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Primitive and Aboriginal Dog Society

Dear Members of the Preservation of the Primitive Aboriginal Dog Society and readers of our Newsletter

In this issue we publish the next three articles presented at the first international conference "Aboriginal Breeds of Dogs as Elements of Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage of Humankind" held in Almaty, Kazakhstan in September 2007: review article by Konstantin and Anna Plakhov, review article by L. S. Bogoslovskaya and article about the Tuva Ovcharka by I. A. Zakharov, S. N. Kashtanov and S. V. Kashtanova. We have also added an article recently sent to us by Sue Hamilton about the Inuit Sled Dog and the remarkable work on the preservation of this breed in Canada and Greenland.

Sincerely yours,
Curator of PADS, Vladimir Beregovoy

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ABORIGINAL DOG BREEDS AS FULL VALUE ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY AND THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE PEOPLES OF SOUTHWESTERN ASIA

K. N. Plakhov, A. S. Plakhova and M. Kh. Eleusizov
(translation from Russian by Vladimir Beregovoy, editor of the English text is Sir Terence Clark)

ABORIGINAL BREEDS IN THE MODERN WORLD

L. S. Bogoslovskaya
Institute of Heritage, Moscow, Russia
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TUVA OVCHARKA
(Preservation of disappearing aboriginal population)

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THE INUIT SLED DOG

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ABORIGINAL DOG BREEDS AS FULL VALUE ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY AND THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE PEOPLES OF SOUTHWESTERN ASIA

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The investigation and preservation of the genetic diversity of animal world should cover both species of wild animals and breeds of domesticated animals. The latter are most vulnerable and fragile, because for the preservation of wild animals it often enough just leaving them alone, whereas the preservation of domesticated animals without the qualified intervention of humans is virtually impossible.

In reality, at a certain stage of societal development, problems of preserving domesticated breeds remain outside the interests of government and this actually threatens them with extinction.

For the preservation of wild animals, we set aside protected territories, their existence is protected by laws for the animal world and in critical cases they are put on the list of endangered species. Domesticated animals, which entirely depend on humans, are totally defenseless. Those breeds that are important for human consumption are somewhat more secure. Non-productive breeds are in the worst situation. To zoologists, aboriginal breeds, which were created during many centuries under the influence of artificial and natural selection, are most interesting. Within their natural range, they were the property of ethnic groups of people, who had developed them and "passed them on through generations as inheritance" and from one ethnos to another one. They can be found only in small regions or widely distributed, remaining practically unchanged evolutionarily or changed under changing conditions of life and selection.

Under modern conditions, as a result of several factors, modern "civilization dissolves ancient customs, deprives their traditional way of life under harsh natural conditions, changes their life style, culture and knowledge of nature" (Chudinov, 1991).

In the process, we observe processes of the abandonment of authentic historical and cultural values and a shift towards so-called "general values". Many nations, joining the world community and globalization, go through the stage of refusing their own historical cultural values, especially when they shift to a western life style. In this process, only a few people are carrying out cultural work with aboriginal breeds, whereas the majority of the population becomes merely consumers. This is a dangerous period, when the attributes of ancient culture are being lost and aboriginal breeds of animals are particularly endangered, because they need the more constant participation of humans than any other artifacts. Once lost, they cannot be returned.

On the other hand, why preserve aboriginal breeds, especially dogs? There are many cultured pedigree breeds to replace them. Why, for example, spend money from the budget of the Kazakhstan Republic for the difficult restoration of such breeds as the Tazy and Tobet, when it would be easier just to buy foreign dogs to serve in government organizations (for example, the Belgian Malinois and the German Shepherd Dog, as is currently done)? At the same time we would be supporting these worldwide popular breeds. On the one hand, the antiquity of aboriginal breeds is confirmed by artifacts; scientists estimate their age in hundreds and even thousands of years. On the other hand, during their entire history, they were bred by people's (unconscious) selection, without pedigree records, stud books, dog shows and breed standards. In the process, they were subject to artificial as well as natural selection in equal proportions. As a result, their entire past history "does not give them a right" to be accepted officially. It is even more so, because it seems unnecessary. In utilitarian qualities they are not as good as pedigreed breeds created with the help of modern scientific methods of selection. Even in such a case with aboriginal breeds, which possess qualities like adaptation to local climate and resistance to diseases that could be used as genetic material for the improvement of pedigree breeds or for the development of new breeds, they are still not recognized. Speaking of dogs, this condemns them to extinction, because they become uninteresting not only to international cynologic organizations, but also to local canine clubs.

Aboriginal breeds of dogs can be divided into the following groups:

Extinct.

Surviving until the present.

The second group can be further subdivided into:

Breeds with pedigree versions (Saluki, Afghan Hounds, Central Asian Ovcharkas, West Siberian Laika, East Siberian Laika, Russo-European Laika, etc.).

Breeds without recognition as purebreds (Tazy and Taigan).

Besides this, we distinguish breeds or groups of breeds with wide or restricted distribution ranges, including different types of dogs belonging to different ethnic groups. Where an aboriginal breed has a pedigree version, a certain part of its gene pool can be preserved as a source for replenishment of the pedigree stock to avoid genetic isolation and inbreeding. Where an aboriginal breed does not have a pedigree version, it should be preserved as whole, as a part of the breed gene pool of the planet.

Traditionally, Southwestern Asia in official cynological literature is considered poor in authentic aboriginal dogs. However, this is surprising in view of some unexpected discoveries. Unfortunately, there is little evidence what kinds of breeds were evolved from these dogs, because many drawings, rock paintings and written records have been destroyed after Islam spread over the region. Another setback results from the fact that data about dogs are scarce and descriptions of the results of archeological excavations did not pay proper attention to dogs, as they were not considered important productive animals. At best, they were simply named "dogs". Numerous petroglyphs found in Kazakhstan have never been studied and await a detailed investigation. Besides, a precise dating is important. Among the rock painted galleries, there are images of different epochs. The oldest images of sighthounds dated to 9500 BC are found in the Belt cave (Iran) (Blokhin et al. 2001). In one work of a noted archeologist of Kazakhstan, A. G. Medoev, "Engravings on Rocks" (1979), a petroglyph from the lower Paleolithic (XII-X millennia BC, Almaty Province, Kazakhstan) shows a group of animals, two Bos primigenius and four Capra aegagrus followed by two dogs, one of which is similar to the Tazy and the other one wolf-like. The static postures of the animals indicate that this is not a hunting scene, but rather a movement of domesticated animals. Possibly this is one of the oldest images of dogs. Our analysis showed that in rock paintings in different parts of Kazakhstan, belonging to the first chronological period of the history of Central Asia (Stone, Bronze and early Iron Age), images of hunting and livestock guarding dogs of at least five different types occur: spitz-like, dachshund-like, sighthounds, livestock guarding dogs and scent hounds (Plakhov and Plakhova, 2005).

In the fifth chronological period (XVI-XIX centuries) the final change and impoverishment of the diversity of dogs in Central Asia took place. By the end of this period the majority of ancient breeds disappear, leaving only different varieties of sheep guarding dogs and Tazy sighthounds, which are becoming increasingly popular. Thus, L. P. Sabaneev (edition of 1986) described two breeds of dogs discovered in 1877 by scientists of the expedition of the Turkestan Society of Lovers of Natural History in Pamir. One of them is the Javzy, an Asian longhaired bird dog, and the Karateginka, an Asian mountain falconry dog. V. A. Obruchev (1955) mentions the Kalmyk guard dog similar to the Spitz, which occurred in the XIX century in northwestern China. M. G. Dmitrieva-Sulima (1911, edition of 2003), a leading Laika specialist in Russia of that time, wrote about "sighthound-like Laika of the Kirghiz (Kazakhs). Unfortunately, there no names or memories were left about this breed. Her brief description amazingly resembles the stylish images of Spitz-like dogs in the petroglyphs of Southern Kazakhstan dated by archaeologists to 2.5-3 thousand years ago. All these breeds became completely extinct in the first half of the XXth century. Besides the Turkmen Tazy and the Kyrgyz Tazy, L. P. Sabaneev (1964) described the Khivan Tazy, which also did not survive.

