

BLACK MONEY AND WHITE SNOW: A REVIEW OF SOCIAL LICENSE TO
OPERATE IN WESTERN SIBERIA

A CAPSTONE

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Introduction

On September 5th, 2016, in the Oil Worker's Square in the city of Surgut, a monument to oil and gas workers in the region was unveiled to celebrate the Russian Day of the Oil and Gas Worker (*День работников нефтяной и газовой промышленности*). The monument, designed by artists working with the Non-Profit Fund of Sculptors of Russia, stands at 21 meters tall with five black arches representing a flowing oil fountain. The arches are raining down gold droplets onto the square, mirroring the flow of wealth that oil



stimulates in the Surgut and larger western Siberian economy. At the base of the statue are 11 figures depicted atop the phrase “The labor feat of generations of oil workers of Surgutneftegaz” (*“Трудовому подвигу поколений нефтяников Сургутнефтегаза”*)

The 11 figures reflect various positions that make oil production in Western Siberia possible, including but not limited to: a geologist, a cook, a driver, an engineer, an electrician, and a surveyor. At the official unveiling ceremony, then-governor Natalya Komarova explained, "The discovery of oil transformed the city. Surgut became the oil capital of Russia, and Ugra became the main energy stronghold of the country. Surgutneftegas made a huge contribution to this, and this monument is in its honor" (Department of Public and External Relations of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug – Ugra, 2016). At the same ceremony, General Director of Surgutneftegas Vladimir Bogdanov pronounced, “This fountain of oil which rains on Oil Worker’s Square will never run dry, just as the memory of the past and the people who made this harsh northern land become a

welcoming home [will never fade]” (Department of Public and External Relations of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug – Ugra, 2016).

Bogdanov’s proclamation, however, fails to address the 30,000 Indigenous people who “made this harsh northern land ... a welcoming home” before the first oil surveyors appeared in the 1950s. The Khanty-Mansiisk Autonomous Okrug, where Surgut is located, is the heart of Russia’s oil production, responsible for over half of the country’s actively-mined reserves. This landscape has been completely transformed since the first oil flowed at Shaim in 1960, with a complex network of pipelines and railroads now ribboning the terrain. The oil industry also triggered a mass settlement, resulting in a more than 300% population growth since the 1960s (Forsyth, 1992).

Before oil production, however, this land was inhabited almost exclusively by the Khanty and Mansi people. Their long and complicated relationship with the Russians began in the 11th century, when the first Russian merchants and hunters made contact with the groups in order to establish trade. Relations were amiable until the Muscovite state established nominal suzerainty over the inhabitants of the region in the 16th century, which began the process of Russian settlement and colonization. Since then, Russians and Indigenous Siberians have engaged in a complicated relationship often marked by violence, such as during Yermak Timofevich’s campaigns in the 1580s, and repression, such as during the Kazym War. Critics claim that the various conflicts spanning over the centuries set a precedent for Russian superiority and conquest in Siberia, from the first Russian fur trappers of the 1600s dispossessing the Khant and Mansi of their hunting and breeding grounds through debt to the oil engineers of the 1960s developing oil fields along sacred grounds. Today, the Khant and Mansi and the landscape they have cultivated and protected with their traditions are threatened by the ever-growing Western Siberian oil industry. As questions regarding climate change become more pertinent, revisiting the long history of Siberia and

the role that its ecosystems play today in decelerating climate change is essential in order to innovate a sustainable future.

This essay seeks to confront the violent and oppressive history of the Khant and Mansi people of Siberia, evaluate the modern cultural and societal role of social license to operate in the region, establish Siberia as a location vital and indispensable in the fight against climate change, and discuss the potential for a sustainable, inclusive, and fossil-free future in Siberia. The main argument is that the money funneled into projects pertaining to the procurement of a social license to operate achieve community consent because they address the problems put into place by oil operations—but re-directing this investment toward building a fossil-free future and centralizing Indigenous voices in that process is one of the more effective ways of combating climate change.

Understanding the history of Russia and oil exploitation in the context of Siberia's Indigenous people is necessary in order to assess and confront the modern-day exploitation of natural resources and people that pertain to Western Siberia. As the largest carbon sink on the planet, Siberia plays an important role in the future of fighting global climate change. As trees are cut down to make way for the development of oil fields (*mestorozhdeniya*) in the region, the planet loses organisms vital to the regeneration of oxygen in the atmosphere. Furthermore, methane, a potent greenhouse gas, is trapped below the permafrost that covers Siberia. This greenhouse gas has an incredibly high heat trapping ability, resulting in a Global Warming Potential (GWP) about 25 times stronger than that of carbon dioxide.

Mining practices have a high potential for catalyzing negative environmental, cultural, and social impacts while simultaneously converting local economies into mining-dependent economies. Indigenous communities in Western Siberia were both economically and culturally dependent mainly on fishing and reindeer herding before oil and gas was discovered in the region. However, the lucrative oil industry has resulted in the depletion of

these natural resources, thus eroding the historic cultural practices of the Khant and Mansi people of the region.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the privatization of Russian oil companies, however, spurred a unique response to this phenomenon of cultural erosion. In a post-communist Russian Federation, questions arose from the capitalist world about obtaining a social license to operate. According to BP Executive Vice President Dev Sanyal, companies cannot operate long-term without the support of society, otherwise known as a “social license to operate” (Sanyal, 2012). This concept implies that local communities condone the practices of a certain company, believing that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages for society as a whole. The consent of individuals within these communities affected by extractive practices is often obtained via cultural and social program funding.

This circumstance isn't unique to the Russian Federation. All across the planet, extractive companies are using negligible amounts of profit to fund cultural and social endeavors as part of obtaining their “social license to operate” from communities affected by mining practices. In southeastern Louisiana, Royal Dutch Shell funds the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival Presented by Shell, an 8-day festival celebrating New Orleans culture and music that is second only to Mardi Gras in the economic impact on the city. In Amazonian Ecuador, Kichwa communities are signing agreements to allow seismic studies in return for \$40, a hectare, and a verbal promise to build a new school, communal kitchen, better toilets, a new football pitch, and houses. And in Western Siberia, arguably the most important ecosystem in mitigating the effects of climate change, oil companies are funding socio-cultural endeavors among Indigenous communities in exchange for mining accord. Interrogating the complicated nature of social license to operate in Western Siberia while analyzing the role that history plays in this process creates a holistic framework for future activists to apply to their own struggles against extraction agencies.

Part 1: History of Khanty-Mansi and Russian Relations

“Colonialism” is a word often reserved exclusively for the political, social, economic, and cultural domination of the Americas by the Europeans that began in the 15th century. In the United States, modern society is built on these foundations, with slavery having transformed into the mass incarceration system and Native land dispossession being reinforced with the boundaries of modern-day reservations. Questions of reparations are beginning to re-enter national dialogue, with all major Democratic candidates for president having formed a position on the issue and three having even outlined policy positions (King, 2019). Reconciling with the violent and colonial past of the United States by interrogating the ways that it informs modern life in the country is essential in creating an equitable future.

The Russian Federation has just as extensive and complicated of a background in colonialism as the United States and will undoubtedly have to face the same questions of reconstruction and possibly even reparations in the future. Similar violent practices during territorial colonization were observed in both regions (Sabol, 2017). The timelines are almost parallel, with nominal suzerainties of various Indigenous groups in western Siberia established under the Muscovite state by 1499 (Forsyth, 1992). Unlike the case of the Americas, however, Russians established contact with Indigenous Siberians starting in the 11th century, when Russian hunters and merchants established trade with the Khant and Mansi people of the modern-day Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug (Forsyth, 1992). Over the millennium, Khant and Mansi relations with the Russians have undergone drastic transformations—but just as in the United States, these historical relations are fundamental in understanding the narratives of power and narratives of resistance that create the caste of profit over people and environment that prevails in Siberia today.

