

University of Northern Iowa

UNI ScholarWorks

---

INSPIRE Student Research and Engagement  
Conference

2023 INSPIRE Student Research and  
Engagement Conference

---

Apr 3rd, 2:20 PM - 3:05 PM

## Mapping for Cultural Resurgence: Reclaiming Geocultural Knowledge of Kamchatka's Indigenous Peoples from Early Scientific Expeditions

Semyon Drozdetskii  
*University of Northern Iowa*

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

Copyright ©2023 Semyon Drozdetskii

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/csbsresearchconf>

---

### Recommended Citation

Drozdetskii, Semyon, "Mapping for Cultural Resurgence: Reclaiming Geocultural Knowledge of Kamchatka's Indigenous Peoples from Early Scientific Expeditions" (2023). *INSPIRE Student Research and Engagement Conference*. 74.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/csbsresearchconf/2023/all/74>

This Open Access Oral Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the CSBS Conferences/Events at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in INSPIRE Student Research and Engagement Conference by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

**Offensive Materials Statement:** Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.

# Mapping for Cultural Resurgence: Reclaiming Geocultural Knowledge of Kamchatka's Indigenous Peoples from Early Scientific Explorers

Thesis Research by  
Semyon Drozdetskii

Thesis Committee: Dr. Andrey N. Petrov (Chair), Dr. Tatiana Degai, Dr. Bingqing Liang and Dr. Lisa Tabor  
Indigenous Advisory Group: Yulia Vasilieva, Aleksandr Mokryi and Viktoria Sharakhmatova

I acknowledge that I am on the land of the Báxoje or Bah Kho-Je (Iowa), oθaakiiwaki·hina·ki (Sauk) and Meškawahki·aša·hina (Fox), Ochéthi Sakówinj (Sioux), Umó<sup>n</sup>ho<sup>n</sup> (Omaha), and Hocąk (Ho-Chunk), as well as those tribal nations who are contemporary caretakers of land in Iowa

# Introduction: Kamchatka Peninsula

---



# Introduction: Pre-Colonial Kamchatka

---

- Two peoples inhabited most of the peninsula: Koryaks and Itelmens.
  - Koryaks - nomadic reindeer herders.
  - Itelmens - sedentary fishermen living along rivers.
- Indigenous knowledge systems.
  - Earth is inseparable from people and their culture.
  - Humans are elements of the land.
- Indigenous land ties that defined culture.

