mongolia) and evidently in Mongolia, are the Orochen, Solon, and Khamnigan nationalities, whose languages may be considered to be dialects of Evenk: about 7,000 Orochen, 26,000 Solon, and 1,600 Khamnigan in China, and 1,000 in Mongolia [HU 1987]. Solon, considered by some to be a separate language, is mutually intelligible with Evenk. Orochen is poorly maintained (with perhaps 2,000 speakers, including very few children), but Solon (17,000 speakers) and Khamnigan Evenk are relatively well maintained, for a total of about 20,000 speakers of these varieties of Evenk in China, of a total population of about 34,000. Thus with Russia and Mongolia as well as China, the international Evenk total is 65,000, with 30,000 speakers [JANHUNEN 1997, TSUMAGARI 1997]; information on Evenk language retention in Mongolia is not available (p.c. V.A. Robbek, 1995).

On the lower Amgun' and Amur Rivers, Khabarovsk District, are the **Negidal**, officially considered a distinct language but linguistically a distinct dialect of Evenk. The census reports show about 500 total population of whom 170 are speakers, but a more realistic figure is probably well below 100, as the youngest speakers are probably all middle-aged or older.



On the lower Amur just above the confluence of the Amgun' and on the coast just south of the Amur delta, are the **Ul'chi**. Census reports show a total population of about 3,200, of whom about 1,000 speak the Ul'ch language, but a more realistic figure is probably closer to 500. The Ul'chi are officially considered a distinct Small Northern Nationality, but their language is so close to Nanay (see below) that it should perhaps be considered a dialect of Nanay.

**Nanay** (in earlier literature Goldi) is spoken along the Amur from below Komsomol'sk up to Khabarovsk and the Ussuri, into the Kur-Urmi and Bikin tributaries of the Amur and Ussuri, and across those in Heilongjiang Province in China, where it is known as Hezhe. Census reports for Russia show a total population of about 11,877, of whom 48.5% or 5,760 speak Nanay. A realistic figure is probably far lower: earlier reports were that children who speak the language were at most few, and the average age of youngest speakers was approaching at least thirty; according to A.V. Stolyarov in *Krasnaya Kniga*, fluent speakers are generally over 50, for a total of half the official figure, or 2,880 speakers; however, the proportion of such a population older than 50 out of 11,877 would be well under 2,000. On the Chinese side maintenance is still weaker: total population there, reported in 1980 to be 1,500 with perhaps 300 speakers of the older generations, but more recently reported (1990 census) to be 4,000, with only 50, or [Tsumagari 1997, Hu 1987: 40] or (Xi Zhang 1994, p.c.) "a dozen" speakers of the very oldest age group. Total international Nanay population thus perhaps 16,000, but with under 2,000 speakers. There are two distinct dialects, Nanay or Hezhen, and Kili or Kilen (occasionally considered a separate language), the former the majority in Russia, the latter the majority in China.

**Oroch** is spoken to the west of Nanay, from Komsomol'sk-na-Amure toward the Tatar Strait coast and lower Tumin River near Sovetskaya Gavan'. Listed sometimes as a dialect of Udege or lumped with Orok (see below), Oroch or part of Oroch is instead most similar to Nanay, perhaps close enough to be considered a dialect of Nanay, but is in any case currently listed officially as a distinct ethnic group. Census reports show a total population of about 900, of whom about 150 are speakers, the lowest proportion of all Tungusic languages in Russia. The actual number of speakers may be well below 100.

**Orok** (Uil'ta) is a distinct Tungusic language (not to be confused with Oroch) spoken in north-central Sakhalin Island in the Tym and Val areas and also, as a southern dialect, in the upper Poronay. Census reports show a total population of 179, with 82 speakers. More realistic figures might be 250 to 300 total population, with about 30 speakers (not including some 30 moved to Hokkaido, Japan, with 3 speakers, p.c. J. Ikegami and A. Majewicz 1995). The youngest speakers would generally be over age fifty.

**Udege** is spoken in the interior of the Primorskiy Kray, on the upper parts of the western tributaries to the Amur and Ussuri Rivers, from the Khungari south to the Upper Ussuri, 44° latitude North. The census reports show a total population of 1,900, of whom 450 speak Udege; this remarkable increase in total population

(of 33%) over the decade seems unrealistic; the number of speakers may be even more so, and is probably below 100, all well into middle age and beyond. A. Kh. Girfanova in *Krasnaya Kniga* confirms this, that the total of speakers is below 80, generally above 70 years of age, with some bilinguals 10 to 15 years younger. Janhunen [JANHUNEN 1997] reports a population of 2,000 of Udege origin in China, but there the language is altogether extinct and undocumented.

The Tungusic languages have all been studied and documented to some degree, and the difficulty and disagreement in classifying them into defined languages is due at least as much to the artificiality of such classification into language and branches as to the deficiencies in this documentation and study. However, of these languages, only three, Evenk, Even, and Nanay have been official literary languages, with extensive though not in every regard comprehensive documentation, especially for their dialectology. For the rest of the Tungusic languages documentation varies from fragmentary to considerable. For Udege there was a short-lived literature in the 1930s, and a few works have been printed recently in Ul'ch and again in Udege. Much of this work has been carried out by scholars at the Academy Institute of Linguistics, St. Petersburg: I. Nedyalkov in particular for Evenk, A. Malchukov for Even, A. Stolyarov for Nanay, A. Girfanova for Udege; also for Udege, V. Belikov and E. Perekhval'skaya, Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences, Moscow. Yakutsk is now also an important center for Even and Evenk language work: V. Robbek for Even and A. Myreeva for Evenk, Yakut State University and Academy Institute of the Problems of Northern Minorities, Siberian Branch. Important work has also been done by Japanese scholars at Hokkaido University, Sapporo, and Abashiri (J. Ikegami, T. Tsumagari, and others) on Tungusic languages, particularly Oroch.

By dealing with all the Tungusic languages in or partly in Russia, we have covered all but **Manchu** itself. Once the language of millions and of the rulers of China, it now survives as a spoken language only in two or three small enclaves on the northern Chinese border. In a very few villages in Fuyu, Sunwu, and Aihui areas in northern Heilongjiang just across the Amur there still live perhaps 20 to 70 very elderly speakers of Manchu. There is now a Manchu Language Research Institute working with these last speakers [JANHUNEN 1989: 279]. Finally, over 2,000 miles to the west, in Xinjiang beyond Mongolia, in the upper Ili area between Yining and the border of what is now Kazakhstan there are some 33,000 Xibo (Sibe), of whom perhaps 15,000, including children in rural areas (p.c. Arianne Dwyer), speak what is still a mutually intelligible dialect of Manchu, deployed there during the 18th century.