Culture Pre-Colonization

In the 16th century, before various Russian conquests systematically diluted and arguably razed Khant and Mansi culture, the groups lived chiefly as fisherpeople, hunters, and reindeer herders (Reid, 2002; Naumenko, et. al., 2019). These practices developed out of survival necessity, and many continue into the present day—albeit inhibited by the oil and natural gas extraction activities in the region. Though they were not formal nations with a single ruler, there were various separate clans with hereditary chieftains who were responsible for negotiating and interfacing with the other clans. The Khant and Mansi were moieties that practiced strict exogamy, meaning that members of each group were required to marry members from another group (Forsyth, 1992).

Knowing how to expertly navigate Siberia's harsh terrain was essential for the survival of the Khant and Mansi, who adapted their lifestyle around the summers and winters of the region. In the winter months, skis were utilized to cross long distances in icy conditions, whereas summer brought with it canoes for maneuvering thawed rivers (Reid, 2002). These seasons also created a semi-nomadic culture that required mainly two distinct living accommodations. Winter quarters were typically log huts built of branches covered by earth, which served as a permanent settlement throughout the season. During the summer months, groups would spread across various hunting and fishing grounds throughout the region, where they would construct light rectangular shelters of birch bark and poles that were assembled and disassembled with ease (Forsyth, 1992).

The Khant and Mansi were skilled hunters with sophisticated and intricate bows. These bows were six-feet-tall, constructed from both cedar and birch. The armory of arrows that accompanied them were tailored for specific animals: blunt-headed for thick pelts, forked for birds, and even sometimes feathered in order to disguise as a swooping bird (Reid, 2002). Khant and Mansi hunting dexterity resulted in an orientation system centered around animal

patterns. Traces of reindeer, for example, could be used to locate large seasonal herds, of which human settlements could be found in the vicinity (Leete, 1997). Navigation both during and outside of hunting was also guided by changes in elevation, branches or log markers, and notches or signs cut on tree trunks (Leete, 1997).

Khant and Mansi religious identity was deeply connected to the natural environment, and the groups had a pantheon of nature gods. All natural phenomena was believed to have a spirit, with rocks, rivers, lakes, trees, animals, and even thunder all corresponding with forms of life to be respected (Jordan, 2004). Specific animals were often regarded as totems and considered sacred to certain families, who would prohibit the killing of that animal.

As with all Siberian (and North American) Indigenous people, the brown bear had particular significance across Khant and Mansi families. The animal was believed to be living incarnation of justice on earth, and oftentimes was revered as so holy that groups referred to it strictly under nicknames as to not commit any disrespect (Forsyth, 2002). These nicknames were often divine or celestial in nature, including phrases such as “master of the forest” or “the old man with claws” (Forsyth, 2002).

In fact, the groups’ most important and elaborate religious ceremony was practiced after bear hunts. After a bear was killed, a large procession would accompany it back to the village. Then, the carcass would be offered food and drink while being entertained with song and dance. This ceremony would extend over various days until the body was ceremoniously butchered and consumed by the village while the fur, hide, and bones went towards creating clothing and various tools (Reid, 2002). The cleaned skull would then be meticulously and reverently placed as a guardian totem on a pole.

Reindeer, elk, squirrels, deer, birds, and fish were other animals critical to Khant and Mansi customs, serving as sources of both food and clothing (Reid, 2002). Agriculture supplemented the rest of the diet, with the southern territory providing arable land and

optimal weather for cultivating produce. Bee husbandry was routine in the mixed forests, and honey had various uses in both the summer and winter seasons (Forsyth, 1992). Outside of survival, the Khant and Mansi were the only Indigenous groups of northern Siberia to possess stringed instruments. A swan-necked harp and kind of psaltery was commonplace across groups and oral poetry incredibly popular (Forsyth, 1992; Vorobeva, et. al., 2015).

Colonization

Though the Russian conquest of Siberia was arguably gradual, Yermak Timofevich's various violent campaigns in western Siberia throughout the 1580s will serve as the starting point of the colonial timeline of Siberia for the purposes of this paper. At the time of these campaigns, the Khant and Mansi were subject to Russian rule exclusively as tribute-paying vassals (Forsyth, 1992). The original full Siberian coat of arms of the Muscovite state venerates this fact by depicting a Khant man kneeling in the bottom-right corner and proffering furs, the main tribute item, to the shield representing the Russian state at the time (Reid, 2002).

However, the relationship between the Russians and Siberians did not extend past the tributes. Though the Ural Mountains only reach heights of up to 6,000 feet, this terrain then-uncharted by the Russians of the time inhibited further expansion into Khant and Mansi territory (Forsyth, 1992). Siberia was Russian in name only; Ivan III, otherwise known as Ivan the Great for his accumulation of Siberia into the Russian empire, added "Ruler of Obdor, Konda, and all Siberian lands" to the title of the tsar in the early 1500s after establishing the suzerainties, but native ways of life remained unchanged aside from regular tributes to the crown (Armstrong, et. al., 1975).

Much like the Europeans that arrived to the United States equipped with enough artillery to swiftly overpower the Indigenous populations, Yermak and his men traveled and

conquered with steel and gunpowder. One Tatar remarked in 1581, near the beginnings of Yermak's campaign, that "When they shoot from their bows, there is a flash of fire and a great smoke issues, and a loud report like thunder in the sky. One does not see arrows coming out of them ... Our scale-armor, armor of plates and rings, cuirasses and chain-mail do not hold them; they pierce all of them right through." (Armstrong, et. al., 1975) This firepower enabled Yermak to conquer all groups that stood in his way, thus making him incredibly wealthy in furs and other Indigenous tools and artifacts (Reid, 2002).

Though Yermak's campaigns throughout Siberia lasted less than a decade, his journeys catalyzed a spike in Russian interest in Siberia. The wealth he amassed from pillaging Indigenous settlements and stealing furs, tools, and artifacts from the Indigenous populations laid the foundation for others to force their way into the region with the same intentions. These campaigns laid the foundation for the perpetual oppression of Indigenous people. Russian conquerors regarded the Siberians as so inferior so as to dispose of entire families callously and unceremoniously, often hunting them like animals (Yadrintsev, 2014). This practice was incentivized by the system of "feeding" (Кормление; *kormleniye*), which gave Russian provincial governors appointed by Moscow the ability to appropriate tributes and taxes to their own pockets since they were not provided a salary (Forsyth, 1992). For these colonial governors, the priority was placed on the amount of revenue paid to the government, not the means used to attain it, which meant vagabond groups of marauders were not held accountable for their actions so long as they paid the appropriate taxes to the governors (Forsyth, 1992).

Russian colonizers also exacted a complex system of land dispossession that enabled them to create wealth from the well-cultivated breeding grounds of the Khant and Mansi, which furthered the perceived caste between Russians and Siberians. Indigenous Siberians were often deceived by Russians into transferring the rights to their homelands and entering

serfdom against their will in order to pay debts to the Russian invaders. This system of debt collection emerged during the rise of the fur trade in Western Siberia, during a time period when the Siberian sable was a staple fur in aristocratic European circles. The supply and demand resulted in a spike in migration similar to that of that California Gold Rush of the 19th century in the United States, meaning that large numbers of Russians were entering Indigenous territory in order to profit off of pelts. These migrants would often trade Russian goods such as alcohol for pelts from Indigenous tribes. Eventually, however, as the demand for Russian goods rose among the Siberian groups, the Russians began to craft a complex system of debt that dispossessed Indigenous lands.