Reviewing literature describing the life of the peoples of Central Asia of different periods of time, we found one more breed of dog from Uzbekistan, which is not known anywhere else. This is the Gurdji found in the Surkhandarya Province and Bukhara Province (Sultanov, 1939; Salikhbaev, 1939).

The existence of aboriginal breeds has always been closely tied with fate of the peoples that developed them. A change of religion and the relocation or disappearance of ethnic groups inevitably results in the extinction or transformation of their animals. This process has been going on for centuries and millennia and it is part of the social and biological evolution of man. At present, starting from the early XXth century, the Javzy, Karateginka, Gurdji, Kalmyk Laika and Kazakh Laika have become extinct. Perhaps other dog breeds of Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Northwestern China have also become extinct without any evidence or descriptions remaining. We can only guess their past existence simply because no tribe or ethnic group of the planet existed without their own dogs and sometimes other domesticated animals. All those breeds were lost and no drawings or photographs, except the sketchy descriptions cited above, remain (Plakhov and Plakhova, 2005).

At present, among all the diverse aboriginal dog breeds of Southwestern Asia and Kazakhstan, the following kinds of dogs still exist: the eastern type of Tazy, among which two major varieties are known, the Turkmen Tazy and the Kazakh Tazy. Among the Kazakh Tazy, there are three types: steppe, smooth and basic. Other breeds are the Kyrgyz Taigan and livestock guarding dogs of several types called kopek and kopek-si but most often alabai in Turkmenistan; in Tajikistan – dakhtarma, in Uzbekistan – kopek and Kazakh-it and in Kazakhstan they are called tobet-it, alapar-it and arab-it. By using dogs from Turkmenistan and partly from

Tajikistan in the 1930s, a breed called the Central Asian Ovcharka was created. It is also being bred in other countries. Moreover, there are numerous types of mixes, which in different regions have special names, such as duregei (drok, durek, kain and kain-kaptal), dubara, etc.

The Tazy and Taigan eastern sighthounds are the oldest dog breeds used for thrilling hunting on horseback for hares, foxes, saiga antelope and other game. The number of Tazys within their aboriginal range of distribution has declined rapidly. Only single individuals were found in Tajikistan and in the Uigur National Province, China; in the early 1980s, 80-100 dogs were in Turkmenistan (Rustamov and Atamuradov, 1986), but only 10-20 Tazy remain in the hands of lovers of this breed in the National Club of Falconers of Turkmenistan. In Kyrgyzstan, about 50-100 dogs, which conform to the Tazy standard, remain and not more of them remain in Uzbekistan; in Karakalpakia they do not exist any more. In Kazakhstan, in late 1980s, there were 800-1000 relatively pure Tazys, but at the present time their total number is 100-150 dogs. The majority of their owners are members of the Purebred Hunting Dogs Club and its regional branches.

Another breed is the Kyrgyz Taigan, another aboriginal breed related to the aboriginal Afghan Hound (Bakhmul). It was wide distributed in the mountains of Southwestern Asia, in the Pamirs and the Tian-Shan Mountains. At present, it actually does not occur in Tajikistan and in Kyrgyzstan, according to Almaz Kurmankulov, Chairman of the National Society of Kyrgyzstan for the Preservation of the Taigan, only 100 purebred specimens remain. In Kazakhstan, in several regions of Shymkent, Zhambyl and Almaty Provinces there are about 100 Taigans and their mixes with Tazys of different generations.

The extinction of southern Asian dog breeds was caused by social and economic changes, such as revolution and hunger during the 1930s, the transition from the nomadic to the settled way of life, the loss of traditions, the reduction of hunting grounds, changes in the hunting industry and its role in the economy and the decline of sheep breeding, and by biological factors, such as the decline of populations of game species, the import of other breeds of dogs, new contagious diseases and high mortality among puppies, especially in densely populated regions, anti rabies measures, rodent control, use of poison baits against wolves, foxes and other animals, mixing with other breeds, inbreeding and especially killing female puppies.

The disappearance of livestock guarding dogs was also accelerated by using them in organized dogfights. Livestock herding dogs and eastern sighthounds survived for centuries together with people droughts, invasions, robbers and wolves, successfully defended livestock and property (livestock guarding dogs) and caught game for food (Tazy). The dogs helped people unconditionally and often risked and gave their lives. They became part of the history, traditions and culture of people. Popular proverbs like “The dog is one of the seen riches”, “The dog is more important than sheep” emphasize the role of dogs in the life of the Kazakh people.

Dogs have endured the hardships of the past century, hunger in the 1930s and WWII, but now, in the time of democratization, political independence and the restoration of forgotten historical values, they have been abandoned by those people for which they have lived (Plakhov and Plakhova, 2005).

The solution of the problem of preserving aboriginal breeds of dogs under modern conditions inevitably leads to the transition from unconscious methods of breeding to pedigree breeding. When pursuing this goal, we are faced by the following tasks (Shereshevsky, 1962):

“1. Cleanse such breeds from the consequences of interbreeding and crossbreeding with different types and do not allow it to happen again.

2. Decisively refuse and breed out traits of mixed breeding.

3. Raise the level of purity of the pedigree population, gradually getting rid of animals of unknown origin and achieve a breeding stock consisting of animals with four generation pedigrees, which should prevent the possibility of further genetic segregation.

4. Improve the conformation of breeds being formed and continue work for fixing certain coat colors.

5. Continue selection and enhance and fix traits distinguishing one breed from another (type of body structure, size, shape of head, etc.).

Besides this, it is important to expand the range and to create new centers of breeding and formation of pure breeds.”

Under the economic and social conditions existing in countries that were republics of the former Soviet Union, the preservation and rebirth of aboriginal breeds is impossible without the support of the government. This is particularly important because the role of dogs in different areas of state activity is constantly growing.

Border security, the Customs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Committee for Extraordinary Situations constantly need canine assistance. The role of dogs as protectors of property is priceless. Livestock guarding dogs are the only reliable form of protection against wolves, which cause quite substantial damage to livestock in Kazakhstan. The dog is a valuable assistant at hunting, completely removing the risk of losing an injured animal. Finally the dog is a friend and helper at home, helping people to find relief from nervous stress.

Despite all this, our state does not recognize dog breeding as part of agriculture, considering it as "non productive animal breeding". As a result, in our colleges, there is no special education in cynology. However, it is a pleasure to inform you that the Kazakh National University has become a leader in this direction. In 2007, they graduated the first students specialized in the areas of cynology and felinology Cynology is not listed in the state catalogue of professions and breeding of dogs in the country is left to non professional public organizations, which care more about profit than about breeding better dogs. As a result, with the increased need for purebred dogs by different government agencies, the existing cynological organizations cannot keep up with the demand. We do not have a standardized system of preparing qualified specialists in cynology at all levels. Our veterinary and agriculture do not pay attention to dogs, there is no reliable health care for dogs and veterinary preparations for dogs and cats are not manufactured in the country.

