



Siberian Bridges

FALL 2018 NEWSLETTER

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Siberian Bridges

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A note from Judy Boudreau, Treasurer and tourist to Zabaikalye this summer.

Many friends asked me about the trip to Russia this summer, “How was it?”

My simple answer, “*Inspirational!*”

We began in Moscow, led by longtime SB friend Olesya Bezhina (<http://www.siberianbridges.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SIBERIAN-BRIDGES-SPRING-2016-Newsletter.pdf>) and she showed us some of the famously artistic metro stations, through Gorky Park, outdoor museums, the Kremlin, over Moscow bridges and even to a few evening fun spots. Olesya was a joy, letting us see a personalized and intimate view of this great city.

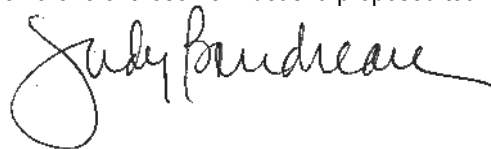
On to Irkutsk—enjoying the open air museum of Taltsi, the hospitality of local villagers at their homes and dachas, visiting the magnificent (and chilly!) Lake Baikal where I finally got to have a quick swim(!), and after a scenic drive, enjoying the tranquility of the relatively warm lakes of Vydrino in their gorgeous natural setting. There was the warm hospitality of the Old Believers of the Tarbagatay region, and we learned about their special place in Russian culture. On to Ulan Ude, capital of Buryatia, and there we learned about the Buryats who preceded the Russians in the region. And then the train to Chita.

Our intrepid tour guide, Olga Kostina, and gifted interpreter, Irina Shipley, led us from Irkutsk to Chita. SB supports Irina and Michael Shipley’s work with older children at the Chernovsky Children’s Home. Irina brought with her 17 year old Lyosha, one of the boys from the Chernovsky Home who has become very close to the family. He made our group complete with his enthusiasm for English, his humor...and his willingness to haul luggage! On arrival in Chita, Irina and Michael were our first hosts, serving their famous homemade pizza. There we met other young men, also Shipley charges from Chernovsky. These teenagers were very curious to know why we came so far to see their remote place, and wanted to hear about our world.

We spent the week learning about the Decembrists sent to Chita, enjoying an annual Cossack celebration (Chita was founded by a Cossack in 1653), rounding out our many cathedral visits with a look at Chita’s young ten year old one, and visiting dear friends. We were guests at Elena Anisimova’s birthday party at hers and Victor Kulakofsky’s dacha, and inaugurated their just renovated banya. (Elena and Victor are profiled in our Fall 2013 newsletter <http://www.siberianbridges.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SIBERIAN-BRIDGES-FALL-2013-Newsletter.pdf>.) We were treated to teas and dinners in several homes. We even did our own entertaining one evening at a city park, inviting local English speakers and learners to join us for our “English Get-Together”.

And then, of course, our visit to Petrovsk-Zabaikalsky. I was so happy to be back at the Children’s Home after six years! (<http://www.siberianbridges.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SIBERIAN-BRIDGES-FALL-2012-Newsletter.pdf>) Excitement was high, because it was the first day back to school for the 100-plus kids. We not only met new young residents, but many alums now in jobs or college came back for this special, including my favorite, Kristina. I am continually amazed by the dedication of the Home’s staff: how they give the kids a family after their own no longer function.

And so, with many fond memories, we boarded a night train to Irkutsk to catch the flight back to Moscow, and after a blur of airports and customs agents, we arrived safely in Minnesota. I was exhausted, but more enthusiastic than ever, and we were coming up with new ideas for increasing friendship and understanding with our neighbors in Eastern Siberia. I hope you’ll support our projects. Maybe you can join us on a one of those new ideas: a proposed tour in 2020 joining Americans and local English-speaking Russians! Ask about it!



FALL 2018 UPDATE

REPORT ON THE 2018 TASTE OF ZABAIKALYE TOUR

by Chuck Ritchie

“The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you. They are unique manifestations of the human spirit.” Wade Davis

Our recent trip to Russia this past summer gives testament to the words of Wade Davis. As I think back and replay the trip, Russia’s “unique manifestations of the human spirit” seem to literally jump out at me.