The next group of languages included here does not constitute a genetic family at all, but are three of the languages sometimes grouped together (often with Chukotko-Kamchatkan) with the label *Paleoasiatic*. These three genetic isolates are probably—it so happens—more realistically to be considered small families of two surviving languages each.

**Nivkh** (Gilyak in Western, Japanese, and older literature) is spoken on the lower Amur River and its estuary, and on northern Sakhalin Island. **Amur** and **East Sakhalin Nivkh** are of low mutual intelligibility, and should probably be considered different languages, but Shmidt Peninsula Sakhalin is intermediate. Census reports show total population as 4,700, of whom 1,100 speak Nivkh. That would imply an average age of youngest speakers in their thirties, but more realistic estimates place the number of speakers at 400, and average age of youngest speakers in their fifties. The population has been severely displaced, and dialect breakdowns are unavailable, but the Amur mainland group is the minority, perhaps 2,000, and its speakers are also older than on Sakhalin Island, so that one may perhaps estimate the Amur speakers at 100, the Sakhalin at 300. Amur Nivkh was the basis of the official literary Nivkh, and of a small literature 1932–1953, discontinued; a new literature has recently begun in both Amur and East Sakhalin languages. Considerable modern documentation has been done on both Amur and Sakhalin, but more on Amur than on Sakhalin, at least until recently. The Paleoasiatic Sector of the Academy Institute of Linguistics, St. Petersburg, has been a center for the study of Nivkh (E. Gruzdeva, now based in Helsinki).

**Yukagir** is another Paleoasiatic isolate or small language family. It was formerly very widespread but in modern times is mostly replaced by Yakut and reduced to two small widely separated enclaves with no contact and low mutual intelligibility, more realistically to be considered two languages. Census reports list 1,200 total population (for a surprising increase over previous decades: 400, 600, 800), of which 375 are speakers of Yukagir (showing a steady absolute increase in number of speakers over three decades: 150, 276, 302). As children have generally not been learning the language for some forty years, these figures can hardly be taken as realistic. The two groups are the northern **Tundra Yukagir** (Wadul), of the Alazeya-Chukocheya-lower Kolyma tundra and village of Andryushkino, and, some 300 miles to the south, are the **Kolyma Yukagir** (Odul), of upper Kolyma-Yasachnaya-Zyrianka area, village of Nelemnoe. Both groups are mixed with Even and Yakut, and are multilingual. More realistic total population figures may be about 900, and the number of active fluent speakers may be well below 100. The Tundra group is the larger, with perhaps two thirds of the total, the number of Tundra speakers perhaps 50, Kolyma 20. Maslova in *Krasnaya Kniga* tends to confirm these estimates, with main groups of Tundra and Kolyma in proportion of 230 to 130, and of fluent speakers at 30 to 10 (not counting semispeakers or minor groups). The Paleoasiatic Sector of the Academy Institute of Linguistics, St. Petersburg, has been a center for the study of Yukagir (E. Maslova), also Academy Institute of Linguistics, Moscow (I. Nikolaeva), but the senior current active specialist is the Yukagir G. Kurilov at the Siberian Branch of the Institute of the Problems of Northern Minorities, Russian Academy of Sciences, Yakutsk.

Officially sometimes recognized as another Small Northern Nationality of Yukagir origin are the Chuvantsy of the upper Anadyr' River drainage, Chukchi

Autonomous District, with a total population of nearly 1,300. However, though some may speak Even and/or Chukchi in addition to Russian, they have not spoken Yukagir since the early twentieth century; this mixed population has no language different from other northern groups even though the 1989 census reports (after no entry for 1970 and 1979) a total Chuvantsy population of 1,384 of whom 18.5% (256) count "**Chuvan**" as their native language. Their original language, now extinct, would count as a third Yukagir language.

Below the Tundra Yukagir on the Alazeya were the **Omok**, with evidently a fourth Yukagir language. They may still have been about 500 in the 1920s, and some of them may have spoken Omok well into the twentieth century. Presumed extinct.

**Ket** (Yenisey Ostyak) is a third Paleoasiatic isolate or small language family, all that remains of a once larger family (including **Kott/Assan**, **Arin**, **Pumpokol**, all extinct between about 1800 and 1860). Ket itself may however be considered to be two different languages, (**Imbatski**)-Ket, and **Yug**, the latter itself now on the verge of extinction. Ket is spoken along and near the middle Yenisey, from the Podkamennaya Tunguska to the Turukhansk regions, most viably at the village of Kellog. Census reports show the total Ket population at about 1,100, of whom about 550 are speakers. The total population figures show little growth over recent decades, and the percentage of speakers a relatively slow decline; if this is realistic, then the average age of youngest speakers may be twenty-five to thirty-five, with the possibility even of some children being speakers. Of Yug there may survive two or three elderly speakers or semi-speakers of a population of 15 at Vorogovo in the Turukhansk area. The Paleoasiatic Sector of the Academy Institute of Linguistics at St. Petersburg has been a center for specialists in Ket. Present active specialists are N. Grishina, Novosibirsk University, O. Alekseenko, Academy Institute for Anthropology and Ethnography, St. Petersburg, and for Yug Heinrich Werner (now in Germany).

Another language sometimes counted a Northern minority is **Ainu**, marginally a part of the area here in question, and another Paleoasiatic isolate, also probably two different languages. The **Kurile Ainu** of the northern Kuriles, originally south to Urup, nineteenth-century population about 100, was extinct by the middle of the twentieth century, and the main Ainu language, on Hokkaido southern Kuriles and southern Sakhalin may be practically extinct by its end. There are by now over 25,000 persons considering themselves Ainu in Japan, in rapidly growing numbers, but the number of speakers, or perhaps semi-speakers, may be about 10, all of the oldest generation, but with a few more elderly speakers continuing to appear, as concern and respect for the language grows. There is an undetermined small number of Ainu still on Sakhalin Island, but a recent search found no remaining speakers there. A center for the study of Ainu is Hokkaido University, Sapporo (H. Kirikae).