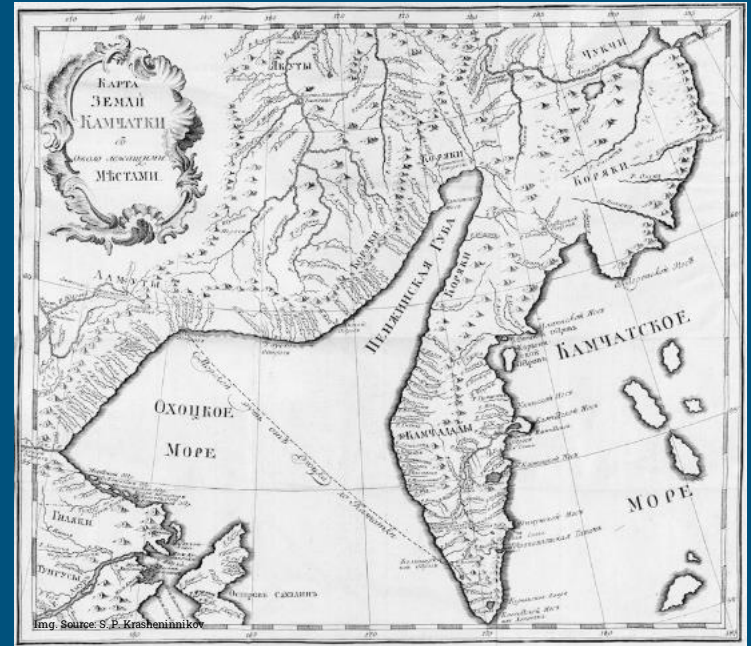


Img. Source: S. P. Krashinsky

Itelmens

# Introduction: Russian Colonization and Research of Kamchatka

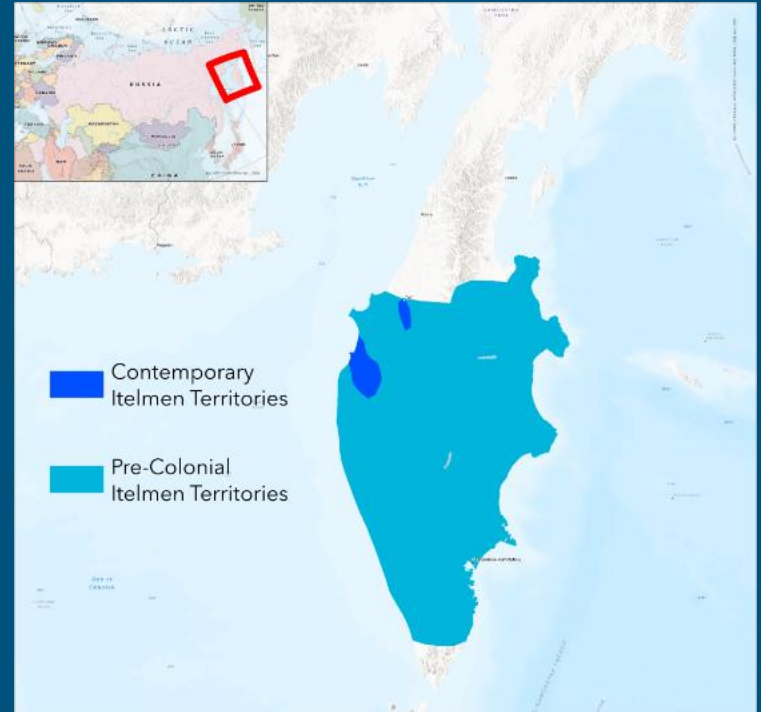
- Russians colonized Kamchatka in the late 17th century.
- Several scientific expeditions were sent to Kamchatka.
- The most important of these - Second Kamchatka Expedition (1737-1742) and of Stepan Krasheninnikov.
- Krasheninnikov records remain the only major source from which we can draw an idea of the pre-colonial state of the Indigenous Kamchatka.



# Introduction: Consequences of Colonization

---

- Wars with Russians, diseases, forced baptizing, Russification, relocation.
- Disrupted connection with the land → loss of culture.



# Purpose and Significance of the Research

---

- Little attention has been paid to reclamation of the past Indigenous geographic knowledge.
- Cooperation with the Indigenous Knowledge holders to develop data and tools that could be utilized in reclamation of the Indigenous geocultural knowledge.
- Utilization of counter-mapping techniques to re-map past Indigenous geographic knowledge.
- The result - GIS-based geocultural analysis of cartographic and historical data documented by the 2nd Kamchatka Expedition.

# Goal

---

Develop a co-produced geospatial platform for reclaiming geocultural knowledge of the Kamchatka's Indigenous Peoples from early scientific expeditions.



# Objectives

---

- Collect, document, curate and map geographical and ethnographic information collected by the 2nd Kamchatka Expedition (by Krasheninnikov in particular).
- Analyze how the Indigenous geocultural knowledge about places of significance in Kamchatka has changed from the onset of Russian colonization to the present day using the Avacha Bay as a case study.
- Develop cartographic and data products and tools to facilitate the use of geographic materials by the Kamchatka Indigenous Peoples in the process of cultural resurgence in collaboration with them.

# Literature Review: Summary

---

- Pre-contact Indigenous knowledge revolved around an animistic perception of the world and deep integration into it.
- We can only interpret available information about pre-colonial knowledge of Indigenous Peoples.
- Russian colonization led to the loss of Indigenous culture.
- Indigenous knowledge was transformed with the inclusion of Christian worldview and new layers of knowledge.
- Indigenous communities developed their own cartography to challenge oppressive maps power structures - “counter-mapping”.
- Complex nature of Indigenous knowledge require special care and consideration of specific local realities.

# Literature Review: Indigenous Counter-Mapping

---

- Maps are a tool that embodies power and is involved in power relations (Harley, 1988).
- The increased availability of mapping enabled Indigenous Peoples to challenge Western cartography - counter-mapping (Cochrane et al, 2016).
- Counter-mapping - mapping against dominant power structures (Peluso, 1995).
- Counter-mapping challenges:
  - Indigenous spatial knowledge is fluid, making cartographic representation of it difficult on static Western maps (Vermeulen et al, 2012).
  - Indigenous distrust of mapping (Cullen, 2015).
- Counter-mapping initiatives must adapt to individual cases (Sletto, 2009).

