

On the Creation of the Multimedia Project “The Memory of a Settlement”, Dedicated to the Genealogy, Oral History, and Photographic Archives of Yupik Families from the Settlement of Novoe Chaplino, Chukotka (Research Note)

Sur la création du projet multimédia « La mémoire d'un village », dédié à la généalogie, l'histoire orale, et photographiques des familles yupik du village Novoe Tchaplino, Chukotka (Note de recherche)

О создании мультимедийного проекта «Память поселка», посвященного генеалогиям, устной истории и фотоархивам эскимосских семей поселения Новое Чаплино, Чукотка.

Dmitriy Oparin

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Résumé de l'article

En 2020, j'ai débuté un projet ayant pour but de scanner et de numériser les généalogies yupik recueillies à Novoe Tchaplino (district de Providenia, côte de Tchoukotka) par l'ethnologue Mikhail Chlenov dans les années 1970 et 1980. Il avait rassemblé ces documents issus d'informations provenant des archives et des administrations locales d'enregistrement locaux, ainsi que des informations de source orale issues de conversations avec les aînés Yupik de Novoye Chaplino, dont beaucoup étaient nés au début du XX^e siècle. Tout en travaillant sur les généalogies, j'ai également commencé à collecter des vieilles photographies et des documents des résidents locaux, et à écrire leurs souvenirs concernant leurs ancêtres. C'est ainsi qu'est né le projet multimédia, qui présente 47 généalogies se rapportant à neuf clans yupik et plusieurs centaines de photographies et de documents privés des habitants de Novoe Tchaplino de l'époque soviétique, ainsi que les souvenirs de 77 ancêtres de ces yupik vivant aujourd'hui.

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On the Creation of the Multimedia Project “The Memory of a Settlement”, Dedicated to the Genealogy, Oral History, and Photographic Archives of Yupik Families from the Settlement of Novoe Chaplino, Chukotka (Research Note)

Dmitriy Oparinⁱ

ABSTRACT

In 2020, I started a project that involved scanning and digitizing the Yupik genealogical charts compiled in Novoe Chaplino (Providensky District, coastal Chukotka) by the ethnographer Mikhail Chlenov in the 1970s and 1980s. He had assembled these materials on the basis of information from local archives and registry offices along with information obtained from communication with the elderly Yupik of Novoe Chaplino, many of whom had been born at the beginning of the 20th century. While working on the genealogical charts, I also began to collect the old photographs and documents of local residents and write down their memories of their ancestors. This is how the multimedia project came about, which presents 47 genealogical charts referring to nine Yupik clans and several hundred private photographs and documents of the inhabitants of Soviet Novoe Chaplino, as well as recollections of 77 ancestors of those Yupik living today.

KEYWORDS

Yupik, Chukotka, elders, genealogy, multimedia, archives, oral history, photography

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- i. Passages (UMR 5319, Bordeaux Montaigne University – University of Bordeaux – CNRS). Lors de la préparation de ce volume, Dmitriy Oparin était employé par l'Université d'État de Moscou (Faculté d'Histoire, Département d'Ethnologie), le Département des études nordiques et sibériennes de l'Institut d'Ethnologie et d'Anthropologie de l'Académie des Sciences de Russie, et l'Institut de Politique Sociale de l'École des Hautes Études d'Économie de Moscou. dimaoparin@hotmail.com.
 - ii. Translated from Russian into English by Ben McGarr. Website URL: <https://www.chaplino.ru> (language: Russian).

РÉSUMÉ

Sur la création du projet multimédia « La mémoire d'un village », dédié à la généalogie, l'histoire orale, et photographiques des familles yupik du village Novoe Tchaplino, Chukotka (Note de recherche)

En 2020, j'ai débuté un projet ayant pour but de scanner et de numériser les généalogies yupik recueillies à Novoe Tchaplino (district de Providenia, côte de Tchoukotka) par l'ethnographe Mikhail Chlenov dans les années 1970 et 1980. Il avait rassemblé ces documents issus d'informations provenant des archives et des administrations locales d'enregistrement locaux, ainsi que des informations de source orale issues de conversations avec les aînés Yupik de Novoye Chaplino, dont beaucoup étaient nés au début du XX^e siècle. Tout en travaillant sur les généalogies, j'ai également commencé à collecter des vieilles photographies et des documents des résidents locaux, et à écrire leurs souvenirs concernant leurs ancêtres. C'est ainsi qu'est né le projet multimédia, qui présente 47 généalogies se rapportant à neuf clans yupik et plusieurs centaines de photographies et de documents privés des habitants de Novoe Tchaplino de l'époque soviétique, ainsi que les souvenirs de 77 ancêtres de ces yupik vivant aujourd'hui.