The only remaining linguistic family indigenous to the North is the *Uralic*, itself divisible into two main branches, the *Samoyedic* and *Finno-Ugric*. We shall consider all of the Samoyedic languages, but of the Ugric only Ob'-Ugric (Khanty and Mansi; not Hungarian) and of the Finno-Permian only Saami (the others are either too southerly and/or too large (Komi) to be considered Small Nationalities of the North). We shall see that in Russia, although these are officially listed as seven nationalities, over twice as many living languages should be counted.

**Nganasan** (Tavgi) is the northernmost Samoyedic language (and northernmost indigenous language of Eurasia), at the treeline and from Pyasina-Dudypa to Khatanga and scattered north into the Taymyr as far as 75° North. Census reports show a total population of nearly 1,300 (a remarkable increase from the previous decade, of 50%), of whom 1,000 are speakers. A more realistic estimate (Khelimskiy 1994 p.c.), [SALMINEN 1997] is 500, of whom few, if any, are children.

**Enets** is a very small group, often included in Nenets (see below), linguistically intermediate between that and Nganasan, of the Lower Yenisey and Yenisey estuary. The lower Yenisey or **Forest Enets** (village of Potapovo) is so divergent from (**Tundra**) **Enets** (Vorontsovo, Yenisey estuary) that the two might best be considered two different languages. Census reports show a total population of 200, of whom 90 speak the language(s). Average age of the youngest speakers would be thirties or forties, with no children speakers, for both Tundra and Forest Enets. With somewhat more speakers of Forest Enets, a plausible breakdown might be 40 Forest Enets speakers, 30 Tundra, but according to Bolina and Khelimskiy in *Krasnaya Kniga*, Tundra Enets speakers are down to "a handful" ("bukval'no edinitsy").

**Nenets** (Yurak) is spoken from the mouth of the Yenisey southwest to the upper Taz and Pur, across the Yamal, Yugor and Kanin Peninsulas, even to the Kola, and across two Nenets (Yamal Nenets and Nenets) autonomous okrugs. Census reports show a total population of 35,000, of which 27,000 are speakers of Nenets. As in the case of Enets, Nenets also has two very different forms, (**Tundra**) **Nenets** and **Forest Nenets** (upper Pur, Nadym), so different that they are probably best considered two languages, but the Tundra Nenets population is much larger than Forest, and language maintenance is reported to be significantly stronger in Tundra Nenets than Forest Nenets, such that Tundra Nenets is spoken by at least a very large proportion of children. Salminen [SALMINEN 1997] reports a breakdown of 2,000 Forest Nenets, 1,500 speakers, probably including some children; and 25,000 Tundra Nenets. Tundra Nenets is vigorously maintained by highly traditional non-urban population in the Taymyr' and especially Yamal areas, but is severely eroded to the west. Literature and journalism in Tundra Nenets is well developed. Tundra Nenets by all accounts thus has by far the strongest viability or chance for survival as a living language of all the Northern minority languages of Russia.

**Yurats** was another Samoyedic language replaced by the eastward advance of Tundra Nenets, extinct during the nineteenth century, with meager documentation

[SALMINEN 1997].

**Sel'kup** (Ostyak Samoyed) is the only member of the southern branch of Samoyedic languages now surviving. There is strong dialect divergence within Sel'kup such that, in spite of partial dialect continuum, it is perhaps best to consider Sel'kup three different languages. **Northern Sel'kup** (or Taz Sel'kup) is spoken along the middle and upper Taz River and Turukhansk area of the Yenisey. The **Central Sel'kup** (or Tym or Narym) is spoken along the tributaries (Tym, Ket') of the middle Ob' River north of Tomsk, and **Southern Sel'kup** on the Ket' and Ob' towards Tomsk. Census reports show a total population of about 3,600, of whom perhaps 1,750 are speakers of Sel'kup, not likely to be a realistic figure. Breakdown is not provided, but Central and Southern Sel'kup are approaching extinction, with average age of fluent speakers well into fifties, or beyond, while Northern Sel'kup is in a relatively strong position, with many young adult speakers, and perhaps some children. Combining reports from Salminen and Janhunen (p.c.) suggests a breakdown of 1,700 for Northern, 1,400 speakers, including some children; 1,700 for Central, 150 speakers; and 200 for Southern, 20 ("very few") speakers.

Still further south, in the Sayan mountains, were the highly divergent Sayan Samoyed languages. **Mator** became extinct about 1840, but speakers of **Kamas** survived into this century: the last known speaker died in 1989 (p.c. Salminen and Janhunen).

The Samoyedic languages have been extensively studied since the nineteenth century by both European and Russian scholars, and many have extensive or in some cases even comprehensive documentation, but only Tundra Nenets has been the basis of a literature, and Sel'kup very sporadically so (missionary period, 1930s, and recent). Forest Nenets and Enets, and some Sel'kup are relatively little studied. References: for Samoyedic languages generally, E.A. Khelimskiy, University of Humanities, Moscow; for Nenets, M. Barmich, Herzen Pedagogical University, St. Petersburg; for Enets, I. Sorokina, Academy Institute of Linguistics, St. Petersburg; for Sel'kup, also Tomsk University.

The only *Ugric* languages we shall consider here are the Ob'-Ugric Khanty and Mansi, which are closest to Hungarian.

**Khanty** (Ostyak) is a complex of languages and dialects spoken along the Ob' River and tributaries from Salekhard near its mouth on the Arctic Circle through the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District up to the Vasyugan and Parebel' in the Tomsk district. Khanty is an outstanding example of ethnically cohesive complex of quite diverse mutually unintelligible but intergrading dialects that is particularly difficult to divide into languages, but currently specialists divide Khanty into three languages: **Northern Khanty** from the Nizyam-Sherkal' area down the Ob' even into the Yamal'; **Southern Khanty** on the Irtysh and lower Konda; and **Eastern Khanty** on the middle Ob' in Surgut and Vakh-Vasygan areas, probably more divergent from Northern and Southern Khanty than those are from each other.