Though a large amount of land was stolen without regard to prior ownership or occupation, a practice of loaning and debt collecting emerged that further disenfranchised the Khant and Mansi people in territories that consisted of traditional hunting or fishing grounds. The Russian economic system meant nothing to Khant and Mansi people, who signed leases on their land as collateral for cash loans to buy Russian commodities (Naumenko, et. al., 2019). When the time to pay back loans arrived they were unable to pay since they did not generate traditional Russian hard currency incomes, thus forfeiting the rights to their land forever—but more, arbitrary interest rates meant that sometimes land was not enough. A cruel feedback loop emerged that compelled Siberians to work as slaves for their Russian creditors—a sentencing that was passed down hereditarily. This perfidious system persisted well into the 19th century, meaning that many Native debtors were simply victims of mortgages made by their ancestors hundreds of years before (Forsyth, 1992).

This system of debt is one of the earliest examples of systematic cultural dilution in Western Siberia. Once the land was transferred into Russian hands, all members of the Indigenous group lost access to that territory. Traditional ways of life were dependent on hunting, fishing, and reindeer herding, practices built on a symbiotic relationship among the

landscape, the plants and animals, and the people. Carefully maintained ecosystems that the groups frequented for furs and food alike were quickly ravaged by invading Russian entrepreneurs, who converted the land into fountains of profit on account of the abundant natural resources (Forsyth, 1992). The Khant and Mansi people, on the other hand, suffered under debt systems that dispossessed them of their land and enslaved them all the while they witnessed the razing of their carefully constructed breeding and hunting grounds for house-building and fuel production (Forsyth, 1992).

The Russian Revolution and the USSR

Despite history and imperial conquerors such as Yermak, the turn of the 20th century and Russian Revolution brought brief hope to Khant and Mansi people, who were granted autonomy along with every other nationality which had “definable territory.” (Forsyth, 1992) Autonomy, however, did not mean self-governance. Indigenous groups were allowed to use their own languages and run their own schools, but Lenin’s vision was of “the closest drawing together and eventual merging of all nations,” meaning that autonomy was simply a step toward collectivization (Daniels, 1993). Nonetheless, the 1917 “Declaration of the Rights of the People of Russia” declared:

The united will of these Congresses, the Council of the People's Commissars, resolved to base their activity upon the question of the nationalities of Russia, as expressed in the following principles: 1. The equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia; 2. The right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination, even to the point of separation and the formation of an independent state; 3. The abolition of any and all national and national-religious privileges and disabilities; 4. The free

development of national minorities and ethnographic groups inhabiting the territory of Russia (Daniels, 1993).

This declaration along with Lenin's 1920 draft theses on "The Question of Colonized People and Oppressed Minorities" brought Indigenous people into the dialogue surrounding the future of the nation. "The Question of Colonized People and Oppressed Minorities" focalized the woes of various persecuted populations, from Indigenous Siberians to Black Americans. The new Bolshevik state's approach to these questions of addressing past marginalization was forward-thinking in some ways, for they released all Siberians of their debts to the former Russian state and bourgeoisie class while provisionally restricting the activities of private Russian traders (Forsyth, 1992). Furthermore, groups were temporarily absolved of responsibilities to the state, such as paying taxes or performing labor.

However, the party still regarded the Indigenous groups of Siberia as primitive and backwards, meaning that priority was placed on innovating ways to "ameliorate the material conditions of their life." (Forsyth, 243) The Russians imposed laws against tribal ways of life regardless of the opinions of the Indigenous peoples themselves. Nevertheless, the distance between European Russia and the Urals was enough that laws weren't enforced harshly, especially after the police supervision of Native communities was abolished. Free from debts and protected by distance and harsh climate, the Khant and Mansi people began to reconstruct culture and tradition from outside the reaches of the Russian colonizers that had oppressed them for centuries.

Much of this freedom was also enjoyed in light of the formation of national districts and autonomous regions, which functioned antithetical to its original goal. The Soviets viewed the Khant and Mansi, along with all Indigenous Siberians, as integral aspects of the eventual success of communism in the Soviet Union. In "The Question of Colonized People

and Oppressed Minorities,” Lenin explained that “Federation is a transitional form to the complete unity of the working people of different nations,” which is why he advocated for the creation of the national districts and autonomous regions (Lenin, 1965). Lenin believed that class identity would eventually supersede all others, culminating in the global rise of the proletariat. Lenin thought that the Indigenous populations of Siberia were an essential part of this coming revolution, and thus granted autonomy not to further divide the cultural identities of the Soviet Union, but to eventually move away from the necessity for cultural identity at all.

The Soviets, however, did believe that the Khant and Mansi traditions involving practices such as nomadism, clan culture, tribal religion, polygamy, and bride-price had to be abandoned in favor of the modern Soviet lifestyle. Lenin assumed that they could entice the Khant and Mansi away from their traditional ways of life not through coercion, but through exposure to the commodities available to Russians. However, the establishment of the national districts and autonomous regions was popular instead among the Khant and Mansi because it offered an opportunity to re-cultivate the territory and traditional ways of life outside of the Russian sphere of influence for the first time in over than three centuries.

Collectivization and The Kazym War

Across the colonized world, boarding schools have been wielded as a tool against Indigenous autonomy and as a means of cultural assimilation. In the 1930s, the newly-formed Mexican state attempted to “incorporate” Indigenous Mexicans into nation-building through obligatory attendance boarding schools—schools which were oftentimes populated with students who had been forcibly taken from their homes (Lewis, 2006; Ariadna, 2004). In the United States, boarding schools first gained traction as a means of controlling Indigenous populations in the late 1800s and then persisted for almost a century, with the last schools

closing in 1973 (Piccard, 2014). In Soviet Russia, large-scale education and assimilation efforts taken against Indigenous communities across Siberia were no different. These boarding schools, just like the boarding schools in the Americas, were a state-sponsored attempt at cultural genocide against the Khant and Mansi people.

Despite large improvements in access to territory and quality of life among Western Siberians made in the decade following the establishment of the USSR, tensions between the Soviets and Indigenous Siberians began to rise in the late 1920s as a response to collectivization efforts. Once again in control of their land and able to maintain livestock herds and breeding grounds, the Khant and Mansi viewed collectivization as a threat to their newly-inherited sovereignty. They opted to murder livestock and destroy fields and breeding grounds rather than turn this property over to the state (Forsyth, 1992). As a form of protest in response to the mass collectivization on the horizon in December of 1929, Indigenous Siberians slaughtered cattle and livestock in even larger numbers than the peasants who resided in European Russia. The scale was so great that the number of surviving livestock in the region was well below the pre-Russian Revolution levels (Forsyth, 1992). The thriving cattle and dairy-farming industry of early 20th century Western Siberia transformed from an economic powerhouse into a destitute memory.

Another reason that collectivization played such an important role in the mounting hostility that crescendoed into the Kazym War was the discrepancy between Soviet and Indigenous understandings of livestock, fur, and material need. A Khant family of five required around 43 reindeer to survive and maintain their way of life, but the Soviet government demanded that most of the reindeer be surrendered for meat processing (Xmapa 2016). These numbers were detrimental to the Indigenous groups, who were already struggling with famine underneath collectivization (Xmapa 2016).