MOTS-CLÉS

Yupik, Tchoukotka, aînés, généalogie, multimédia, archives, histoire orale, photographie

АННОТАЦИЯ

О создании мультимедийного проекта «Память поселка», посвященного генеалогиям, устной истории и фотоархивам эскимосских семей поселения Новое Чаплино, Чукотка.

Дмитрий Опарин

Адрес сайта: <https://www.chaplino.ru> (язык сайта: русский).

В 2020 году я начал проект по сканированию и дигитализации генеалогических схем, составленных этнографом Михаилом Членовым в 1970-80-е годы. Эти схемы были созданы им на основе сведений из местных архивов и загов и информации, полученной при общении с пожилыми эскимосами Нового Чаплино, многие из которых родились еще в начале XX века. Одновременно с работой над генеалогическими схемами, я начал собирать старые фотографии и документы местных жителей и записывать воспоминания об их предках. Так получился данный мультимедийный проект, в котором представлены 47 генеалогических схем девяти эскимосских кланов и несколько сотен частных советских фотографий и документов жителей Нового Чаплино, а также воспоминания о 77 предках ныне живущих эскимосов.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

Эскимосы-юпик, Чукотка, старейшины, генеалогия, мультимедиа, архивы, устная история, фотография

In 2020, I began a project that involved scanning and digitizing the Yupik genealogical charts compiled in Novoe Chaplino (Providensky District, coastal Chukotka) in the 1970s and 1980s by ethnographer Mikhail Chlenov. He had assembled these materials based on information taken from local archives, registry offices, and communications with elderly Yupik of Novoe Chaplino, many of whom were born at the beginning of the 20th century.

While working on the genealogical charts, I also began to collect old photographs and documents of local residents and to document their memories of their ancestors. This is how the multimedia project came about, which presents 47 genealogical charts representing nine Yupik clans, several hundred private photographs and documents of the inhabitants of Soviet Novoe Chaplino, and recollections of 77 ancestors of those Yupik living today.

Mikhail Chlenov is a linguist and ethnographer, as well as a specialist of Indonesia, Asiatic Yupik, and Judaica. In Soviet Chukotka, he worked mainly with the relocated Naukan Yupik and relocated Ungaziq (Staroe Chaplino) Yupik in Novoe Chaplino and Uel'kal, investigating the topics of ethnic history, kinship, and clan structure. His book entitled *Yupik Transitions: Change and Survival at Bering Strait, 1900–1960*, co-authored with Igor Krupnik, was published in 2013.



Figure 1. Rozalia Seliaka, ethnographer, linguist, and author of the genealogical charts, Mikhail Chlenov, Valentina Seliakina, and Ippi (the mother of Rozalia and Valentina, and one of Mikhail Chlenov and Igor Krupnik's most knowledgeable informants). Novoe Chaplino, early 1970s. From the personal archives of Ippi's granddaughter Svetlana Seliakina.

Novoe Chaplino is a “village located in Tkachen Bay, 20 kilometres north of the district centre: the urban-type settlement of Provideniya. The village was founded in 1958 on the site of an old Chukchi nomad camps. Most of the inhabitants of Novoe Chaplino are Yupik who came from the settlement of Staroe Chaplino (Ungaziq), which was closed by the authorities

in 1958. In the early 20th century, Staroye Chaplino was the largest Siberian Yupik settlement—and the most important point of contact between the inhabitants of the Chukotka Peninsula and Alaska (St. Lawrence Island). In the 1930s and 1940s, the residents of small Yupik villages that were being closed down—Avan, Qiwaaq, Tasiq, and Siqlluk—were resettled in Staroe Chaplino. When Staroe Chaplino itself was closed in 1958, its population was sent to Novoe Chaplino. In the summer, the absence of sea mammals in Tkachen Bay forces Chaplino hunters to move to the special Engaghhpak base, located 30 kilometres from the village. At the beginning of 2020, 446 people were registered in Novoe Chaplino (with the administration's data indicating an actual resident population of 285 people). Most of the inhabitants are Yupik, with Chukchi forming the second largest group.