A simple memorial on the bridge near the Kremlin where on Feb. 27, 2015 opposition leader Boris Nemtsov was killed. It is faithfully yet very modestly maintained by a group of volunteers to preserve his name and what he stood for.

A wonderful dinner at the home of Sergey and Irina Beznosov, in the town of

Listvyanka on the shores of Lake Baikal. Everything we ate was homegrown and prepared by our hosts—including the samagon (moonshine)! The two houses, outhouse, the sheds that housed Soviet memorabilia, the gardens and creative and amusing ornaments that dotted the yard, all of them are the product of Sergey and Irina’s own manual labor—a lesson in self-sufficiency.



The Besnosov's shed, a mini-museum of Soviet era paraphernalia

A stay in a typical summer dacha in the forest village of Vydrino (Ottersville). The outside shower, the outhouse, and a two-story building that had two sleeping areas and a very small kitchen, comprise the well-known concept of the Russian dacha. Given all that, it is not so much a physical entity as an almost spiritual one where nature can provide release and solitude. There was also there a lone domed chasovaya (chapel) set in a lush surrounding of forest and three small lakes—a stunning visual of man’s spirituality nestled among the inherent beauty of the natural world.

A meal and a concert in a village of Old Believers. These descendants of those who refused to accept the reforms of Patriarch Tikhonov in the Russian Orthodox Church in the mid 1600’s cling to a vibrant way of life that was cause for many to be exiled in the time of Catherine the Great.

A visit to the poet Vyacheslav Vyunov and his wife Natalia in the village of Tasei outside Chita. We were treated to a lovely meal and wonderful homespun hospitality including tea from a real charcoal heated samovar (and several “one more for the road” toasts).



The little chapel of Vydrino

Most importantly, there were verses from this poet who, continuing the Russian literary tradition, so beautifully translates the emotions of the soul into eloquent and accessible language.

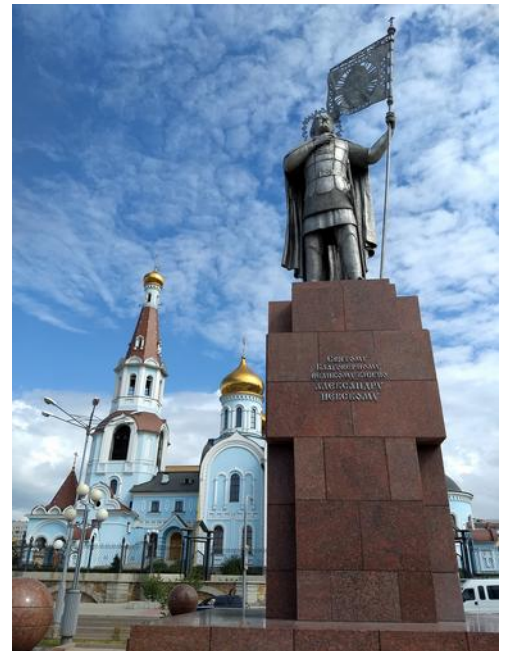


Poet Vyacheslav Vyunov in his home. His wife Natalia behind him. From left: Olga Kostina, our driver Sergey, and Judy Boudreau up front..



Irene Duranczyk with the Cossack singing group on Cathedral Square in Chita.

A chance to meet and talk with the leader of the Cossacks in Chita. Cossacks are, in fact, not an ethnic group, but rather a professional one, originally charged with defending the tsar when called upon, but also maintaining order in their home settlements. There is a rich tradition of culture and music that was on display at a celebration on Cathedral Square (Our Lady of Kazan Cathedral). This Cossack head or “Ataman” told us how they are trying to revive and preserve their rich heritage, and keep it relevant in 21st century Russia.



At Cathedral Square: Our Lady of Kazan Cathedral (2005) with the even newer grand statue of the Chita’s patron saint, Alexander Nevsky



At our SB sponsored "English Get-Together" at a park in central Chita. Tom D with Elvira Baldanova and Olga Fleshler. Elvira is requesting an English teacher for a new private school in the Buryat district of Aginsk.



Children's Home talent in costumes created by the kids.