Census reports show a total Khanty population of over 22,500, of whom 13,600 are speakers of Khanty. No breakdown is provided, but information from Janhunén [JANHUNEN 1993], Salminen [SALMINEN 1997 and p.c.] and O. Balalaeva and A. Wiget (p.c. 1996) suggests the following: the smallest group is Southern Khanty, with perhaps 1,000 population, but very few or no speakers; Eastern and Northern Khanty are in much better condition, and Northern is the larger. Eastern has a population of perhaps 5,000 and 4,500 speakers, including most children, and Northern has a population of 15,000, with 7,500 speakers, including many children, especially in the Obdorsk-Yamal. Eastern and Northern Khanty are thus among the most viable northern languages remaining in Russia. Beginnings of literature in at least five forms of Khanty have so far failed to gain widespread acceptance or success.

**Mansi** (Vogul) is spoken east of Khanty and the Ob', toward the Urals. Official figures are about 8,500 population and 3,140 speakers, which may not be far from correct. However, Mansi, though somewhat less internally diverse than Khanty, is now considered to be four different languages: **Northern Mansi** (Sygva, Sosva, Lyapin, Ob'), **Eastern Mansi** (upper Konda), **Western Mansi** (Pelym, Lower Loz'va, Vagil'), and **Southern Mansi** (Tavda). Statistical breakdown is not generally available, but the general picture is fairly clear. According to Salminen [SALMINEN 1997] and Janhunén [JANHUNEN 1993], the surviving Southern and Western groups are very small, perhaps 100 each, the Southern Mansi language has been extinct since the middle of this century, and the Western Mansi language is by now probably extinct or very nearly so. Eastern Mansi, the most divergent of the four Mansi languages, has a population perhaps approaching 1,000, but the language is remembered only by the older generation, probably not much more than 100 in number. Northern Mansi constitutes the vast majority in population, about 7,000, and also has by far the largest number and proportion of speakers, up to 3,000, probably including some children, especially where the people are not urbanized. A literature and school programs have existed for Northern Mansi, and community concern for the language has grown, but the situation of the language is surely critical.

Both Khanty and Mansi, being the closest languages genetically related to Hungarian, have long been extensively studied by European as well as Russian scientists. Nevertheless some of the dialectology or languages may be only fragmentarily documented. References for Khanty: I. Nikolaeva, Academy Institute of Linguistics, Moscow, and for Mansi E. Skribnik, Academy Institute of Philology, Novosibirsk.

The only other branch of the Uralic family treated here will be the *Saami* (Lappish, now widely considered a derogatory term), a subbranch of the Finno-Permian branch of Finno-Ugric. We shall deal with Saami not only in Russia, but also in Finland, Norway, and Sweden. As Saami is the only northern "indigenous" language group of Western Europe, we thus come full circle, to the other side of the

Atlantic from Greenlandic Inuit. Saami might be compared with Inuit, moreover, in that like Inuit Saami is an extensive gradated chain of dialects, but those dialects are fewer and their divergence greater, such that it is significantly more appropriate to call them nine or ten different languages rather than dialects. (Alternative interpretations will be offered below after the presentation of each language or dialect.) Saami may be comparable with Inuit also in that it is spoken in four countries, but here the geopolitical configuration is not linear and the distribution is more complex and of course more compact.

Four forms of Saami are spoken in Russia. Northeasternmost is **Ter**, centering on the northeastern Kola Peninsula. Next and central to the Kola is **Kildin**. In Southwest Kola is **Akkala** (Ahkkil or Babinsk), recently recognized (by P. Sammallahti, to whom we are also indebted for confirmation of some Finnish Saami estimates, p.c. 1997) as a separate language, closest to Skolt. In the eastern Kola and Petsamo district, and partly in Finland to Lake Inari is **Skolt**. Census reports show a total of about 1,900 Saami in Russia, of whom 700 are speakers. (About half of the Russian Saami now live in the town of Lovozero.) Approximate breakdown might be 400 Ter, 1,000 Kildin, at most 100 Akkala, and 400 Skolt (with another 600 Skolt in Finland). Rantala [RANTALA 1994: 201-202] provides the first available breakdown for number of speakers: Ter 6, Akkala 7, Skolt 20-30, all obviously nearing extinction, and the rest, 650, speak Kildin, including perhaps some children. Of the 600 Skolt in Finland, who moved there during World War II, there may be 400 speakers; the average youngest may be in their twenties. **Inari** is spoken in Finland around most of Lake Inari. Total population up to 900, perhaps 300 speakers; average youngest probably in their thirties.

**Northern Saami**, by far the largest language of the family, is itself a dialect-complex with an internal diversity approaching that of Inuit from West Greenland to Alaska (Knut Bergsland, p.c 1994). It is spoken widely in northernmost Norway on the Finnmark plateau (Karasjok and Kautokeino main centers) and into many of the fjords, in northernmost Finland, and in northernmost Sweden (there also spread into the more southerly language areas where it may constitute a large proportion of the Saami speakers). The total population is unknown, but may be conservatively estimated at 30,000 for Norway (estimates differ very greatly, often cited at 40,000, depending of course on the definition of Saami), a smaller number in Sweden which we shall set at 8,000 (5,000–10,000?), and perhaps 4,500 in Finland, for an international total, accordingly, of 42,500 (less conservatively, easily 55,000). In Norway in the core area, Varanger-Finnmark plateau, the language is vigorously maintained, spoken by the children in even the larger settlements, where the population is overwhelmingly Saami, but in the periphery the percentage of speakers is lower, nevertheless including some children. A conservative estimate might be 15,000 Northern Saami speakers for Norway, for Finland perhaps 2,000, and for Sweden perhaps 4,000. An international total of 21,000 (or 25,000?) Northern Saami speakers, widely including children, makes Northern Saami the most viable of northern indigenous languages of Eurasia, along



with Tundra Nenets.

To the south primarily in Sweden is a series of three varieties of Saami which might be considered separate languages: **Lule** along the upper Luleå in Sweden and Hamaroy-Tysfjord area in Norway; **Pite** along upper Piteå, Arjeplog, in Sweden, and Saltfjord-Rana area of Norway; and **Ume** along the Umeå in Sweden (and formerly towards Mo i Rana in Norway). No clear breakdown in total population in Sweden is provided between these three or Northern Saami. Sweden is reported to have a total of at least 17,000 Saami, of whom half are speakers, a strong indication that few or none are children, especially among these three; the numbers are smaller towards the South, and the proportion of speakers generally smaller still. (As noted above, also, a large proportion of the Saami speakers in those areas are of the spread Northern Saami.) An estimate for Lule might be 6,000 in Sweden, plus perhaps 1,000 in Norway (emerging to 2,000 according to Leena Huss, p.c. 1994, including a few children speakers), of whom perhaps 1,500 in Sweden plus 500 (+ ?) in Norway speak Lule. There is for Pite a population of perhaps 2,000 in Sweden (plus one or two families in Norway), of whom fewer than 50 speak Pite. Ume has a total population of perhaps 1,000 (probably none any longer in Norway), and about 50 remaining speakers (p.c. Olavi Korhonen 1995).

