

Longing for the Kollektiv: Gender, Power, and Residential Schools in Central Siberia
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Source: *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Nov., 2005), pp. 534-569
Published by: Wiley on behalf of the American Anthropological Association
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3651542
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Longing for the *Kollektiv*: Gender, Power, and Residential Schools in Central Siberia

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> As we rode away from the residential school and out of town, up the rough gravel road toward the cemetery, the rickety bus shifted its passengers from side to side. One older Evenk woman pointed out the window exclaiming, "Look, that's where the businessmen live, in those new *kottedzhi* [villas]! I couldn't live there; I was raised as an *internatskaia* [a residential school student]." An elderly Evenk woman seated across from her friend replied, "Yeah, we would be uncomfortable out here all alone away from the center; we were raised as part of the *kollektiv* [collective]."
>
> —*from* author's field notes, 1993

Throughout the 1990s and into the present, indigenous Siberians have negotiated difficult socioeconomic conditions as they have sought to redefine relationships with the Russian nation-state. Although dominant interpretations of post-Soviet subjectivities have tended to emphasize the ways in which subjects experience a sense of liberation from a monolithic socialist state, local responses to post-Soviet forms of power have, in fact, varied widely. As the opening passage indicates, at least some indigenous Siberians still felt strong ties to vehicles of Soviet power such as the residential school *(internat),* which continued to shape their lives following the fall of the Soviet Union in December 1991.[1] Drawing on fieldwork conducted between 1992 and 1998, this article explores how Evenks in central Siberia often invoked the pride with which they felt themselves to be part of Soviet society and the pain, or at least ambivalence, they felt with its downfall.[2] In conversation with many Evenks in the 1990s, this sense of collective belonging in Soviet society acted as a sort of metanarrative, and yet a rigorous treatment of the ideologies and subject formations making this possible are often elided in scholarly discussions of postsocialist societies.[3]

In the 1990s, Evenk subjectivities, as with those of other indigenous Siberians, were significantly formed through the institution of the residential school and,

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY, Vol. 20, Issue 4, pp. 534–569, ISSN 0886-7356, electronic ISSN 1548-1360.
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by extension, through a range of interactions with state power as it was locally remade and interpreted. In this article, I explore the widespread nostalgia associated with the residential school. Among Evenks residing in central Siberia in the Evenk Autonomous District (hereafter, the Evenk District or EAO), as many as four generations of family members have attended residential schools beginning in the 1920s, when the system was established throughout Siberia (Bloch 2003).[4] Few of the older people I came to know spoke of the school as an instrument of state control. In fact, most saw it as a way of securing belonging to a larger Soviet society. Drawing on the narratives of elderly Evenk women about their residential schooling, I argue that such expressions of Evenk nostalgia for the socialist era are a form of critique of the neoliberal logics emerging in Russia today. In this respect, their accounts allow us to explore negotiations of power in a post-Soviet era and to examine how ideologies shape conceptions of self and the social order more broadly.

The conversation quoted above between two Evenk women affirming their belonging to a kollektiv reflects widespread criticism of the emerging social stratification and individualism throughout Russia (Humphrey 1999b; Ries 2002). New wealth became visible by the mid-1990s with the mushrooming of private houses built by nouveaux riches in the growing residential belts of urban and some rural areas. In more peripheral regions, such as the Evenk District, located four time zones away from Moscow, there was widespread dismay at growing economic disparities. As government jobs disappeared and state infrastructures fell apart, areas such as the Evenk District suffered severe depopulation. The diverse population of the Evenk District *(Evenkiitsy),* consisting predominantly of Russians, Ukrainians, and indigenous Siberians but also including Central Asians such as Tadzhiks displaced by civil war, decreased from over 24,000 people in 1992 to about 18,000 in 2005 (Evenk Autonomous District Official Website 2005).[5] As the post-Soviet state struggles to support town infrastructures elsewhere, it has all but abdicated the support of villages in the North. Many nonindigenous residents have returned to former places of residence in southern cities. The indigenous inhabitants are increasingly moving to towns, such as the regional capital of Tura, which is home to about 5,500 people, while maintaining close links with those who remain in villages and in the taiga (Bloch 2003).[6] The nearly 5,000 indigenous Siberians in the Evenk District continue to rely on subsistence practices revolving around reindeer herding, hunting, and fishing (see Anderson 2000). Like other Evenkiitsy, they also continue to depend heavily on the central Russian government for housing, healthcare, education, and transportation. In the 1990s, as former state-controlled natural resources such as oil, gas, and timber were becoming privatized, most Evenks saw their standard of living plummet, and many began to lament the erosion of the kollektiv.

Cold War Ideologies

As social scientists, our frameworks for research are implicitly products of our times and political locations. In the late 20th century, much of the English-language

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scholarship published on the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (e.g., Arendt 1966; Conquest 1990) overwhelmingly invoked a discourse of oppressive state power and popular resistance to it. Such an approach positioned political science as the premier discipline producing knowledge about Soviet society. Katherine Verdery suggests that the Cold War influenced social science research by forcing scholarship to adopt a certain "cognitive organization of the world" (1996:4–7). More recently, the hegemonic discourse regarding postsocialist and late-socialist societies has turned to a neoliberal narrative of "liberatory" economic reform (e.g., Blanchard et al. 1994).

Today research by political scientists on citizenship and nation-state consolidation, coupled with the efficiency-driven metrics of neoliberal economists, threatens to edge out other interpretations of the social transformations taking place. This is especially the case as international financing mostly from the United States and the European Union begins to shape institutions of civil society in regions of former state socialism (see Bloch n.d.; Sundstrom 2003; Wedel 1998). The challenge for anthropologists working in postsocialist and late-socialist societies is to move beyond the dominant discourses that have defined the study of state socialism and its aftermath. Ethnography, with its central aim of "decoding signs that disguise themselves as universal and natural" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:10), is a powerful tool for understanding the ways in which socialist structures of power have shaped historical consciousness in locations as different as Vietnam, China, Madagascar, and Russia.

Stepping out of the shadow of political science and economics, ethnographers of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have spent the last decade engaged in analyzing local cultural practices (e.g., Anderson 2000; Berdahl 1999; Bridger and Pine 1998; Humphrey 1999a; Rethmann 2001; Ries 1997). A central task has been to examine critically Cold War paradigms that continue to shape scholarship on the region. When postsocialist subjects today voice nostalgia for life under state socialism, rather than dismissing this as "false consciousness," we should instead explore the ambiguities of lives lived under state socialism. As economic restructuring continues to do away with the social safety net of socialism as it existed in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, those on the margins are reimagining its positive attributes. For minority populations, in particular, state socialism stressed the unique historical role of people on the margins. As in the case of China (Litzinger 2000), minority populations in the former Soviet Union occupied a relatively advantaged place in a system based on ideologies of affirmative action. With the erasure of these state supports, many indigenous Siberians now find themselves struggling on a day-to-day basis; securing food and housing has become difficult, let alone arranging education for children. In this context, residential schooling continues to occupy an important position in indigenous communities.

An institution that was created in the 1920s, the residential school has influenced the collective consciousness of Evenks for decades and is, therefore, an ideal site for thinking about relations of power between indigenous Siberians

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and the Soviet and post-Soviet states. In the 1990s, the residential school in Tura acted as a symbolic nexus for cultural revival and even political mobilization, particularly among Evenks. In this article, inspired by work emphasizing the centrality of gender in historical experience (di Leonardo 1991; Scott 1988) and by work examining gendered processes of power in the North (Chaussonnet 1988; Kertulla 2000; Rethmann 2001), I examine the significance of the residential school in Soviet society as a site where indigenous peoples, women in particular, were singled out by the state as subjects for transformation. These women's narratives prompt a reexamination of understandings of relations of power in binary terms of homogenous indigenous communities as oppressed and the state as oppressor. A number of scholars (Cruikshank 1997; Krupnik and Vakhtin 1997; Nadasdy 2003; Morrow and Hensel 1992; Warren 1998) writing about indigenous communities have sought to destabilize such a binary model of power. They have also pointed out that the term *community* itself is contested and defined in a myriad of shifting configurations, as mechanisms of "the state" are indigenized to fit local needs.