Pushed to the brink by collectivization, the Khant and Mansi, along with other Indigenous groups in the region, were already at odds with Soviet powers when the construction of *kult' bazi* (cultural bases) and the obligatory attendance of children in boarding schools resulted in an Indigenous uprising. In an effort to lure Khant and Mansi people to a more “civilized” way of life, Soviets established cultural bases to serve as a home for hospitals, stores, bathhouses, and boarding schools (Leete, 2009). The structures mainly served the Russians who resided in the area and desired a semblance of the same urban commodities as European Russia. However, the cultural bases were also employed as a means of infiltrating and eroding Indigenous communities. Art Leete, a professor in the Department of Ethnology at the University of Tartu and a prolific writer on Indigenous Siberian history and politics, describes these centers as “a large-scale, radical form of social experiment that was supposed to introduce modernizing culture changes” that simultaneously served as “tools for collecting information about the Indigenous groups of the North” (2009, pp. 229).

One of these cultural bases became the site of arguably the most prominent resistance movement in Siberian history. The Kazym War began in response to the establishment of a Soviet boarding school hosted in the culture base of Kazym, a village in Khant and Mansi territory on the eastern bank of the Ob River. In 1931, local authorities forcibly gathered 50 Indigenous children from the tundra and taiga to attend this boarding school that would provide a Russian education and instill Soviet values in the next generation of Khant and Mansi people (Leete, 2009).

One of the main reasons that the boarding school sparked an uprising among Indigenous Siberians was that the students were at a key developmental stage in life. These students were abducted during a pivotal age in their lives, which Khant writer Tatiana Moldanova affirms in her short story based on the event *In the Lonely Nest*:

My children will not survive. I had no time to teach my sons how to hunt game and fish. Although my wife is strong, she is merely a woman. And those [soldiers] took the rifle away. No, they will not survive (Moldanova 1995).

The narrator here is primarily concerned with the development of their children and their ability to upkeep Indigenous tradition in order to survive in the harsh Siberian climate. While a fictionalized account, this worry reflects one of the foundational motivations behind the war. Russian oppression under the tsar manifested itself in financial burden, land dispossession, and physical labor via serfdom, but families remained united and therefore able to pass along cultural practices through their children. The boarding schools, however, disrupted this education integral to survival in the tundra, thus sparking an uprising in a population already in disrepute from lack of access to resources.

Between the years of 1931 and 1934, the Soviets engaged in a covert war with the Indigenous people of Western Siberia that established the foundation for Russian dominance over Indigenous populations in the modern era. Khant leader Ivan Yernikhov, who was key in organizing the armed uprising, explained at the first rebellion meeting that “Since the cultural base was built on Kazym, it became impossible for the natives to live. The Russians have begun to oppress the natives ... We must remove the cultural base and purge all the Russians from the tundra” (Несмиян). Unfruitful negotiations with the Soviets evolved into armed conflict, which was met with harsh consequences (Хмара 2016). Over the next four years, Indigenous children suffered in boarding schools from typhus and chicken pox as the Russians kidnapped Indigenous men, employed pilots and large-caliber machine guns to terrorize and massacre communities, and stripped families of all known weapons—even those necessary for hunting, starting famine throughout the population (Хмара 2016).

The Kazym War is marked by the kidnapping, disappearance, and execution of various Khant leaders, as well as the spread of typhus through the boarding schools and famine through the forest populations as men were imprisoned and women left without weapons for hunting and fishing. 83 people were arrested after the uprising, and of this number with some killed, some eventually released, and three dying in custody (Xmapa 2016). During the month of trials that took place from June 25th to July 25th 1934, 52 people were indicted (Xmapa 2016). Of those 52 people, 33 were Khants from Kazym, 14 were Khants that lived in the forests, and 5 were of another Indigenous group (Xmapa 2016). Eleven people were sentenced to death, 3 were acquitted, and the rest served various lengths of time in prison (Xmapa 2016).

These sentences that followed the years of terror on the part of the Soviets against the Indigenous groups of the region are fundamental in understanding how rampant industrialization was able to so efficiently raze the natural landscape while Soviet officials discounted its impact on the local economy and customs of the Khant and Mansi. The first resistance to Russian rule on the part of the Indigenous groups resulted in numerous deaths and trauma, something that the groups did not forget when state oil companies began to infringe on their traditional territory in the 1950s and 60s.

Part 2: Social License to Operate in Khanty-Mansi

Paul Klein wrote in *Forbes* in 2013 that “Twenty twelve was the year when corporate social responsibility was found to be an inadequate way of aligning business results and social outcomes. Twenty thirteen will be the year of the social license to operate” (Klein). Klein is the CEO and founder of Impakt, a company that advises businesses and corporations across the world on the process of obtaining and managing a *social license to operate* (SLO). A social license to operate refers generally to the acceptance that corporations and their activities get from government bodies, communities living close to project activities, and broader society (Gupta & Kumar). This concept comes from the older, broader, and much better-established concept of corporate social responsibility (Hall, Lacey, Carr-Cornish, and Dowd, 2015). In Klein’s article, he shares three modes of securing a social license to operate: 1) Be a social purpose leader, 2) Give more control to local communities and stakeholders, and 3) Build partnerships with the right and the wrong NGOs. Klein writes with an urgency, explaining that securing a social license to operate is complicated but will be essential in ensuring the success of future capital endeavors in a community.

Social licenses to operate are transforming the influence of extractive industries in the cultural and social lives of people inhabiting the regions where extreme production and manufacturing takes place. Oftentimes, however, these lands are rife with histories of marginalization and abuse by foreign authorities spanning centuries. These histories result in a pre-existing caste of marginalization that enables companies to infiltrate communities by occupying similar positions of imposed power. In the case of the Khant and Mansi people of Western Siberia, the violent, 16th-century tsarist conquests promoting expansion and imperialism laid the framework of oppression that persists in the region today. Despite the suspension of Indigenous debt and declarations of native autonomy by Lenin after the Russian Revolution and Civil War, the Soviet Union’s compulsory collectivization under

Stalin further marginalized the Khant and Mansi people culturally and socially. Students were prohibited from speaking their native languages in school and traditional religious practice was forbidden by law. Shamans in particular were persecuted both as religious figures and community leaders. At this time, there was no need for any sort of “social license to operate” because the wealth of mineral resources in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug had yet to be discovered. However, the government still imparted intense assimilation pressures on the region by forcefully including the Indigenous groups into state economic structures. Additionally, it imposed its power through rampant social and cultural suppression. State actors worked to entice Native people to a Soviet way of life by establishing villages designed to promote a “civilized” lifestyle and obliging Indigenous students to leave home and study in their boarding schools.

Despite being unable to practice some of their religious or cultural traditions under Soviet rule, the Khant and Mansi were able to preserve their traditional practices of fishing and reindeer herding since it contributed to aforementioned state economic structures. Before the oil and natural gas sector razed the boreal forests and corrupted many of the animal and plant habitats, the summers in this region would usher in large harvests and fishing yields. However, that all changed once the Soviet Union discovered oil and natural gas and promptly instituted massive industrial development projects in the region. The first drops of oil flowed on the river Konda in Shaim, located near the Ural Mountains and also regarded as the main territory of the Mansi people (Forsyth 390). Afterward, widespread modern industrialism resulted in worsening cultural and social repression as the natural terrain was destroyed and replaced by roads, railways, pipelines, and massive oil fields. Site clearings, heavy tracked vehicles, and oil spills made it impossible for Khant and Mansi people to access their traditional hunting and herding territory, and the degradation of the environment partnered with strict Soviet law surrounding land access resulted in the decrease of these practices.