Finally, **Southern Saami** is scattered from Hattfjelldal-Vefsen in Norway to Vilhelmina on Angeman River in Sweden and southward 250 miles to Elgå in Norway and Idre i Dalarna in Sweden, with a total population of 1,200, half in each country. Here in the southernmost Saami area the situation is markedly better than at the Saami language low point, Pite and Ume, as the number of Southern speakers may be half the population, in Sweden 300 plus 300 in Norway, with speakers into their thirties and forties, but now reportedly perhaps a few children, attributable to ethnic resurgence and strong school language programs (p.c. Knut Bergsland, Olavi Korhonen 1995).

A higher-level more conservative division (or radical lumping) of Saami into different languages might be three: Eastern Saami consisting of Ter, Kildin, Akkala, Skolt and Inari; Central Saami consisting of Northern, Lule, and Pite; and Southern (in a wider sense), consisting of Ume and Southern.

To sum up the figures (total population and, following hyphen, number of speakers) for each, one might venture the following, including some rough estimates for the ten groups: Ter 400–6, Kildin 1,000–650, Akkala under 100–7, Skolt 1,000–425, Inari 900–300, Northern 41,500 (+ 15,000?)–21,000 (+ 5,000?), Lule 7,000(+ ?)–2,000 (+ ?), Pite 2,000–50, Ume 1,000–50, Southern (narrow sense) 1,200–600. With the higher-level division: Eastern 3,400–1,388, Central 51,500–23,050 (or 67,000–28,050?), and Southern (wider sense) 2,200–650. Breakdown by country is somewhat less problematical, as figures for countries (total population and estimates of number of speakers) are more available than for language/dialect, correlating approximately with the preceding figures: Russia 1,900–700, Finland 6,000–2,700, Sweden 17,600–5,900 (or 20,000–6,000?), Norway 31,600–15,800 (or to 43,000–19,000?). The grand international total of Saami would then be 57,100

(to 70,000), with 25,100 (to 28,400) speakers of the various forms of Saami. Of all of these in any case Northern Saami would be about 75% of the population, and about 84% of Saami speakers.

The Saami languages have long been studied by European linguists, many of them intensively. Some have massive multi-volume dictionaries and all or most have advanced degrees of documentation, the most likely exceptions being Ter and Akkala. The following individuals and institutions currently the most active in Saami language studies may be noted; many are located in or near the Saami area. Nordic Saami Institute in Kautokeino and Samisk Høgskole, O.H. Magga, M. Aikio and N. and E. Helander; Institut for Språk og Literatur, University of Tromsø, N. Jernsletten; Avdelingen for Samiska, University of Umeå, O. Korhonen; University of Oulu, P. Sammallahti, University of Helsinki, R. Bartens; P. Zaykov, Academy Institute, Petrozavodsk. Several of the individuals listed are multiply affiliated, and institutions deal with a wide scope of Saami languages, on a highly international basis.

### 3. SOME OBSERVATIONS

From the foregoing we may extract the following tabulation (see Tabular Summary at end). A total of 92 languages or putative languages are listed. Of these, five (included in square brackets) might be considered peripheral to the North as defined in the introduction (<sup>51</sup>Manchu-Xibo in China only, <sup>64</sup>Ainu now in Japan only, <sup>32</sup>Southern Haida and <sup>35</sup>Southern Tsimshian in Canada, British Columbia only), reducing the total in that case to 87. Of these, three are very possibly to be considered dialects: <sup>45</sup>Negidal a dialect of <sup>44</sup>Evenk, <sup>46</sup>Ulch and <sup>48</sup>Oroch dialects of <sup>47</sup>Nanay, reducing the total then to 84. (It is of course possible to reduce the total still further by taking a coarser standard of defining languages, but a number somewhere in the 80s seems to be fair for counting the languages of the North, in terms comparable to the standards used for European languages).

Of the 84 languages here so listed 14 to 16 have already become extinct in the last two centuries (<sup>6</sup>Sirenik, 1977; <sup>28</sup>Tsetsaut, ca. 1930; <sup>41</sup>Southern Kamchadal, ca. 1900; <sup>42</sup>Northeast Kamchadal, ca. 1920; <sup>56</sup>Chuvan, after 1900; <sup>57</sup>Omok, after 1900; <sup>60</sup>Kott, ca. 1860; <sup>61</sup>Arin, ca. 1800; <sup>62</sup>Pumpokol, ca. 1800; <sup>63</sup>Kurile Ainu, ca. 1950; <sup>68</sup>Yurats, 19th century; <sup>74</sup>Kamas, 1989; <sup>75</sup>Mator, ca. 1840; <sup>82</sup>Southern Mansi, by 1950; also possibly by now <sup>78</sup>Southern Khanty and <sup>81</sup>Western Mansi), leaving then about 70 to 72 Northern languages still living. The question is, for how much longer?

In the Tabular Summary, in addition to the base population figures and number of speakers as given in the text, I have tried to provide an evaluation of the degree of viability of the language to remain alive through traditional oral transmission by parents to the next generation, creating new generations of active fluent speakers. This evaluation of viability by age distribution of speakers is as follows: a (language spoken by all generations, learned by practically all children),

**a-** (learned by nearly all or most children), **b** (spoken by all adults, parental age and up, but learned by few or no children), **b-** (spoken by adults in their thirties and older, but not by younger parents, and probably no children), **c** (spoken only by middle-aged adults and older, forties and up), **c-** (fifties and up), **-d** (sixties and up), **d** (seventies and up), **d-** (seventies and up, and fewer than 10). These latter categories are probably fairly liberal in terms of active fluency, and may in some cases be constituted largely of "semi-speakers". The final category, **e**, extinct, thus probably means, throughout, no living person able to carry on a conversation or perhaps even able to understand the language (other than by virtue of perhaps being able to understand some closely related language). In many cases more than one letter is given. In those cases where the letters are connected by hyphen, the status of the language is more complex or less uniform, and the hyphen is deliberately ambiguous, indistinguishable from the minus sign: e.g. **a-c** indicates that in some communities or areas, often in dialect areas, the children generally learn the language, through a range to other communities or areas where the youngest speakers are in middle age. An extreme example is (Inuit **a-c,d** where, as shown, the language status varies from that in Greenland, **a**, where practically all children learn the language, through Canada (**a-c**, **a** in the East, **b** in Central, **c** in the West) and Alaska (**b-c**), to Russia (**d**) with perhaps 2 remaining elderly speakers. Letters separated by comma instead of hyphen indicate relatively separate situations where a specific community of distinctly stronger or weaker maintenance is known, as for Inuit in Russia, or e.g. Aleut at Atka (**b**), but elsewhere **c-d**. Where the status can be differentiated by country, that can be seen or inferred from the table, otherwise in some cases from the text.