Rather than a sense of "liberation" from oppressive power structures, Evenk women's narratives reflect an affirmation of collective belonging, suggesting the complex ways in which a wide range of people negotiated a sort of "accommodated assimilation," whether in the Soviet Union, China, or elsewhere (see Fitzpatrick 2000; Litzinger 2000).[7] The inclusion of indigenous peoples, particularly Siberian women, as national heroes deserving state assistance, anchored the allegiance of many in the Soviet North. Along with the elderly women riding the bus, I heard many others express their feeling of being part of a collective endeavor through their experience in the residential school, which today continues to be a central institution in the Evenk District's regional capital (see Figure 1).[8]

By drawing on the narratives of older indigenous women who were among those most targeted by the Soviet system of residential schooling in its early years, I consider Soviet institutions such as the residential school as a form of productive power within the historical context of Soviet state efforts to transform Evenk communities through the creation of new forms of gendered subjectivities. In this central Siberian community, political alliances are clearly gendered. In 1994, those who continued to belong to the Communist Party in the regional capital were all elderly women. In part, this was because of the falling life expectancies of indigenous Siberian men; by 1999, indigenous Siberian men lived on average to just 45 years old, ten years less than women.[9] However, women were also particularly drawn to party membership. They saw themselves as part of a collective they had participated in building. Unlike older men, they had been at the center of an ideology of social transformation in the Soviet era. As icons of Soviet efforts to transform society, indigenous women represented the "backwardness" that Soviet power sought to civilize. Drawing women into socialist relations of labor would free them from the oppressive patriarchal structures of capitalism as well as of tribal society. To understand how ideologies of a Soviet era influenced older women's subject positions in the 1990s, it is important to see how these ideologies created a

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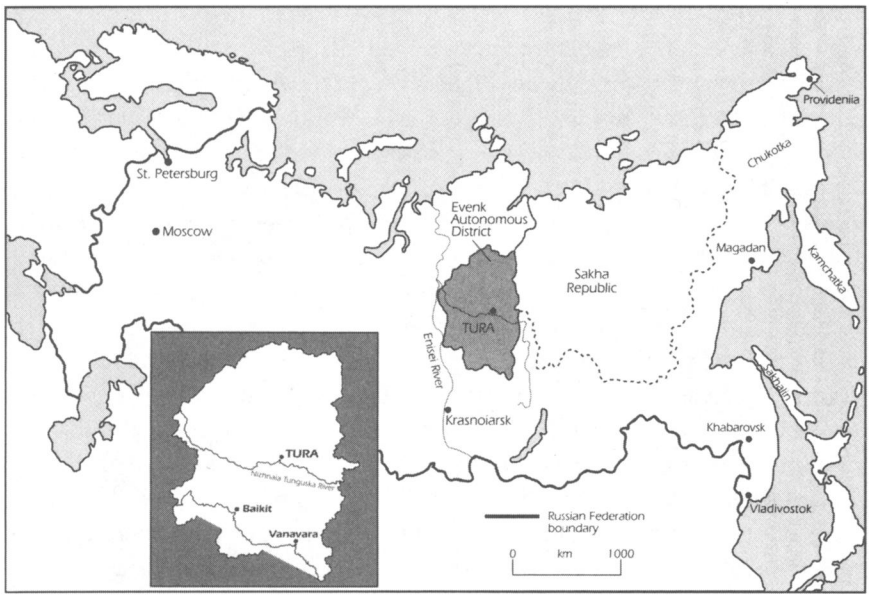


Figure 1
Russian Federation with Evenk Autonomous District. Artist: Bridget Thomas, American Museum of Natural History.

"fundamental framework of assumptions that define the parameters of the real and the self" (Kavanagh 1990:310). In seeming to reflect so little resistance to Soviet ideals about women's labor and norms of Soviet society, these women's narratives push us to view the relations of power during the Soviet era as much more complex than a simple binary between domination and resistance.

Power, Resistance, and "False Consciousness"

In my research, I sought at first to pay attention to more subtle forms of resistance to Soviet structures of power that may not be, in themselves, overtly political (Abu-Lughod 1990; Constable 1997; Raheja and Gold 1994). However, in the case of the residential school, I came to see it as a technology of subject formation, or an "institutional apparatus that work[ed] on conceptions of self and social order" (Kavanagh 1990:310). Other societies self-consciously striving toward modernity have shaped women's subjectivities in strikingly similar ways. The older generation of Chinese women silk workers that Lisa Rofel interviewed also saw themselves as being "at the center" of historic social transformations (Rofel 1999). By the 1990s, when they were no longer commended for their dedication to laboring in the silk factory, these older Chinese women still upheld a sense of self as grounded in the former socialist order and in their factory work. However, technologies of subject formation need not operate through concrete institutional frameworks such as factories or schools. Amanda Wiedman demonstrates how South Indian classical

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music played a critical role in the constructions of womanhood in colonial and postcolonial South India (2002). In tracing the lives of two women vocalists from marginal backgrounds, Wiedman shows that discourses around Indian classical music, ideal womanhood, and nationalist aspirations were "enabling" for some women (2002:220). As in these cases, Evenk women's accounts prompt us to ask how ideologies create new forms of subjectivity.

Early ethnographies explicitly examining power and its manifestations particularly emphasize the mechanisms of reproducing relations of power in class societies (e.g., Willis 1981). In these works the concept of "false consciousness" is invoked as the central explanatory force for why those on the margins might not particularly resist mechanisms of power. From this perspective, ideologies do the work of effectively convincing people to both abide by prevailing systems and believe that the systems are working fairly. In reconsidering some of the foundations of Marxist thought, however, scholars have recently pointed out that the concept of "false consciousness" does not take into account that all forms of sociality are constituted through ideologies. As Kavanagh explains, "If society uses apparatuses of force to confront open rebellion, it uses apparatuses of ideology to form members of its various classes into social subjects who are unlikely ever to consider rebellion" (1990:308).

Turning to an assessment of ideology and how exactly it works on people allows us to avoid the other extreme, the assumption of a sort of ceaseless resistance of subordinates in power relations (e.g., Scott 1985). This is the direction taken by anthropologists who have recently sought to understand how power (and resistance) might be something experienced differentially by men and women (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1990; Ong 1987; Sharp 1990). Most critically, feminist theorists have sought to disaggregate power and resistance and demonstrate the multiple layers and ambiguities that coexist (Abu-Lughod 1990; Gal 1995).[10] In particular, Evenk women's accounts can be understood by turning to Abu-Lughod's work on power and resistance among Bedouin women (1990). Abu-Lughod breaks apart the monolithic idea of "resistance" by pairing it with issues of consciousness, and she considers several dilemmas: how to explain why women both resist and support a system of which they are a part and how to recognize forms of resistance as "culturally provided" without assuming the existence of a "safety valve" in a mechanistic cultural model (1990:47).

I argue that Evenk women's accounts can serve as what Abu-Lughod has called a "diagnostic of power" (1990:41). Instead of reading them as sources for demonstrating relative degrees of resistance to power, they should be read as indications of the forms power takes and the ways in which people may resist, but are just as likely to take part in, structures of power. I examine Evenk women's accounts to demonstrate the ways in which residential schooling contributed to new forms of subjectivities that confound a simple reading of resistance to state power and to suggest the ways that state power also offered certain possibilities to those on the margins.

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As scholars have demonstrated in other contexts (Constable 1997; Ozyegin 2001; Romero 1992), those who are in structurally oppressive relationships still exercise some degree of agency. Although a number of scholars have noted that "accommodation" and "resistance" are not always easily distinguished (Lamphere 1987; Ortner 1995; Rofel 1992), the idea of women taking "control" of their situations shifts an examination of power relationships from a binary structure of oppressor–oppressed.[11] Such an approach underscores that women actively engage in power relationships and are not defined by a category of universal oppression (Mohanty 1991). Evenk women's narratives point to the need for fine-tuned concepts of power and resistance and for concepts of agency in analyses of unequal power relations. Most importantly, these narratives demonstrate how a subject is produced through historically specific power relations.

Returning to the Evenk women on the bus, the critical point is how these women understand the formation of their own subjectivities through their being part of the collective. If not all indigenous Siberians resisted the new ideologies embodied in the residential school, then the question must be posed: Who did not resist and why? And in what ways did the residential schools act as technologies of subject formation, enabling women, in particular, to achieve new forms of success within that system? In the next section, I consider the establishment of residential schooling in the Soviet North and the interwoven nature of power relationships that were very much experienced in gendered terms.

Gender, Power, and Residential Schooling in the North

In taking an historical perspective on residential schooling in central Siberia, it is difficult to state that the Soviet system was more "oppressive" than the post-socialist market system. From a certain perspective, it might be possible to view this collectivized child rearing as an attack on indigenous Siberian systems of knowledge, imposing a set of idealized western gender roles rooted in the idea that women need to be "liberated." In fact, however, the collectivized child rearing of the Soviet system "freed" women to take advantage of a whole new set of opportunities and to excel in academic and professional settings (Goldman 1993; Kollantai 1977). In contrast, the market economy threatens to drive the cost of child care, health care, and professional training out of range for many. The residential school was meant to be the first step toward women's "liberation" and toward the assimilation of indigenous Siberians, more generally. The project of modernity itself drew women to take part in the residential schools as they contemplated their historical role in constructing a new society.

In widely different locations around the world, residential schooling has served as a key aspect of nation-state attempts to control and assimilate indigenous populations. This was accomplished, in part, by instilling historical and cultural amnesia that disrupted the transmission of knowledge between generations. In examining the anthropological literature on residential schooling, one finds accounts

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of indigenous peoples resisting schools that sought to transform them (Child 1998; Haig-Brown 1993; Lomawaima 1993). In general, residential schooling has become emblematic of a painful loss of language, traditional subsistence knowledge, and even self-respect (Ing 1991; Kelm 1996). Where residential schools have been curtailed, as in North America and Australia, few remain nostalgic for them. In the Russian Federation, however, this form of schooling is less clearly viewed as an oppressive one. Residential schools continue to operate today under the aegis of the federal government, and the relationships of indigenous Siberians to this form of schooling are strikingly complex.