Figure 2. View of the settlement of Novoe Chaplino after a blizzard, 1980s. From the personal archives of Igor' Makotrik.

Genealogical charts: Research methodology and significance for the local population

Chlenov's primary interest in the 1970s and 1980s was the Yupik social organization and kinship system. To this end, he applied the genealogical method of identifying the terms of kinship. He documented all the relatives of each informant, thereby finding out how each informant was related to and addressed one another. Thus, scattered drafts of Yupik genealogies

began to emerge, gradually forming into professional genealogical schemes. The system of kinship interested Mikhail Chlenov not only in a linguistic sense, but also as a cultural and anthropological phenomenon; it was not so much the biological connection between individuals that interested him, but how this connection was understood culturally. He recorded the social ties of the Yupik of Soviet Chukotka at the stage of the destruction of the old kinship system and clan endogamy.

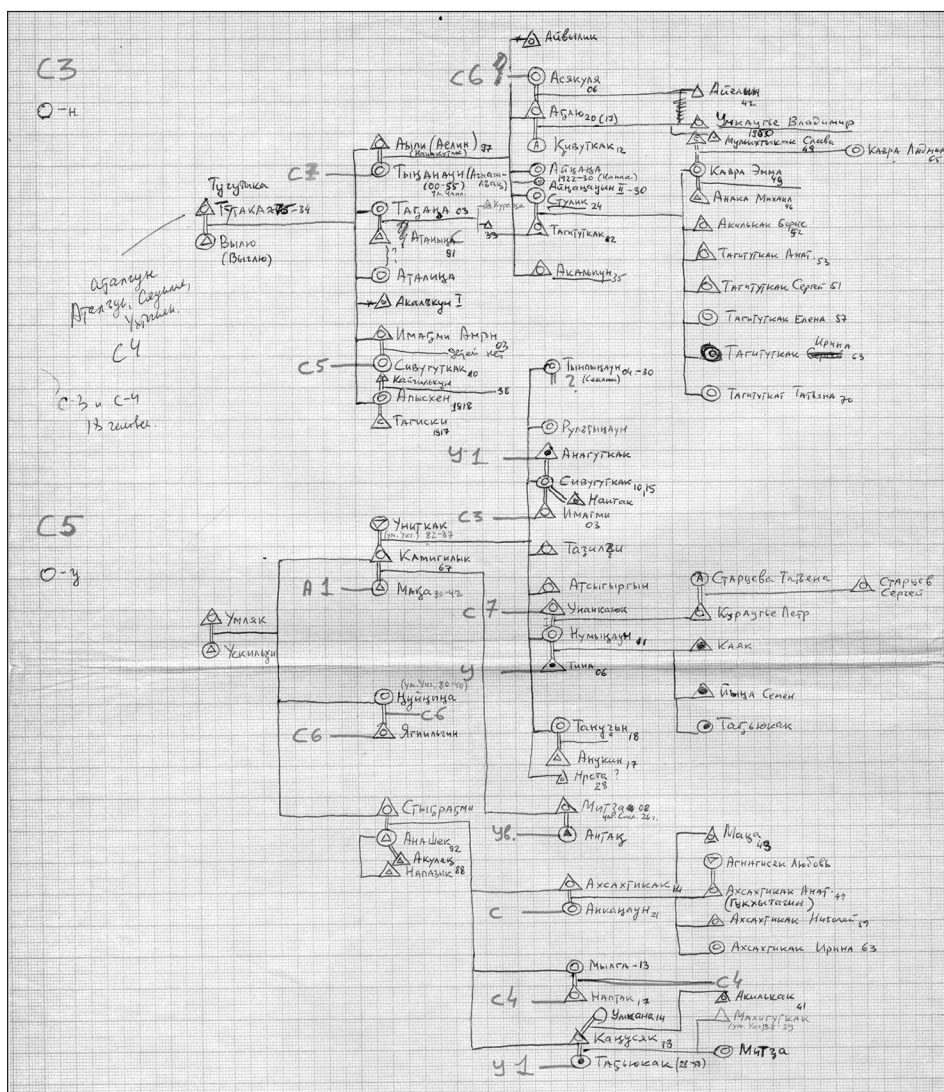


Figure 3. Fragment of a genealogical chart made by Mikhail Chlenov in the 1970s–1980s. Chart of the Sighunpaget Yupik clan.

