

KICY Call Letter

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Toll-Free: 1-800-478-5429 email: office@kicy.org website: www.kicy.org June, 2023

Manager's Mic



The Story of KICY includes the story of our Russian language broadcasts. Wherever I share about this



Patty Burchell

ministry people always want to know Luda's story. Many have heard bits and pieces and now, after nearly 20 years in the US, Luda is ready to share more of her journey with the wider KICY family. What follows in this issue is Luda's story, in her own words.

Luda's Journey to Citizenship

Hawaii time is ticking at 2:51 a.m. Even busy Honolulu retains the peacefulness of a quiet island at night. The sound of the waves and moonlight stir within me a yearning for connection. Yesterday, May 10th, 2023, I became a naturalized American citizen. So today is a good day to reflect on the journey and share it with the KICY family.

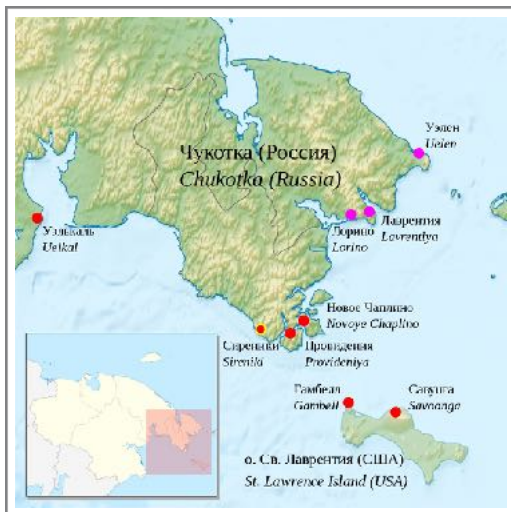
I was born in the USSR during the height of the Cold War in 1977 in the small Yupik village of Sireniki. For us, Yupiget (plural), the Cold War started when a Soviet Airborne regiment base was established in the Yupik territory of Avan, under the leadership of the War hero Rokossovsky (1947-1952). In response, the US closed the border in 1948 with the message that US national security interests outweighed the interests of the local people. As a result, the International Date Line split my Yupik people in half, separating relatives on both sides of the Bering Strait without any communication for the next four decades.

In his first days as USSR leader, Nikita Khrushchev realized how close Chukotka was to Alaska—a territory of capitalistic America. In complete secret, a massive government presence transformed Yupik land into a key nuclear site in the USSR in the late 1950s. Since then, right on the ancient Yupik settlements, the authorities built dugouts, barracks, and bomb shelters, among other structures. The highest points of the slopes became anti-aircraft batteries, and the narrow coastal lines became artillery fields. Hidden tanks surrounded Avan. Such a high number of military installations called for highly qualified personnel. The 1910 census in Avan counted 80 Yupik, and by the 1980s, old Avan territories, Provideniya and Ureliki, totaled 8,000 newcomers.

Soon, integrated Sireniki reflected the USSR and developed into a microcosm of that complex society. The Russians' dominance and superiority over that world were unquestionable, and it remains so today. Udarnik, Sireniki's collective farm, grew in size and strength. Following confiscation of reindeer herds from the nomadic Chukchi, the government expanded the herds in the area. Udarnik hired former owners as reindeer herders and forced them to move to a foreign coastal Yupik village. Traditionally, both



Luda Kinok



Yupik and Chukchi specialized in trapping for winter clothing. Coastal people rendered marine mammal fat for food and for oil lamps. The Soviets commercialized these cultural practices for profit. Collective farms sold oil for manufacturing products on the mainland and exported fur to far larger markets. A weird fusion of Soviet tactics and Arctic traditions developed into a new life style, employing the newly migrated residents from closed Native settlements. Stuck between two worlds, where the dominant culture dictated its own concept of good and bad, hybrids merged, no longer traditional Yupik and never a true Russian. We have learned to adapt and survive.