How to stop the extinction of our dog breeds? If we do not do it, who will? First of all, we should remember that aboriginal dog breeds (as well as other animals) are covered by the Convention "about biological Diversity (Rio de Janeiro, June 5, 1992), … "Domesticated and cultivated species". This Convention was accepted by the Kazakhstan Republic, 19.08.1994, No. 918. It was also signed by 149 other countries. Aboriginal breeds of dogs, as well as other aboriginal breeds of animals, are elements of biodiversity (agricultural biodiversity) of the planet and they need to be preserved for future generations. The Convention about preserving biodiversity recognizes that people of all countries are responsible for preserving each element of biodiversity. Therefore, organized actions for the preservation of aboriginal breeds of dogs in the countries of their original distribution under condition of the participation of governments are very important. This includes the following:

- investigation of their present situation and conducting a survey of aboriginal breeds.
- popularization of aboriginal breeds among the local population.
- creation of centers of breeding (kennels).
- formation of new purebred breeding centers in different regions of the country.

Furthermore, it is necessary to unite efforts to achieve international recognition of aboriginal breeds of dogs. We are speaking of the international right of every country or people to have its own aboriginal breeds of domesticated animals, including dogs. This follows from the right of nations to self-determination, according to International Pacts on "economic, social and cultural rights", New York, December 16, 1966 and Civil and Political Rights, New York, December 16, 1966:

«1. All people have the right to self-determination. They are free to determine their own political status and secure their own economic, social and cultural development.

2. All people, pursuing their goals are free to manage their natural resources unabridged by any obligations within the framework of international economic cooperation based on the principles of mutual interests and rights. Under no circumstances, can any nation be deprived of the sources of its existence.

3. All participating nations of this Pact, including those responsible for governing autonomous and subordinate territories, should encourage responsibility and respect for these rights, according to the laws of UN".

A key element of measures for preserving aboriginal breeds of dogs is their recognition. On the one hand, these breeds exist and are very old, being satellites of their people, which are confirmed by different methods and artifacts. On the other hand, they are not recognized by international and national organizations, including the home countries of the breeds. Actually, they do exist, but by law they do not exist.

Thus, by not recognizing aboriginal breeds of dogs, the FCI, being the leading cynological organization, as well as other cynological organizations, intentionally or not, encourage not only the termination of work with them, but also the reduction of the biodiversity of the planet. This occurs, despite 145 countries having signed the Convention on the preservation of biodiversity, including countries that are members of the FCI. Moreover, in this case, the FCI denies the countries of the original distribution of aboriginal dogs their lawful rights for cultural development, which are affirmed in international pacts.

I would like to urge all participants of the Conference to address the governments of their countries with an appropriate appeal. Problems associated with aboriginal breeds of dogs are the same in all countries of their origin. These are: the rapid decline in populations, intensive interbreeding with cultured breeds and the neglect of local people to breed aboriginal dogs, replacing them with pedigree breeds. It is important that everyone should realize that the preservation of aboriginal dogs is not a whim of a handful of dog nuts. Our Conference is representative enough, because of the qualifications of the participants and the importance of the discussed problems and we should call to unite efforts directed to the preservation of all aboriginal breeds, including dogs. They are all covered by the International Convention on the preservation of biodiversity. Moreover, these breeds, being living monuments of centuries old civilizations, must be preserved therefore like material objects of human culture. For this purpose, we need not only to organize purposeful breeding, keeping, etc., but also unite efforts of international organizations directed towards their preservation. The role of the FCI, a leading international cynological

organization, should be particularly important, because the international recognition of breeds depends on it. Stiff requirements for the presentation of "new" breeds deny many countries the possibility of working with their aboriginal breeds of dogs. How to discuss "new" aboriginal breeds, if their ancient origins are confirmed by numerous artifacts? In such a case, it makes sense to organize work with aboriginal breeds by using a model accepted in IUCN (International Union of Conservation of Nature) for working with rare endangered species:

Open an additional group of dog breeds, for example Group 11 FCI -aboriginal breeds.

Include in this group aboriginal breeds, offered by cynological organizations or by specialists.

Appoint a curator (or a group of curators) for each such breed, which would be responsible for its management, such as putting together and amending breed standards, organizing and conducting pedigree work, dogs shows and field trials.

As soon as the requirements of the FCI for registering a new breed are met, the aboriginal breed would be transferred from group 11 into one of the 10 other groups, according to established classifications.

The disappearance of any breed means not only a loss of biodiversity of the planet, but also a loss of national heritage, because each of them is a living monument of the culture and civilization of people, which created it and preserved it until the present. This is a monument to thousands of years of development and efforts of hundreds of generations of dog breeders. We have no right to allow the extinction of even one breed of domesticated animal. Mahatma Gandy wrote: The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be well measured by how it treats its animals."

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ABORIGINAL BREEDS IN THE MODERN WORLD

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At present, the problem of preserving aboriginal and local breeds of animals, including dogs, is recognized by the world community as one of the important directions of preserving the cultural and natural heritage of our planet. Starting from 1974, two structures of the UN, the Program on the Environment (UNEP) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) jointly run several projects in this direction. The common interest in investigating and preserving domesticated animals is determined by the following:

1. Aboriginal and local breeds are parts of the biological diversity of the Earth, in other words, they belong to the common heritage of humankind.

2. Aboriginal breeds are always associated with ancient cultural traditions of people. To some ethnic groups, these animals are part of religious cults, often determining the peculiarities of their spiritual world and national distinction (dog, horse, reindeer and some breeds of cattle).

3. In particularly endangered ecological communities, and millennia genetic material well adapted for centuries and represented by gene pools of aboriginal and local breeds cannot be replaced by any breeds of domesticated animals from other regions.

In cases where a gene pool is preserved for a long period under local conditions, it becomes a natural resource, not less valuable, than coal, oil, gold, etc. In our country, such gene pools are in the Central Asian Ovcharkas - livestock guarding dogs, northern sled dogs, hunting and reindeer herding Laikas, numerous local breeds of horses, cattle and poultry.

A noted Soviet geneticist, A. S. Serebrovsky, indicated two processes that change the composition of a gene pool: selection (natural and artificial selection) that tends to eliminate some genes and to multiply other genes and to create new genes. A gene pool is considered as a complex of hereditary factors, or set of genes and their alleles, which determine basic characteristics and qualities of a breed.

The gene pool of any species of domesticated animals is determined by the diversity of existing breeds, strains and individual animals, which fit the idea of "genetic resources".

Darwin divided breeds of domesticated animals into artificial and natural. The first ones were developed as a result of systematic deliberate selection. They often have an unnatural appearance and without supporting selection are prone to loose their new traits, returning to their ancestral and spontaneous variation.

Natural breeds of domesticated animals are ancient breeds, preserving the appearance of their ancestral forms and possessing fewer non-functional characteristics of domestication. They are optimally adapted to the environment under conditions of poor feeding and harsh living. They are hardy and resistant to local diseases. Natural breeds with large ranges of distribution consist as a rule as a rule of smaller groups within the breed, which may differ noticeably in appearance and purpose.

At present, natural breeds occur in regions little changed by civilization, although in the past they were distributed everywhere and existed in all European countries.

Intentional selection rarely influenced them, most often it was unconscious selection and natural selection, because such animals take care of themselves and adapt actively to the environment, even to slight differences in it.

Aboriginal dogs represent a considerable part of natural breeds. In Russia, the Arctic and northern hunting and reindeer herding Laikas, Caucasian and Central Asian Ovcharkas belong here.

The Central Asian Ovcharka's distribution range includes different landscape zones: steppe, semi-deserts, mountain foothills and the mountains of Central Asia to the western shores of the Caspian Sea. This breed is one of the oldest on Earth, several thousands of years old. During its long history, the Central Asian Ovcharka was passed from one livestock-keeping people to another, while retaining its appearance and behavior, which indicates the adaptability, stability and resilience of the breed's gene pool. Modern dog breeders should be particularly careful when designing breeding programs for these dogs under city conditions and pay more attention to their preservation in their natural regions in Russia.