Gender Roles and Transforming the Collective

Nearly four generations of indigenous Siberians in the Evenk District have experienced the collective upbringing in the residential school (internat, as it is called in Evenk and Russian). The *internatskie* (people raised in residential schools) have a sharp sense of this shared experience as formative. Since the mid-1930s, the majority of school-age indigenous Siberians attended residential schools. In many cases, this distanced them from a traditional way of life and caused severe hardship and loneliness. For many, however, the residential school also came to be instrumental for incorporating them into Soviet society. The schools provided a route to social mobility and allowed them to take part in a collective identity striving to be modern.

For Evenks in central Siberia, the presence of the Soviet state became difficult to avoid by 1924, just seven years after the Russian Revolution. A cadre of Soviet personnel began arriving in what is today the Evenk District capital of Tura to establish an administrative outpost in the form of a culture base *(kul'turnaia baza)*. In the early 1920s, the Soviet Ministry of the North *(Komitet Severa)* established 15 similar culture bases in an effort to assert Soviet administrative and economic power in areas of Siberia populated by indigenous Siberians (Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [GA RF] 1925–26). The infrastructure established in Tura, as in the other culture bases, was staffed by Soviet personnel who were determined to encourage literacy, instill European ideas of hygiene and medicine, promote new veterinary cures for reindeer, and create structures for indigenous self-government.[12] The system of residential schooling, as one component of the 1920s culture bases, was meant to funnel children from their herding groups into town centers for education. In 1927, two schools opened in the growing Evenk District administrative centers of Baikit and Tura.[13] These sites had been seasonal trading posts for years prior to the Soviet arrival in the 1920s. Even in the 1990s, Evenks and their neighbors continued to travel from villages to these sites to trade, seek medical care, attend school, or make arrangements for travel on to southern cities. The expansion of the Soviet administrative and educational infrastructure corresponded to the growing domination of the Soviet state, including efforts to collectivize farming and herding throughout Russia. Beginning in the early 1930s

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and extending into the 1950s, the Soviet state consolidated most indigenous Siberian men in state collective operations (*kolkhozy* [short for *kollektivnye khoziaistva*]) and then state collective herding enterprises (*sovkhozy* [short for *sovetskie khoziaistva*]; Okruzhnoi arkhiv EAO 1932:68).[14]

Initial efforts to collectivize herds and agricultural land were followed by violent purges carried out throughout the Soviet Union especially during the years 1937–38.[15] The Volochanka Rebellion, involving Evenk, Dolgan, and Sakha herders in an area north of the Evenk District in 1932, was the most violent instance of resistance, in which four protestors were killed along with 20 Communist Party members (Anderson 2000:49).[16] Throughout Siberia, herders slaughtered large numbers of reindeer in an effort to avoid surrendering them to the state.[17]

In this same period, Soviet authorities imprisoned about 20 people identified in documents as Evenk and Iakut shamans *(shamany)* and kulaks *(kulaki,* pl. *kulaks).*[18] Both terms were applied to people who were thought to be opposed to state policy, but the term *kulak* was also applied to reindeer herders in this region who either had hired laborers or who owned more than the prescribed number of privately held reindeer of 30 or so. From the 1930s to early 1950s, the term *kulak* (the Russian word for "fist") came to be used as a catch-all label for anyone who was not abiding by local government efforts to collectivize herds and administer this area of central Siberia.

As the Soviet state consolidated most indigenous Siberian men into state collective herding operations, women were increasingly segregated from subsistence practices (Vitebsky and Wolfe 2001). Instead, they were concentrated in villages where they were employed in offices, processing sites for furs, and social services such as medicine and education. Children, adult women, and the elderly often spent summers with their male herding relatives, but most of the year, male reindeer herders lived without these family members. The Soviet organization of collective farms among reindeer herders allowed for just one woman, a tent worker *(chum-rabotnitsa),* to be employed to carry out what were viewed as the domestic tasks of cooking, sewing, and tending the camp for each reindeer herding brigade (Fondahl 1998:70).[19] Additional women who chose to remain in the camps received no wages or pensions and in effect were encouraged to live sedentary lives in villages and towns. This pattern continued up to 1993 when state-organized reindeer herding was dismantled and as financing from the central government dwindled to nothing. These gendered patterns of residence organized by the state also influenced the degrees to which men and women viewed the residential school as an instrument of social mobility.

Beginning in the 1920s, indigenous Siberians on the margins were drawn in and nurtured to become agents of change within the new systems of power being introduced by the Soviet state. These government tactics secured footing for many indigenous Siberians to take part in the broader Soviet society in subsequent decades, and many found their new positions provided them with opportunities they otherwise might not have had. Women, in particular, were offered basic education

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and a means of making a living outside of herding groups. Some women also had extensive opportunities for social mobility that led them from lives of herding with family members to employment as intellectual workers in towns and cities.[20] Most significantly, women played a central role in the creation of a new Soviet society via participation in institutions that cultivated "modern" social practices and systems of knowledge. These discourses and institutions were built on the premise of "liberation" from indigenous cultural practices that anchored men and women in the taiga.

Women and Nation in the North

Scholars have widely noted that nation-building discourses often situate women as symbolically central in embodying the idea of the nation (Bloul 1994; Chatterjee 1989; Ong 1990; Mani 1987). As Schein (2000:100–131) notes for China, and Abu-Lughod (1998) in regard to the Middle East, the figure of "woman" has been a key trope in the pursuit of modernity worldwide. Ideas about modernity in the Soviet period were produced and reproduced through an opposition of "modern" to "traditional" spheres, with the status of women as one of the central indicators of modernity.

The Soviet state's vision of modernity from the 1920s and into the 1980s closely linked the "liberation" of women to radical structural change, including configurations of gender roles and the structure of the family (Goldman 1993:8). Among indigenous Siberians, engaging women in public meetings was a first step toward their liberation. Beginning with civic participation, women were intended to transform their social position and thereby bring a new Soviet consciousness to indigenous Siberian communities. At the core of this vision, ideals of the new Soviet woman were seen as critical in the socialization of children and the transformation of local communities, whereas the figure of woman as the bearer of tradition became suspect. Therefore, radically altering the gender roles of indigenous Siberian women was tantamount to instilling socialist visions of modernity and transforming the "backwardness" of herders' lives.

Soviet administration of indigenous Siberians was premised on an evolutionary vision formulated by Engels (1972), in which participation in labor and success in mastering European systems of knowledge were key yardsticks in an ideology of progress that included women's liberation. In the context of central Siberia, administrators at the culture base of Tura paid careful attention to cultural work *(kul'turnaia rabota)* addressing women. For instance, one administrator wrote, "With each health discussion [he notes 27 in 1929], women became increasingly active. There were cases where women even began to argue with the doctor! . . . Women actively made speeches and made very concrete [*delovye*] suggestions" (GA RF 1929–30). Residential schooling was a critical component of the state's attempt to mould all indigenous Siberians, especially women, into

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active *(aktivnye)* and productive *(produktivnye)* participants in building a Soviet society.

From Resistance to Accommodation

Although 18 residential schools were planned across Siberia by 1926, initially educators had difficulty attracting students to the schools.[21] Educators were keenly aware of the need to appeal to students and parents alike, and they successfully argued for the necessity of teaching classes in the indigenous language for at least the first two years of instruction. They also promoted teaching skills related to the given subsistence of a region, such as sewing fish nets, both to improve this technology and to maintain student and parent interest. For instance, one educator emphasized that, "This is the only way to make school make sense . . . for [subjects] to be dear to the student herself and to attract the interest of the parents" (Dobrova-Iadrintseva 1928:81).[22]

Across Siberia there was some resistance to residential schooling in the early years, when the first students began to attend these schools.[23] For instance, teachers working in the Tomsk District in western Siberia and at the other end of Siberia in Nikolaevsk-on-Amur, in the Russian Far East, recounted in 1926 that indigenous parents threatened to take students out of school because local Russian peasant children were taunting them (GA RF 1925–26, 1926). A more direct case of resistance occurred in the early 1930s in western Siberia as the Soviet state sought to collectivize herds. In this "Kazym uprising," the Khanty and Nentsy refused to send their children to the school or to participate in Soviet efforts to establish local councils and demanded that the school be closed (Balzer 1999:110–116). In the end, the uprising, involving perhaps 100 people, resulted in 51 indigenous people being found guilty of rebellion, and 14 were sentenced to death for treason.

In a 1936 incident, possibly inspired by the Kazym uprising, a group of Evenks set one of the Evenk District residential schools on fire. Tragically, six children died. Although the district archives contained no documentation of the event, several people quietly commented to me that the perpetrators were perhaps shamans or, alternatively, government provocateurs, seeking to ensnare any Evenks who might be planning an uprising at the time. The Evenk District Regional History Museum's photographic collection includes several photographs of the children's coffins and some penciled notes suggesting that an "enemy of the people" *(vrag naroda)* had been responsible.[24] Following events such as the Kazym uprising, the school fire, and the Volochanka Rebellion discussed above, the pace of collectivization in the North and efforts to gather students in residential schools were slowed. After World War II, however, Soviet state consolidation was reinitiated with new vigor.