During the oil industrialization of the 60s and the subsequent decades leading up to the end of the Soviet Union, the necessity for obtaining consent, or a “social license,” to operate in these communities was non-existent. The state had already seized land ownership during collectivization, so there were legally no land disputes to threaten the imperialism of the oil and gas companies settling themselves in the region. Once again, Khant and Mansi people found themselves under direct political subjugation by the Russians—a subjugation that was eroding traditional cultural and social practices of the people.

And it wasn't just general state-sponsored repression anymore. The opportunity to drive more Russians to the area in order to populate Siberia was appealing to the Soviets, who felt as though this would promote Russification among Indigenous peoples while simultaneously stimulating the economy. The population surged as people migrated to the Khanty-Mansiisk Autonomous Okrug from all over the Soviet Union, attracted by good pay for short-term work in harsh conditions. These workers had little interest in preserving the landscape that was totally devoid of the urban amenities they were accustomed to, and the practices of the Khant and Mansi people suffered as a result of their abuse. By 1979, less than 4% of people living in the okrug were of Khant or Mansi descent (Forsyth 391). The non-Native population had soared from 98,000 to over half a million, a fact that also contributed to the dilution of culture in the area (Forsyth 391).

Before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the oil and gas of Western Siberia had become the backbone of the economy. Between 1971 and 1975, oil exports accounted for 28% of Soviet hard currency earnings per year on average, and that number only grew with the expansion of the industry (Sim 2). By 1985, oil exports represented 60% of these hard currency earnings, and these numbers cause some historians to speculate that “had there been no Samotlor oil, events would have forced [the Soviet Union] to start economic restructuring

10 or 15 years earlier” (Arbatov, et. al., 2005). Samotlor is the largest and most productive oil field in Russia, producing 30 million tons of oil annually (Archer, 2014; Petzet, 2009)

The burgeoning Russian Federation, therefore, had foundations already laid for the perpetuation of oppression among Indigenous individuals in Western Siberia. The Soviet Union had left a framework of oppression in its wake ideal for newly privatized oil and gas companies to mold in order to suit their best interests. Obtaining a social license to operate in this new economy would be eased because the previous systems of power already left huge social and cultural vacancies. Understanding the privatization of the Russian oil industry and the reshuffling of the country as it transitioned toward a market-based economy during the Yeltsin/early Putin era provides key insight into the wealth of modern Russian oil companies in Western Siberia. Before obtaining a social license to operate even begins to emerge as a necessity in the Russian business world, the pre-existent structures of social and cultural oppression in Western Siberia paved the way for oil companies to re-write the history of the landscape while filling a space much-needed in Khant and Mansi social and cultural preservation.

Acquiring a Social License: The Fall of the Soviet Union

In Western Siberia, the concept of acquiring a social license to operate rose in prominence with the fall of the Soviet Union. Though still referred to then as “corporate social responsibility,” these social licenses became easier to obtain in light of the weakened post-Soviet economy. In this society, cultural funds were widely depleted amid the economy’s extreme turbulence. Perm, an oil-dependent region in Western Siberia, wrote dismally in their Department of Culture’s 1996 annual report that

The current stage of the development of society is characterized by the deepening financial-economic crisis and instability in all spheres of activity, including the cultural field. Nevertheless, the organs of culture in the Perm region are doing everything possible to preserve what has been accumulated but to develop further. (Rogers 185)

Despite “doing everything possible,” Perm and other cities across Russia reported steep decreases in community social and cultural events on account of lack of funding. Without the money available to advance projects across Russia, Houses of Culture were being converted into more lucrative alternatives, such as nightclubs, discos, or bars, while former Department of Culture workers sought second jobs to make ends meet (Rogers 185). In Western Siberia, this dearth of financial resources paved the way for oil and gas companies to eventually step in. Though not yet referred to as a “social license to operate,” these initiatives enabled oil and gas companies to write themselves into the cultural foundation of the region.

And this problem wasn’t unique to Russian Departments of Culture: throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the unstable Russian economy swayed like a pendulum as it worked to establish a solid footing in the global market, resulting in unstable funding across the country. Over the decade, the ruble fell more than 99 percent against the US dollar despite the country temporarily stabilizing inflation with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund in 1995 (Shleifer & Treisman, 2005). Much of this instability had to do with the fluctuation of oil prices in the 1990s, as the Soviets had built an economy that relied heavily on oil production and distribution.

At the same time of this economic turbulence and restructuring, Russia’s oil industry was in the midst of a massive privatization movement that helped complete the state’s transition toward a market-based economy. At the beginning of 1992, the state fully owned

and operated 330 different oil entities involved in everything from scientific research to the exploration, refining, and distribution of oil, natural gas, and petroleum products (Sim 1). In the decade that followed, Russia's multi-billion dollar oil industry condensed into six privately owned petroleum companies that emerged to dominate the Russian oil market: LUKoil, YUKOS, Surgutneftegaz, Sibneft', Tyumen' Oil (TNK) and Slavneft' (Sim 1).

Russia's rapid privatization was unprecedented: by mid-1994, around 70% of the Russian economy had already been transferred to private hands (Shleifer and Treisman). When the Russian Federation did finally stabilize the economy in the early 2000s, much of it had to do with the surge in global oil prices. The oil industry was reporting novel profits. In 2002, YUKOS doled out 500 million USD to shareholders at their annual conference (Cornelius, et. al., 449). This number represented only sixteen percent of net profits that year and was double the amount distributed in the previous year—and YUKOS wasn't the only company doubling shareholder dividends. In that same year, Lukoil paid 400 million USD and Sibneft' 900 million USD (Cornelius, et. al., 449). These numbers mean that each company was grossing over 2.3 billion USD when Russia had just been referred to two years earlier as “a looted and bankrupt zone of nuclearized anarchy” by United States House majority leader Dick Armey (Schmitt, 1999).

In a postcommunist society barely staying afloat in the transition toward a market-based economy, private Russian oil companies had generated enough capital to fill the vacuums in funding left by the Soviet Union. However, much of it left an interesting vacancy in the cultural and social sphere of the country—especially in Western Siberia, which did not have the same independent cultural and social institutions established like in Moscow or St. Petersburg to replace failing Houses of Culture. As mentioned earlier in this part, there were no questions surrounding social licenses to operate in the region because the state-sponsored companies had government consent in the region. By the early 2000s, however, most of the

oil operations in Western Siberia were private, and these newly-privatized companies were following the community engagement models of already-established companies such as Shell and Chevron. This model created a sort of system of “accountability” by addressing the ways that communities of people in the region would benefit from this exploitation.

Most oil companies responded by choosing to fund various cultural and social projects among Indigenous people throughout the region. Companies began funneling percentages of profits into various ventures designed to establish oil and gas excavation as both a natural part of the landscape and an integral aspect of maintaining the people of the region. The following sections discuss the influence and consequences of two different avenues of obtaining a social license to operate in the region, starting with the creation of cultural heritage through the Museum of Geology, Oil, and Gas, and ending with Surgutneftegaz and their modern-day “interaction with the small numbered Indigenous people of the North” (Сургутнефтегаз).