Thus, in my opinion, attempts at dividing the Central Asian Ovcharka into several breeds, based on peculiarities of coat color, some body structure traits and political borders, should be evaluated with a grain of skepticism. This would translate into the fragmentation of the original gene pool and impoverish it genetically, with subsequent detrimental effects on the immune and nervous system of the breed at large.

Specialists, working on aboriginal breeds on the territories of the former Soviet Union, should start with a survey of these breeds, mapping the historical and contemporary ranges of their breed and describing how each breed is used. This would help to find out the following:

(1) What remains; and the possibility of sustainably breeding the breed.

(2) The morphological structure of the breed's population, in other words its intra population variation.

(3) The practical demand for the breed, because it is hard to preserve any breed, if it had lost its economic purpose.

In conclusion, it is necessary to pay attention to ethical principles in preserving aboriginal breeds of dogs. It is important to know more about each breed that has been created by ancient peoples and then passed from hand to hand to other people. Our task is to save aboriginal breeds of dogs, as well as other domesticated animals, for future generations as unique objects of the Earth's cultural heritage.

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TUVA OVCHARKA
(Preservation of disappearing aboriginal population)

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During expeditions in hard to reach mountain regions of Tuva, we discovered sporadically single dogs, which local people called Tuva Ovcharka ("kadarchy it" – "guard dog"). We became interested in the origin and history of herding dogs of Tuva and collected information about Tuva Ovcharkas. Quite expressive and, as it appeared, a precise description of this dog was found in shaman song:

You are faithful to your master.
You lie on the doorstep, standing guard over the yurt.
You, dog, a faithful keeper of the camp of nomads,
Are on guard over the herd of domestic cattle.
You lie low in hiding where a wolf could approach by path.
Once you perceive a rustle, you nod your head and bark.
You lie there soundly, blocking the way of misfortune with your body...
The shaggy nest of your tail stands in magnificent splendor,
The earrings in your ear are marvelous and good to look at.
Bay dog, your hair is dark and velvety. [1].

In Tuva, only 40-50 years ago, Tuva Ovcharkas were very common. Old timers recall that in the past, at each nomad camp, dogs of three types could be seen.

First, it was that type of very big dog with matted hairs on the tail, abdomen and ears described in the Shaman's hymn. A dog of this kind of dogs was usually called "Ezir" (Kite) and "Tas" (Vultur). They were always used within nomad camps, had very low voice and guarded the camp and everything on its territory. This was particularly distinct at night, when dogs circled around borders of the camp. In the morning, they could be often seen in hills overlooking around the camp. During the same time, dogs of two other types were quietly sleeping near the yurt.

Second, there were herding dogs, which were also big similar to mastiff dogs with red spots above eyes ("four-eyed" dogs), with black and tan pattern covering abdomen, legs and cheeks. They were always called "Kostuk" and "Cherlikpen"

At last, light built and agile hunting dogs with tails curving over the back, white on chest on neck ("Moinaks") and with not very long hair. They were often called bird names, such as "Khartyga" (Falcon) or "Ezir" (Kite). If someone was approaching the camp, they met the stranger together with other dogs and followed him far away from the camp. During this time, big dogs of the first type remained at the border of the protected territory. To follow master riding on horseback was a privilege of only hunting dogs.

Each of the types of dogs had its own functional purpose. Price for good puppies born out of well known working parents was measured in rams and artfully designed bridles.

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Now, the Tuva Ovcharka almost disappeared, but it still can be found on remote grazing lands, in the mountains. There were several circumstances, which contributed in their reduction nearly to a degree of extinction.

In late 50th of 20th Century, after Tuva was united with USSR, nomadic population was forcibly relocated in villages. Under these conditions, dogs from several camps were gathered on the limited area and became overcrowded. They were killed regardless of their unique qualities. In selsovets (local governments) there was a plan for extermination of dogs. Such measures resulted in drastic reduction of number of aboriginal dogs and loss of most valuable breeding stock.

Appearance of small mixed origin dogs brought from different cities of Russia also played their detrimental role. Herdsmen castrated their males so they would not run too far from the camp. Chances of birth of purebred puppies became very low. Thieves poison well working dogs with lures formerly used for poisoning wolves.

Tuva ovcharkas, similarly to Central Asian Ovcharkas, live a semi wild way of life and fend for themselves, catching marmots, ground squirrels and other small mammals. Because of poor diet, genetically determined traits like big size and robust body complexion cannot develop in full. Therefore, at present time, in Tuva, dogs are predominately of intermediate type. General decline of aboriginal dogs also contributed in this and, therefore, it became very difficult to select a breeding pair of the same type dogs for producing desirable type offspring.

Besides, Tuva Ovcharka give birth to puppies only one time per year and usually in the most difficult time, in December- February. Number of puppies per litter usually does not exceed 4-5 and usually only one-two puppies live until summer.

At present, Tuva Ovcharkas sufficiently large (males are over 65 cm at withers), well built, proportionally developed, active and with very stable nervous system dogs [2, 3]. They are outgoing with their owners, but mistrustful with strangers, very alert alarm dogs and guard dogs.

Aboriginal herding dogs of Tuva have a peculiar appearance: black or black and tan are coat colors valued traditionally, but other coat colors also exist; matted hair behind ears and on tail forms “earrings” and “plates” or “tassels”, and white markings on neck, chest, legs and tip of tail.

Hair of the Tuva Ovcharka is unique and allows the dog to endure changes of temperature from plus 40˚ to minus 50˚ Celsius. It consists of silky, but stiff guard hair and very thin, soft and dense undercoat. The hair almost does not require any maintenance.

On the neck and withers, guard hairs form mane and

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on hind legs and tail hairs form feathering, which are most developed in males.

This kind of coatmost likely had been developed, because Tuva Ovcharkas for centuries live outside, under conditions of sharply continental climate of high mountains. Owners never let their dogs inside urta or house even in bitter cold, or soaking rain. Therefore, this kind of coat saves dogs not only from cold, but also from overheating and it is water repellent. It is enough to shake up and the dog is dry.

However, Tuva Ovcharkas are attractive not only because of their appearance. They are intelligent and can be trained, well controllable, moderately aggressive to strangers and animals. They combine best qualities of guarding dog.

Tuva Ovcharkas are characterized by a strong type of nervous system. They are calm and balanced under any conditions, alert, but do not display excessive aggressiveness, well adaptable to any environment, in overcrowded conditions in presence of people and animals, long travel in a car or airplane, life inside the apartment, kennel or dacha.

The Tuva Ovhcarka is a result of many centuries' long people's selection; this is a versatile guard dog for a great variety of conditions of life. When on duty, the dogs are constantly watchful, even when it seems that they sleep, and momentarily react, when new people or animals sow up. Under normal conditions, they quickly relax and eagerly play with house animals and the owner.

Origin of this dog is associated with history of breeding yaks. Breeding of yaks came in Mongolia from Tibet, in Tuva Republic and in Altai. Dogs guarding livestock came together with yak herds; these dogs were ancestors of Tibetan Mastifs and aboriginal dogs guarding herds in regions listed above.

When we, authors of this paper, became convinced that Tuva Ovcharka as a breed (speaking more precisely, local population or breed group, because the breed have never been described until now, just like many aboriginal dogs, have never been pedigreed) is threatened by a complete extinction, we set up a goal to find typical specimens suitable for breeding, bring them to Moscow, breed them and, if conditions would be favorable, return "kadarchy it" to their historical home country.

What we managed to accomplish for recent 10 years? With assistance of students and workers of Tuva State University, we found a region, where Tuva Ovcharka still survived. It was Mongun-Taiga Kozhuun, in southwest of Tuva, at the border with Mongolia and Altai Republic. As a result of expeditions and assistance of our Tuva colleagues, we brought several dogs in Moscow. We also found another place, where Tuva Ovcharkas of similar type were found. It was Kosh-Agach District of Altai Republic, at the border with Tuva.