The visit to the Children's Home in Petrovsk-Zabaikalsky. Once again we were welcomed and received so warmly by staff and children. And for the first time, most of the

SB Board was there to see firsthand this, our largest project. We spent time with the kids and staff as they celebrated the onset of a new school year. There were games, competitions, and a performance by some very talented dancers and singers, including Vitaly and Zoya of "You



Улыбнись вместе с нами -- "Smile with us!" a display at the Children's Home of photos of events including SB visits

Are Super” fame ([click here for our website posting about Vitaly and Zoya](#)) as well as graduates Vika Romanova , Tanya Kolodeznikova, Anna Chizhkova, and Alyosha Kapitov, as well as a new generation of young rising stars. Most amazing was a picnic on Sunday to which we hiked over the rather steep hill behind the Center down into an open glade where before us—seemingly out of nowhere—materialized an incredible array of food, displayed on a several large tablecloths on the ground, each one set and decorated by “family” groups of the Home. It was a sweet and moving demonstration of the commitment, care, and love that the Director Natalya Skliarova and her staff give these children. The children are overwhelmingly responsive and welcoming, a testament to the tenacity and efforts of such dedicated care-givers. Seeing all this inspires.



Judy with her friend, Kristina, now working. (See Judy's cover letter.)



One of the beautiful tablecloth picnic settings made by the kids.



Tom Lonergan with one of the kids at the picnic. The town of Petrovsk-Zabaikalsky is behind them.



Bread and salt (traditional welcome) for us Americans and the volunteers from Chita and local ones, too.

Above all, our friends: Olga Fleshler, Elena Pishcherskaya and her family, Elena and Victor Kulakovsky, Michael and Irina Shipley, Olga Kostina—and I must mention Tanya Sukhanova, too, whom we missed this summer due to her tragic illness. The greatest manifestation of the human spirit that we encountered is the friendship and love that these dear people share with us. These relationships are the bedrock for what we do at Siberian Bridges.



Olga Fleshler in Victor's son's (Vova) police cap at Elena's birthday party.

Elena's birthday party at hers and Victor's dacha! Elena is standing 3rd from the right on ground level. Her husband Victor is waving. Others are Victor's children and their families (the youngsters are almost all grandkids), other relations, and friends old and new including us Americans. OK! Best effort: On steps: Victor, Olga (Elena's boss) Irene. Middle: Judy, Chuck, Ginny, Nadezhda, Tom D, granddaughter of Victor (Victor's daughter's daughter), mother of Victor's daughter-in-law, Victor's son Vova, Elena the birthday girl, Tom L, father of Victor's daughter-in-law. In front: Varya, Victor's granddaughter (Vova's), Olya, Victor's daughter-in-law and Vova's wife, Victor's granddaughter (daughter's daughter), Pasha, son of Elena Pishcherskaya. Phew!

Bonus to the online newsletter, this just happened! **Report on the 2nd Annual International Students Day Video Conference, November 15-16, 2018** **by Irene Duranczyk**

Siberian Bridges has been collaborating with The Chita Institute of Baikal State University and the University of Minnesota College of Education and Human Development to host annual international conversations among college students that can, and have, expanded into corollary international projects.

The purpose of these dialogues is to provide a space for students to experience a conversation that transcends time, place, and country identities. We live on one globe with many interconnections in trade, environmental concerns, issues of war and peace, and advancements in science, technology, and humanity. This generation will not have the luxury of only attending to their backyard. Global understanding and leadership has a more prominent place leading a secure life.

International Students Day was first held on Nov. 17, 1941 as an international observance commemorating the Nazi storming of Czech universities in 1939. It is now a nonpolitical observance for students throughout the world to celebrate multiculturalism and solidarity for protecting all students' rights.

This year, as in 2017, the Tri-Country Video Conference involved Russia, China, and the United States of America. It took place on November 15th in the evening in Minnesota, and November 16th in the morning in Dalian, China (14 hours later) and Chita, Russia (15



A glimpse of the video conference. The Dalian group in in the main frame here. Chita is lower right. Tom Dickinson is moderator.



Conference room at the U of M. Front row is high schoolers with Polina Matveeva in green, U of M student who translated for the group.