Переписать историю и культуру: Музей геологии, нефти и газа в Ханты-Мансийском автономном округе

«В самом сердце нефтяного края России—окружной столице Югры—находится единственный в стране общедоступный «нефтяной» музей» начинается официальная страница Музея геологии, нефти, и газа (Музей геологии, нефти и газа). Музей открылся в марте 2003 года, и теперь является домом для более чем 36 000 единиц хранения (Музей геологии, нефти и газа). Музей был основан во времена нефтяного бума начала 2000-х годов, когда нефтяные компании в регионе получали большие прибыли. Музей может похвастаться широким кругом партнеров, наиболее заметными являются Сургутнефтегаз и РуссНефть, две крупные нефтяные компании, работающие в Ханты-Мансийском автономном округе. Музей стал членом Международного совета

музеев в 2015 году, членство в котором означает, что музей соответствует «профессиональным и этическим стандартам» Международного совета музеев. (Музей геологии, нефти и газа; International Council of Museums). Однако при более внимательном рассмотрении музея видно, что в его представлении истории и культурном наследии Ханты-Мансийского автономного округа есть зияющие дыры. В этом разделе предпринимается попытка осветить способы, которыми музей увековечивает маргинализацию коренных народов в нефтедобывающих регионах Сибири, и рассматриваются методы, благодаря которым музей способствует успешной закупке социальной лицензии на проведение деятельности.

Данный музей в первую очередь способствует приобретению социальной лицензии на проведение деятельности, представляя нефтяные компании как спасителей региона. В этой экспозиции описывается процветание территории народов ханты и манси, которое произошло благодаря нефтяным компаниям и способствовало индустриализации. Об этой распространенной мысли свидетельствует речь губернатора Ханты-Мансийского Автономного Округа Натальи Комаровой на открытии памятника трудовому подвигу нефтяников, где ей было сказано следующее: «Все, что мы любим в нашем округе - плоды труда нефтяников, газовиков, строителей, учителей, врачей, ученых, всех югорчан. Огромный вклад в это внес Сургутнефтегаз» (Department of Public and External Relations of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug – Ugra, 2016). Она высоко оценивает труд нефтяных компаний, которые работают в регионе, и людей, которые заставляют их работать бесперебойно и даже заходит так далеко, что упоминает Сургутнефтегаз. Музей работает во многом таким же образом. Несмотря на партнерские отношения с такими учреждениями, как Томский Областной Краеведческий Музей, который посвящен выставке и сохранению сибирской этнографии региона, Музей геологии, нефти и газа не работает над примирением

истории нефтяных компаний с историей насилия в отношении коренных народов и их территорий, но также не дает возможности продемонстрировать их культурные достижения. Скорее, это создает историю, в которой культура коренных народов в регионе в основном отсутствуют.

По мнению Н.Л. Сенюкова, Музей геологии, нефти и газа, использует различные «источники культурных ценностей», чтобы рассказать историю добычи нефти и газа в регионе (2014). Эти источники включают, но не ограничиваются естественно-научными, картографическими, документальными, изобразительными источниками, а также книжными источниками и периодическими изданиями и так называемыми «вещательными предметами» (Сенюкова 2014). Однако в целом эти источники не ставят ханты и манси в истории нефти в регионе. Например, экспонаты, выставленные в музее, перечислены ниже:

исторические мундиры отечественных горных инженеров; одежда геологов, буровиков, строителей промыслов и магистральных трубопроводов; образцы корпоративной одежды нефтяных и газовых компаний; памятные ленты, вымпелы, транспаранты; знамёна геологических и нефтегазодобывающих предприятий; сувениры в память отдельных персон, событий и месторождений ... нумизматические источники, и нумизматические источники (Сенюкова 2014).

В данной коллекции отсутствует традиционная одежда ханты и манси, которые действительно рассказывают историю этого региона. Такой одеждой являются олени шкуры, обувь из оленьей или лосиной кожи, а также пальто или парки из различных мехов с подкладкой из кожи зайца или белка (Forsyth 13). Даже рыба и птицы

используются в традиционной одежде, так как Ханты и Манси используют практически всё животное после его разделки. (Forsyth 13). Эта одежда важна, так как она использует экологичные ресурсы, предлагающие модель будущего, которая стремится отойти от использования природных ископаемых. Кроме того, одежда была усовершенствована настолько, чтобы позволить хантам и манси выживать в суровом сибирском климате на протяжении веков, что исключает предположение о том, что их культура была менее развитой, чем у русских.

Тем не менее, отсутствие одежды является лишь одним из симптомов более серьезной проблемы в музее. Пространство музея оформлено таким образом, чтобы посетители почувствовали гордость, что представляет «культурное наследие» региона, но приписывает это наследие исключительно нефтяной промышленности. Серьезная проблема с этим заключается в том, что он стирает положение коренных народов как наиболее уязвимого населения в регионе, и одежда является лишь одним из примеров подобного пренебрежения. Другие примеры включают ежегодный конкурс сочинений, который не может включать произведения «политические, религиозные и национальные разногласия» и выставку, посвященную первому нефтяному месторождению в этом районе, подразумевая, что ранее была необитаемой, говоря, что эта территория «заболочена и затапливается» (Музей геологии, нефти и газа). Это не только создает неполную картину региона, но и полностью стирает роль коренных народов в сохранении земли.

Сайт музея предлагает виртуальную экскурсию по галереям, и самая впечатляющая из них - «Приобское: Место Рождения». Название галереи - игра слов, потому что «место рождения» трактуется и в буквальном смысле, и ссылается на само место, где, где добывается нефть. Даже с таким названием музей продвигает культурные и социальные связи с нефтью: нефти даны человеческие характеристики:

как и люди, она также имеет «место рождения». Эта галерея разделена на два основных раздела: Паспорт Месторождения и Жизнь Месторождения (Музей геологии, нефти и газа). В этих разделах есть подразделы, один из самых красноречивых из которых - «Геология и История Открытия», который рисует картину этого «истории открытия» на витрине, полной советских медалей, разнообразных минералов, найденных в регионе, и документов детализация промышленной истории округа (Музей геологии, нефти и газа). Под этим подразумевается, что русские «открыли» область во время разработки нефти, хотя земля была ранее заселена. Последний раздел в галерее включает интерактивное пространство «потрогай нефть», где посетители могут надеть перчатки и погрузить, чтобы погрузить свои руки в небольшую прозрачную коробку, полную черного масла, произведенного в регионе. Все эти галереи предназначены для фабрикация культурных и личных связей с бурением и добычей нефти, которые дает посетителям музея возможность связаться с нефтяными компаниями на индивидуальном уровне.

В конечном счете, музей вносит вклад в приобретение социальной лицензии стирая жестокую и трагическую историю хантов и манси в регионе. Jason Prno and D. Scott Slocombe, профессора экологических исследований в Университете Уилфрида Лорье, утверждают следующее: “голоса сообществ, затронутых добычей полезных ископаемых, приобрели влияние в решении вопросов по развитию минеральной промышленности, а также в решении политических вопросов (2012). Тем не менее, музей реагирует на эту идею, смещая акцент на то, кто заинтересован в этой ситуации. «Культурное наследие» связано с добычей нефти, что дает ему социальную лицензию, поскольку оно является неотъемлемой частью как повседневных, так и исторических социальных и культурных структур. Социальная лицензия на проведение деятельности

предоставляется без необходимости признать ответственность болезненное прошлое с эксплуататорским настоящим.