Based on foundation stock imported from one of these two regions, we created a kennel "Mongun-Taiga" registered in 2001, in Union of Cynological Organizations of Russia (SKOP in Russian) as a kennel for breeding the Tuva Ovcharka. The first breed standard was put together.

At major dog shows in Moscow and Podmoskovye, during recent years, we showed 17 dogs. Two males imported from Tuva, Mugur (7 years old) and Tyrgak (4 years old) got titles "Champion of Russia" [4].

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Now, we got the second generation of Tuva Ovcharka born in Moscow. Total number of Tuva Ovcharkas living in Moscow and Moscow Province is 19 adults and 9 puppies, and in other cities in Russia 6 dogs and one puppy in Belorussia.

Mangu Taiga Kennel has a website www.mongun.e-dog.ru, which contains basic information about the Tuva Ovcharka, the kennel and dog shows, in which our dogs were shown. Great numbers of photographs show aboriginal Tuva Ovcharkas in Tuva and those of Moscow breeding. A separate part of it is dedicated to responses of Moscow owners about their pets from Tuva.

Participation in international dog shows conducted in Moscow showed that the Tuva Ovcharka can attract and actually attracts attention of dog lovers. It cannot be confused with any other breed by the appearance. Impression of owners of these dogs in Moscow and Podmoskovye is one: Tuva Ovcharkas wonderfully protect their territory and do not display aggressiveness beyond its borders. They are very undemanding dogs, even in winter they prefer to stay outside the doghouse, sleep on the snow, when inside, they are not annoying asking and undemanding for attention and they eat less then European breeds.

During recent years, at last, it seems interest to their aboriginal guard dogs emerged in Tuva. One of the authors of this paper many times wrote about preservation of "kadarchy it" in Tuva newspapers, talked in local radio and television. Now, we know that one of citizens of Kyzyl city obtained a pair of good Tuva Ovcharkas, but he still did not breed them. Three puppies with pedigree documents from "Mongun-Taiga" kennel were sent from Moscow in Tuva and there is a hope that aboriginal population of Tuva Ovcharkas would be successfully restored.

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THE INUIT SLED DOG

Sue Hamilton
Connecticut, U.S.A.

Inuit Dogs, Iqaluit, Northwest Territories 1990. Photo: C. Ingwersen

Ancient History

The Inuit Sled Dog, Canis familiaris borealis, is said to be about 4,000 years old, dating back to the paleoinuit culture. However, it wasn't until about 800 BP, in the period of the Thule culture, that archaeologists have identified sled runners and harness material. Therefore it is believed that in between these two time periods the Independence I, Pre-Dorset, Independence II and Dorset cultures used this primitive aboriginal breed not as a sledge dog but as a hunting partner and defender from polar bears. One must not assume the breed to be simply the aboriginal sledge dog of the circumpolar north based on its name alone, for it possesses these other essential skills as well. All these characteristics combined: sniffing out aglu (seal breathing holes), alerting hunters and family encampments to the presence of hungry bears and then keeping these large predators at bay, carrying belongings on their backs in summer and hauling a heavily laden qamutiq (sledge) over snow and ice covered surfaces, along with their legendary endurance of hardship, have credited the Inuit Sled Dog as being the principal reason for the survival of the ancestors of today's modern Inuit people1, including into the mid-twentieth century, at which time the lives of these hunter-gatherers, already affected by the presence of the outside world, began to dramatically change.

The Dog/Wolf Controversy

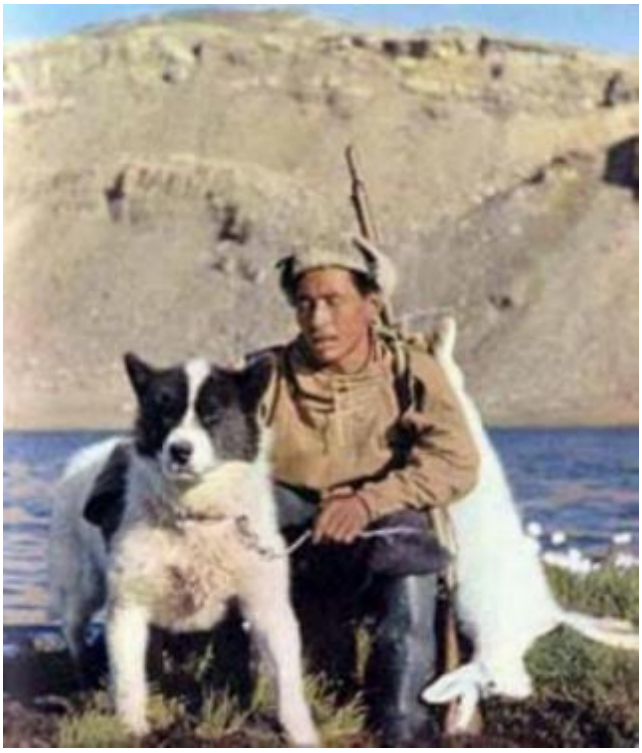
It was with good reason that this is the title long-time arctic resident and Inuit Dog owner/breeder Ian Kenneth MacRury gave to a chapter in his thesis on the Inuit Dog2. Many early explorers insisted that the Inuit Sled Dog was part wolf and even to this day there are some who believe this to be true, going so far as perpetuate the urban legend that bitches in estrus were staked out by themselves to be bred by wolves. Inuit Dogs do share elements of the polar phenotype with arctic wolves. However, MacRury's research on skull and dentition measurements shows no consistent hybridization. Furthermore, it is well known that wolves have a strong preference for killing dogs, loose or picketed. Also, biologists have explained that the differences in breeding and estrus cycles between wolves and dogs are not advantageous to the survival of hybrids in a polar environment. Personal communications with Inuit affirms that the willful practice of hybridization did not occur. Based on this

body of information, it can be said that the Inuit Sled Dog has no more wolf content than other recognized pure breeds of Canis familiaris.

Clarifying the Name and Genetic Status Controversies

People are confused regarding nomenclature and genetics. They ask, "What is the difference between a Canadian Inuit Dog and a Canadian Eskimo Dog?" "Are they different from a Greenland Dog?" "What is an Inuit Sled Dog?" The name "Eskimo" is a corruption of a name assigned by non-Inuit more than a century ago. It has long since been considered a pejorative, and the name was abandoned shortly following the first Inuit Circumpolar Conference held in the 1970s when "Inuit", meaning The People, was officially adopted. However, the term "Eskimo" is still used in the historic sense. And it is also acceptable to identify Alaskan Yupik/Aleut as "Eskimo". The word is also singularly used in the world of all breed kennel club registered dogs, including the Canadian Kennel Club (CKC) and its European counterpart, the Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI). It is the rigidity of such organizations that has prevented changing the name to Canadian "Inuit" Dog and, as the Greenland Dog is recognized by dog-registering bodies as a separate breed, enthusiasts of "both breeds" have long insisted they are genetically distinct as well.

Russian hunter with a dog resembling an Inuit Sled Dog, 1960. Photo: by Bavaria Verlag



In his master's thesis, MacRury describes the Inuit Dog as one pure breed that existed from Alaska to Greenland. It is largely gone from Alaska and the western Canadian Arctic in the aboriginal sense, but in existence there in varying degrees for recreational use. The name Inuit Sled Dog reflects the inclusion of dogs in both Canada and Greenland, and perhaps even Russia, as one breed based on the migration pattern of ancient Inuit ancestors and physical findings at early living sites. That the Inuit Dog of Canada is indeed the same as the Inuit Dog of Greenland (also called the Greenland Dog or Greenland Inuit Sled Dog) has recently been proven in the laboratory by DNA analysis. In her Veterinary Master Thesis3, Dr. Hanne Friis Andersen states, "…there is no genetic evidence that states the presence of two different dog breeds in the native Arctic. From a geneticist's point of view, based on this study the Canadian Inuit dog and Greenland dog is one breed divided into subpopulations." Genetically differentiating the Greenland Dog from the Canadian Eskimo Dog is nothing more than an artificial contrivance of all breed kennel club systems, based on their registration policies.