Given the instances of unequivocal resistances to residential schooling noted above, at least on the part of some indigenous Siberians, there was relatively little discussion about them among the women with whom I consulted in the 1990s. After

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World War II, when financial support for outlying regions was more forthcoming from the central government and collectivization was more extensive, schooling took firm hold in the Evenk District and girls were required to attend. For instance, Trofimov (1965:140–142) notes that in 1931 only one kindergarten was in place in the Evenk District (in Tura), attended by 15 Evenk children four to six years old; by 1938, however, residential schooling had become a defining feature of Evenk identities, with 80 percent of school-age Evenks studying in the residential schools and living away from their families for six months at a time (Dunn 1968:7). Children were taken from their families at increasingly early ages, and by 1965, 23 nursery schools serving 1,067 children from one to six years old existed in villages throughout the Evenk District (Boitseva 1971).

After World War II, attendance at residential school became mandatory and russification was an acknowledged aim from the perspective of educators; they were no longer worried about appealing to parents and students as they had in the 1920s. Even before the war, teaching was no longer done in indigenous languages but solely in Russian, and the curriculum no longer revolved around local subsistence practices as a subject of study. Although Evenk cultural practices were already significantly gender segregated in subsistence activities, residential schools encouraged a specifically Soviet sexual division of labor through vocational classes.[25] By the end of the war, the residential school focused on training students to be productive workers with distinctive skills segregated by gender. In addition to the standardized Soviet academic subjects, such as Russian language and literature, physics, history, and math, students learned vocational skills; boys took classes in carpentry and auto mechanics, while girls were encouraged to bake and sew.[26]

Residential schools prevailed, in part, because of the coercive success of collectivization but also because of inducements that were both material (food, clothing, and opportunity for travel and education) and immaterial (images of indigenous Siberians as subjects of Soviet state-building ideals). By the postwar period, a shift in consciousness was already emerging, and the second generation of students to attend the schools became inculcated with ideals of modernity linked to European systems of knowledge. These government efforts in the Evenk District were carefully documented in photographs taken by local administrators from the 1930s to 1960s as they took note of the government's proclaimed successes in transforming gender roles and creating a new modern woman who was "liberated" from "traditional" ways. As reflected in a series of 1950s photographs held in the Evenk District Museum collection, indigenous Siberian women were valorized as building socialism by "being capable of anything." Depicted as dedicated hunters, bakers, and seamstresses, the accompanying captions described Evenk women in particular as fighters *(bortsy)* who were building socialism.

The visual discourse imparted through these photographs was one in which the assimilation of indigenous Siberian women would require them to adopt European—more specifically Soviet—value systems of formal education, wage

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labor, and sexual division of labor. The residential school was part of an effort not only to educate indigenous children but also to free women for becoming involved in Soviet administrative and cultural praxis. Particularly during World War II, when women's labor was critical to the war effort, but also when women had opportunities for graduate school or short-term professional training, children were sometimes placed in residential schooling. Thus, the discourses around women's liberation and residential schooling are closely intertwined with discourses of nation-building in a time of crisis. The rhetoric of inclusion in this historical social experiment permeated the daily lives of Evenks, and this is reflected in the discourses invoked by elderly women in the 1990s. As Evenk women's narratives demonstrate, contrary to a binary model of power, indigenous women did not automatically resist the Soviet hierarchies of power. Many were proud to be part of the new society and by extension reflected fondly on the residential school and its links to the Soviet nation-state.

Women's Narratives on Residential School

Given the radical transformation of gender relations for indigenous Siberians in the 20th century, Evenk women's narratives provide a powerful means for examining how indigenous Siberians encountered state power. These narratives, drawn from the dozens of life histories I conducted with indigenous women in the Evenk District in the 1990s, resonate with experiences of Soviet power structures and the negotiation of power in contexts such as the residential school. The narratives here focus on two generations of women from various social backgrounds ranging from educated to unlettered reindeer herder.

The accounts of five women—Praskov'ia Nikolaevna, Vera Anatol'evna, Zoia Viktorovna, Galina Petrovna, and Polina Mikhailovna—suggest that we need to be attentive to how people negotiate relationships of power from a wide range of subject positions.[27] From the early days of residential schooling, Evenks, in particular, were trained to act as administrators, teachers, and caregivers; as Caroline Humphrey has described in her work on Mongolia, "the rhetoric of socialism required the plucking of people from obscurity to participate in the drama of power" (1994:24). People were not always "plucked from obscurity," but illiterate and semiliterate indigenous Siberians were drawn into this system, especially women. The multifaceted nature of the residential school experience was conveyed in the fond memories recounted to me by a generation of indigenous women who received higher education in the Northern Faculty at Leningrad State University. Many students returned to the North to work in the school system as teachers and caregivers.

Praskov'ia Nikolaevna

Praskov'ia Nikolaevna, an 85-year-old woman who studied in Leningrad in her youth explained when we met in 1993, "Those were wonderful years; we lived

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well. When I look back at those years I am proud to have lived in the Soviet era." My acquaintance with her began through younger women's accounts of their time in the residential school; they often mentioned Praskov'ia Nikolaevna as one of their favorite teachers. She spent her adult life working in the residential school system as a caregiver in the dormitories. Her family moved from the Katanga region in 1929, when her father completed training in a Communist Party training school in Leningrad and was assigned to Tura to work in the party administration for the Evenk District. In Tura, her mother was in charge of the house and gave birth to 12 children, only three of which survived to adulthood. Praskov'ia Nikolaevna learned to read and write at a young age and was one of the first Evenks to attend the Northern Faculty at Leningrad University. She studied elementary education there during the years 1931–35 and subsequently returned to the Evenk District to work. In the years 1935–46, Praskov'ia Nikolaevna worked in five different villages in and around the Evenk District, traveling via reindeer each time she was reassigned. In 1946, after her husband died, she moved to Tura to live with her mother and teach in the residential school until her retirement in 1965.

Her first teaching assignment in 1935 was in Sulomai, a village to the west of Tura near the Enisei River, in a region that was primarily populated by the Kets, an indigenous Siberian group that also relied on reindeer herding for subsistence.[28] I had read about the residential school in this region when examining photographs in the Evenk District Museum. In a fine, penciled script on a picture depicting a crowd of Kets, the director of an ethnographic expedition had written in 1925 that not all the guests present at the October Revolution celebration were in the picture. The note explained that, "ten men refused to be photographed ... since Babkin [the culture base director] accused them of being kulaks ... [for] carrying off children from the school."[29]

When I asked Praskov'ia Nikolaevna about children running away during her tenure in Sulomai, she said: "Where could they have run away to? There was nowhere to run to; you wouldn't run away into the taiga. At that time it was really bad. Parents were really poor there; the Kets, they drank." She explained that the Kets brought their children to the schools of their own accord. As she explained, "how else would they have fed their children? They didn't have a house, nothing, and it was cold."

Later in 1939, Praskov'ia Nikolaevna was sent to teach in Chirinda, an Evenk village located to the north of Tura. Again, in reflecting on her work as a caregiver during that time, I asked how the children felt about being in the residential school, and if they tried to return home. Praskov'ia Nikolaevna said, "No, they didn't want to [return home]. What would they do in the taiga in the winter? It's cold there. ... Well, all the kids were there; no one wanted to stay behind [with their parents]. There it was good and warm and besides that they were fed. Why not stay?"

Praskov'ia Nikolaevna's depiction of the benefits of the residential school reflects one version of reality for indigenous Siberians at the time. Her perspective was certainly influenced by her lifelong career in the school system and her role

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as one of the new cultural workers *(kul'turnye rabotniki)* in the 1930s. From her position of power relative to the students, her account left out a sense of the students' hardship of living without family. As a child, she had lived at home and had attended nearby schools, only coming into contact with the residential system when she became employed in it. Although Praskov'ia Nikolaevna identified as Evenk, she had a distinct background; the Katanga Evenks came into intensive contact with Russians and had access to education at least two generations earlier than Evenks in the area around Tura (Sirina 1995:79). Many Katanga Evenks played an integral role in establishing the Soviet infrastructure, and consequently they tended to be strongly allied with the Soviet ruling elite. As was the case with many Evenks of her social background and generation, Praskov'ia Nikolaevna was unapologetic about her role in the Soviet project. In her view, there was little need to resist a modernization process with which she was allied; her own concept of self was closely tied to the part she played in molding a Soviet version of modernity among generations of indigenous students.

As suggested above, many people I talked to in the 1990s, who had actively taken part in the excitement of creating Soviet infrastructures and inculcating Soviet ideals among indigenous youth, viewed their lives retrospectively as part of a generally successful Soviet effort to link the North to the broader Soviet project of modernity. To be critical of schooling as a process that detached people from cultural traditions would also involve questioning the Soviet project in general. As Grant (1995) has suggested in regard to the Nivkhi on Sakhalin Island, the success or failure of a single component of Soviet social life, such as a collective farm or the residential school, was used as an instance to reflect on the general progress of Soviet society. As in the case of many older Evenks and other post-Soviet citizens in the 1990s, Praskov'ia Nikolaevna actively played a role in the drama of Soviet power in which she herself promoted the Soviet project and in this process gained a sense of belonging to it (Hosking 1987).

