

Siberian Bridges



SPRING 2019 NEWSLETTER

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Siberian Bridges

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- To donate with a credit card, go to siberianbridges.org and click the [DONATE](#) link under "About".
- 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.

Kevin Brondum's Cover Letter

Dear Friends of Siberian Bridges!

Our work connecting the outside world to the people and culture of the Trans-Baikal continues apace since last Fall. It's truly rewarding for me, as one of Siberian Bridges' board members, to foster the person-to-person connections across continents that are essential to our mission. We are finding more and more ways to do this in our recent projects, especially in the educational sphere.

In this newsletter, you'll read about the tri-country teleconference we held last November. This was the second annual teleconference in what we hope to turn into a long-standing tradition. It involved recruiting high school and university students from the Twin Cities to meet their peers in China (2017: Harbin, 2018: Dalian) and Chita, Russia through video chat to share and compare experiences with volunteering and extracurricular service. Then, throughout February and March, also for the second consecutive year, we matched University of Minnesota students and members of our organization with students at Baikal State University's Chita Institute studying the economy of the United States. As always, however, the opportunity to learn went both ways: the Russian students' questions, reactions to our testimonials, and other feedback offered insight into their understanding of economics, economic policy, and our respective countries' roles in world.

And last summer's tour to Zabaikalye gave birth to a really exciting idea for the next. In 2020 the Zabaikalye part of the tour will have Russian tourists from Chita--English learners--joining the Americans for a week of real cultural immersion, close contact, and fun. We plan to have the tour coincide with an international "Old Believers" music and crafts festival.

For me, these projects underscored something I heard from the other board members soon after I started volunteering with the organization: While we do hope to help people, we try to avoid the attitude of offering one-sided charity for people in need. Instead, our work is about learning as much as teaching, about how we and our contacts in Russia can gain common understanding and build wholly mutual friendships through our connections to each other.

The success of these projects has inspired us to develop more ways to use tech to connect Minnesotans with Zabaikalskie on a person-to-person level. We know our newest volunteer Alexandra Koullick—profiled in this newsletter— will be an enormous help to us in this. She has already demonstrated her initiative, video editing skills, and online network savvy by starting to send a series short videos with accompanying tran-

scripts to English language teachers and new pen-pals (or rather, screen-pals) in Chita.

Finally, we had the pleasure of hosting some of you in true Russian style at a *tusovka* (roughly, the Russian word for “shindig”) at our president Tom Dickinson’s home in Minneapolis last December. If you couldn’t make it, we hope to see you at future *tusovki* in coming years. If you were there, you know we never get tired of talking about how much we love Russia and the Zabaikalye! It was that much more fun to sample Russian party food, and drink a toast or two (or five!) to our favorite part of Russia with you, and we hope you enjoyed the festivities as much as we enjoyed your company! As always, whether you showed us your generous support from home or in person, we’re more grateful to you than we can express for making our work possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kevin Bondman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

SPRING 2019 UPDATE

Tom Dickinson, Irene Duranczyk, Chuck Ritchie reporting...

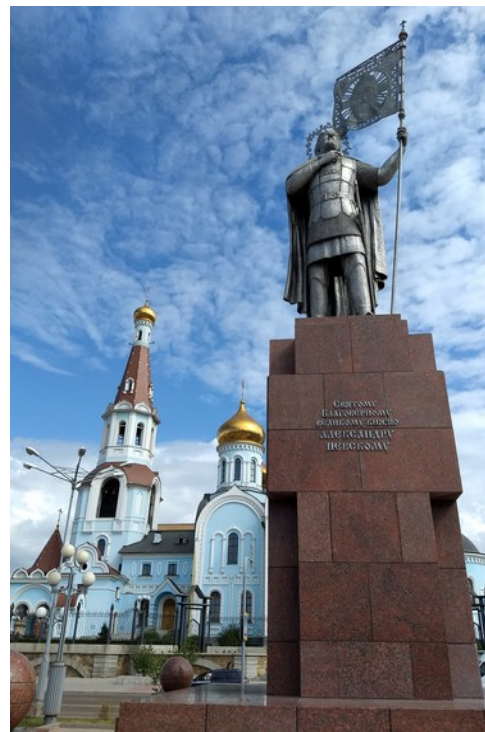
- Last summer's tour has produced a novel idea for another **"Taste of Zabaikalye"** tour in 2020. After arriving in the Lake Baikal region the American tourists will be joined by Russian (Chita-based) English learners for 7-10 days to see the Lake, the beautiful and historic Krasny Chikoi region (biennial Old Believers folk arts festival, famed archeological dig with evidence of the original peoples that migrated to our American continents), and Chita, home to our fellow travelers. As international tours go, this one is a bargain, (as are flights to Russia these days)—double occupancy, simple, but always comfortable. Inquiries at siberianbridges@gmail.com.