The question has also been asked, "Is an Inuit Sled Dog a pure breed?" Having traveled extensively throughout the Canadian arctic, Bill Carpenter and John McGrath established the Eskimo Dog Recovery Project in the early 1970s. They were alarmed by the dwindling numbers of pure dogs seen. The men collected examples of pure dogs from traditional working teams across the arctic and bred them at Carpenter's kennel in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada. The endeavor was a success in that it resulted in a revitalized number of pure dogs. In order to "validate" their work and the resulting population of dogs, those animals were registered with the Canadian Kennel Club4. Some of the Recovery Project dogs were placed in the care of breeders who lived in the arctic and elsewhere below the tree line who bred and used the dogs strictly as working dogs. And it is from those sources that represent some but not all of the today's pure traditional stock remaining in the arctic, collectively referred to as Inuit Dogs or Inuit Sled Dogs. Other dogs from the Recovery Project were taken up by the Canadian Kennel Club dog show and pet fancy. Because some pure dogs can be traced back to the recovery project surely does not mean that these are the only pure dogs. It simply indicates that this is a population of dogs whose lineage is known back to the Recovery Project. Pedigree alone, without proof of performance, does not confer breeding worthiness.

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Enthusiasts of kennel club registered dogs have conducted a media campaign to try to convince (i.e. mislead) the public that their breed is endangered and in need of government involvement in a rescue effort5. But they were not actually referring to the Inuit Dog living in the arctic. The real object of their lament was the dwindling numbers of CKC registered Canadian Eskimo Dogs. While traceable back to the Eskimo Dog Recovery Project, most of these dogs have been bred to a show standard and as pets, not strict adherence to traditional performance and challenged by the severe polar conditions which selects for the most capable and heartiest stock.
Photo courtesy of Br. Jacques Volant, OMI

It has long since been known, and recently restated in the documentary Dogs That Changed the World6, that it doesn't take too many generations of inattentive breeding to diminish the original working character of any breed. It is worth noting that the official CKC breed standard makes no meaningful/useful mention of working ability as a qualification for a good specimen. In his master thesis, MacRury emphasizes the absolute need for performance based breeding.7 In a June, 1988 interview8 eminent behavioral geneticist, Dr. Benson E. Ginsburg, Professor Emeritus at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut, said, "Genetic variability is built into a species so it can adapt if conditions change. In wild forms, the coyote and wolf, there are what we call buffering systems so that genes they have are not necessarily expressed. In domestication, the system of genes that buffer differences from the norm, are bred out." Dr. Ginsburg concluded, "We have selected away from the buffering system, so all possibilities can appear, and dogs can freely show all their genetic variability." So the answer to the question, "Is the CKC Canadian Eskimo Dog the same as the Canadian Inuit Dog/Inuit Sled Dog?" is both "yes" and "no". One thing is certain, the real endangered species is not the registered show dog, but the traditional aboriginal dog of the circumpolar north.

The Population Decline

There is no doubt that the numbers of traditional Inuit Sled Dogs working in the Canadian north9 has dwindled precipitously in the last century. Opportunities for contamination of the pure ISD occurred with the arrival of non-indigenous (non-ISD) dogs brought north by early explorers, missionaries, prospectors, laborers and fur traders. It has also been said that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) undertook a program to cross breed Inuit Sled Dogs with other breeds in order to make "a better sled dog". This author suspects that this was an effort to dilute out the legendary combative nature of the ISD, something even some inexperienced, intolerant mushers still seek to do. They want all the power and endurance without any of the breed's "baggage" which is in fact another link in the chain defining the Inuit Sled Dog.

A Greenlander uses a knife to prepare an "ice davit", a small, strong tunnel through which a line is passed to secure his team of dogs when stopping to camp. Photo: J.M.Starck

The presence of non-indigenous dogs is now ubiquitous throughout the Canadian north and currently there are no regulatory mechanisms in place to control this influx, either by outright banning or by allowing only altered dogs accompany their owners north. In Greenland there is a law forbidding non-indigenous breeds into the northern

part of the island as a measure to keep the breed pure. However it is believed that strict enforcement has not been in place. For example, after a late 1980s epidemic of distemper in Greenland, Inuit Dogs from the north Baffin region of Canada were sent into the Thule District of Greenland. Also, there is the issue of the U.S. military disbanding teams of sled dogs, not necessarily Inuit Dogs, staged in Greenland for use during World War II.

Not only were foreign genes seeded into the aboriginal dogs, some diseases were as well. To this day all too frequent epidemics of preventable deadly canine diseases such as distemper and parvovirus sicken and kill large numbers of teams in the Nunavut Territory and elsewhere.

The arrival of the snowmobile has also been prominently identified as a reason for the demise of traditional dog teams, although many Inuit wives still admit that they don't worry when their husbands go out hunting by dog team, but they do when snowmobiles are used. A dog team will not break down; they can find their way in a blizzard; they can help with the hunt; and they have a sense when the sea ice is dangerously thin.

Traditionally, after the running season is over, entire teams are placed loose on a "dog island" where food is brought to them. Photo: Heiko Wittenborn

Surely the most controversial and contentious issue involving the decline of traditional working teams of Inuit Sled Dogs is what is commonly referred to as the slaughter of sled dogs by the RCMP and others said to have taken place from the 1950s to the 1970s. A year-long self-examination by the RCMP concluded in 2006 that, while they conceded that some dogs were killed to end their suffering from sickness and for human safety reasons, there was no organized effort to mass slaughter teams of sled dogs in order to end a period of starvation for the nomadic Inuit by keeping them in settlements where the government could tend to their needs [instead of helping the Inuit to help themselves]. However, Inuit, their organizations, both government and NGOs, and especially those Elders who actually lived through those times, and others believe differently. As this article is being written, the Qikiqtani Inuit Association's (a non-profit land claim and community organization aimed at representing the interests of the Inuit of the Baffin Region, High Arctic and Belcher Islands) Truth Commission as well a Makivik Corporation (mandated to manage the heritage funds of the Inuit of Nunavik provided for in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement) commission are both conducting their own investigations into this matter as well as other issues of significant social impact10 during the mid-twentieth century. Those who want to learn more about the geo-social politics of the mid to late twentieth century may wish to read Relocating Eden: The image and politics of Inuit exile in the Canadian Arctic by Alan Rudolph Marcus.

Approaching a dangerous lead. Photo: Corel Dogsledding

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The Inuit Sled Dog Today

Despite all that has taken place in the past couple of hundred or so years, and the current socio-economic challenges that continue to keep the future of the traditional Inuit Sled Dog uncertain, the breed endures. This author and knowledgeable colleagues have personally identified many fine examples of individual dogs as well as traditional working teams in both Nunavut and Nunavik, as well as districts in Greenland. Inuit Sled Dogs used and selected for breeding based on working qualities and not to an artificial breed club standard can also be found outside of the arctic in both North America and Europe. These dogs number in ownership from just a few used on recreational mushing teams to large populations of multiple teams maintained by outfitters, polar adventurers and tourism operators. (Some of these are owned by mushers who continue to refer to their dogs as "Canadian Eskimo Dogs" because their stock can be traced back to the Recovery Project.) Unlike what has been previously touted, the Inuit Dog is not free of inherited or other diseases. Without access to veterinary pathology service in the arctic, the reasons dogs die or are killed most often go undiagnosed.11 Cataracts, cancers, endocrine diseases and bloat have been identified outside of the arctic. In his interview as Featured Inuit Dog Owner in The Fan Hitch12, Ken MacRury urges that, because Inuit Dogs maintained outside of polar regions are not subject to the same harsh forces of arctic life that served to create the Inuit Dog as it is found in polar regions, owners need to apply extra diligence in both husbandry and selection for breeding, taking advantage of every available diagnostic "technology" to screen for and avoid the perpetuation of some of these diseases, thereby weakening the overall quality of the breed. Dr. Ginsburg's explanation of the buffering mechanism he described in that June 1988 New York Times interview pertains not only to the infiltration of characteristics not in the best tradition of a working dog but also the emergence of heritable disease as well.