Another political phase followed the fall of the USSR. Nuclear peace thawed the Cold War but backfired on the Chukotka people. The Government transported nuclear weapons out of our region in 1986. A biblical-scale exodus of all qualified personnel followed. People fled the Soviet Arctic as they ran from concentration camps. It resulted in immediate and total paralysis. People did not see paychecks or pensions for months at a time. Even during brutal Arctic winters, we suffered without any electricity or heat. All transportation stopped between 1999–2001. No planes, trucks, or ships delivered supplies for two years causing severe hunger. Infectious diseases like measles and dysentery were accompanied by starvation. Neither the authorities nor the general public acknowledges it happened. Only boil marks on my body remain as a silent testimony to this recent past.

Russia has 145 million people, and we are the only ethnic group with blood ties to Americans - St. Lawrence Island Yupik. Because of this and the fact that Chukotka, Russia, and Alaska, USA, are only two miles away from each other, our Provideniya region is under constant surveillance. That gave our area a strong governmental presence.

Historical accounts portray the USSR as an evil empire. Those of us who are born into a lack of freedom and continuously lose it

on a daily basis may not recognize our own suffering. Anyone who followed a religion became a target for the KGB in the Soviet Union because of the authoritarian character of communist ideology, which saw religion as a threat. In 1994, when I was 16 years old, barely three years after the fall of the Soviet Union, I answered the call to serve as a missionary and later joined the Living Word church in Provideniya. The church's senior pastor was an American who just moved his family to Provideniya. Religious institutions were and are classified as NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). So, the FSB (the Russian successor to the KGB) sent one agent to each worship service. Although there were no hiccups with the service, we were always conscious of being watched. It drew even more suspicion on my whereabouts.

There was strong resistance from the locals as well. My windows were often broken throughout my missionary service years. I was repeatedly attacked and beaten. So were the other believers in our church. I was dragged on the streets by my feet and mocked.

After serving as a pastor in Sireniki for five years, in 1999, I

moved to another native village in our region, Yanrakinnot. There were two group rapes before I moved there. In both cases, victims did not survive the injuries. Within my first week, a group of men broke through my door. Although the men did not rape me, they did attack me and told me to get out of the village, or I would end up like those two women. I was beaten and sexually assaulted throughout my five years in Yanrakinnot.

I came to Nome, Alaska, in 2004 to volunteer at the Christian radio station that broadcasts to Chukotka, Russia, in Russian. I got a religious worker visa and served for eight years. Every few months, I traveled back home to Russia for a couple of months. If there was no direct flight from Nome to Provideniya, I had to fly to the capital of Chukotka, Anadyr. Each time I would receive a notice to meet with border guards for questioning and be escorted by an FSB officer on the flight from Anadyr to Provideniya.

In 2012 I returned to full-time service at the Living Word church in Provideniya. The border guards notified me to visit the local base for questioning. They asked me what was the purpose of my return home. They questioned me for about two hours. I was happy to be with my family and friends and was ready to live with my whereabouts being monitored. But in 2014, my best friend confessed to me that an FSB officer asked him to report to them every week everything about my day, including meals. My friend visited me every other day and documented everything I did to the FSB.

I needed space to process that summer and came to Nome, Alaska. I shared my story with KICY's general manager Dennis Weidler, and he suggested I request asylum. After a few restless nights, I followed his advice and requested asylum in 2014. KICY



Sireniki, Chukotka, Russia



Sereniki Church, 1995. Luda is in the center, a 16 year old pastor.

and the Covenant Church of Alaska stepped up in the unequal challenge. During that time, political winds were unfavorable to my case. The country made a big effort to decrease the immigration flow. That is why the first attorney we consulted turned down my case, saying I had zero chance of succeeding. Curtis Ivanoff (Superintendent of the Alaska Conference) introduced Dennis and me to an Immigration attorney that attended Covenant church in Anchorage. She also warned of the 50/50 chances but took on the case. I had to wait for the interview for three years. Finally, in July 2017, the USCIS officer granted me asylum, and a year later, I received permanent residency status.