From these evaluations some predictions can be made about how much longer Northern languages will remain alive. It requires no crystal ball to make the simple arithmetical prediction that a language which has no speakers under age sixty is most likely to be extinct by the end of the life expectancy of those age sixty added to the present year. I have here generally taken such life expectancy to be about seventy-five or eighty, admittedly quite generous considering the general life expectancies and health of indigenous populations. Sheer size is of course a factor, so that of two languages both with youngest speakers age sixty, one with 100 such speakers is likely to become extinct somewhat later, perhaps by 5 or 10 years, than one with 10 such speakers; thus the former is most likely to become extinct in the year 2025, while the latter is most likely to become extinct by 2020, but these variations are relatively minor. The same principle would hold also for languages of which the youngest speakers are age six, by extending the dates for the above by perhaps 55 years, to 2080 or 2070. The fact that we do not have in this report any languages whose youngest speakers are age six (or sixteen) is interestingly indicative of the limited accuracy of this report, in no small part connected with widespread community denial of reality.

We need to qualify the term extinct as "functionally" extinct, to allow for two

types of isolated exceptions, where either some elder lives to the age of one hundred, adding another 20–25 years to the “life” of a language, or more frequently an exceptional individual is, typically, raised by grandparents, and can likewise add 25 or more years to the life of a language—or by also living to 100, add even 50 years or more to a language otherwise functionally extinct—and very often prematurely also written off by linguists, anthropologists, or the public as absolutely extinct. Such individuals are potentially of crucial importance also in that they can add to the documentary record. It should be borne in mind that such exceptions could take place in the future of a fair proportion of the remaining languages.

In those cases where there are some but not all children still learning the language, the proportion and above all the density of their distribution is critical to further predictions for dates of extinction in the later 21st century. Usually little information is available in these cases. If the children speaking these languages are concentrated in whole communities or areas, to constitute some sort of critical mass, the language will of course last significantly longer than if the children speaking them are thinly scattered. Thus sheer numbers or general proportions of even children speakers are by no means the only criteria.

Finally, we cannot take into account here unforeseeable changes for the worse, e.g. industrial developments, natural or ecological or social disasters, or for the better, i.e. radical improvement in economic and especially social conditions. The most plausible of these is resurgence of pride in ethnic identity and cultural heritage, including serious use in the school domain and above all strong positive shift in parental motivation to speak the language to the children. A case already in point may be Southern Saami, where reportedly both in Sweden and Norway, with strong cooperative school program and community motivation, parents and grandparents have been speaking the language to children after a general lapse, beginning a notable reverse of advanced language loss. This kind of possibility could be a factor in making especially the more distant of the following predictions highly inaccurate.

I shall proceed with the predictions without trying to take into account these unforeseeable factors, but qualify the predictions—or rather, simple calculations—as being realistic only “at the rate things are going”, “if present trends continue”, “barring unforeseen circumstances”, and not counting exceptional individuals as mentioned above.

Thus three or five (or six) Northern languages will probably be extinct in the next ten years (<sup>75</sup>Southern Khanty and <sup>81</sup>Western Mansi, if not already extinct; <sup>14</sup>Tagish, <sup>29</sup>Eyak, [<sup>35</sup>Southern Tsimshian], <sup>37</sup>Kerek, <sup>38</sup>Yug, with but one or two elderly speakers now remaining), and two (or three) more (<sup>83</sup>Ter Saami, <sup>85</sup>Akkala Saami, [<sup>64</sup>Ainu], which, if the figures are correct, are remembered by ten or fewer persons of the very oldest generation), which will have died out before the coming century or during its first decade.

Unless radical changes for the better take place, i.e. outright language loss

reversal, the next fifty years of the twenty-first century will see the extinction, in addition to the above, of about 43 (or 45) Northern languages, the majority of those remaining, beginning with the rest (6 [or 7]) of those whose (best) viability status is designated **d**, then the very large number (22) of those whose (best) viability status is designated **c-d** or **c-** or **c**, whose youngest speakers are now in their forties to sixties, followed by those (15 [or 16]) whose (best) viability status is designated **b-c** or **b-** or **b**, languages still spoken by young adults, parental generation, but not by children; unless those parents now reverse the seemingly inexorable trend and speak their language to their children, after about 2055 only (at best) 22 Northern languages will remain. Thus, while there have been only 14 to 16 known extinctions of northern languages in the last two centuries (9 to 11 so far during this century), there may well be four times that many during the next sixty years.

After 2055 (sixty years hence and the end of the expected lifetime of the youngest speaker of those languages known no longer to be spoken by children), though extinctions of Northern languages are quite likely to continue, such extinctions become of course much less predictable. Of the 22 likely then remaining Northern languages, seven have a (best) viability status designation of **a?**, meaning that there may be some children, but generally few, if any, who speak the language, which, accordingly, may have some chance of survival into the indefinite future (<sup>43</sup>Even, <sup>58</sup>Ket, <sup>65</sup>Nganasan, <sup>71</sup>Northern Sel'kup, <sup>79</sup>Northern Mansi, <sup>84</sup>Kildin Saami, <sup>89</sup>Lule Saami).

Of the remaining 15 or 16 which definitely or presumably still have children speakers, in several cases (e.g. <sup>3</sup>Central Alaskan Yupik, <sup>36</sup>Chukchi, <sup>38</sup>Koryak, <sup>44</sup>Evenk in Russia, <sup>70</sup>Forest Nenets), such children are a minority, often a small minority in continuously shrinking isolated areas or communities. The condition of these languages may be termed critical or severely endangered.

