



Wide Ponoï River during summer. Photo: Snowchange, 2015

Snowchange Discussion Paper #6 – ‘Flow of Life’: Photo Essay of the Ponoï River Workshops, December 2014 to January 2015

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1. Introduction

Snowchange Co-op, together with the Lovozero's Center for Development of Leisure and Culture - HOC, organized new sets of workshops in December and January, devoted to the dissemination of the Ponoï river 2006-2015 project posters², titled '*Flow of Life*'. The purpose was to present the main results of the project to the general public.



Participants of the opening of the Exhibition in Lovozero. Photo: Snowchange, 2015

All in all the following events were organized:

21.12.2014 – Opening of the posters exhibition "*Flow of Life - the River Ponoï*" (participants discussed what they learned from the posters at the round-table discussion) in remote Krasnoshelie village along the Ponoï River.

21.12.2014 - Opening of the posters exhibition "*Flow of Life*" in Lovozero, municipal center, the "Sámi capital of Kola Peninsula".

30.12.2014, 04.01.2015, 08.01.2015 – Exhibition was shown to groups of tourists from Murmansk, traveling by snowmobile to Krasnoshchelië.

29.01.2015 – Educational program for children "*Journey by the River Ponoï*" (in Lovozero's HOC)

12.02.2015 – Round table "*Flow of Life - the River Ponoï*" in Lovozero. The residents of Krasnoshchelië and Kanevka attended the meeting.

² http://www.snowchange.org/pages/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/19082014_pieni.pdf

Overall, in the workshops, the following topics were discussed:

- To inform general public about Snowchange Cooperative;
- To inform residents about the processes occurring in the catchment area of Ponoï according to posters materials;
- To highlight to the participants, who attended the meetings of Lovozero, Krasnoshelie, Kanevka and Sosnovka of the importance of personal participation and care in future of the river Ponoï.

2. Workshop with Children in Lovozero, 29th January 2015

On January 29th, 2015 the poster materials were discussed together with a total of nine children in Lovozero HOC.



*Children learning about the Ponoï River at HOC.
Photo: Snowchange, 2015*



Then the children had a chance to learn and contribute to the biodiversity 'mapping' of the catchment area. Photo: Snowchange, 2015



The result was a rich tapestry of human settlements along the Ponoï and animals, fish, birds, including the reindeer, burbot, Atlantic salmon, spruce trees, capercaillie and other local species. Photo: Snowchange, 2015



The 'map' was ready. Photo: Snowchange, 2015

3. The Workshops in the Remote Wilderness Villages of Ponoï



*A local resident reviewing the posters in remote wilderness village of Kanevka.
Photo: Snowchange, 2015*

The posters provided an overview of the main themes of the longstanding research by Snowchange and provided results of the 2006-2015 work, which is very important for ordinary villagers. During the community workshops the posters became the main source of information and discussions.



*Tourists at remote wilderness village of Kanevka.
Photo: Snowchange, 2015*

Poster exhibitions were held in the Lovozero's Center for Development of Leisure and Culture - HOC, the Ethno-cultural center of Krasnoshcheliye and HOC's village club in Kanevka.



*Local boys studying the posters in
the remote wilderness village of Krasnochelye.
Photo: Snowchange, 2015*

A very important theme that emerged was that the residents of the villages could understand, why they were interviewed by Snowchange in previous years³, the significance of the research and that their voices are heard and considered important.



*Local people at the opening of the exhibition in remote wilderness village of Krasnochelye.
Photo: Snowchange, 2015*

³ All research is conducted according to standard Indigenous and social science methods and results taken back to the interviewed people in Snowchange work. However, people who were spoken to as far back as in 2006 could now see the long history of the project and their participation contributing to it.

4. Workshop in the Regional Center, Lovozero – Return to Ponoï ?

At the round table, which took place on February 12th, 2015 residents of Lovozero, Krasnoshchelië and Kanevka took part, including mr. Nikolay Ivanovitch Kurzenev - the head of the Lovozero village municipal administration.



The Ponoï roundtable attracted a lot of participants. Photo: Snowchange, 2015

As one of the conclusions of the conversation, participants considered the Ponoï River to have a sacred status, especially for residents of Krasnoshchelië, Kanevka and former village Ponoï.



Posters reviewed during the roundtable. Photo: Snowchange, 2015

Posters exhibition, as well as the results of Snowchange research have been a catalyst of deep feelings and stirred up strong emotions. Round table participants felt free to express their views openly and directly, rejecting fears and concerns.



A summer view of the now abandoned village of Ponoï at the extreme Eastern point of Kola Peninsula. Photo: Snowchange, 2015

Main topics of the Lovozero Roundtable included the importance of preservation small villages like Kanevka and Sosnovka. Even the prospect of reviving the village Ponoï, as well as accessibility issues on Ponoï River and river's future were discussed.

Loss of traditional forms of land use such as fishing and reindeer herding in the catchment area of Ponoï River was seen as one of the negative phenomena affecting the life of the river.



Another summer view of the now abandoned village of Ponoï at the extreme Eastern point of Kola Peninsula. Photo: Snowchange, 2015

But words alone are not enough to revive fishing brigades. Along with traditional knowledge people need to know basics of running a modern-time business.

As for tourism - only the development of ecological tourism should be the priority for the river. To solve these issues, authorities at various levels should listen to local people; hear their opinions before taking any decisions.

The participants had noted the importance of Snowchange research work, expressed hope for Snowchange research work would continue.

In Lovozero there's a community of former residents of Ponoï village, who were resettled in 1969-1977. Many of them often visit their relatives in the villages of Sosnovka, Kanévka, Krasnoshchelié.

Many residents of Krasnoshchelié, upon reaching retirement age, move to live to Lovozero. All of them were concerned with the future of Ponoï River. Many of these people have valuable traditional knowledge for future work.

5. Concluding Thoughts and Future Steps in the Work for Spring and Summer 2015

We plan to continue this work in spring and summer 2015 - due to the seasonal residency of the local inhabitants in Sosnovka, opening of the exhibition and discussions on "Flow of Life - the River Ponoï" is scheduled to take place in March 2015 and again in the summer months.

During summer we plan to organize educational program for children "*Journey by the River Ponoï*" in Krasnoshelie, Kanevka and Sosnovka.

It is important to work also with the tourists from Murmansk region and to share poster information with them, because they are one of the most effective mechanisms to spread information about the uniqueness of the River Ponoï and the wilderness settlements.

These posters will help to shape respectful attitude to the Ponoï river area and increase the responsibility of the local people for the preservation and development of the river in the future.



River Ponoï in summer, close to the delta. Photo: Snowchange, 2015

Snowchange Co-op expresses utmost thanks to the local coordinators and HOC, as well as all the participants of the December – January 2015 workshops in Kanevka, Krasnochelye and Lovozero.