Сургутнефтегаз и Социальная Лицензия на Проведение Деятельности Сегодня: «Взаимоотношения с КМНС»

«Богатство тюменских недр на службу Родине!», «Дадим стране больше нефти!», «Даеть 500 000 тонн нефти в сутки!»... «Миллион тонн нефти, миллиард кубометров газа в сутки!» (Сургутнефтегаз) Гигантская компания обосновалась в Сургуте, крупнейшем городе Ханты-Мансийского автономного округа, где она работает с 1977 года (Сургутнефтегаз). Губернатор Югры отметил вклад компании в социально-экономическое развитие автономного округа благодаря поддержке физической культуры и спорта в Сургуте, коренных малочисленных народов Севера, разработке природоохранных программ, инвестициям в строительство, ремонту социальных объектов и объектов инфраструктуры (Правительство Ханты-Мансийского автономного округа – Югры, 2019). Экономическое и промышленное развитие области было бы в значительной степени невозможно без Сургенефтегаза и его операций по добыче и переработке нефти и природного газа. Однако эти операции в значительной степени зависят от уничтожения лесов и традиционных охотничьих угодий хантов и манси, а в результате аварий, связанных с нефтью, создана система, в которой более 60% проб воды в регионе не соответствуют гигиеническим, химическим и санитарным нормам (Московченко & Убайдулаев, 2014)

Как и все нефтяные компании, Сургутнефтегаз использует свои значительные доходы для того, чтобы получить социальную лицензию на проведение деятельности в регионе. Одним из наиболее интересных способов, с помощью которых Сургутнефтегаз добивается своих целей, является прямая передача денежных средств

или материалов «малочисленным коренным народам Севера». В 2017 году компания сообщила о передаче 68 бензиновых пил, 61 снегоходов, 25 моторных лодок, 87 лодочных моторов, 48 силовых установок, более 697 тонн бензина и более 27 тонн моторного масла коренным жителям, которые проживают в регионе, где работает Сургутнефтегаз (Сургутнефтегаз). На странице «Взаимоотношения с КМНС» на сайте Сургутнефтегаза объясняется, что эти средства были распределены следующим образом:

Указанные суммы включают квартальные компенсационные выплаты семьям и единовременные компенсационные выплаты, оплату проживания в общежитиях, лечение и протезирование зубов, обучение, транспортные расходы, средства на приобретение призов и подарков для проведения национальных праздников коренных жителей, а также затраты на приобретение материально-технических ресурсов (ГСМ, спецодежда, стройматериалы и др.) (Сургутнефтегаз).

Несмотря на то, что группы коренных народов получают существенную выгоду от этого обмена, деятельность нефтяных компаний в регионе усиливает зависимость от этих действий. Ханты-Мансийский автономный округ не только экономически зависит от добычи нефти, но и страна в целом также зависит от добычи, переработки и распределения материала. По данным Всемирного банка, почти 10% ВВП России приходится на «ренту природных ресурсов» по сравнению с 0,3% ВВП США (World Bank). И эта добыча только увеличивается, поскольку Россия сообщает об увеличении добычи нефти и нефтепродуктов с конца 1990-х годов (US Energy Information Administration). По мере того, как зависимость России от нефти возрастает, страна активнее поддерживает процветание нефтяных компаний и, следовательно, экономики,

а не здоровье и традиции коренных народов—но это благоволение будет иметь долгосрочные последствия не только для обычаев и здоровья людей, населяющих регион, но и для всей планеты, поскольку изменение климата ускоряется разрушением одной из самых важных экосистем в мире.

Discussion

Facilitating company-community relations have evolved drastically since the concept of corporate social responsibility was first developed in the 50s. The modern concept of social license to operate attempts to transfer agency back to communities that are most impacted by extractive practices, but the programs put in place by companies are often short-sighted and unsustainable. The two cases reviewed in this capstone are examples of the varying dynamic approaches to SLO, but each of them are marked by some egregious oversight that perpetuates the marginalization of these communities.

In the case of the Museum of Geology, Oil, and Gas in Khanty-Mansi, the curators could continue to celebrate the economic and industrial achievements of the oil and natural gas industry while simultaneously addressing the history of the region in a way that honors those who have been marginalized by companies. This historical accuracy would advance transparency in the region, holding both the state and oil companies accountable for their actions toward both the people and the land. Furthermore, the museum could innovate the educational facilities that it currently operates for patrons of varying ages to encourage alternative and sustainable engineering. Much of Khant and Mansi tradition already promotes an oil-free lifestyle, with clothes and materials made from the animal, plant, and other renewable resources of the region. Instead of glorifying oil production, which is not only detrimental to the environment but unsustainable in long-term human survival, the museum could serve as a space for people of various educational and cultural backgrounds from all

over Russia to learn about the history of the region while looking toward the future of energy production in Siberia.

The preservation of Siberia is integral in mitigating the effects of climate change, and as a museum dedicated in part to geology, the Museum of Geology, Oil, and Gas in Khanty-Mansi could also challenge patrons to engage with all aspects of Siberia's complicated landscape. The museum currently shares a single narrative which paints the oil industry as the heart of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug. The museum fails to discuss the geological and environmental significance of the region outside of oil and natural gas extraction, but this information could spark innovation regarding the transition away from oil and toward a fossil-free Arctic.

In the case of cultural programs such as those funded by Surgutneftegaz, oil companies could work to design long-term sustainable outcomes rather than confining the project to a certain number of weeks or months. Rather than funding cultural exploration of past traditions through language or folklore, they could incentivize students to both study this history and then produce their own works honoring and reflecting culture. Furthermore, Indigenous teachers could be sponsored to design an educational curriculum that honors historical accuracy and encourages the transfer of cultural tradition in the region.

Ultimately, however, the most important investment Surgutneftegaz and other oil companies could make in the name of obtaining a social license to operate is in ventures that transition the economy away from oil dependency. Surgutneftegaz writes on its page "Interaction with the Small-Numbered Indigenous People of the North" page that their social license to operate ventures are "In order to preserve cultural traditions and integrate local communities" (Взаимоотношения с КМНС). The current system, however, encourages dependency on the companies. Rather than distributing cash and materials through families, companies could support Khant and Mansi businesses that practice herding, hunting, and

fishing, as well as educational endeavors that innovate long-term engineering and energy production that prioritizes people and the environment over profit.

This money could also be used to update pipelines and other out-of-date extraction infrastructure that beget crude oil accidents and spills. In 2013, of the 2,831 oil spill accidents that took place in the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug, 2,684 of them were a result of pipeline corrosion (Шигапов & Гаврилин, 2015). Though the goal is to transition away from oil dependency, the production of oil will continue in the region for decades and should prioritize environmental protection in all the ways that it can.

Part 3: Climate Change in Western Siberia

Siberia is a vast, expansive land characterized by its carbon-rich permafrost, peat and taiga soils, and boreal forests. All of these aspects of Siberia's ecosystem play a crucial role in mitigating the effects of climate change on a global scale, but they are under threat as extraction companies disseminate the region in order to generate profit. Before these oil companies operated in Western Siberia, however, the Khant and Mansi meticulously curated this land, cultivating breeding grounds and taking care of the forests in order to ensure that they could in turn provide for their communities (Forsyth, 1992). Now, oil industry expansion has inhibited Khant and Mansi traditional and cultural education, which would enable the future generations to protect and care for the land. At the same time, the devastation of the natural landscape is creating a positive feedback loop that ultimately plays a role in climate change.

