



# **Mining in the Russian North and its Influence on Indigenous Peoples: the Case Study of Kola Sami**

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# Background information

- The Kola peninsula (from Northern Sami *Guoladat*) is situated in the North-West of Russia, completely to the North from Arctic Circle. The largest settlement at the peninsula is Murmansk (307,000 inhabitants).
- Kola Sami – first mentioned in Russian Novgorod chronicles in 1216 – are now mostly settled in the village of Lovozero (Lujavvr) and in Murmansk.
- Number of Sami in Russia: 2,070 in 1907; 1,771 in 2010.



# First geographic and ethnographic expeditions

- 1732: discovery of first silver, copper and gold deposits at the Kola peninsula; first prospects concerning the mineral richness of the peninsula
- XIX – early XX centuries – active geographic and geological exploration of Kola: expeditions of F.P. Litke, N.V. Kudryavcev, V. Ramzay et al.
- 1907 – 1914: Sami ethnographic expeditions of V.A. Plotnikov



# Mining at Kola Peninsula in the Soviet Times

- Already in the the first post-revolutionary years the importance of Arctic exploration is stated. The romantic image of Arctic is cultivated: the land of challenge and new opportunities.
- New deposits discovered: apatite (1920-1930), kyanite (1932-1939), titanium (1935), olivinite (1935), iron (1940), glist, pyrrhotine, copper-nickel

## 49 types of minerals were discovered in the period of 1920-1940

- 1920s – 1930s – first industrial plants at Kola Peninsula: mining and chemical plant “Apatite” (1929), copper – nickel plant “Severonickel” (1935).
- New cities appeared in tundra due to mining development; thousands of people were transferred there from other Russian regions.



# Influence of Mining on Sami in the Soviet Period

- Several Sami settlements along the coastal line stood in the way of mining industry. It resulted in the forced relocation of Sami groups from the territories of mining plants in Khibinogorsk (Kirovsk), Monchegorsk and Apatity to the central part of the peninsula.
- Sami were used to nomadic lifestyle: life in the central part of Kola in winter and following the reindeer to the coast in summer. Only few Sami were able to continue reindeer herding after the relocation.
- Different linguistic and cultural groups were transferred to live at the same villages causing loss of dialects.
- Only the Sami of Lovozero and Sosnovka were not affected by relocations.



# Current mining prospects at Fedorova tundra

- The platinum deposit “Fedorova tundra” (59 km from Lovozero); *Fedorovo Resources*, a branch of the Canadian company *Barrick Gold International* holds a license to extract minerals. In 2009 the extraction was suspended due to financial crisis, but it can be continued any time.
- The extraction works will damage the pastures of the reindeer herding cooperative “Tundra” (near Lovozero) => possible decline in the number of reindeer => direct influence on Sami traditional culture.
- The company declared that 700-900 local people will be employed at the planned extraction site, and the project will be agreed upon with reindeer herders.
- Russian legislation concerning indigenous peoples’ land and natural resources rights is vague, and its implementation varies depending on a concrete region





**Thank you for your attention**

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