

Chukchi

Profile

According to the 2002 national census, there are 15,767 Chukchi in the Russian Federation. Chukchi are ethnically close to Koryak and speak one of the Chukotic languages. The Chukchi literary language was created in 1931 using the Cyrillic script. Chukchi live primarily in the Chukchi Republic, formerly the Chukchi AOk in the north-eastern part of Magadan Oblast and in adjacent areas and in the Koryak AOk.

Historical context

Indigenous to Siberia, the Chukchi first came into contact with Russians in the seventeenth century. Historically their way of life was based on the hunting of sea mammals and reindeer husbandry. They were forcibly collectivized by the Soviet state in the 1930s, and subsequent industrial development increased pressures to assimilate. In September 1990, the Chukchi AOk Soviet proclaimed autonomy and in March 1991 decided to separate from Magadan Oblast. In May 1993, the Russian constitution court supported the right to secede.

Current issues

The Chukchi confront problems of linguistic assimilation through industrial and urban development in Chukotka. Chukchi leaders have called for the creation of national parks in the Chukchi republic in order for traditional reindeer herding to be preserved.

Chukchis are the subject of many derogatory Russian jokes, due to their association with a remote and rural culture.