Singers at the 2018 Old Believers Folk and Craft Festival



A "tusovka" during last summer's tour



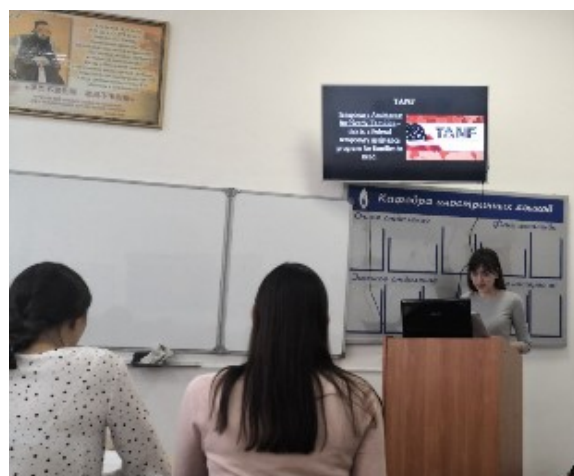
Chita's cathedral (2005) with its new statue of the city's patron saint, Alexander Nevsky

- The next exciting development in the **Tri-Country Conference** (that originated in a summertime conversation in Chita in 2017) is that **the University of Minnesota College of Education** has approved a 3-credit hour class entitled “Globalizing Your Undergraduate Curriculum” for Fall 2019. The course is the brainchild of **Professor Irene Duranczyk**, ex-officio board member of SB. The course is for freshmen students with interest in global studies but don’t know how to fit it in their field of study. The course includes students designing and hosting the [3rd Annual] Tri-Country Video Conference on International Students Day in November. Students with global studies integrated in their chosen discipline are more marketable as well as more flexible living in our multicultural, globalized world. As major nations, Russia, China, and the US have had complex relationships over the last 300 years; never has it been so important for these countries to understand one another as it is now. Students will engage online in real time with undergraduate students in Chita, Russia and China exploring what it means to be a student and adult participant on the world stage. Irene hopes that this new class will enhance the engagement of UMN students with Siberian Bridges, particularly the Tri-Country Conference and the **Survey of the American Economy** project with Chita—mentioned next.



Dalian, China's Foreign Languages University participants in the 2018 Tri-Country Conference

- For the past two years Siberian Bridges with Irene Duranczyk in the lead has engaged students from UMN and the Twin Cities area in a class project devised by **Elena Pishcherskaya** for her students of the US Economy at the Chita Institute of Baikals State University. This year, seven students from Irene’s statistics class along with SB board members, **Kevin Brondum** and **Tom Dickinson**, collaborated with 10 of Elena’s students on their presentations about the US



Students in Chita giving presentations about the US Economy

Economy. The students at UMN developed statistical studies on the data exchanged. The following were the Russians' research topics: The US economy post-Great Depression, social safety nets, the "American Dream", Income inequality, "Manifest Destiny" and trade policies. The student-to-student encounters were focused and fruitful. Elena and Irene plan to make the 3rd year of this project more international. This year again the conversations were only one way: Russian students probing US students' perceptions of their history and economy. Although this created rich discussions it did not improve the American students' knowledge of Russian students and their lives very much. Next year we will turn the corner and create a two-way project.

- In December, the English students at the "**City of Childhood**" **Developmental Center** (a private afterschool enrichment center) made—by hand—over 60 holiday cards for **3rd graders of Minnehaha Academy**, classmates of Tom Dickinson's 8 year old next-door neighbor (and piano student) **Ahnika Goze**. Each unique and creative card was personally addressed to a child with a holiday greeting in English from the artist, each an English student between the ages of 7 and 14. Tom delivered the cards in early February and the response was very enthusiastic. We hope they were able to reciprocate or will in the future.