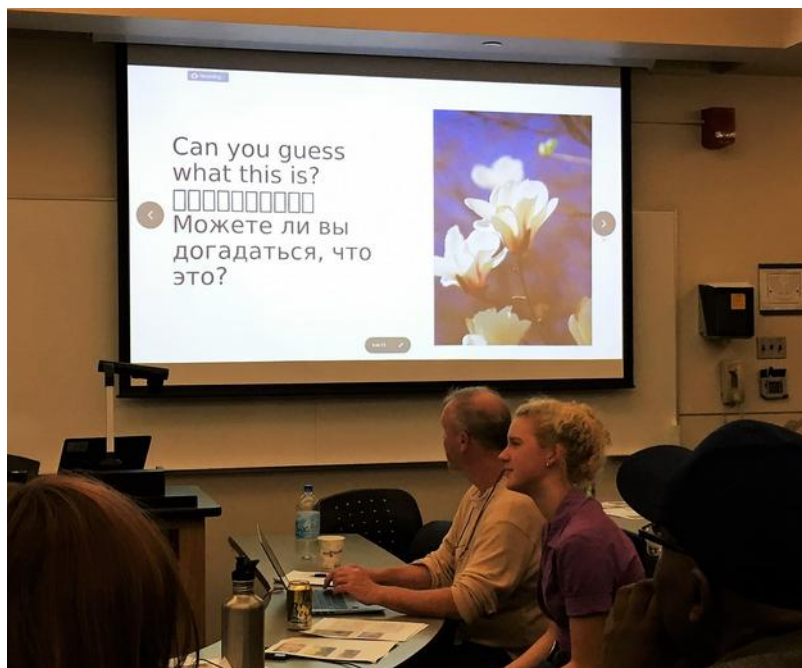
hours later) The three institutions this year were: Dalian University of Foreign Languages, Chita Institute of Baikal State University, and the University of Minnesota. The conference was attended by over 50 students. The program included:

- Introductions of each participant both live and in pdfs shared prior to the conference
- Pictures of students' campuses, of favorite places, and of volunteer/service activities
- Lively dialogue on how volunteer service is a part of one's culture
- And finally, thinking about our future

Interspersed in the three hour conference were iconic and sometimes humorous representations of Dalian, Chita, and Minnesota presented in "Guess what this is?" "ice-breaker" quizzes (try explaining a Minnesotan's relationship to lutefisk!).

The multilingual issues of the conference were handled with a high degree of success on the United Nations model, with each person speaking in their home language and the necessary translators at each site. By design therefore, no one language was privileged over the other. It gave students a real opportunity to see their language and culture being respectfully honored side by side with other cultures. Additionally, there were many individual students at each site who were multilingual and shared their skills.

It is our hope to continue international conversation that will help students see their place in the world and envision their future as individuals, inventors, workers, and or leaders in our increasingly globalized work. The concreteness of people to people conversations can help to contextualize what we read and study



An "ice-breaker" question from Dalian (it's magnolia, the flower of the city!). Because the Dalian group was made of Russian majors, most of the conference was in Russian and English.

COMPARATIVE FINANCIAL REPORT

We are proud of the work we do and the interest and support it engenders. Each year since being reinvigorated in 2010 our donations have increased. We began to recognize the confidence of our supporters, and so started to spend the money more confidently ourselves. To demonstrate this, our treasurer, Judy Boudreau, shows us summaries of 2015 and 2017 incomes and expenses. We are a shoestring non-profit, but effective. No funds go to salaries, travel, or gifts for members of Siberian Bridges.

2017

Income: \$15602

Expenses, \$11,223.50:

- Projects \$8260.95 - 73.6%*
 - Children's Home, \$4544 (40.5%)
 - Shipleys, \$2121 (19%)
 - Gifts, \$1260.95 (11.2%) *string bags as SB gifts in Chita*
 - Special support for teacher, \$275 (2.4%)
 - Books, \$60 (0.5%)
- Operations 2962.77 - 26.4%*
 - Semi-annual mailings, \$1738.11 (15.5%)
 - Other, \$825.20 (7.3%) *consulting fees/computer*
 - Annual event, \$376.40 (3%)
 - Monthly meeting supplies, \$23.06 (0.02%)

2015

Income: \$14,478

Expenses, \$5030.75:

- Projects 3507.79 (70%)*
 - Children's Home, \$2755.54 (55%)
 - Books, \$391.25 (7.8%)
 - Jennifer Drewyor, teacher \$320 (6.3%) *cost of visa*
 - Gifts/honorariums, \$41 (0.08%)
- Operations, 1522.96 (30%)*
 - Semi-annual mailings, \$1181.08 (23.5%)
 - Annual event, \$274.72 (5.5%)
 - Website, \$50 (1%)
 - Monthly meeting supplies, \$17.16 (0.03%)