As with other modernity projects of the 20th century, an evolutionary narrative featuring "backward" peoples who would become modernized framed the Soviet state narrative. In the Soviet case, people such as reindeer herders were envisioned as progressing through stages of development to the pinnacle of socialism. Although this depiction of the ideology so central to socialist economic development appears difficult to imagine as appealing to indigenous Siberians, in the following accounts I seek to demonstrate how some at the center of such an ideology of progress could embrace it. The sense of belonging felt by Praskov'ia Nikolaevna was not limited to those who played active roles in the drama of Soviet power but also included those who were more marginal and had a place on the sidelines.

Vera Anatol' evna

I met Vera Anatol'evna, a retired nurse, in 1992 during a helicopter trip into the taiga where she was herding reindeer with her husband, daughter, three

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grandchildren, and two nephews. Vera exchanged opinions with the helicopter pilot regarding the latest news on Moscow politics and the impending U.S. presidential election. She then turned to me and invited me to join her family for a meal consisting of tea and sugar, *lepeshki* (an Evenk dish of raised bread cooked in a skillet over a small steel stove positioned in the center of the tent), and *chukin* (Evenk, for fresh reindeer meat lightly seared over the fire). I tossed a few drops of vodka into the fire for an offering. As we reclined on the larch boughs spread around the tent for matting, Vera recounted something of her life.

When Vera was a child in the 1930s, her family had very few reindeer, and they mostly depended on hunting and fishing for subsistence. Her parents and grandmother died when she was young, and her grandfather raised her until she was eleven. In 1939, her grandfather tried to enroll her in the residential school in Baikit, but she was refused. (During the war children were not always admitted because resources were limited.) In 1940, she was admitted. She finished the eight grades at the school in 1948 and went on to be trained as a nurse. Just before her grandfather died, Vera recalled him saying: "I won't be here and you will be alone so decide what your fate will be." Vera added, "I thought and thought and in a year I had decided everything, When I graduate I will go somewhere. Who will feed me? Who needs a poorly educated girl? I'm not fit for the taiga. Maybe I will be capable of something there, in Tura."

With her grandfather's help, she actively sought out the residential school and medical training college. Vera's retelling of her life places her as an active, conscious decision maker, but she was also a product of social circumstances dictating that she "be capable of something," as she explained. With no close kin left and no resources of her own (she had no reindeer or ability to provide for herself in the taiga), the academic training she received in the residential school and her medical training college offered the possibility to become self-supporting in the cash economy that predominated after World War II. For Vera, it is clear why she ultimately felt fortunate to have attended the residential school; it served concrete material needs at a time in her life when she had few options.

Zoia Viktorovna

In contrast to many accounts like Vera's, which emphasize an instrumental perspective on the educational system, the accounts of other women in her generation tended to focus more on a pattern of radical state intervention in reindeer herders' lives and less on individual choice. Reactions to state power were by no means homogenous; when the Soviet state imposed certain rules, some indigenous Siberians sought to evade them while others acquiesced. Relative wealth, in terms of reindeer herds, as well as generation and gender, played a role in defining the variable appeal that a Soviet system of social mobility had for different Evenks. Many older women's accounts, such as the following, suggest that even within families parents and children had different views about the educational system.

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I first met Zoia Viktorovna in 1992 at the Tura tuberculosis hospital where she was completing one of her many stays for tuberculosis.[30] It was a sunny day in July, and I found her seated on a pile of lumber outside the building; as we approached I could see that she was sewing reindeer skin *(kamus)* for the warm Evenk traditional skin boots *(unty)* that today are worn by many Evenks and other locals in the cold months of the year. Zoia Viktorovna planned to sell these to supplement her small monthly pension checks of 113,000 rubles (about $25 per month).[31] I noticed that her life of herding reindeer under harsh conditions in the taiga and tuberculosis had taken a toll on her health; at 63 she appeared as old as her former teacher Praskov'ia Nikolaevna did at 85.

Between drags on her unfiltered cigarette *(papirosa),* Zoia Viktorovna recounted that she had spent her childhood in the 1930s in Ekonda, a northern village several hours by flight from Tura. Both her mother and father had come from relatively poor families with only a few reindeer of their own. Zoia Viktorovna's father was killed by bandits in a village skirmish when she was a child. These "bandits" may have been herders who refused to surrender reindeer in the collectivization campaign, or they may have been Russians who were avoiding state control or were exiled to the area. She was not sure. This was a period of unrest in reaction to the initial Soviet attempts to collectivize reindeer herds; the Volochanka Rebellion had taken place in 1932, when she was three.

Zoia Viktorovna spent her childhood accompanying her mother, who transported goods and provided rested reindeer for travelers to continue their monthlong treks to or from Tura. This was a pattern typical of the pre-Soviet period when Evenks and other indigenous Siberians in the region traveled long distances transporting goods for trade; in the Soviet period, prior to 1965, reindeer caravans were the primary means of supplying collective farms, transporting goods for scientific expeditions, and moving people between population centers.[32] Although there was pressure for Zoia Viktorovna to go to school, she began studying only in 1945 when she was thirteen. As she explained, "My mother . . . did not want to give me up. She tried all kinds of methods to dissuade them from taking me . . . she always took me with her. . . . I did not want to leave my mother alone. . . . We had to leave. . . . Everyone was required to study in Tura." As an unlettered reindeer herder and subsistence hunter and fisher, Zoia Viktorovna's mother was able to avoid giving up her daughter for three or four years. Her mother avoided contact with officials who might attempt to take her child off to school. The post from where she supplied travelers with reindeer was over one month's journey to Tura and was not frequented by Soviet officials in charge of gathering up children for the residential school.[33]

Eventually, however, Zoia Viktorovna did attend the Tura residential school. After finishing eight grades, she applied and was accepted to study in the Tura medical training college, but her aging mother convinced her instead to return to Ekonda. There, she initially worked in the daycare center. Soon after, Zoia's mother encouraged her to marry a young reindeer herder because "things were

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tough and it would help out" with their situation; Zoia Viktorovna spent the rest of her life working with reindeer, first transporting geologists and other specialists involved in oil exploration and later in reindeer herding brigades.

In contrast to Vera's account of gaining social standing through the education system, Zoia Viktorovna's account emphasized more resistance to it. However, her account also suggests how the education system simultaneously created possibilities for new life trajectories and potential for generational conflicts over responsibilities to parents. Although Zoia Viktorovna returned to reindeer herding following her schooling, she lamented that she had given up opportunities for education and a more town-based life out of a sense of responsibility to family obligations.

Galina Petrovna

In addition to forms of instrumentality, or conversely resistance to Soviet educational structures, ambivalence toward the Soviet system was also frequently expressed. Many older Evenks reluctantly discussed a history of repression and forced assimilation, and instead their accounts reflected the multiple ways in which they felt a sense of belonging to Soviet society. These sentiments were sometimes expressed in terms of nostalgia, but sometimes with more ambivalence. As the following account reflects, Evenk lives were tightly enmeshed with instruments of the Soviet state; at different points in history, members of one family could experience state coercion and at different points choose to accommodate or resist state programs of social transformation.

Galina Petrovna's daughter Nadia, who recently began working as a bookkeeper, invited me home for lunch occasionally, and this was an ideal time to converse with her mother. While Galina Petrovna's eight-year-old grandson sat nearby and played with his handheld Tetris, she and I prepared lunch, peeling potatoes and talking about her life.

Like Zoia Viktorovna, Galina Petrovna also arrived by reindeer from Ekonda to attend the Tura residential school in the 1940s. However, her background was very different. The families of both her parents were relatively wealthy, and her husband's family had deep ties to what she called shamanism *(shamanizm)*.[34] Although Galina Petrovna's father-in-law was the son of an influential shaman, as a young man he became a *stakhanovets*; he was decorated for his hard work and for being a committed communist by taking a stand against shamanism.[35] Galina Petrovna's own father was a herder with more than 600 head of reindeer. When Soviet organizers began collectivizing herds in the early 1930s, he resisted giving up his herd; however, he was forced eventually to relinquish all his reindeer. In the course of one of our discussions, Galina Petrovna told me these reindeer had just gotten sick and died, but when Nadia contradicted her, she said the herd had been collectivized.[36]

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When we spoke about the residential school and her time there, Galina Petrovna recalled that her parents sent her, "Then you had to send children to school. There was no choice." Galina Petrovna described how the residential school used to send out a special group of people to gather up children from the reindeer herding brigades. Although at first she was scared, she recalled, "I got used to the school, but I cried when my father came (to visit and left)." This was part of the experience left untold by teachers such as Praskov'ia Nikolaevna.

After finishing school, Galina Petrovna went to Krasnoiarsk, the nearest large city hundreds of miles south of the Evenk District, where she trained to become a projectionist. After graduating she returned to the Evenk District and married. She spent most of her professional life traveling around to villages and reindeer brigades in the Evenk District showing films. Her husband died very young. In 1998 at 73, Galina Petrovna was living by herself, although she cooked meals at her daughter's house and continued to work part time in the town's fur processing organization.

From the perspective of Galina Petrovna and many other women in her generation, after the initial trauma of losing herds, the Soviet project offered reindeer herders a chance to become modern and to take part in the new Soviet society. These contradictory aspects of the Soviet state's role in Siberian lives were sometimes reflected in an ambivalence about speaking of the past. Perhaps Galina Petrovna was hesitant to reflect on the collectivization of her clan's reindeer precisely because she was speaking to an American. Galina was aware of how Soviet power was wielded against her family, but perhaps she also wanted to avoid providing ammunition against a society that had shaped her subjectivity as a productive, valuable citizen.