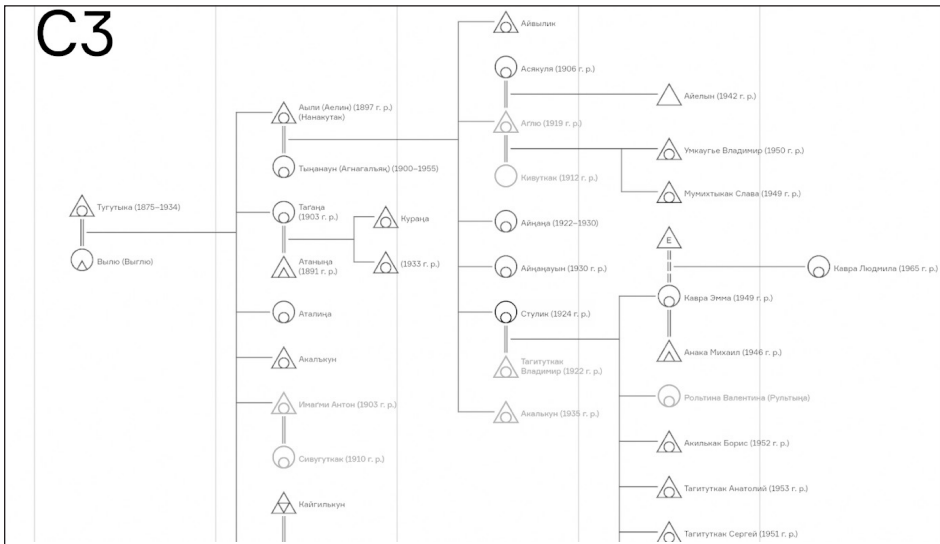


Figure 4. Screenshot of this chart posted on the website: <https://www.chaplino.ru>

The fieldwork material collected by Mikhail Chlenov in the 1970s–1980s has now become history itself—albeit one unknown to many. The names of ancestors born in the mid-19th century shown in these family trees often mean little to the current inhabitants of the settlement. When I brought printouts of the scanned charts with me in the autumn of 2020, it proved to be almost impossible for living relatives of the featured people to supplement or correct the genealogies. However, many were very excited to discover such an account of their bloodlines and proudly displayed them on the walls of their homes.

Jaroslava Panáková (2019) writes, in her article “Something like Happiness: Home Photography in the Inquiry of Lifestyles”, that interviews based on the viewing of photographs have their own peculiar logic and can enable the researcher to turn the conversation in unexpected directions. This can also happen with family pedigrees. Reading the genealogical charts enabled me to delve deeper into the history of each family. The informants’ comments on the family ties recorded in these genealogies from the 1970s gave some indication of the depth of historical memory of each individual, reflecting his or her level of interest in the historical, family, and ritual spheres.

An unexpected direction of conversation concerned reincarnations. One day, I went to visit a family, and together, we began to read their family tree. When I pronounced a particular name, they immediately identified the living person into whom this ancestor had reincarnated. The following is an excerpt from a conversation with a Yupik woman who identified a woman

on a genealogical chart as someone who had returned through her and after whom she was also named:

D.O.: Who did you bring back [to life]?

V: I brought back her.

D.O.: Ymma?

V: Yes, Ymma.

D.O.: And who was Ymma?

V: I don't know who she was. Mama didn't tell. It turns out that I was Ukuna's mother-in-law, this Ukuna. She was Ukuna.

D.O.: Who was Ukuna to you?

V: Some kind of relative on my mother's side.

D.O.: Did Ukuna address you as: 'my *svyokrushka*' [Ru. little mother-in-law]?

V: Yes, yes. Whenever she meets you, she is so joyful! So tall, with a pale face. And she spoke. For some reason, she was happy when she saw me.

D.O.: What did she say?

V: 'My mother-in-law, my little mother-in-law'.

D.O.: Did you understand why?

V: Yes, of course. But I didn't attach any importance to the fact that I was her mother-in-law.