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DONATION INFORMATION:

- *To donate with a credit card, go to siberianbridges.org and click the DONATE link.*
- *Write checks to "Siberian Bridges" and mail to the address listed here.*
- *Siberian Bridges is a 501c3 non-profit registered in Minnesota. Donations are 100% tax-deductible.*

MEMORIAL FOR TANYA SUKHANOVA February 28, 1955 – October 24, 2018



Tatiana Ivanovna Sukhanova died after illness that struck suddenly this past summer. The youngest of three sisters, her family was very close, and she was quite shaken by the deaths of her parents in the 1990s. She is survived by her sisters, Ludmila and Olga and their families.

Tanya was the interpreter for my first visit to Chita in 1989 while on tour as a pianist, so one of my very first and ultimately most dear friends in Russia. She has also been a steadfast and active supporter of Siberian Bridges since its beginnings in 1993. Quite simply, if not for her advocacy and enthusiasm, Siberian Bridges would not have gotten started. Because of her, most visitors we sent enjoyed visits to Lake Arakhley at her brother-in-law's firm's resort. She interpreted tirelessly for the many visitors over the years. It impressed me that the one thing she wanted to do in Washington DC during her 1997 summer in the US as a visiting scholar at St. Michael's College in Vermont was to pay her respects at Arlington Cemetery.

I knew her as quiet, thoughtful, sincere, warm, and someone who really listened. Her love of people was informed by a fiercely moral and ethical code, a fine sense of humor and great kindness. Her graveside service was attended by hundreds of her students and friends. She was one of the most important English teachers in the city, a revered teacher of teachers. She is sorely missed.

Tom Dickinson, president and founder, Siberian Bridges



To her students, Tatiana Ivanovna Sukhanova was ever the epitome of expertise, both as a linguist and as an educator. She was respected by all, across the board—not an easy achievement for someone who has worked with thousands! Even when students disagreed with her over a grade or an issue, they couldn't help but hold Tatiana in high esteem for her knowledge, integrity and impeccable work ethic. She was a real professional and an excellent human.

Anna Krushelnitskaia, former student and colleague



With friends, circa 1997-98. Photo: Stacy Neterer Ford

Tom, I am quite unexpectedly in tears over this. Tanya was like a second mother to me when I lived in Chita. She took such good care of us young visiting teachers and was such a wonderful lady in so many ways. I have always imagined returning to Chita one day (it would be after 20 years at this point) and visiting her first of all. I feel certain I could still find my way on foot straight to her apartment after so many wonderful visits there over my year of teaching. If I can contribute in some manner – money for the flowers, a note to the family, or anything else, please let me know. I am heartbroken to hear this.

Stacy Neterer Ford, SB English teacher, 1997-98

Tatiana Ivanovna was a great teacher, Master of English, and just a good friend to people of all ages. I miss her greatly!

Raisa Lukashova, former student and colleague



If you are in range of the Twin Cities, save the date!

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14, 6PM

**COME TO A
TUSOVKA!**

A SIBERIAN HOMESTYLE DINNER PARTY

You are invited to an authentic *vyecherenka*, or more colloquially, a *tusovka*, with Siberian dishes, tales of and music from far off lands,

And the wonderful camaraderie-building “formal” toasting. Feel free to “get free,” because we’ll be providing car service. (Toasting with non-alcoholic beverages is becoming common now too, so no drinking necessary to join in!)

Dinner includes dishes and beverages for toasting (sparkling fruit drinks, kvas, vodka, wine, beer, even a little “samagon” or homemade spirits.)

“Herring Under a Coat,” stuffed eggs, breads, Russian halva, shashlik, Russian torte, borsch or shchee, prianiki, pickles and relishes and more!

Slideshows and stories about the past summer’s tour to Zabaikalye and about our projects there.

In the home of Tom Dickinson, SB President, but a shared culinary project of the entire SB Board!

If you want to drink, let us pick you up and take you home—either private car or car service.

\$70 per person (\$35 is donation)

Seating limited to 12 people on first-come, first-served basis. Depending on interest, there may be an overflow 2nd event!

RSVP by December 10: siberianbridges@gmail.com or leave voicemail or text at 612-822-9520.