

# NOMAD Fieldnews

Edition 1

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**Picture 1.** The 2007 Festival of the North at its opening: youngsters from Lovozero are presenting a dance program. Photo: Vladislava Vladimirova.

The field team of the NOMAD Expedition left for Murmansk Region on 10 March and is now preparing for the first field trip to Belaia Golovka Corral Base – approx. 60 kms to the southeast of Lovozero. The village of Lovozero, located in the middle part of the Kola Peninsula, is a municipal center, with some 3 000 residents. The administrative office of “Tundra” reindeer herding cooperative (SKhPK “Tundra”) is located here, as well as the homes and families of the reindeer herders, who work for it.

The beginning of the Expedition was planned to coincide with an important local event: the Festival of the North (*Prazdnik Severa*), held locally as the reindeer herders’ professional holiday since 1934.

On this day, the municipal administration as well as that of the reindeer herding cooperatives of Lovozero and Krasnoshchel’e, traditionally organize a festive event with official speeches, choir performances and reindeer draft team races. Villagers would take part in a variety of other “ethnic sport” competitions, to be followed by prize giving at the House of Culture on the next day. The competitions have always been a theme of importance and pride for the employees in the reindeer herding brigades of “Tundra” and Krasnoshchel’e’s “Olenevod”.



**Picture 2.** One of the few reindeer-pulled sledges, exhibited at the Festival, belonged to Professional School N26 in Lovozero, and was under the care of the retired reindeer herder and a long-time winner of the reindeer-sledge races Ivan Ivanich Chuprov. Photo: Vladislava Vladimirova.

From its very start NOMAD encounters a situation of heightened anthropological interest and importance. For the first time in its history of over seventy years, the two reindeer herding enterprises of the Kola Peninsula – “Tundra” and “Olenevod” – administration and herders alike, have decided to boycott the event and not take part in the races.

The herders are said to be protesting against measures by regional offices in Murmansk who claim to have controlling rights over the pastures as well as the wild deer herd of the Peninsula. The bone of contention seems to be the status of unmarked deer claimed by *Rossel'khoznadzor* to be treated as wild deer. Local hunters are of the opinion that an unusually high number of hunting licenses for wild deer have been issued during the past hunting season.



**Picture 3.** Active reindeer herders, instead of driving their sledges in elaborately decorated traditional costumes, were watching the opening program from the side. On the picture, reindeer herders from one of the brigades of “Tundra” discuss the current situation with the NOMAD research team. Photo: Vladislava Vladimirova.

On top of it all, eight head of cooperative deer had been slaughtered illegally in the vicinity of the village just on the eve of the Festival. A serious question arises before the reindeer herders: whether to go back to close contact with the herd “as our grandfathers did”, or leave reindeer herding entirely. Thus, we are inclined to suggest that the period which began roughly with the onset of economic reforms (1991/1992) and was reflected in reindeer herding with allowing an unlimited number of deer for private ownership, has come to a close. What is to follow is as yet to be seen and possibly the Expedition may see the first signs of adaptation to the new conditions. For the moment local opinion is focused on criticizing overarching Murmansk based authorities for bending to economic interests and neglecting the social, economic, and cultural role of Lovozero Raion reindeer herding.



**Picture 4.** One of the usual attractions of the Festival, the produce of the local bakery, could not compensate for the absence of active engagement of reindeer herders with the event, as reindeer are the emblematic feature of the holiday. Photo: Vladislava Vladimirova.