- **Tom Dickinson** goes to Chita for another long stay on May 13th. He'll be a teacher at two summer English programs of "City of Childhood" repeating his job of 2017, the same that **Marie Nicholas** held in 2016. In May he'll be visiting English students of the Zasopka village school just outside Chita and also students at the Chita Institute of Baikal State University. He has been invited to participate in the Decembrist Festival and Conference in Petrovsk-Zabaikalsky and do that as a representative of Siberian Bridges, presenting a gift to the Decembrist Museum in the town. He may also perform a full piano recital as an addendum to the festival—plans are still in the works.



One of the amazing holiday cards!

NOTES ON “UNITY” CHILDREN’S CENTER

- **Natalya Skliarova**, Director of the Center, was specially requested as a representative of one of the region’s most successful Children’s Centers (orphanages) to attend a conference in the Vladivostok on issues relating to the Centers. Upon her return she held a meeting at the her Center of its Trustees focusing on hobby groups (“krushki,” eg. afterschool crafts, painting, performing arts, etc.) and their value in addressing needs of the children. After reporting on their work, Natalya sent the Trustees to visit various “krushki” where the children shared their endeavors. The value of these groups shown brightly in a case where 2 new girls recently arrived at the Center were particularly arrogant and aloof. But, thanks to these “krushki” one of the girls is now singing and dancing and the other is helping emcee the concerts.



A "krushki" at the Center--boy's playing folk instruments

- In April, the 2nd round of a major regional competition between Children’s Centers was held in Petrovsk-Zabaikalsky. The town’s own “Unity” Children’s Center participated, competing in all categories: from choreographic design to literary reading, vocal group singing, preservation of traditions, crafts, needlework, and many others, winning 9 of 11 categories and receiving thunderous applause! The “home team” acquitted itself admirably! Their greatest victory, however, was being awarded overall winner for their creativity and their active participation.
- **Vitaly and Zoya**, past winners in the “You Are Super!” nationally televised children’s singing competition, are again in Moscow rehearsing



Vitaly and Zoya singing last summer at the Center

for this year's round. Download our Fall 2017 newsletter for news on their first successes.

- *Children at the Center recently created in their own "KVN" (Club of Funny and Inventive People). KVN is a favorite, long-standing humor show and competition on TV—begun back in the time of the Soviet Union—where teams, usually college students, compete by giving comic answers to questions and performing prepared sketches. The children's own KVN speaks to the creativity and imaginative play that Natalya and her staff are developing in these children.*
- *On a related note, **Sergey Davydov**, founder of the Academy of Health in Chita, the city's best private medical facility, was asked to serve as the Minister of Health. After serving for almost three years, he has returned to lead the Academy. Because of Davydov's innate humanitarian nature, this a world class medical facility has been a longtime supporter of the "Unity" Children's Center, providing material and professional support to that under-resourced place.*

PROFILE
ALEXANDRA KOULLICK



•
Chuck Ritchie reporting--
Meet Alexandra (Sasha) Koullick, Siberian Bridges' new, enthusiastic volunteer. Sasha is finishing her junior year at the Blake School in Minneapolis where she is actively involved outside of the classroom. She is captain of the cross country team, plays ultimate Frisbee, is a Nordic skier, works on the staff of the student publication Flash, and also participates in a feminist club called "Girl Up", which raises funds to support feminist groups and activities.

Hers is a fascinating linguistic story. Her father is a physicist from Ukraine and her mother is a chemist from Moscow emigrating to the US in 2000. Russian is her native language and remains the primary language

spoken at home. However, when she began school her parents enrolled her at Xin Xing Academy in Hopkins, a Chinese immersion school, where she learned Chinese from the age of 5 to 13. Her fascination with the Chinese language and culture led her to China in the fall of 2017 to participate in an international Chinese contest with participants from over one hundred countries. Those three weeks in China proved a pivotal experience, as she saw people from the world over are not that different. At the same time she came to realize the power and the importance of language in a closely connected global world. Her fluency in three languages (did we mention English?) shows her outlook is anything but provincial!