(F, born in 1950, Novoe Chaplino)

The woman who "brought back" Ymma is Valentina Ivanovna Seliakina (her father's name was Seliaka), and sometimes she is called simply Mma. On a 1968 examination certificate, upon her admission to the Magadan Medical School, her surname is given as Mma. Only after getting acquainted with the genealogical charts did Valentina Ivanovna understand exactly who this woman named Ymma had been: she was the sister of her grandfather Nataqa, the father of her mother Ippi. Ymma had a son named Maina. Maina's wife Ukuna, whom Valentina Ivanovna had known as a child, had referred to her as "little mother-in-law". The information about Ymma had been given to Mikhail Chlenov by Valentina's mother Ippi. Valentina Ivanovna herself often repeated to me that she was very sorry that Ippi (her mother) had told her so little, even though she had always shared her knowledge with ethnographers, including Chlenov. We can thus say that the ritual and genealogical information which should have been passed on to the daughter did reach her eventually—albeit indirectly—through the works of ethnographers, such as those of Mikhail Chlenov.

The schemes not only "reveal" distant ancestors for young Yupik; they visualize the historical dynamics of the family. Genealogies also reflect social and political processes: they relate the preference for clan endogamy and its gradual erasure during the course of the 20th century and show how Yupik personal names of parents became the surnames of their children.

Photo archive: A visual chronicle of the Yupik settlement in the 1950s-1990s

In addition to genealogical charts, the website presents photographs and documents taken mainly from the personal archives of Yupik families of Novoe Chaplino. The pictures are divided into 11 albums, each of which covers one of the facets of the everyday life, history, and culture of Chukotkan Yupik in the 20th century. I scanned the photographs in Novoe Chaplino and Provideniya in 2020.

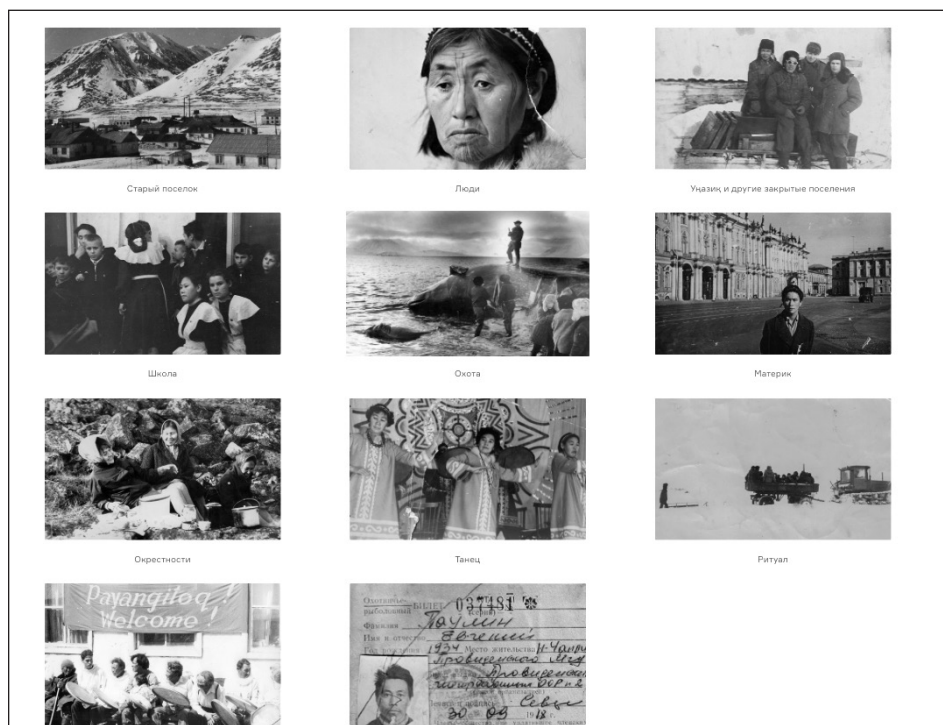


Figure 5. Screenshot of photo album covers.

The earliest documents and photographs date back to the 1930s, and the latest to the mid-1990s. Most of the images were taken in the 1960s–1980s. These pictures form a kind of visual chronicle of the Yupik village during the period of late socialism. Often, there are ceremonial group photographs of school classes, photographs of May Day demonstrations, and performances by a local ensemble. There are also many portraits, and the hunting and butchering of sea mammals, meetings with Chukchi reindeer herders, and trips to Qiwaag and other abandoned settlements are also captured.