No Northern language as defined in this report is spoken by all the children. None have the viability status designation simply **a**, but have **a-**, **a-b**, **a-c**, indicating, respectively, that some (minority of the) children no longer speak the language or that there are some communities or areas of the language community where the children, or even the parents, do not speak the language. In all these remaining ten strongest cases, however, at least the majority of the children still do speak the language, and there are large areas in which the language is still the first language for all generations. These languages also have at least close to a thousand speakers, most much more than that. Because of their positive importance for the future of Northern languages, I shall mention each of those nine individually.

Borderline cases are two of the Canadian Athabaskan groups, <sup>9</sup>Chipewyan and <sup>12</sup>North Slavey, where the children speaking the language may not even be the majority. Another truly "borderline" case is <sup>13</sup>Central Siberian Yupik, where on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, the situation may be designated **a-**, but in Chukotka the youngest speakers are about 30; since 1988 and the end of the Cold War, the two halves of this international group, which have only their ancestral language in common (otherwise Russian in Chukotka, English on St. Lawrence Island), are in a

unique situation, the development and resolution of which will be of great importance and symbolic significance for the circumpolar North. Two other Canadian Athabaskan groups, <sup>11</sup>South Slavey and especially <sup>10</sup>Dogrib, the only Athabaskan languages anywhere spoken by such a large majority of the children, belong more clearly in this strongest category.

Larger numbers still and the heavy concentration in the Obdorsk-Yamal region of <sup>76</sup>Northern Khanty of traditional speakers of all generations and exceptionally strong maintenance of <sup>77</sup>Eastern Khanty qualify those languages as the next strongest Northern languages in Russia, after <sup>69</sup>Tundra Nenets, with far larger numbers still, and still critical mass of great traditional strength in the Taymyr and Yamal parts of its area; it remains to be seen how conditions in Russia, especially in view of industrial developments in the Yamal, are going to favor maintenance of this strength. The situation of <sup>88</sup>Northern Saami is of course rather complex; that has relatively large numbers, critical mass, and recently improving political and cultural support, but Saami-speaking children may not be the majority. In any case even these most favored Northern languages might be considered endangered. Very probably they will still be spoken in the year 2100, but for how much longer, and by children?

The case of Inuit is unique. Though no longer spoken by children in Alaska or Western Canada, its position of great strength in Eastern Canada and above all in Greenland puts it in a class by itself amongst the languages of the North.

It may be interesting to sum up with some total figures. The entire population as listed in this report of Northern peoples (not counting Manchu-Tungusic in China, Mongolia, or Ainu in Japan) is 393,100 (47,000 in Greenland, 60,894 in Canada, 58,985 in Alaska, ca. 171,000 (43.5%) in Russia; and (Saami) 6,000 in Finland, 31,620 in Norway 17,600 in Sweden). Of those, 205,210 or about 52.2% speak the languages (47,000 in Greenland, 37,436 in Canada, 16,451 in Alaska, 79,923 in Russia; 2,700 in Finland, 15,800 in Norway, 5,900 in Sweden).

Comparing the number of speakers as a percentage of the population for each country, Greenland has increasingly close to 100%, Canada 61.5%, Alaska 27.9%, Russia 46.7%, Finland 45%, Norway 50%, Sweden 33.5%. Counting also the numbers and percent of (living) languages in each country spoken by some children, Greenland has 1/1 (100%), Canada 5/18 (27.8%), Alaska 2/21 (9.5%), Russia 13/40 (32.5%) or, not counting a?, 7/40 (17.5%), Finland 1/3, Norway and Sweden each 1 or 2/3. Either way, Greenlandic is in a class by itself; Finland, Norway and Sweden are difficult to rate; and of the three countries with the greatest diversity Canada has perhaps done less poorly than Russia, and Alaska has done by far the worst both in sheer numbers and in diversity.

Let us now look at the situation of the surviving languages of the North as a whole, to put the North in a global perspective, by comparing the proportion of languages in the three broad categories that I have defined [KRAUSS 1992: 4-7] as "safe" (most likely still to be spoken by (at least some) children in 2100),

"moribund" (no longer spoken by children), and "endangered" (all cases in between). Compared to the global estimates of 5–10% "safe", 20–50% moribund, and the remainder, 40–75%, endangered, of the 70–72 living Northern languages, only one seems "safe" (Inuit in Greenland), about 50 (70-some %) are moribund, and the remainder (20-some %) are endangered. It may well be wondered that the North, often naively regarded as an "unspoiled wilderness," is in fact one of the more devastated parts of the globe linguistically. I believe this is due to the lateness and suddenness of intense contact in most parts of the North, between indigenous groups of very small population and huge imperialist powers at a point when their vast technological and political advantage was at a maximum (Russo-Soviet and Anglo-American), contrasted with the obvious exceptions of Danish contact in Greenland, beginning in 1721, and Finno-Scandinavian with Saami, much older still.

However, unlike the present situations in parts of the world where there is greatest linguistic diversity and active elimination of minority indigenous languages is going on at a rapidly increasing pace (e.g. New Guinea, Indonesia, Amazonia, parts of Africa), in the North active efforts to eliminate indigenous minority languages are past their peak. Though there is certainly the powerful momentum of those past policies still at work, in all Northern countries government policy during the past decade or two has shifted markedly toward tolerance and support for indigenous minority languages. Further, though it must be emphasized that that momentum has been internalized by the people themselves, who might still be able to speak their traditional languages to their children but do not, with or without awareness of the consequences they may regret, throughout the North there is at the same time very rapidly growing desire on the part of the peoples themselves to revitalize (if not always to maintain!) their language. In fact, greatly adding to the uncertainty of the above dire predictions of language loss in the North, for the great majority of those languages no longer spoken by children there are rapidly developing school and community efforts—now beginning to include "total immersion" programs. Thanks also to that work, we may now hope that the North may yet keep at least its share of mankind's languages.