# Data Source

---

- Stepan Krasheninnikov's "History of Kamchatka" + historiographical literature of later periods.
  - References of landscape features, sacred sites and man-made objects that were of particular importance to the Indigenous Peoples to be taken.
  - Challenge of dealing with document of colonial nature.
  - Challenge of interpreting geographic descriptions.
  - This research will focus primarily on Itelmen geographical knowledge.

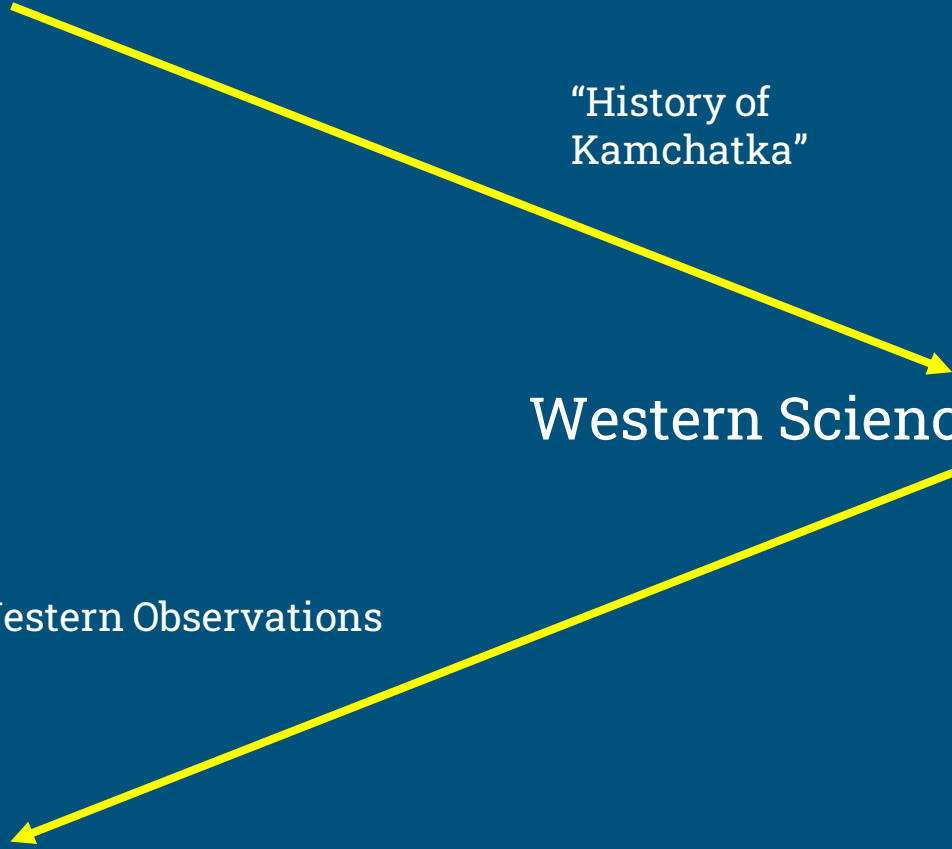
Original Indigenous Knowledge

“History of  
Kamchatka”