The photographs I scanned were not only related to Novoe Chaplino, as the lives of local residents are not limited to one village or region. Many



Figure 6. A captured whale in Tkachen Bay near Novoe Chaplino. Whale hunter Yuri Kaigilkun. Novoe Chaplino, 1980s. From the personal archives of Valentina Seliakina.

people have studied in Anadyr, Magadan, and Leningrad, have been to Moscow, have served in the cities of the Far East, or have been treated at the health facilities of the Magadan region, and the beginning of the 1990s saw an opening up of travel to Alaska. Almost all the early photographs relating to the 1930s–1950s were taken in Ungaziq (Staroe Chaplino). In 1958, this ancient populated Yupik village was closed, with all the inhabitants relocated to the newly created Novoe Chaplino. The photographs of the 1960s–1990s were therefore taken in Novoe Chaplino against the background—as the locals say—of *the old village*, completely rebuilt in the 2000s and thus preserved only in memories and photographs.

Some pictures were taken by professional visiting photographers or photojournalists, others by local amateurs. Unfortunately, the informants were rarely able to give their names. The owners of the archives were likewise often unable to identify all the people in a given photo. Almost every house has some old photographs. They are sometimes kept together in albums, often in women’s handbags or even in old Soviet suitcases. Photos hang on the walls, and pictures of departed hunters can be seen in the window of the sea hunters’ office. I did not scan all the Soviet photographs from the archives; my priority was rather given to images showing the old settlement and collective events, photographs illustrating social and cultural processes, artistically outstanding shots, and portraits of people indicated in the genealogical charts of Mikhail Chlenov.



Figure 7. Nikolai Appa. Leningrad, 1960s. From the personal archives of Tamara Pivrana.

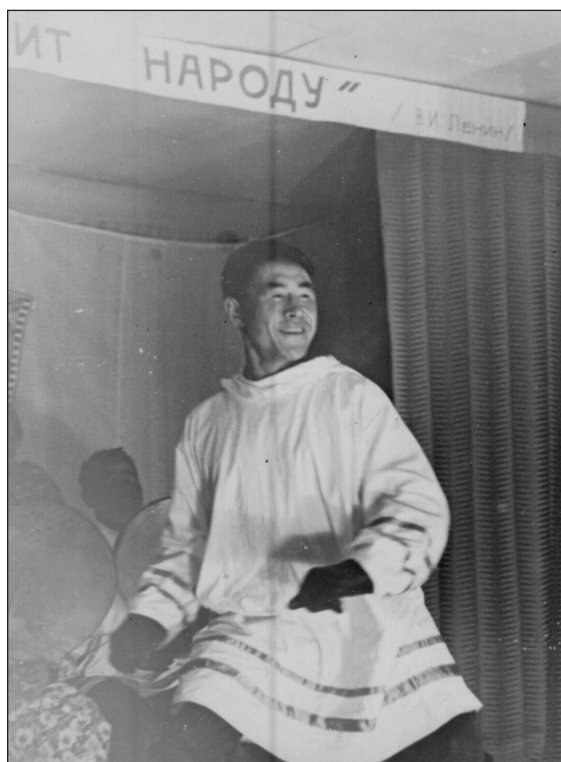


Figure 8. Gennady Kayak in the House of Culture. Novoe Chaplino, 1960s. From the archives of the Beringian Heritage Museum in Provideniya.

Conclusion

The main goal of this project is to preserve the unique genealogical charts drafted by Mikhail Chlenov and to pass them on to the inhabitants of Novoe Chaplino: the descendants of all those people indicated in the genealogies recorded by the scholar in the 1970s and 1980s.

When I first arrived in Novoe Chaplino in 2011, the place did not even have mobile phone reception. Today it does, and there is an internet connection too—which is sometimes slow, sometimes tolerable, and quite expensive. I hope that internet will soon be good there, but even in the present conditions, many of my Yupik acquaintances have already managed to look at the website.

The second part of the audience for whom the website is intended (as yet hypothetical) is made up of people who have never been to Chukotka but who have an interest in this region. By means of the photographs and documents of local residents, through their stories about their own personal 20th century, and through memories and the peculiar aspects of family ties, the project will give this wider public the opportunity to get to know the Indigenous world of coastal Chukotka.

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