Siberia's landscapes are crucial in controlling the Earth's carbon footprint. Siberian peatlands have been a long-term net carbon dioxide sink since the beginning of the Holocene, meaning that they absorb more carbon than they release, reducing the levels of CO₂ in the environment (Smith, et. al., 2004). In addition to these peatlands are the expansive boreal forests covering the region, which also serve as efficient systems for regulating the amount of carbon in the atmosphere (Pugh, et. al., 2019). Not only are these landscapes essential because of their ability to

Oil extraction in Siberia is an extensive process which begins with the clearing of forests in order to construct extraction facilities in a region. As trees are cut down to make way for the development of oil fields in the region, the planet loses organisms vital to the regeneration of oxygen in the atmosphere. The Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug is home to 70% of Russia's oil fields, about 450 in total (Archer, 2014). Among these fields is the Samotlor field, the largest oil field in Russia and the sixth largest on the planet (Archer,

2014). The field is roughly 1,500 sq. km., meaning that an area more than half the size of Rhode Island had to be cleared in order to begin the process of oil and natural gas extraction (Central Intelligence Agency). This kind of clearcutting has lasting negative impacts on both people and the environment for three main reasons. The first is that Indigenous groups suffer because they don't have access to the plant and animal resources of that landscape anymore, nor can they cultivate them for future use. The second is that this destruction of the forests and peatlands significantly decreases the efficiency of Western Siberia as a carbon sink.

The third aspect concerns the presence of methane below the permafrost of Siberia. Permafrost traps and stores carbon from the atmosphere, and permafrost thaw exposes previously frozen soil organic carbon to microbial degradation to the greenhouse gases carbon dioxide and methane (Heslop, et. al., 2019). This means that the melting of permafrost actually releases more greenhouse gases into the environment—and methane is one of the more powerful greenhouse gases because it has a high heat-trapping ability. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, methane has a Global Warming Potential 28-36 times as strong as that of carbon dioxide (United States Environmental Protection Agency). After oil companies clear and develop land for oil extraction, they drill deep into the Earth in order to discover oil. This drilling melts the permafrost, increasing the levels of methane and carbon released from the area into the atmosphere.

The Arctic is an incredibly fragile landscape, and climate models depict global warming averages in the region as 1.9 times greater than the already-warmer parts of the world (Winton). Protecting Siberia's natural landscapes is crucial in the fight against climate change, and oil industry activities are exacerbating the situation by creating positive feedback loops that increase the amount of carbon release (Fleischer, et. al., 2016). Khant and Mansi people are the best ones to protect and preserve the natural environment in efforts to fight climate change because they have already been doing it for centuries. However, the oil

production that is increasing the amounts of carbon and methane in the atmosphere is also prohibiting the Khant and Mansi people from accessing and thus re-cultivating and revitalizing their ancestral lands.

Conclusion

“Politically and emotionally, different kinds of disaster possess unequal heft. Falling bodies, burning towers, exploding heads, avalanches, volcanoes, and tsunamis have a visceral, eye-catching and page-turning power that tales of slow violence, unfolding over years, decades, even centuries, cannot match. Stories of toxic buildup, massing greenhouse gases, and accelerated species loss due to ravaged habitats are all cataclysmic, but they are scientifically convoluted cataclysms in which casualties are postponed, often for generations” (Nixon 3).

In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon explains that advocates fighting for and protecting the environment and people living in toxic environments are presented with the unique challenge of facilitating a sense of urgency among unaffected people (Nixon 5). This “slow violence” is not enough to outrage people about injustices outside of their sphere because the negative impacts seem so distant and, often, unrelated.

In the case of Western Siberia, however, people must work to understand the key role the physical landscape plays in combating climate change for all people on the planet. Various manifestations of slow violence have marked the region over the centuries. The subjugation of the Indigenous Siberians under the Russians turned into the subjugation of their ancestral lands under oil companies, and together this marginalization creates a positive feedback loop for climate change by increasing the release of greenhouse gases. Spurring people to action is difficult when liberation would require a complete overthrow of the colonial and capitalist system flourishing in oil-producing regions of the world.

Khant and Mansi cultural traditions and customs are incredibly susceptible to environmental degradation and climate change. What practices and heritage did survive centuries of violent and oppressive colonization are now under threat due to climate change.

Exacerbated by humans and oil exploitation in the region over the past 70 years, the global climate crisis has continued the process started by colonizers of eroding Khant and Mansi ways of life, dwellings, religious traditions, clothing, and social customs.

This vulnerability was abused by early Russian colonizers and has been exploited by oppressive powers ever since. Today, Surgutneftegas and other petroleum companies employ this fragility in order to advance their extraction practices. The Khant and Mansi people are aware of this fragility and thus accept oil money that enables the company to obtain their social license to operate in the region. But this fact goes one step further—as the new economic powerhouse of the region, these oil companies can use their money to fund the rewriting of history and the restructuring of the landscape. Monuments such as the one mentioned in the introduction of this essay establish the native groups of western Siberia as backwards and uncivilized, when in reality their interconnected understanding of the world empowered them to develop technology and customs advanced enough to survive centuries in some of the most extreme conditions on the planet.

Understanding historic modes of oppression is key in innovating solutions to the current problems faced by the communities of Western Siberia—but moreover, connecting these histories across borders and continents is crucial in producing a global solidarity movement that reconciles history with the present while planning a fossil-free future. As the Samotlor Oil Field was being developed in 1967 despite its importance as a Khant sacred site, Indigenous Waorani people in Amazonian Ecuador were being forced off their land and into camps in order to pave the way for the formation of an oil industry. The present is connected because the history is connected, and social license to operate is just another tool employed by oil companies to manipulate residents and neighbors into granting consent for practices that go against their personal, environmental, cultural, and social best interests. However, the money associated with obtaining a social license to operate permits extractive industries to

assume a role in shaping a region's social, environmental, and economic characteristics (Panda & Sangle, 2019). Making clear the historical connections and colonial parallels not just in Russia, but throughout the planet could empower movements to strategize liberation together.

Many of the projects funded in the name of obtaining a social license to operate would not be necessary were it not for the re-colonization of the Khant and Mansi people during the 1960s in the name of developing Russian oil markets. Before petroleum was discovered in Western Siberia, Khant and Mansi people were generally left to maintain their traditional lifestyles. Even during mass collectivization efforts and the Kazym War, the Khant and Mansi tributes to the Soviet state typically took the shape of furs, wild game, or fish, which were all byproducts of traditional practices.

This capstone project is in no way a comprehensive or complete analysis of the modern-day role of social license to operate in the most lucrative oil-producing region of Russia. It fails to address all the various roads taken toward obtaining a social license to operate, one of the largest ones being the funding of Indigenous culture projects in primary and secondary schools in the region. It briefly touches on the importance of Siberia in the context of global climate change but only discusses oil field development, not even taking into account the amount of energy expended during extraction procedures and how those levels might contribute to thawing permafrost and escaping methane. This is an ever-expanding study and there are a myriad of questions to address and gaps to fill.

Ultimately, however, the reader should walk away with one thing clear: Siberia is indispensable in the fight against climate change. For centuries before oil-catalyzed industrialization ravaged the region, the Khant and Mansi people cultivated and protected the landscape and honored all living creatures who depended on it. However, the Khant and Mansi have long been under intense assimilation pressures, which have included centuries of

direct political subjugation, forceful inclusion into state economic structures, imposition of Russian language boarding schools, and repeated assaults on traditional religion (Jordan, 2004). Today, bringing them into the dialogue about climate change not just on a national level, but on a global level, is essential if humanity is serious about reversing the impacts of climate change. The blueprints for a fossil-free future are being constructed now, and the only way that these plans can be truly sustainable is if voices that have been marginalized for centuries occupy an active and central role in the dialogue.

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