

Dolgan

Profile

According to the 2002 national census, there are 7,261 Dolgan in the Russian Federation. Dolgan are a Turkic people of Tungusic origin. They speak a dialect of the Yakut language and are being assimilated by the Yakuts, but still retain a separate identity. They live in the Taimyr (Dolgano-Nenets) AOk (pop. 44,300: Dolgans 8.8 per cent, Russians 67.1 per cent, Ukrainians 8.6 per cent, Nganasans 1.5 per cent, others 13.4 per cent). There are some Christian additions to their shamanist-animist religion.

Historical context

The Dolgan emerged as a separate identity group in the eighteenth century as a result of migration movements induced by Russian influence in the region. They are descended from Evenk migrants into the Taimyr peninsula who adopted the Yakut language and displaced the original Nganasan inhabitants. The traditional Dolgan economy was based on nomadic reindeer herding. The Taimyr peninsula is one of the least known areas in Russia, yet its mineral, oil and gas reserves are thought to be considerable. At present industrial production in the region is incipient and unprofitable.

Current issues

In 2005 the populations of the Taimyr autonomous okrug, the Evenk autonomous okrug and Krasnoyarsk krai voted in favour of the unification of the three regions in a referendum. The unification was set for 1 January 2007. In the Taimyr AOk 69.9 per cent of voters voted in favour of the merger.