

Book Proposal

Author	Kseniia Bolshakova
Title (en)	All the Frost Melts
Genre	Autofiction
Original edition	Digital copy
Original language	Dolgan
Available translations	English (100%), Russian (100%), Finnish (100%), Norwegian (100%), Swedish (80%), Northern Sámi (80%), Italian (80%)
Awaiting publications	In Norwegian by <i>Spartacus Forlag (Forente Forlag AS)</i> In Finnish by <i>Suomen Rauhanpuolustajat ry</i> in collaboration with <i>Rosebud Books Oy</i> In Northern Sámi by <i>ABC-Company E-skuvla AS</i> In Italian by <i>Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore</i>
Recognition	Recognized by inclusion in the <i>IBBY-UNESCO Collection of Remarkable Books for Young Readers in Indigenous and Endangered Languages</i> and will be presented at the IBBY 40th World Congress in Ottawa, Canada, on 6–9 August 2026; All-Russia creative writing award <i>Young Northerners about their Peoples</i> in 2021
First public presentation	United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues , New York, April 2024
Volume in English	16 chapters; 218,68 words; 121,038 characters (including spaces)
Illustrations	46 (negotiable)
Target audience	Adult and older young adult readers of literary nonfiction, memoir, Indigenous writing, and environmental literature. The book will especially appeal to readers interested in Arctic Indigenous communities, endangered languages, decolonial perspectives, reindeer-herding cultures, climate change, and the survival of traditional knowledge.
Secondary audience	Scholars, students, activists, and educators working in Indigenous studies, Arctic studies, environmental humanities, decolonial studies, translation studies, and language revitalization.
Key words	Indigenous literature, women's writing, Arctic, Siberia, reindeer-herding, Indigenous languages, Indigenous rights, decolonization, climate change, melting permafrost, Indigenous boarding schools
Funding	At present, I do not have secured funding for this project. However, the English translation of the book has already been completed,

	which significantly reduces the amount of funding needed to move the project forward.
Translation into English	Ainsley E. Morse , literary translator and associate professor at the Department of Literature at UC San Diego
Previously published excerpts in English (~ 25%)	I retain all copyright and publication rights; no copyright or exclusive publication rights have been transferred. Chapter 8. Rajden / Köös / Reindeer Caravan // The Non-Russian Russia: Decolonial Literatures / Det icke-ryska Ryssland: ur de dekoloniala litteraturerna, ISBN 9789187605659, pp. 36-41, 2024; Chapter 13. Freedom / Köñül / Svoboda (in English, Dolgan and Russian) // Words Without Borders. Fifty States, Many Languages: Writing from the US, July 2025; Chapter 16. Akko Hire / Akko's Earth (in Dolgan and English) // Arctic and Circumpolar Indigenous Futurisms. Bikuben Foundation and the Nordic Culture Fund, pp. 43-54, 2024.
Previous publications in other languages	Buluus da irer / I merzlota taet (in Dolgan and Russian). Full Edition Krasnoyarsk, Ofset, 240 pages, 2024, ISBN 978-5-6051997-6-2; Buluus da irer / I merzlota taet (in Dolgan and Russian). Adaptation Edition. Krasnoyarsk, Ofset, 212 pages, 2024, ISBN 978-5-6051997-5-5; <i>Belek / The Gift</i> (in Dolgan and Russian) // Külük. A collection of works by authors from the Republic of Sakha on art, culture, and global phenomena. Khallaan Ettige, pp. 112-117, 2024.
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Author's biography

Kseniia Bolshakova is an Indigenous activist and writer. She is a cofounder and board member of [PEN Languages of Russia](#). The writer is a member of the Dolgan Tribal community lydyna, born and raised in the Dolgan village and tundra of Popigai in the Russian Arctic. She is one of the youngest language keepers of the Dolgan language community, which counts only 800 people.

After being detained during protests against Russian aggression in Ukraine, Kseniia Bolshakova moved to the United States for safety reasons. In the US, she served as the Indigenous youth focal point for Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, Central Asia, and Transcaucasia at the United Nations in 2023–2025.

Translator's biography

Ainsley Morse teaches in the Literature department at UC San Diego and translates from Russian, Ukrainian and the languages of former Yugoslavia. Selected translations include the Yugoslav surrealist-Marxist children's poem *Fine Feats of the Five Cockerels Gang* (Brill 2022); the Odesan poet Maria Galina's *Communiqués* (Cicada Press 2024) and the novels of early Leningrad modernist Konstantin Vaginov (NYRB Classics, 2025). She was co-editor of the anthology *F-Letter: New Russian Feminist Poetry* (isolarii, 2020), and poetry translations editor for *Ukrainian Soviet Modernism: Texts and Contexts* (ASP, 2025).

Book annotation

All The Frost Melts explores the fate of Arctic Indigenous nomads through the personal story of a child raised in a traditional reindeer herding family in the tundra. The novel is about the forever that is becoming finite: permafrost, tundra, reindeer herding, and native language. Both the child and adult voices of the author reflect in the novel on the far-reaching effects of ongoing colonization and assimilation.

The novel encapsulates all the aspects of the life of Arctic Indigenous Peoples: mortal dangers and miraculous rescues in tundra, faith in spirits and communal solidarity, raising of a sacred reindeer and slaughter of a reindeer bull, ice fishing and goose hunting, lassoing games and snowmobile races, household and spiritual taboos, ecological challenges and social hardships.

The narrative ends with a scene in which a helicopter takes a Dolgan girl from her reindeer camp to a remote boarding school for Indigenous children. The book will make any reader, regardless of their ethnic background, reflect on the fact that even eternal permafrost may one day thaw.