Polina Mikhailovna

In many cases, older women not only expressed a deep sense of belonging to Soviet society but they were also nostalgic about what was lost with the fall of the Soviet Union. This was the case for Polina Mikhailovna, who despite personal tragedy, spoke of a sense of belonging to the Soviet era. Polina's narrative reflects the great personal cost the state imposed on those it perceived to be resisting the redistribution of wealth—in this case reindeer. Her account especially highlights the need for a careful discussion of the indigenous Siberian experience in Soviet society as distinct from that of other indigenous peoples negotiating power with dominant nation-states. Drawing on life-history narratives such as Polina's provides a fresh perspective on nuances of state-periphery relationships and can foster discussion about the nature of indigenous peoples' relationships to state power without homogenizing their experience.

When I met Polina in 1995, she was a retired nurse, aged 63, who was working part time as a doorwoman for the district administration building—the "white house," as Tura residents called it. One evening while we sat at her post, Polina

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recounted something of her life, beginning with reflections on her father. He was from what is today the Sakha Republic but was exiled to Essei, a village north of Tura by about two hours by small plane.[37] In Essei, he met Polina's mother and they had six children, although one of them died. Polina recalled the most difficult period of her childhood, beginning in 1938, when her father was accused of being a kulak; he was sentenced to prison in Krasnoiarsk, located to the south of Tura several days by barge.

The government's mechanisms for marginalizing those who were thought to be resisting attempts to collectivize herds were gradually implemented in the early 1930s. Those who were labeled kulaks were sanctioned in several ways. In 1932, for instance, 19 kulaks in the Evenk District lost their voting rights in indigenous council meetings. Those labeled as shamans were also harassed; 13 Evenk men who were accused of being shamans lost their right to vote in the counsel meetings in 1932 (Okruzhnoi arkhiv EAO 1932:68).[38] Oral accounts indicate that those who were accused stood trial, albeit briefly, and then were sent via barge to Krasnoiarsk to serve time. In the late 1990s, one woman, who had cared for children in the Tura residential school, told me about her work as an interpreter (from Iakut into Russian) in the interrogations that were held in several northern villages in the Evenk District. Several people recounted to me how the wealth, mostly furs, of certain groups was transported from these villages to Tura when those accused of being kulaks were put on trial. A former barge captain who transported some of the accused recalled that most of them were Evenks or Sakha who were locally considered to have prestige, often in the form of a connection to shamanic powers. However, a few longtime nonindigenous residents *(sibiriaki)* were also among those the captain transported south.

In Polina's case, the collective farm appropriated their 20 reindeer and Polina's father was imprisoned. As the eldest child, Polina remembered, "They didn't leave us even one reindeer. My mother said that they took everything.... He was in prison for four years in Krasnoiarsk I think. ... They wanted to shoot him and then that was rescinded. ... They imprisoned a lot of people. Lots did not return. ... A few did their time and then returned." The imprisonment of Polina's father was extremely hard on the household. Polina's mother was forced to support five young children on her own, and the surrounding community was relatively hostile toward the family. Only the exiled Latvians and Germans helped out with firewood and some food.

The ostracism on the part of the community continued even after Polina's father returned home when she was in the second grade at the residential school. In Soviet society, children at this age usually joined the Young Pioneers.[39] Polina was not permitted to join, and later she was also denied membership to the Komsomol, the youth division of the Communist Party. Nearly 60 years later, Polina could recall: "They called us kulak children *(deti kulaka)*. ... The Komsomol wouldn't accept us, and the Pioneer camp wouldn't take us. We wanted to wear those red ties. ... We hankered after those. Everyone wore them, but we couldn't. They

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didn't give them to us." For Polina the import of the red ties, which Pioneer and Komsomol members wore around their necks to indicate belonging in Soviet society, was unshaken by her personal experience.[40] Given Polina's personal history, one might expect her to have a very different attitude toward the Soviet state and its instruments of power. Instead, like many in her generation, Polina was nostalgic for the Soviet past. In part this was linked to her witnessing how material conditions radically improved in the North after World War II, and her own subject position within these webs of power somehow softened, all but erasing any sense of outrage about what collectivization meant for her family. Polina particularly equated Stalin's era with ideals she now views as lacking in society. She whimsically reflected, "I respect Stalin all the same. . . . He jailed my father, but I do not feel malice [*zlo*] toward him. Because of Stalin, we are honest. We grew up honest. We were never late for work, we didn't smoke, and we didn't drink. So there's the result of the 'Cult of Stalin.' "[41]

This forthright statement raises questions about a range of issues, including how to think about a subjected people's relationship to power. A certain type of "internal colonialism" appears to be at work; however, one must remember again the context in which this statement was made. Polina's sentiments of nostalgia for the Stalin era were widely held by this generation of Evenks, but not because they necessarily felt sympathetic toward a repressive state. The childhood trauma suffered by people like Polina was "forgotten" as they became openly nostalgic about Stalin's era because the "red ties" of socialism were later extended to them in a number of ways, both ideologically and materially (Verdery 1983; see Grant 1995 for a similar point). Although not every reindeer herder went on to become a teacher, film technician, or nurse, these trajectories of accomplishment within a Soviet system of knowledge were extended to indigenous Siberians, and especially to women. In the 1990s, the familiar paths to belonging continued to be widely valued as Soviet structures were unraveling and new structures were taking shape.

Contemplating Red Ties, Belonging, and the "Political Imaginary"

The bus conversation noted at the outset of this article reflects something of the experience of state socialism and its demise from the perspective of those on the margins. Many Evenks in the 1990s viewed their lives as enveloped in Soviet society and, in important ways, defined by Soviet institutions such as the residential school. Although one might expect indigenous Siberians to lament the Soviet-state attempts to erase and transform traditional subsistence practices, the older Evenk women I talked to often affirmed the ways in which the state inscribed them with a collective sense of belonging. Given the power of the Soviet state refracted through this institution, why was resistance so nominal a theme in these women's accounts? Many Evenks consciously evaluated the benefits of the Soviet system and concluded that these outweighed its negative or oppressive aspects.

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As Susan Buck-Morss (2000:11), borrowing from Valerii Podoroga and Elena Petrovskaia, has suggested, "defining the enemy is the act that brings the collective into being," and the disappearance of the enemy creates the possibility of the collective dissolving. The collective belonging Evenks often expressed could be seen as part of what Buck-Morss calls the "political imaginary" created and promoted by the Soviet state; the legitimacy of the state depended on the state being able to act in the name of a collective. But why would so many Evenks with whom I spoke emphasize their sense of belonging and de-emphasize the acts of power imposed on them?

In reflecting on India's postcolonial legacy, Ashis Nandy claims that those who attempt to think in terms of the "benefits" of the colonial power structure are "collaborators" in oppression (1983:3). In fact, what if some Evenks have internalized quintessentially Soviet institutions as an important aspect of their identity? What if, within the nested hierarchies of Soviet society, elements of equality and belonging were extended to older Evenk women and cherished by some? One might dismiss Evenk women's accounts as reflecting "false consciousness," but this would deny them active agency and suggest a mechanistic model of society.

The concept of "false consciousness" is problematic on another level as well. This term implies that there is a "true (correct) consciousness" as a corollary. But what would that "true consciousness" amount to? Would this be an eagerness to live in the conditions of poverty neoliberal reforms have imposed on many indigenous Siberians? As one scholar has written, "ideology is pragmatic, to enable various social subjects to feel at home, and to act (or not act) within the limits of a given social project" (Kavanagh 1990:313). I argue that the nostalgia evident in these older Evenk women's accounts suggests a protest against the shifting ideologies and economic circumstances of the present, rather than a form of "false consciousness."

One could also understand the accounts detailed in this article from the perspective of a generation that has come to expect to have certain needs met by government in exchange for its legitimacy. Michel Foucault argues that governmentality operates through the maintenance of the "common good" that has historically entitled a state to exercise power (1991:94–95). I encountered few older individuals who voiced their days in residential school as an oppressive experience at least, in part, because of the moment in time in which my research was conducted. In contrast to the current era in which the Russian state has increasingly abdicated responsibilities for the social welfare of its citizens, the past appears as a time of relative well-being for many on the margins. However, this is also a perspective that is generation specific.

Although it is beyond the scope of this article to explore the range of ways generation influenced perspectives among the Evenks I came to know in the 1990s (see Bloch 2003), it is important to note that socialist discourses of equality and of building society for a "common good" did not resonate with youth in the same way that they did with older people. Conversely in the 1990s, more recent discourses,

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such as the universalizing discourses of indigenous people's rights (see Gray 2005) and of a consumerism that romanticizes individual accumulation of wealth, were beginning to take on meaning for a younger generation.

The women's accounts presented here encourage us to consider the ways in which people are positioned through a wide range of factors. Perhaps one can better understand Praskov'ia Nikolaevna's comment, "When I look back at those years I am proud to have lived in the Soviet era," and Polina Mikhailovna's statement, "We wanted to wear those red ties," by thinking about the ways in which these women were evaluating their lives as members of Soviet society, as Evenks, as women, as Communist Party members, as students, as Evenkiitsy (residents of the Evenk District), and as members of their households. These women's assessments of their lives involved multiple subject positions, and for many, the centrality of the state and the institution of the residential school were very much ensconced in nostalgia for bygone days of youth and opportunity.