In May 2000 the year-old government of Nunavut chose the Inuit Sled Dog – not the seal, caribou, musk ox or even the polar bear - as its official territorial mammal. The choice recognizes of the Inuit Sled Dog as being uniquely responsible for the survival to the ancestors of today's Inuit. Despite this honor and the creation of a cloisonné pin in the likeness of an Inuit Sled Dog, it appears that the Nunavut government, as well as other government and non-government Inuit agencies in Nunavut and elsewhere, are doing little to nothing to assure a strong viable presence and an enduring future for the their own aboriginal primitive breed.

Chinook Project. Veterinarians spay a sled dog during one of the organization's wellness clinics in Kimmirutneeded skills to a permanently established clinic in the Canadian north. Photo: courtesy of The Chinook Project, Nunavut, Canada. Perhaps some in the audience will be inspired to become veterinarians and bring these badly

It may not be the place of governments or NGOs to assume the full responsibility for preventing the extinction of such a significant part of their heritage and culture. This belongs to the will of individual northerners and concerned others who care deeply. However, there surely is a role for leadership to play, and not just one that hammers out laws further restricting the keeping of traditional dogs, as some hamlets grow larger and then into cities, due to a growing population not used to living a northern lifestyle. The Inuit Sled Dog is not, nor should it be considered a racing dog. But given it is human nature to make competition out of just about anything - including traditional activities such as skinning muskrats and plucking ducks - it is not unexpected that events like the Nunavut Quest in the north Baffin region, the relatively new Qimualaniq Quest in the south Baffin and Ivakkak in Nunavik are popular "races". Traveling on qamutiit (sledges) and with dogs harnessed in a fan hitch, these "races" are not to be confused with events such as the Yukon Quest or the Iditarod where massive amounts of support are available at checkpoints. In comparison, traditional "dog team races" receive modest and varying degrees of support from local, regional and territorial government and NGOs. While strictly speaking participation and support does not specifically encourage the breeding, keeping and continued use of the pure Inuit Sled Dog, these events are significant in that they do promote the tradition and culture of dog team travel, paying homage to Elders who remember their past living on the land, while stimulating keen interest in the younger generation in whose hands the future of the Inuit Sled Dog rests. Up

to scores of teams representing hundreds of dogs gather, some traveling under their own power great distances (i.e. not flown to the starting line), to the communities where the race begins. Some routes take them through other hamlets on their way to the finish line so many residents, young and old, can enjoy the sight of teams of dogs in harness.

Unfortunately, upon returning home from the 2008 Nunavut Quest, many dogs became sick and died due to communicable diseases that could have been prevented with proper vaccinations. An unnecessary tragedy, this was not the first time epidemics of distemper and parvovirus, spreading from community to community, has decimated populations of northern sled dogs. Because rabies is a zoonotic disease and considered endemic among wild arctic mammals such as foxes and wolves, thus posing a risk to domestic dogs and therefore humans, a program of preventative canine vaccine administration in northern communities is well established. However, based on comments received from several northern residents, there is no consistent, reliable program to protect working sled dogs (and therefore the needs of their owners, many of whom continue to rely on dogs for tourism income as well as some hunting and fishing for the preferred "country food" diet) against other preventable diseases which are not considered a health threat to humans. This author has been told that such vaccines are not always available and there is no routine means established to have the vaccines administered in a time frame necessary to protect both adult dogs and puppies.

Right now, there are no permanent veterinary clinics that routinely service the needs of northern communities, to address often heartbreaking situations this author has witnessed first hand. Veterinary medical support is something that is needed and sought out by northern mushers as well as the burgeoning number of owners of non-aboriginal pet dogs now living in a polar climate. Options are few: send a dog south on an expensive airlift to a place like Ottawa or Montreal, or mushers treat the problem themselves as best they can, sometimes using a rifle to end suffering. There are a few traveling veterinarians who may show up once or twice a year to some of the larger communities such as Iqaluit, Nunavut's capital. There are also angels of mercy such as The Chinook Project, a team of veterinarians, veterinary students and assistants from the Atlantic Veterinary College at the University of Prince Edward Island, Canada who, as long as their project continues to receive grant support, makes an annual pilgrimage to a Nunavut community. Similarly, the Canadian Animal Assistance Team, sends crews of veterinarians and technicians to communities across the Canadian north.

Early socialization of Inuit Dogs is critical to their proper development. Equally critical is parents teaching their children how to behave in the presence of dogs and that they must never enter, unless accompanied by a responsible adult, an area where teams dogs are picketed. Photo: Heiko Wittenborn

Both of these organizations report back describing the overwhelming support and gratitude for their services which range from vaccinations and de-worming to spays and castrations (only performed when asked), surgical repairs of wounds, tumor excisions and general education programs on veterinary first aid and dog bite prevention for children. Not to disparage the fine work of these hardworking and dedicated groups, their seasonal traveling clinics, while enormously helpful, are but a gauze wrap covering a festering wound. The Canadian north needs permanent veterinary centers in major "hubs", perhaps where most airline routes travel to and from, to be staffed by professionals who can organize a system whereby all necessary vaccines are always available and there are trained paraprofessionals, similar to physicians' assistants for humans, to administer them, to serve as the long-distance eyes and hands of the clinic's veterinarian, to teach basic first aid skills and do whatever else the dog owning community needs. But more than that, such a network of support can work in concert with local wildlife biologists and hamlet Hunter and Trapper organizations to monitor the health of terrestrial and marine mammals and birds,

destined to become country food for humans. Zoonotic, diseases, illnesses transmissible from animals to humans by various routes, come in more "flavors" than just rabies.

Despite Inuit organizations investing time, effort and money in truth and reconciliation commissions, seeking solace for Elders who remember being left with no means to return to their hunter/gatherer lifestyle after their dogs were shot and burned in piles on the ice; and despite honoring the Inuit Dog as the territorial mammal; and despite recognizing the role dog teams have in tourism and sport hunting income; and despite proudly promoting the traditional dog team races to celebrate culture; despite all this, there appears to be no centralized effort or desire to assure the future of the traditional, pure Inuit Sled Dog. They are still needlessly dying of preventable diseases and other ailments that could be treated if only for a network of veterinary oversight. Greenland has such a system. And although a function of the Danish military, Greenland also has the renown Sirius Patrol, a central breeding/kenneling facility on the north east coast where annually, pairs of soldiers patrol vast stretches of their island by Inuit Dog team to assure their polar sovereignty. The Canadian federal government is very serious about exercising its arctic sovereignty and, in addition to its national military; the Canadian north has what is known as the Canadian Rangers. Yet a Sirius Patrol-like system is not under consideration. "Before I judge a man, let me first walk a mile in his moccasins," is an old First Nations (Indian) proverb. Perhaps a better understanding of Inuit culture along with that of the north's complex social, political and economic challenges may help outsiders understand why there appears to be such a huge disconnect between interest in the Inuit Dog's past and its presence yet a lack of action to secure the breed's future. There are some noteworthy exceptions, however. Within the past few years two northern communities in Nunavik have made a commitment to keep, breed and use pure Inuit Sled Dogs in as traditional a manner as possible. We have seen these two grass roots efforts spring to life, grow and evolve. It has happened with huge dedication, effort and sacrifice and with very little government support. This has been very much a case of friends helping friends, with Inuit Dog enthusiasts outside of the arctic who wish very much to see the traditional Inuit Sled Dog maintain a continued presence in the arctic.