Beyond her senior year she is looking for a college with a strong Economics/Business curriculum, as well as a challenging East Asian Studies program.

When asked why she is interested and involved in Siberian Bridges, she affirmed the value of our mission to foster contact and cooperation between the people of Zabaikalye, Russia and the Upper Midwest, citing the importance of our relationship with Russia in the world today.

Her initial participation was at last fall's Tri-Country Video Conference put on by ex-officio SB board member, Professor Irene Durancyk of the University of Minnesota between students

from Dalian, China, Chita, Russia and local students from the U of M and area high schools. As you might imagine Sasha was invaluable with the three languages rolling around in her head!

Since then she has taken on an SB project of editing and transcribing short video clips of native English speakers from here that are then sent to ESL teachers in Chita for use in their classrooms. (In fact, we encourage any of you to submit such a clip—contact us for details.) She has also struck up a digital friendship with a young student in Chita named Polina. And her weekly meetings with Tom, our President, have helped him keep up-to-date with the projects on his plate.

Needless to say, we are delighted and energized to have Sasha with Siberian Bridges!

TUSOVKA AND RECIPE!

Janet Stewart reporting--



SB Treasurer Judy Boudreau toasting at our 2018 tusovka

Last December, we hosted a *tusovka*, or Russian dinner party, for some of our valued supporters. It was a magical evening of wining, dining, and storytelling where all things—stomachs, minds, and hearts—were filled to the brim. We toasted the night away enjoying authentic Russian dishes such as “Herring Under a Coat,” stuffed eggs, breads, shashlik, Russian torte, shchee, prianiki, Central Asian pilaf (plov), pickles and relishes and more. In

memory of all these delicious eats, we thought we’d share one of our favorite Russian recipes, Seledka pod shuboi. We hope you enjoy it!

Селедка под шубой (Seledka pod shuboi or “Herring Under a Fur Coat”)

This festive and beautiful traditional dish gets its name from the many layers of shredded vegetables that lay on top of the herring. Everyone has their own method. Here’s one:

- 2 medium beets
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled
- 2 medium carrots, peeled & halved crosswise
- 2 hard-boiled eggs
- finely chopped salt or pickled herring
- 1/4 C minced onion
- 1/4 C canola oil
- 2 TBS chopped dill, plus sprigs for garnish
- 1/2 C mayonnaise
- Salt & pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 450°. Wrap the beets in foil and roast for about 1 hour, until tender. Let cool slightly, then peel.
2. Meanwhile, in a saucepan, cover the potatoes and carrots with water and boil until tender, about 15 minutes for the carrots and 20 minutes for the potatoes. Let cool to

room temperature. Grate the potatoes on the medium holes of a box grater and transfer to a small bowl. Repeat with the carrots and beets, keeping the vegetables in separate bowls. (Careful fine chopping also works.)

3. Halve the eggs. Push the egg whites through a fine sieve into a small bowl. Clean the sieve, then push the yolks through into another small bowl. (Careful chopping also works.)

4. In another bowl, mix the herring with the onion, oil and chopped dill.

5. In a small bowl, mix the mayonnaise with 2 TBS of the grated beets.

6. Place a 4-inch round ring mold in the center of a serving plate. Using the back of a spoon, spread 1/4 of the potatoes inside the mold in an even layer. Season with salt. Spread one-fourth of the herring mixture on top in an even layer. Repeat the layering with 1/4 each of the carrots and beets. Season with salt. Spread 2 TBS of the beet mayonnaise on top. Garnish with some of the egg whites, egg yolks and dill sprigs. Refrigerate for at least 6 hours before serving.



Приятного аппетита!
(Priyatno appetita! Bon Appetit!)

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IN MEMORIAM

*We at Siberian Bridges are saddened by the passing of a good friend and supporter, **Lucy Hartwell**. She followed our endeavors at Siberian Bridges with great interest and compassion. She particularly wanted to know how the children were doing at the Center, not surprisingly, because Lucy was acutely responsive to those in need. Hers was a kind and gentle heart, and we feel blessed to have merited her attention and generous support.*

Thank you Lucy.