Lisa Rofel, in contrasting the subject position of an older generation of Chinese women she interviewed in the late 1980s and early 1990s with that of a younger generation that came of age in the midst of economic reform in the 1980s, explains that with the 1949 revolution in China a new set of values came to be central for evaluating Chinese womanhood; proper women came to be defined as those who worked (1994:237). The older generation of Chinese women workers went from being transgressors of pre-1949 gender sensibilities to becoming revolutionary "liberated" women. The older generation framed the present (1990s) as an experience of "loss of frames of reference that had featured them at the center" (Rofel 1994:239), whereas the younger generation "yearned for modernity," which meant denouncing the socialist values of the Cultural Revolution.

In a similar fashion, elderly Evenk women were often nostalgic for a time when they were "at the center" of a rapidly transforming society. Many identified with Soviet idioms of modernity. The older women's accounts reflect a personal dedication in establishing an urban utopian society and dispelling a "traditional" one. In their youth, Evenk women also "yearned for modernity," a Soviet version. The political imaginary that positioned this generation of women as subjects to be transformed also positioned them as agents of historical transformation who were in the vanguard striving toward a new and modern society.

It should not be surprising that when the ideological overturning of state socialism prevailed in Russia, many of those who were "at the center" of a socialist political imaginary reflect on the past with nostalgia. For Evenk women, the Soviet project, as embodied in the residential school, represented the enfranchisement of Evenk women within the broader society. As neoliberal restructuring takes hold in Russia, people on the margins are drawing on memories to secure themselves to the red ties of the past. Accounts such as these suggest that the postsocialist condition requires us to pay closer attention to competing ideologies and systems of meaning that give life to shifting subjectivities and the place of ideology in the multiple forms that modernity takes.

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Notes

Acknowledgments. The research for this article was supported by funding from the University of Pittsburgh Nationalities Room Committee (summer 1992), the International Research and Exchanges Board (1993–94; summer 1995), and the American Council Teachers of Russian (summer 1998). I am grateful to Sergei Savoskul and to those in the EAO who graciously facilitated this research over the years. I would also like to acknowledge the support provided by Urmila Diwekar at an early stage of this project, as well as valuable comments provided by Nina Diamond, Jacqueline Siapno, Meg Herbig, and Kyra Voss. Milind Kandlikar has provided constructive critiques of this project from its inception through its many transformations.

1. *Internatskaia/internatskii* is a colloquial term created from *internat,* the Russian word borrowed from the German word meaning boarding school. Given the elite connotation in English of the phrase "boarding school," I have chosen instead to refer to these institutions as "residential schools." The Russian term for residential schools *(internaty)* refers to institutions existing throughout the former Soviet Union that care for children whose parents either live away from towns where schools are located or whose parents are unable to look after them. These are distinct from orphanages *(doma rebenka),* where young children who are up for adoption generally live. In 1992, 77,200 children reportedly lived in orphanages and residential schools in the former Soviet Union (Creuziger 1997:357).

2. In this article, I use the term *Evenk* as both an adjective and as a noun; the plural is formed using the English plural, thus, *Evenks.* Unless noted otherwise, ethnonyms in the text are transliterations of the Russian terms and appear in roman typeface. In 2003, just over 26,000 Evenks lived in the Russian Federation, about the same number were living within the borders of China, and an additional 1,000 to 2,000 resided in Mongolia (Du and Yip 1993; Fondahl 1998). Although they could not easily cross these borders in the Soviet period, older Evenks I came to know were aware of these related peoples and spoke about one day conversing with them in the tunguso-manchurian language that they have in common.

3. There are exceptions. David Anderson's work (2000) has carefully considered how "belonging" and nationalist sentiments were shaped among reindeer herders in north central Siberia. Daphne Berdhal has explored nostalgia for the socialist era among East Germans (Berdahl 1999). A few films address the sense of belonging that the fall of socialist societies in Eastern Europe disrupted. See *Goodbye Lenin* (2003) and *Sun Alley* (2000). Overall, however, scholarship on former socialist societies has assumed a sort of automatic resistance on the part of subjects to forms of socialist experience.

4. On April 18, 2005, voters in three administrative regions in central Siberia—the Taimyr, Krasnoiarsk Territory, and the EAO—cast ballots in favor of consolidating into one province (Moscow News 2005b). The new province is scheduled to come into being in 2007 and will be 2,333,700 square kilometers (about 1,450,403 miles, or 13.7 percent of the total Russian territory)—six times the size of Germany. This consolidation reflects the recent turn toward centralization of power in Russia; although governors of the 89 regions currently composing the Russian Federation have been elected since 1993, they will now be appointed by presidential decree. This reorganization of administration within Russia is the most significant since the early 1930s, when the Soviet government established a system of "autonomous regions." These roughly corresponded to concentrations of ethnic minorities; one of which was the EAO (Svensson 1978).

5. Although the Evenks are the primary group of indigenous Siberians living in the Evenk District, nearly 1,000 Sakha also inhabit the region as well as about 100 people identifying with other indigenous Siberian groups, such as the Kets.

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6. As in other parts of Siberia (Grant 1995; Gray 2005; Kerttula 2000; Rethmann 2001), in the Evenk District today indigenous Siberians frequently rely on employment in villages and towns where they work in a wide range of spheres, as teachers, nurses, and administrators.

7. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for the phrase "accommodated assimilation" to describe these relationships to the Soviet nation-state.

8. In a suspected case of arson, the Tura residential school burned to the ground early in 2002. After extended debates about whether to rebuild it, construction was initiated by the district administration in fall 2004 with funding from the oil company Yukos.

9. Between 1989 and 1999, the average longevity of Russian men fell by nearly 10 years to under 60 years of age, whereas the average longevity of indigenous Siberian men fell by more than ten years from 55 to under 45 years of age (EastWest Institute 1999:1).

10. These analyses are important in that they forcefully demonstrate the interconnected nature of modes of resistance, gender, and contemporary capitalist processes. Aihwa Ong (1987) and Leslie Sharp (1990) examine ways that resistance can be somatized when women's social experience is transformed in contexts of urbanization and market expansion.

11. Rofel considers the dilemmas of these terms in her work on women silk workers' negotiations of power in the context of ideologies of production speed-ups in China. When women take breaks to breastfeed children but instead spend time visiting relatives, Rofel argues that they are resisting pressures for higher productivity (1992:94). If one interprets these actions as pursuing personal aims over the aims of capital, then the actions could be considered as resistance. Rofel also notes, however, that what she initially calls resistance could also be viewed as accommodation because it contributes to the social reproduction of prevailing beliefs in Chinese society that women are less productive than men.

12. The self-government component of this vision was particularly short-lived. See Slezkine (1994) for a critical overview of this Sovietization process.

13. Russian Orthodox church schools existed in Siberia by the 18th century, but they attracted few indigenous Siberian students (Bazanov 1936). According to Sgibnev (1869:3–4, 14), one of the largest church efforts resulted in 20 elementary schools set up in Kamchatka and the Kurile Islands in the mid-1700s; these lasted until the 1780s (Forsyth 1992:142). However, these schools largely served a Russian settler population and did not actively seek to incorporate indigenous Siberians.

14. In the post-Soviet era, clans vied for decollectivized land and control over herding and hunting territories, and by 1998, these were predominantly claimed. However, as Anderson notes (2000:160–170), as late as 2000 in some areas, the decollectivization or privatization of state farms had not taken hold because of local circumstances in which territory bounded by the earlier Soviet state farm designations continued to be politically beneficial for many.

15. Alec Nove (1993) cites that the numbers of people executed for counterrevolutionary offences in the USSR during this period varied dramatically: 2,056 in 1934, 1,229 in 1935, and 353,074 in 1937.

16. The Sakha, known by the Russian ethnonym of Iakut in Soviet and pre-Soviet ethnographic literature, are closely related geographically and historically to the Dolgans. See Anderson (2000) for an extensive examination of the ethnohistorical roots of these groups and the continuing negotiation of ethnic identities.

17. One scholar estimates that the reindeer population throughout Siberia dropped by one third in just a three-year period (1934–37; Pika 1996:320).

18. Today the Iakut population in the EAO predominantly lives in the northern village of Essei and maintains close ties with the neighboring Sakha Republic to the east; interestingly, those residing in Essei prefer the ethnonym of Iakut that was established in pre-Revolution Russia to the newly embraced ethnonym of "Sakha" (Okruzhnoi otdel

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statistiki EAO 1994). About half (1,000,000) of the population of the Sakha Republic identifies as Sakha, an indigenous Siberian group with Turkic linguistic roots. In the late 1990s, the rest of the population in the Sakha Republic was predominantly Russian and Ukrainian, although there were also about 14,000 Evenks living in the Sakha Republic. For more on the Sakha, see Cruikshank and Argounova 2000, Balzer 1999, Ivanova-Unarova 1998, and Tokarev 1988.