Brief précis for each chapter.

1. The Forever and the Finite

The opening chapter introduces the North as a colonial and contested concept, often associated with outsiders, extraction, and conquest rather than with the Indigenous peoples who have always lived there. It also introduces the Dolgan people, the narrator's family, and the world of reindeer herding that shaped her childhood.

2. A Stop at the End of the Road

In this chapter, the reader enters the calm, severe world of a winter tundra journey. The family travels by snowmobile and sledge to a hunters' stopping place, known among the Dolgans as a "stop." On the way, the young narrator falls out of the sledge and has to follow the tracks through the snow on her own.

3. I Didn't Let Myself Think About Death

This chapter reveals the extreme conditions of reindeer-herding life in the tundra, where survival depends on deep knowledge of nature, attention to the wind, and respect for the land. The central story follows the narrator's grandfather, who survives several days in a blizzard after becoming separated from the camp. His survival becomes a lesson in

Indigenous knowledge, endurance, and spiritual strength.

4. A Split Second

The chapter begins with the games available to children in the tundra: sledding, ice-skating on frozen ponds, playing with lassoes, and imagining other worlds through films. The child's joyful perspective gradually shifts into an adult reflection on assimilation, the collapse of reindeer-herding life, boarding schools, Russification, and the question of whether young Dolgans can still remain Dolgan.

5. A Gift

This chapter explores the relationship between Dolgan reindeer herders and their reindeer, as well as the customs of gift-giving, sharing, reciprocity, and taboo. Through the story of Tugut, a beloved white pet reindeer, the chapter shows that reindeer are not only a source of food, transport, clothing, and shelter, but also companions and healers.

6. The Long Short Day

By describing a single day in the life of a reindeer-herding family, this chapter reveals the labor required to live in the tundra. From breakfast in the nomad dwelling on sledge runners to catching and harnessing reindeer, checking fishing nets, preparing fish, feeding the dogs, and making radio contact with relatives in the village, every part of the day has its own place. The short daylight hours shape the entire routine of survival.

7. Breath

This short chapter tells the story of a baby hare found in the tundra and brought into the nomad dwelling by the narrator and her sister. Although the children become attached to the animal, the grandmother reminds them that wild animals belong in nature. The hare dies before reaching its first summer, and the story becomes a quiet reflection on the harshness of tundra life and the limits of human intervention.

8. Reindeer Caravan

This chapter describes how Dolgan reindeer herders migrate from one camp to another, moving their nomad dwellings, sledges, household goods, and entire lives across the tundra. During the caravan journey, the young narrator reflects on her language, her appearance, and the everyday racism experienced by Dolgan children. The chapter connects the movement of the reindeer caravan with the coming separation of boarding school, where the narrator fears losing her language and becoming Russian.

9. The Taste of Life

This chapter describes Dolgan foodways through the slaughter of a reindeer, the careful division of the carcass, and the preparation of blood sausage and other delicacies. The matter-of-fact description of slaughter shows how Dolgan children understand death, necessity, gratitude, and survival. Killing an animal is not presented as cruelty, but as part of a respectful relationship with the reindeer, whose life passes into the people who depend on it.

10. Bear of the North

The chapter begins with the narrator waiting impatiently in the village to return to the tundra, while the thawing ice delays the journey. The chapter then turns into a tense

story about a snowmobile falling through the river ice, showing the danger of seasonal transitions and the fragility of travel between village and tundra.

11. In the Frost's Womb

This chapter takes the reader into an underground frost tunnel used as a natural freezer for fish and meat. From this intimate domestic space, the chapter expands into a reflection on climate change, melting permafrost, wildfires, floods, warming winters, and the disappearance of the conditions that once made Dolgan life possible.

12. Holes in the Hide

The chapter begins with the everyday work of chopping and hauling river ice for drinking, cooking, washing, and the sweat house. It then moves into a childhood sledding scene, where children slide down hills on reindeer hides during the polar night. The image of a reindeer hide full of holes becomes a metaphor for the starry sky and, later, for the fragility of the Dolgan people: each life is part of a small constellation.

13. Freedom

This chapter follows the narrator and her friend Lulu as they ride a snowmobile through the village and into the tundra. Their childlike adventure is interwoven with a sharp political reflection on the loss of Dolgan autonomy, the annexation of Taimyr, extractive industries, unemployment, state restrictions, poverty, and the erosion of Indigenous rights. The joy of the ride contrasts with the reality of a people whose freedom has been systematically taken away.

14. Kyulyulyuk

In this summer chapter, the narrator joins relatives during goose-hunting season. Children make goose decoys from plywood and clay, play in the mud, suffer small injuries, drink tea in the tundra, and call geese using the sound “kyulyulyuk.” The chapter combines humor, bodily experience, family warmth, and hunting knowledge, while showing how children absorb tundra skills through participation rather than formal teaching.

15. Broken Heart

This chapter centers on a berry-picking trip, especially the exhausting work of gathering blueberries for winter jam. What begins as a family outing becomes a frightening but humorous episode when the family mistakes an eagle and its chicks for a bear.

16. Akko's Earth

The final chapter brings together the personal, historical, and political threads of the book. The narrator visits Lulu's reindeer-herding camp before being taken away by helicopter to boarding school. Akko gives her a small bag of tundra earth to hold close to her heart when life becomes difficult. The chapter then expands into a history of colonization, collectivization, repression, industrial extraction, the decline of reindeer herding, and the struggle of the Dolgan people to survive without losing their land, language, and identity.