Western Science Observations

Interpretation of Western Observations

Model of Indigenous Geographic Knowledge



# Methodology: Mapping Indigenous Knowledge

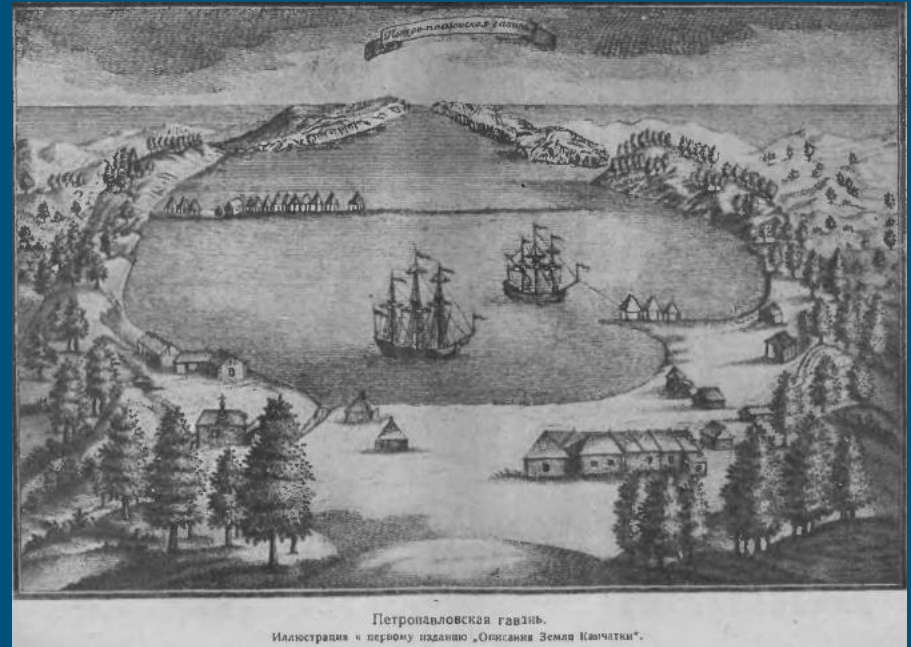
- Counter-mapping to visualize the Indigenous knowledge.
- Digital database will be created for geographical objects mentioned in data sources.
- Objects are to be mapped using Esri's ArcGIS Pro software.
- End result - Indigenous atlas.

ID	Type of a place	Indigenous name of the place	Modern name of the place	Modern points	Type/notes	Notes for indigenous people	Notes for Europeans	Chapter	Page (1545 only)	Other notes
100	Other	Chikichichu	Chikichichu	<a href="#">Chikichichu</a>	None into the "Eastern sea". It went north from Uluwatu, across to the sea and from the sea - a narrow long and a narrow lake	Chikichichu casting is located there	It's the end of the lands of Dobromirsky voyager, other lands lying to the north up to the very Chikichichu are under the jurisdiction of the Voyevoda (administrative center)	Part 1 chapter 6	121	
101	settlement/other	Chikichichu	Chikichichu	<a href="#">Chikichichu</a>	on the mouth of Wabichichu	3 yards, 2 small yards, 10 boats		Part 1 chapter 6	121	
102	Other	Wakawak	Chikichichu	<a href="#">Chikichichu</a>	None into the "Eastern sea". It went north from Nakhichichu, opposite to mouth on the sea near the shore there is a small water	There are numerous boats of the island aborigines, that appear in Quachin, "these Kanichichichu live in houses built with fish and sea animals"	normal because of the island by its mouth	Part 1 chapter 6	121	increased not to manuscript "to visit more than 1 word long and 300 meters"
103	settlement/other	Chikichichu	Chikichichu	<a href="#">Chikichichu</a>	on the top of the cape located between Nakhichichu and Chikichichu	76 white, brown Quacha lines there with 10 boats. None are 4 yards or 8". Kanichichichu from Dobromirsky the "None is water"		Part 1 chapter 6	121	
104	Other	Chikichichu	Chikichichu	<a href="#">Chikichichu</a>	None into the "Eastern sea". It went north from Chikichichu			Part 1 chapter 6	124	
105	Other	Kalika	Chikichichu	<a href="#">Chikichichu</a>	between Chikichichu (Western) mouth to close to Chikichichu mouth	Chikichichu way is built by its mouth		Part 1 chapter 6	124	
106	settlement/other	Chikichichu	Chikichichu	<a href="#">Chikichichu</a>	on Kalika mouth	3 yards, 8 boats		Part 1 chapter 6	124	"Nakhichichu (Chikichichu) is a narrow strip, called Chikichichu in Quacha books"

Listed Geographic Objects with Descriptions

# Methodology: Analysis of Changes in the Perception of Places of Significance

- 5 places of significance to be selected to trace the transformation of their perception by Itelmens with the focus on Avacha Bay
- Mentions of places in literature of later periods.
- 5 places with different historical changes in perception.
- Analysis of timelines is to be used to create a general picture of estimated historical transformation of the geographical knowledge of Itelmen.