19. See Kwon 1993 on "women tent workers."

20. Scholars have written widely on the subject of intellectuals and their role in crafting and opposing structures of power. Instead of seeing intellectuals as set apart from the populace and instrumental in perpetuating a certain cultural hegemony, I see intellectuals in post-Soviet Russia as producers of authoritative knowledge in a wide range of forms. Along with Kay Warren (1998:26), I consider intellectuals to include elders and others respected by a community—leaders, teachers, healers or health practitioners, and officials. Intellectuals *(intelligentsiia)* in the Evenk District in the 1990s were a group of people who often self-consciously carried out their roles as interlocutors with a larger populace through teaching, writing, speaking, performing, or public service. Trained within Soviet institutional settings, Evenk intellectuals in the 1990s could be tentatively critical of the former society and government structures, but they also frequently defended the earlier system.

21. Although 18 schools were planned by the Ministry of the North, in fact, only 15 were completed (GA RF 1925–26). The Soviet Ministry of the North, or Department of the North *(Komitet Severa),* was in existence until 1934, when it was disbanded. One of its primary mandates was to oversee the welfare of indigenous Siberians. For an overview of the Department of the North, its founding mandate, and its historical development, see Grant 1995 and Slezkine 1994. The Department of the North was reestablished in 1993, but disbanded once more in 1999 as regional Siberian systems of administration continued to be reconfigured. In the 1920s, indigenous Siberian children were also attending local schools that were not organized as residential schools. For instance, in 1926, five schools in Siberia (from the Urals to Kamchatka) had a solely indigenous student body, and another 26 schools held classes for first and second grades, with a total of 751 indigenous students attending as day students (Itygin 1927a:124).

22. Egor Itygin, an Evenk educator who directed the Division for the Enlightenment of National Minorities in the Irkutsk Department of Education *(Kraevoi otdel narodnogo obrazovaniia)* from 1927 to 1928 wrote:

> The delicate mind of a child (should) train in its native language from the beginning ... these conditions allow the child to develop in a proper, balanced, harmonious way. That's the physical and psychological way of humans. ... Only when a child has an understanding of his familiar native knowledge will he move gradually from the familiar to the unfamiliar ... then he'll begin to study the language of the majority of the population [of the USSR]. [Itygin 1927b:85]

23. One of the early directors of the Tura residential school complained of the difficulty in attracting and retaining students and wrote that the Evenks only sent children who were considered useless in the household or in need of nutrition; according to the director, the school had three "mentally deficient" students in 1930 (GA RF 1929–30).

24. Okruzhnoi muzei EAO (1936). The Evenk District Regional History Museum houses the Suslov Collection, which consists of photographs taken by the ethnographer-cum-administrator Innokentii Mikhailovich Suslov from 1925 to 1927 during his three expeditions to the EAO. Most of the photographs are accompanied by Suslov's brief commentary written in pencil. The collection also includes photographs that were added later; in this case it is unclear who donated the photographs (Okruzhnoi muzei EAO 1927). See

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Anderson and Orekhova 2002 for a discussion of the three generations of Suslovs engaged in social activism in central Siberia.

25. On Soviet, and particularly Russian, concepts of sexuality and gender relations in the postwar period, with an emphasis on the 1960s to 1980s, see Attwood 1990.

26. K. Tsianina Lomawaima (1993) and Brenda Child (1998) describe comparable gender systems at residential schools for Native Americans in North America. As part of the curriculum and during summers, girls were sent to serve as domestic workers, which was considered ideal training for their future lives as housewives. Boys apprenticed in trades that were meant to lead to potential income for supporting households.

27. Pseudonyms are used here and they correspond to common Evenk names. It is striking that the Evenk first names most often encountered in the Evenk District today are Russian in origin. In contrast, Evenk surnames are distinctively Evenk in origin. Typical Evenk surnames in the region are Khutokogir, Chapogir, and Udygir; historically these were names for clans. Anderson (2000:44) writes in regard to Khantaika surnames that missionaries in that region probably began the practice of using clan names as surnames for specific people. The relatively low percentage of Russian Orthodox conversions among Evenks in this region historically is reflected in their retention of Evenk surnames; by comparison, those identifying as Sakha in the Evenk District often have Russian surnames (e.g., Popov).

28. The 1989 Soviet census counted less than 1,000 Kets in the Soviet Union. The Kets have historically lived in close proximity with the Evenks. However, Ket origins differ from the Evenk origins and they speak a language unrelated to Evenk (Alekseenko 1967).

29. Okruzhnoi muzei EAO (1925). These efforts to collect children from the school were a precursor to the more adamant demands made in the early 1930s by Khanty in the same region of Kazym (Balzer 1999:110–116).

30. In the Evenk District in at this time, more than 840 people of the 25,000 population were infected with tuberculosis (Evenkiiskaia zhizn' 1994: 8). Especially those Evenks who worked in the defunct government cooperatives *(sovkhozy)* were prone to tuberculosis because new "farming cooperatives" or private enterprises were not required to provide sick leave for their employees to receive treatment. Also, the former monthly government medical visits to villages and reindeer brigades were curtailed severely by the mid-1990s, being reduced to a single yearly screening for tuberculosis.

31. The pension was hardly enough for the elderly to finance basics, and they relied on generating extra income through sewing, borrowing from relatives, and receiving emergency monies from the town social service agency providing for pensioners and invalids. In December 1993, a locally subsidized loaf of dark bread cost 300 rubles (about 25 cents, at the exchange rate at that time of 1,000 rubles to $1). In 1995, it cost 1,200 rubles (about 25 cents, at the exchange rate of 4,500 rubles to $1).

32. For a discussion of the dynamics of trade and the various routes traversed by different families in the broader region, see Anderson 2000:136–139.

33. In her work based on extensive interviews with Aboriginal Australians, Thies (1987:24) notes similar methods of avoidance of state schooling.

34. See Shirokogoroff 1919, for a historical perspective on shamanism among the Tungus, and Vitebsky 1991 and 2005, for a contemporary ethnographic perspective on Tungus relationships between human and animal worlds.

35. A stakhanovite *(stakhanovets)* was a status created during the intense industrialization period of the 1920s to indicate that a person was a diligent worker. In the period following World War II, the term *stakhanovets* took on negative connotations among the urban intelligentsia in the Soviet Union, referring to a person who sped up work, forcing coworkers to accomplish tasks faster.

36. This exchange reminded me of how these accounts were very much tailored to the audience. As Cruikshank (1997) has demonstrated, oral tradition is shaped by the context

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in which speakers interact. Had Nadia been absent, Galina Petrovna might have chosen to keep to the story of the reindeer dying from disease; my identity as a U.S. researcher was often weighed carefully by those I met as they considered what they wanted to become part of a story about their lives and their ties to local structures of power.

37. Although Polina's father was Sakha, she did not mention the ethnicity of her mother. Perhaps significantly, Polina also downplayed her identity as Sakha. The nuances of Sakha and Evenk identity are explored in Anderson 2000.

38. Nikul'shin describes his perspective on social stratification in the early 1930s; he calculates that in 1931–32, 8.3 percent of the Evenk kulaks owned 73.5 percent of all reindeer in the Evenk District (1939:15). Tugolukov (1971:204) claims that this concentration of resources was limited to domesticated reindeer; there was no real difference between households in the number of boats, guns, or other tools in their possession. See Grant 1995:68–89, for a discussion of early Soviet administrative structures, such as "native council" meetings, established in the North in the 1920s.

39. Right up to 1991, when the Komsomol was disbanded, many youngsters prized membership in the Young Pioneers; Markowitz notes that many of the students she interviewed in St. Petersburg about becoming Young Pioneers spoke of the pride they had felt on being inducted in the mid-1980s (2000:51–54).

40. In 1993, when the Communist Party was disbanded in Tura, students at the residential school were no longer required to wear the red ties signifying membership in the Young Pioneers. However, it was common into the mid-1990s to encounter young students at the school dressed up for a special occasion who were wearing these ties as accessories.

41. As with many in her generation, Polina credited what she viewed as Stalin's firm governance with maintaining order in society. According to opinion polls conducted in 2005, more than 60 percent of those over 60 years old think Russia "needs a new Stalin," while 40 percent of all those polled agree with this view (Moscow News 2005a).

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ABSTRACT *Interpretations of post-Soviet subjectivities have tended to emphasize the ways in which subjects experience these with a sense of liberation from a monolithic socialist state; however, local responses to post-Soviet forms of power have varied widely. In the case of indigenous Siberians in the 1990s, an older generation of Evenk women expressed positive feelings about their experience as students in the Soviet-era residential schools that continue to shape their subjectivity in the post-Soviet present. Evenk subjectivities, as with those of other indigenous Siberians, have been significantly*

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formed through the institution of the residential school and, by extension, through a range of interactions with state power as it has been locally remade and interpreted in the 1990s. In this article, I explore the widespread nostalgia associated with the residential school. Drawing on the narratives of elderly Evenk women, I argue that such expressions of Evenk nostalgia for the socialist era are a form of critique of the neoliberal logics emerging in Russia today. In this respect, Evenk women's accounts allow us to explore negotiations of power in a post-Soviet era and to examine how ideologies shape conceptions of self and the social order more broadly. [ideology, socialism, indigenous peoples, gender, Siberia]

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