Getting a Green Card allowed me to apply for a job at the Nome Post Office in 2018. I continued to volunteer at KICY spreading the Gospel in the places where I did not get to go. Yes, it is not the same as serving people one on one out there, but KICY service gives most likely the only vital connection with my people.

Soon after I came to Nome for the first time in 2004, I developed a complex PTSD, not only because of the ten years of service for the Kingdom of God, but as child that was born to an alcoholic and brutally abusive household. Nome and KICY helped me to nurture myself back to life.

Coming to the United States after living in Russia was shocking, but that's not what affected me the most. Sadly, it was an introduction to my own Indigenous culture that triggered a true shock. Born in the Soviet Union, I had no clue how detached I was from my origins. Nome came to serve as an Intensive Care Unit for my critically injured sense of Yupik identity. Hearing stories in my native language and sharing laughs and hugs helped me to find my way back to my roots. It was mind-blowing to see how freely Native people can be themselves. They didn't have the "not-Russian-enough" mentality plaguing them.

The sweet people of Nome immediately made me feel at home and included me in traditional activities. I didn't need to speak English to dry my first fish. It felt so right to pick greens, edible roots, and berries. My new friends took me egging (gathering wild eggs) and moose hunting. Nothing made me feel self-conscious. Having a strong emotional and spiritual connection to their land makes them very happy, and I got to experience that sensation firsthand, providing much-needed spiritual balm for my soul.

I felt a deep need to pay respects to my people and started writing. For that reason, I transferred to the Honolulu, HI, Post Office in 2021. The power of technology has allowed me to continue to serve at KICY every day. My apartment has a remote

radio station, and there is no disruption to the Gospel message to Chukotka.

However, FSB is still attempting to intimidate me even now. On April 3, 2023, an FSB agent visited my aunt Tatiana's house and asked whether I was still in contact with my relatives in Russia. They discovered I was writing a book. An FSB officer warned my aunt not to let me publish anything critical of Russia, particularly regarding the war in Ukraine. They also brought my uncle Pavel to the Sireniki border patrol station to ask about my life in the United States.

It took me nearly twenty years to find courage and words even just to share this little article. God has walked with me through it all. Receiving US citizenship is a monumental event of my life! Although the journey of healing and rediscovery continues, I am so relieved I can take my running shoes off and rest peacefully. He gives strength to the weary.

Thank you KICY and KICY family for fighting my battles with me and for me. It is one life that has been spared. I am grateful and humbled. Life only begins.

Truly yours,

Luda Kinok.



Yanrakinnot, Chukotka 1999 or 2000, Christmas Candlelight Service

Memorials

In April and May, we received memorials in the name of:

David Buchanan
Edward Lattimore, Jr.
Grant Gulseth
Carol C. Nelson
Rodger Nelson
JoAnne Smit
James Whede

Thank you for remembering a loved one with your gift.

PLEASE NOTE!

-May Income-

\$35,974.14

-May Budget-

\$29,465.48

-May Expenses-

\$36,370.38

Includes Sales & Programs but not designated funds



Arctic Broadcasting Association is an affiliated corporation of the Evangelical Covenant Church.



AM-850 & ICY 100.3 FM

P.O. Box 820

Nome, Alaska 99762

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Welcome, Stuart Joseph

I'm Stuart Joseph, and I'm going to be volunteering for the next year up here in Nome. I first heard about this opportunity to serve through the grapevine after Patty visited my church late last year for a Salmon Dinner in my home town of Modesto, California. When the mission opportunity was described to me I was instantly intrigued. I love technology, especially in forms like Radio and other sorts of



telecommunications, and I was excited to be able to put that passion to work serving the LORD.

I've been in Nome for almost a week now, and it's quite an intriguing little town. I've started to read a bit about its Gold Rush history, and I'm hoping that I'll be able to search the library sometime in the future to see what local historical accounts they have there that I can go over. This is also probably the most time I've ever spent near an ocean in my life, which is very exciting. I hear it's even more impressive when it's thawed.