



Donations are used directly for programs in Altai

Contribute at www.AltaiMir.org

or mail a check to:
Altai Mir
University
12345 Lake City
Way NE #126
Seattle, WA
98125-5401

Contact:
carol@altaimir.org
206-525-2101 (US)

Altai Mir
University is a
501(c)3 nonprofit
organization

Global Indigenous Land Rights Issues

In Altai Mir University's (AMU) leadership exchanges, linked Altai people (in Siberia) and Native Americans (in both North and South America) are discovering more than cultural similarities. They are learning that they are both facing the imminent loss of their lands, due to federal laws in their respective countries. Such displacement falls under the definition of genocide.

In Russia, the situation is extremely critical, with the window for federally prescribed remedies closing at the end of 2009. Although indigenous lands in most of Russia have now been surveyed and registered, only a tiny fraction of Indigenous lands have been registered in the beautiful Altai Republic—a magnet for Russian and international tourism.

AMU's fundraising effort, which was so generously supported by private donations last winter, is one of a number of international initiatives to help the Altai people legally claim their traditional lands. Although these projects may save particularly valuable tracts, they are insufficient to deal with the wholesale loss of lands for the 60,000 Altai people.

Rudy James, Tlingit Tribal Judge

In searching for strategies that might provide some relief, we encountered Rudy James, spokesman and tribal judge for the Tlingit people of Alaska, as well as Secretary-General of United Indigenous Nations. Judge James has compiled a comprehensive notebook of legal precedents for Native American rights, and used this information to successfully prevent a United States Supreme Court decision regarding Alaskan lands.

In June, 2008, AMU sponsored James' travel to Altai to meet with Altai leaders as well as make a presentation at the 10th Global Leadership Forum in Novosibirsk. James was particularly interested because another name for the Altai people is the Telengit, which points to a probable connection between Altai and the Tlingit Nation in Alaska.

UN Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The most promising lead that we have found thus far for Altai is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the Russian government signed (and the U.S. government did not). But even if legal enforcement of the UN Convention is possible, international courts are a world away from the Altai herders and subsistence farmers. Major cross-cultural bridges remain to be built on the road to international legal recourse.

What Now ...?

Just over a year remains during which indigenous Altai ownership can be claimed by surveying and registering. This is overwhelmingly the best option during this period. AMU will be collaborating with other international organizations to raise funds for this, and to leverage the use of these funds to sustain the Altai culture through ownership of their traditional lands.

In seeking a longer term solution, AMU continues to sponsor and facilitate leadership exchanges out of which appropriate strategies may be generated.