Avacha Bay (from Krasheninnikov, 1949)

# Intermediate Results





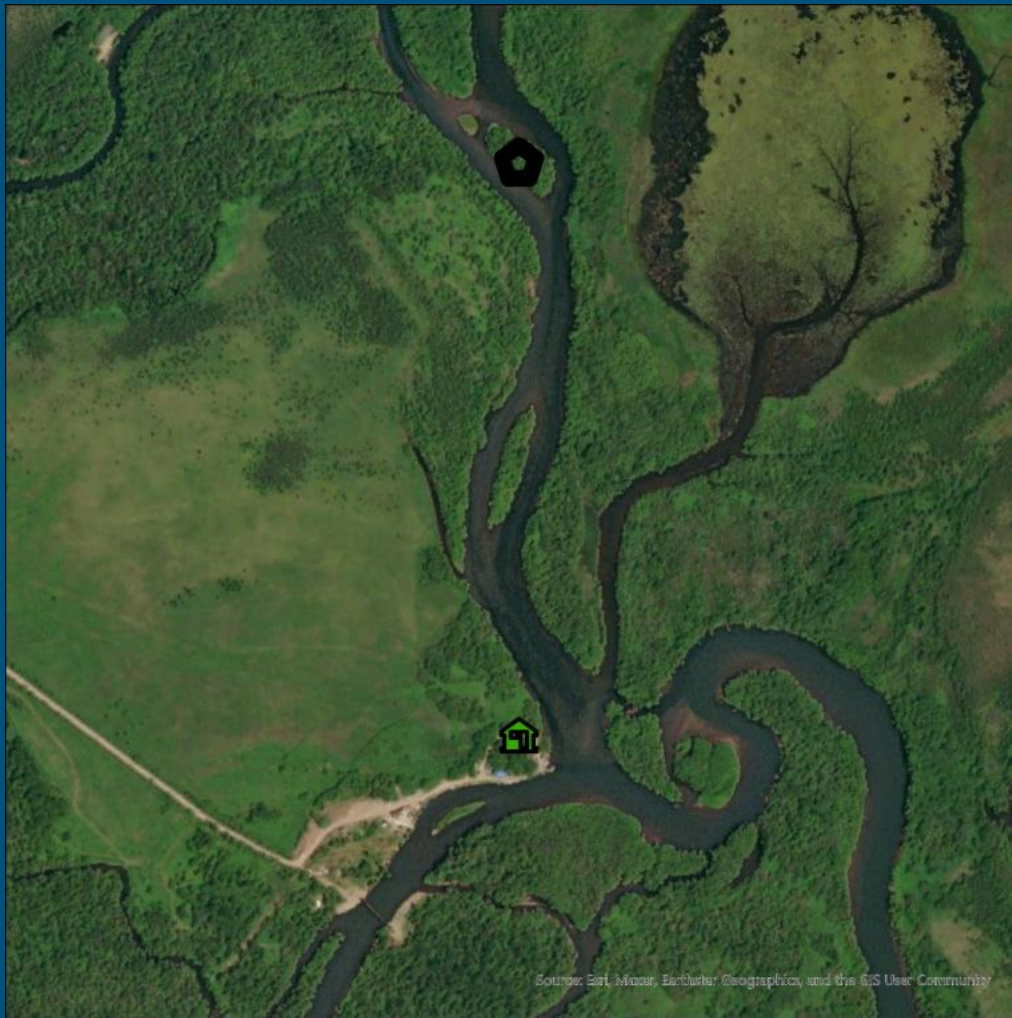
# Lotynum

“24 versts\* downstream from Kyrganik settlement there is a high steep bank on Kamchatka river [...] there [Itelmens] shoot with bows, guessing the time of their life [...] those who shoot their arrow above the bank will live a long life, and those whose arrow does not reach the top will die soon.”

Krasheninnikov, ed. 1949.

\*Old Russian unit of length ~ 0.66 miles





Source: Eric Minner, Esri/arcgis.com, and the GIS User Community

## Paratun settlement and an island

“During the great riot [against Russian rule] [...] 150 of local residents fortified themselves on this island, but it was razed to the ground by the Cossacks [...] and the inhabitants were mostly killed.”

