



# SAKHA

## SOME USEFUL PHRASES IN SAKHA

**Дорообо. Аатым Дьоон.**

[doro:bo. a:tum jo:n.]

/Doroobo. Aatim Dyoon./

*Hi. My name is John.*

**Аатын кимий?**

[a:tun kimi:ʔ]

/Aating kimiy?/

*What is your name?*

**Эн дьыалан хайдаый?**

[en djalang xaidayɯt.]

/En dyialang khaidaghiy?/

*How are you doing?*

**Махтал, үчүгэй. Оттон эн?**

[maxtal, uʧugei. ot:on enʔ]

/Makh-tal, uchugey. Otton en?/

*I'm fine, thanks. And you?*

**Эһиги хантан сылдыбыт?**

[ehigi xantan silɯɟayutʔ]

/Ehigi khantan sil-dya-ghit?/

*Where are you from?*

**Мин Индианаттан сылдыбын.**

[min indianat:an silɯɟabɯn.]

/Min Indianattan sil-dya-bin./

*I'm from Indiana.*

**Уборнай ханна баар?**

[ubornai xan:a ba:rʔ]

/Ubornay khanna baar?/

*Where is the bathroom?*

**Эйиэхэ улахан баһыыба биэрнэм.**

[eiɯekhe ulaxan bahɯ:ba biernem.]

/Eyiekhe ulakhan bahiiba biernem./

*Thank you very much.*

**Көрсүһүөххэ диэри.**

[kørsyhyøx:e dieri.]

/Korsuhuokh-khe dieri./

*Good bye.*

## FIVE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD LEARN MORE ABOUT SAKHA AND THEIR LANGUAGE

1. The Yakut population is estimated to be about 500,000, and can be found mostly in Russia, specifically in the Sakha Republic, also known as Yakutia.
2. A member of the Northern Turkic language group, Sakha shares many structural similarities to other Altaic languages (such as agglutinative, SOV structure, vowel harmony, etc.). Sakha is most closely related to Shor, Dolgan, and Tuvan, other Turkic languages spoken in Russia.
3. The Sakha Republic is the largest of the 10 autonomous republics in the Russian Federation. Covering nearly 1.2 million square miles, it is only slightly smaller than the whole country of India.
4. Oymyakon, in the Sakha Republic, has the lowest recorded temperature in history at -90 degrees F on February 6, 1933, and averages -58 degrees F during the winter.
5. The Yakutian horse comes from the Sakha Republic. It is a small, sturdy horse with a thick mane and heavy coat, which makes it very adaptable for living in the extreme cold climate of the area.

## ABOUT US

The Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR) at Indiana University develops materials for learning and teaching a wide variety of Central Asian languages.

For more information, go to [celcar.indiana.edu](http://celcar.indiana.edu).



238 Eigenmann Hall, 1900 East 10th Street,  
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47406  
Phone: (812) 856-1230  
E-mail : [celcar@indiana.edu](mailto:celcar@indiana.edu)  
Website: <https://celcar.indiana.edu>



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Central Asian Region (CeLCAR)

## WHO ARE THE YAKUTS AND WHERE DO THEY LIVE?



Yakuts, are a Turkic people living in Russia. Historically, the Yakuts occupied the middle Lena River area in Siberian, but

over the last few centuries they have expanded throughout the Sakha Republic located in the far northeast area of Russia. Geographically, the Sakha Republic, also commonly referred to as Yakutia, is located on the Laptev and East Siberian Seas and shares borders with the Chukotka, Magadan Oblast, Khabarovsk Krai, Amur Oblast, Zabaykalsky Krai, Irkutsk Oblast, and Krasnoyarsk Krai. It is the largest yet most sparsely populated of Russia's districts.

Today, the Yakut population is estimated to be about 500,000 with approximately 95% living in Russia (mostly in Yakutia, but also in the Amur, Magadan, Sakhalin, Taimyr, and Evenki regions), with the other 5% of the population distributed among the United States, Canada, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine.

## WHAT KIND OF LANGUAGE IS SAKHA?



Sakha belongs to the Altaic group of languages, which includes languages such as Turkish, Mongolian, and arguably Korean and Japanese. Altaic languages have historically been

spoken across areas of Asia and Eastern Europe, and are named after the Altai Mountains in Central Asia. More specifically, Sakha belongs to the Northern branch of the Turkic language family, which also includes Shor and Dolgan, spoken in Russia, and Tuvan, spoken in Russia, Mongolia, and China. Yakut has two main dialects: Central (comprised of the Aldan, Eastern, and Western Lena varieties) and the Peripheral dialect (comprised of the northeastern and northwestern varieties).

Similar to other Altaic languages, Sakha uses a subject-object-verb word order and is an agglutinative language, where one root word has multiple suffixes added to indicate discrete grammatical functions. And like many other Central Asian languages, Sakha features vowel harmony, wherein the vowel quality of a vowel in a word directly affects the vowel quality of the other vowels within the word.



## WHAT ALPHABET DO THE YAKUTS USE?

Yakut was first written in the 17th century using a modified version of the Cyrillic alphabet. For a short period in the early 19th century, Yakuts adopted a modified Latin alphabet. However, they switched back to using a Cyrillic based alphabet in 1939 under the Soviet Union. This modern alphabet, known as the Sakha alphabet, consists of the usual Russian Cyrillic characters but with the addition of five letters: Ыы, Өө, Өө, Һһ, and Үү.

Although 12 of the letters of the alphabet are used only in Russian loanwords.

## WHAT IS YAKUT CULTURE LIKE?

The Yakut people are historically hunters and fisherman in addition to raising livestock, mainly horse, cattle, and reindeer. In fact, their reliance on raising livestock directly influences Sakha cuisine which is rich in meat dishes, including



*oyogos* (young horse ribs), *khan* (white blood sausage), boiled intensities, sliced liver, and boiled tongue. Additionally, due to its location on the Laptev and East Siberian Seas and its landscape filled with copious rivers and lakes, Yakuts cuisine also incorporates a lot of seafood. And like many Central Asian cultures, Yakuts also enjoy drinking *kumis*, a fermented milk drink made from horse or reindeer milk. In fact, Yakuts even have a popular dessert called *kuerchekh* made from kumis and berries.

The traditional religion of Yakuts is a form of Shamanism focusing on the existence of supernatural good and evil spirits in the universe. However, today, many Yakuts have converted to Russian Orthodox Christianity.

Furthermore, like many Turkic peoples, Yakuts have relied on storytelling through epic poems to preserve their history. The most famous of the Yakuts is the *Olonkho*, which has over 36,000 verses and tells the story of the numerous legends, warriors, deities, spirits, and animals in their history.