It is not right for outsiders to dictate to others, regardless what is felt should be or must be done. In fact, such a posture is as unwelcome as it is counterproductive. That is not to say that there is nothing to be done. The Chinook Project and the Canadian Animal Assistance Team are being sought out by and invited into northern communities. These professionals came without prejudice or proselytizing. They take an attitude of unselfish service, performing only those procedures they are asked to do, with their enthusiasm encouraging the community's interest and imagination and showing by example all the good that can be done for their dogs and thus for them as well. This in turn may be the external spark needed to encourage arctic leadership to take necessary action.

The Inuit Sled Dog International has for its goal the preservation of the traditional, pure working dog, with special focus on the preservation the breed in its native habitat. But the ISDI can only serve as a sideline cheerleader and a resource to hopefully encourage people in the north to want to save their dog from extinction. The ISDI has donated books and copies of the Inuit Dog thesis to school and community libraries across Nunavut and Nunavik, as well as subscriptions to its quarterly journal, The Fan Hitch. The presence of this organization and its publication on the World Wide Web has attracted interest from a variety of sources: authors, journalists, filmmakers, photographers, educators, explorers, scientists, and breed enthusiasts living all over the world. The ISDI has helped researchers keen to study the origins of dog domestication understand the history of the Inuit Sled Dog. The breed is such a fundamental part in this history. And, thanks to colleagues traveling to northern locations where various populations of traditional working dogs are found, DNA samples have been, with great effort under difficult conditions, collected and, along with samples from pure dogs below the tree

line, have been donated to these research projects. ISDI supporters have even collected DNA from coyotes and wolves (both living and harvested) to add to the body of scientific knowledge.

It hoped that with all this demonstration of outside interest in the traditional, pure Inuit Sled Dog of the circumpolar regions, people living in the north will recognize how important it is to preserve their very own breed before it become extinct in the land of its origin.

Footnotes

1 The Inuit Dog: Its Provenance, Environment and History by Ian Kenneth MacRury. pg 45, pp 1.

2 The Inuit Dog: Its Provenance, Environment and History, chapter 2.

3 Population Genetic Analyses of the Greenland dog and Canadian Inuit dog, May 2005, Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Frederiksberg, Denmark.

4 The Canadian Eskimo Dog had already been registered by both the Canadian and American Kennel Clubs, the latter decertifying the breed sometime in the 1950s due to lack of sufficient numbers.

5This can be verified by the numerous Canadian newspaper articles published on the subject.

6 May, 2007 WNET (U.S. Public Television) series Nature.

7 The Inuit Dog: Its Provenance, Environment and History by Ian Kenneth MacRury. pg 5, pp 3.

8 New York Times Science section, June 21,1988.

9 Although it is apparent that there are still pure Inuit Dogs in Greenland, the status of that population is not clearly known to this author.

10 Mass forced relocations to unfamiliar locations; the forcing of Inuit children into residential schools where they were stripped of their Inuit names and forbidden to speak their own language; government and other agencies killing healthy, essential dog teams when families came into settlements to trade for and buy goods.

11 Inuit Sled Dogs in service to the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, later known as the British Antarctic Survey, represented a unique exception to the lack of veterinary care and diagnostics in polar climates. See British Antarctic Survey Bulletin, Number 21, 1969 “Veterinary Studies on the British Antarctic Survey's Sledge Dogs: I. Survey of Diseases and Accidents”, by A.R.M. Bellars reprinted in The Fan Hitch, Journal of the Inuit Sled Dog International, Volume 4, Number 3, May, 2002.

12 The Fan Hitch, Journal of the Inuit Sled Dog International, Volume 5, Number 4, September, 2003

For More Information (by no means all inclusive)

The Inuit Dog: Its Provenance, Environment and History by Ian Kenneth MacRury, Master of Philosophy in Polar Studies, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, 1991; [http://homepage.mac.com/puggiq/thesis.html]

The Fan Hitch, the Journal of the Inuit Sled Dog International, [http://homepage.mac.com/puggiq/]. Also available in print by paid subscription.

Inuit Sled Dog International [http://www.inuitsleddoginternational.com]

The Inuit Way: A Guide to Inuit Culture, produced by the Pauktuutit Women of Canada [http://homepage.mac.com/puggiq/V9N3/V9%2CN3BookReview.html]

Other media reviews in The Fan Hitch. Go to index of articles by subject, “Media Review”. [http://homepage.mac.com/puggiq/subjectindex.html]

Relocating Eden: The Image and Politics of Inuit Exile in the Canadian Arctic, Alan Rudolph Marcus, 1995, University Press of new England; ISBN 0-87451-659-5

A History of the Original Peoples of Northern Canada, Kieth J. Crowe, 1991 (revised edition), McGill-Queen’s University Press; ISBN 0-7735-0880-5

The Face of the Arctic, Richard Harrington, 1952, Henry Schuman, Inc.; ASIN B0007DNDHW

“British Antarctic Dog Team on Sea Ice” painting by Mike Skidmore.

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Sue Hamilton and her husband, Mark, have owned Alaskan Malamutes since 1972. Although they did limited showing, the bulk of their involvement with the breed was recreational mushing and programs on responsible pet ownership. In August 1996 they returned to their Connecticut, U.S.A. home from their 5th visit to Pond Inlet, Nunavut, Canada with 3 Inuit Dogs, two of whom were pregnant. Within two weeks of their arrival in utero, 16 puppies were born. In 1997 Sue helped co-found the Inuit Sled Dog International (ISDI), and currently serves as its U.S. coordinator. In 1998 ISDI's quarterly journal, The Fan Hitch, was created. Sue has been the editor of this award-winning publication from its beginning. She and Mark and their Inuit Sled Dogs (most no more than one generation out of the Canadian Arctic) continue to enjoy recreational mushing.

Their legendary performance widely known, Inuit Dogs were the breed of choice for almost all polar exploration, north and south. Beginning in the 1940s, the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS), now called the British Antarctic Survey (BAS), began the golden era of Antarctic exploration and scientific investigation. Much of the early knowledge gained, which is still invaluable to this day, was made possible thanks to the endurance and stamina of "British Antarctic Huskies" – Inuit Sled Dogs. What also made the BAS dogs unique was the body of information, much of which was published as scientific papers, gained from studying the dogs' anatomy, physiology, health and performance.

Due to political maneuvering associated with the Madrid Protocol, all non-indigenous life (except human) was banned from the continent in April 1994. Save for a very few BAS Huskies that were "repatriated" to their homeland in Arctic Quebec (Nunavik), the British government gave orders to the men, many of whom who owed their lives to the dogs, to shoot their loyal companions. The remorse and bitterness over this act has not lessened over time. Nearly fifty since some of these "FIDS", as they are still nostalgically called, sledged across the continent, they still show fierce loyalty and respect for their dogs. The British Antarctic Husky Memorial Project, currently nearing completion, will permanently honor these dogs so that their contributions will never be forgotten.

Sadly, the dogs returned to Arctic Quebec died and no animals can be traced back to the BAS dogs, thus loosing a valuable and unique genetic population of Inuit Sled Dogs. There is, however, a possibility that frozen semen from one of the dogs returned to Canada is currently in storage.

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