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### Indigenous Languages of the North Tabular Summary

	Total Population	Number of Speakers	Viability Status	Country (Greenland, Canada, Alaska, Russia, Finland, Norway, Sweden)
<b>ESKIMO-ALEUT</b>				
1 Inuit	90,000	74,500	a-c; d	G 47,000-47,000 a, C 30,500-24,500 a-c, A 13,500-3,100 b-c, R -2? d
2 Alutiiq	3,000	400	b, c	A
3 Centr. Alaskan Yupik	21,000	10,000	a-c	A
4 Naukan	400	70	c	R
5 Central Siberian Yupik	2,000	1,300	a-, b-	A 1,100-1,000 a-, R 900-300 b-
6 Sirenik		0	e	R (1997)
7 Aleut	2,200	305	b, c-d	A 2,000-300 b, c-d, R 200-5 d
8 Copper Is. Attuan Creole	100	10	d	R
<b>ATHBASKAN-EYAK-TLINGIT</b>				
9 Chipewyan	6,000	4,000	a-b	C
10 Dogrib	2,400	2,300	a-	C
11 South Slavey	3,600	3,000	a-b	C
12 North Slavey	1,600	900	a-b	C
13 Kaska	900	400	b-c	C
14 Tagish		2	d-	C
15 Southern Tutchone	1,400	200	c	C
16 Northern Tutchone	1,100	200	b-c	C
17 Kutchin	3,000	700	b, c	C 1,900-400 c, A 1,100-300 b,c
18 Han	300	15	c,d	C 250-7 d, A 50-8 c
19 Upper Tanana	340	115	b-c	A 300-105 b-c, C 40-10 c
20 Tanacross	220	65	b-	A
21 Tanana	380	30	c-, e	A
22 Upper Kuskokwim	160	40	b-	A
23 Koyukon	2,300	300	c	A
24 Holikachuk	200	12	c-d	A
25 Ingalik	275	40	c-	A
26 Tanaina	900	75	b, c-d	A
27 Ahtna	500	80	c	A
28 Tsetsaut		0	e	C 0, A 0 (ca. 1930)
29 Eyak		1	d-	A
30 Tlingit	11,000	575	c-d	A 10,000-500 c-d, C 1,000-75 c-d
<b>HAIDA</b>				
31 Northern Haida	1,700	45	-d	C 1,100-30 -d, A 600-15 -d
[32] Southern Haida	500	10	d	C

## TSIMSHIANIC

33	Coast Tsimshian	4,500	<500	b-c, -d	C 3,200-<400 b-c, A 1,300-70 -d
34	Nisga-Gitksan	5,500	<1,000	b-c, d	C 5,400-<1,000 b-c, A <100-<10 d
[35]	Southern Tsimshian		2?	d-	C

## CHUKOTKO-KAMCHATKAN

36	Chukchi	15,000	10,000	a-b	R
37	Kerek	400	2	d-	R
38	Koryak	7,000	2,500	a-c	R
39	Alyutor	2,000	200	c	R
40	Itel'men	1,500	70	c-d	R
41	Southern Kamchadal		0	e	R (ca. 1900)
42	Northeast Kamchadal		0	e	R (ca. 1920)

## MANCHU-TUNGUS

43	Even	<17,000	<7,500	a?-c	R
44	Evenk	65,000	30,000	a-c	R 30,000-9,000 a-c, China 34,000-20,000 a-c, Mongolia 1,000-?
(45)	Negidal*	500	<100	c?	R (possibly dialect of Evenk)
(46)	Ul'ch*	3,200	<500	c?	R (possibly dialect of Nanay)
47	Nanay	16,000	2,050	c,d	R 12,000-<2,000 c, China 4,000-<50 d
(48)	Oroch*	900	<100	c-d	R (possibly dialect of Nanay)
49	Orok	300	35	c-d	R 270-30, Japan 30-<5 d
50	Udege	1,600	100	c-d	R
[51]	Manchu; Xibo	>33,000	16,000	d-; a-c	China (not counting millions of ethnic Manchu)

## NIVKH

52	Amur Nivkh	2,000	100	c-d	R
53	Sakhalin Nivkh	2,700	300	c	R 2,700-300 c-d, Japan 0 e (ca. 1970?)

## YUKAGIR

54	Tundra Yukagir	600	50	c-d	R
55	Kolyma Yukagir	300	20	d	R
56	Chuvan	["1,300"]	0	e	R (after 1900)
57	Omok		0	e	R (after 1900)

## KETIC

58	Ket	1,100	550	a?-c	R
59	Yug	15	2	d-	R
60	Kott (incl. Assan)		0	e	R (ca. 1860)
61	Arin		0	e	R (ca. 1800)
62	Pumpokol		0	e	R (ca. 1800)

## AINU

[63]	Kurile Ainu		0	e	R 0, Japan 0 (ca. 1950)
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[64 Ainu 25,000 10 d-,e Japan 0 d-, R 0 (ca. 1960)

# URALIC

65	Nganasan	1,300	500	a?-c	R
66	Tundra Enets	100	10	c-d	R
67	Forest Enets	100	40	b-c	R
68	Yurats		0	e	R (19th century)
69	Tundra Nenets	33,000	27,000	a-b	R
70	Forest Nenets	2,000	1,500	a-b	R
71	Northern Sel'kup	1,700	1,400	a?-c	R
72	Central Sel'kup	1,700	150	c-d	R
73	Southern Sel'kup	200	20	d	R
74	Kamas		0	e	R (1989)
75	Mator		0	e	R (ca. 1840)
76	Northern Khanty	15,000	7,500	a-c	R
77	Eastern Khanty	5,000	4,500	a-	R
78	Southern Khanty	<1,000	0?	d-e?	R
79	Northern Mansi	7,000	3,000	a?-c	R
80	Eastern Mansi	<1,000	100	c	R
81	Western Mansi	100?	0?	e?	R (recently)
82	Southern Mansi	100?	0	e	R (first half of 20th century)
83	Ter Saami	500	6	d	R
84	Kildin Saami	1,000	650	a?-c	R
85	Akkala-Babinsk Saami	<100	7	d	R
86	Skolt Saami	1,000	425	b-c, d	F 600-400 b-c, R 400-25 d
87	Inari Saami	900	300	b-c	F
88	Northern Saami	>42,500	21,000	a-c	N 30,000-15,000 a-c, S 8,000?-4,000? a-c, F 4,500-2,000 a-c
89	Lule Saami	7,000?	3,000?	a?-c	S 6,000-1,500 a?-c, N 1,000?-500? a?-c
90	Pite Saami	2,000	50	d	S 2,000-50 d, N 20?-e
91	Ume Saami	1,000	50	d	S
92	Southern Saami	1,200	600	b-c	N 600-300 b-c, S 600-300 b-c