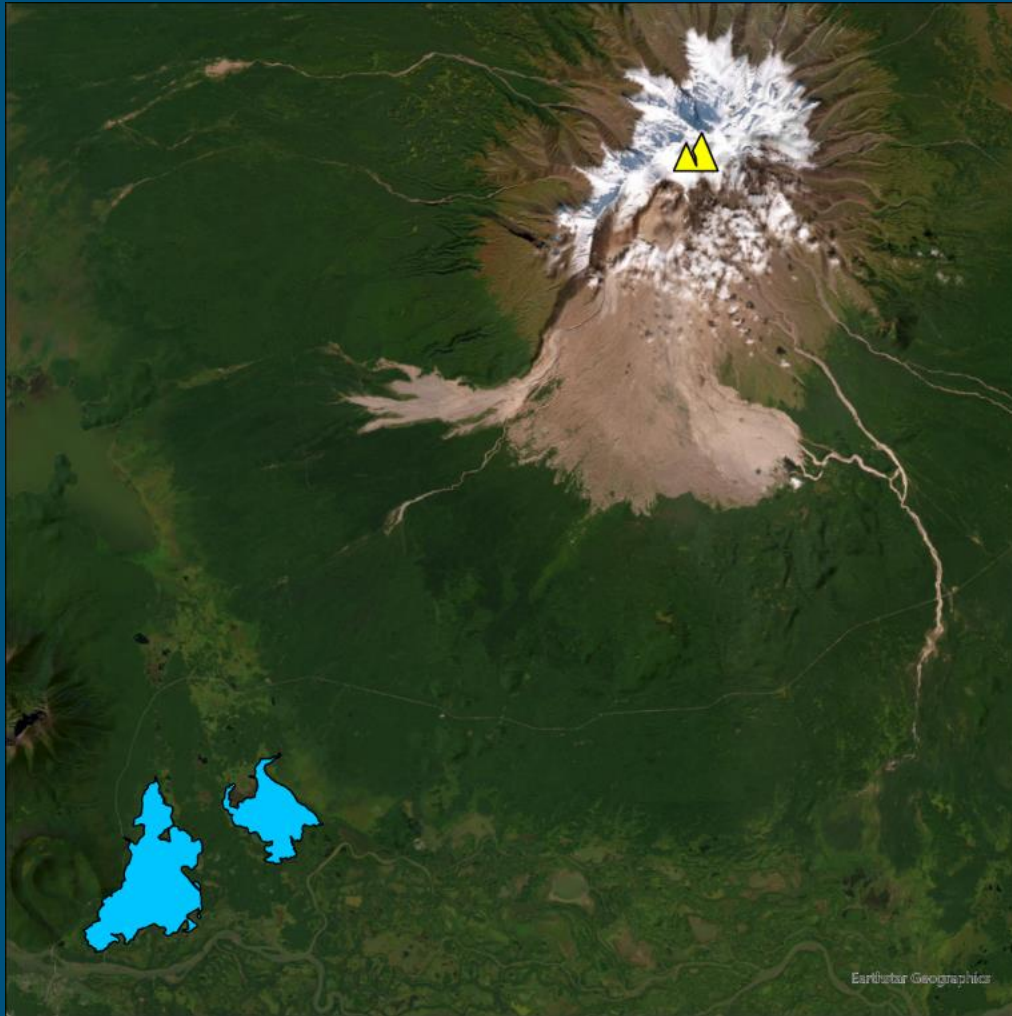
Krasheninnikov, ed. 1949.

## Shevelich volcano and lakes Kainach' and Kulhkolyangyn

“20 verst away from Kamchatka river on its left bank. [...] It [volcano] stood by the Eastern Sea\* on the very spot where Lake Kronotskoye is now, but, disturbed by the ground squirrels grinding it, it was forced to move to this place. [...] [Lakes] appeared from the feet of Shevelich [...] which left its former place and reached its present place in three jumps”

Krashennnikov, ed. 1949.

\*Pacific Ocean



# Methodology: Counter-Mapping through Collaboration with Knowledge Holders

---

## Indigenous Advisory Group



Dr. Tatiana Degai (Itelmen scholar and knowledge holder at the University of Victoria and member of the Council of Itelmens "Tskhanom")



Yulia Vasilieva (Chair, Indigenous Peoples Association of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy)



Aleksandr Mokryi (Itelmen Village of Kovran)



Viktoria Sharakhmatova (Itelmen scholar)

# Thank you!

---

## Acknowledgements:

- Dr. Andrey Petrov and thesis committee members that have helped throughout the development of this study - Dr. Tatiana Degai, Dr. Bingqing Liang and Dr. Lisa Tabor.
- Members of Indigenous Advisory Group: Dr. Tatiana Degai, Yulia Vasilieva, Aleksandr Mokryi and Viktoria Sharakhmatova.

## For Contacts:

- E-mail: [drozdets@uni.edu](mailto:drozdets@uni.edu)
- WhatsApp: +79992385873