

## The Nanai of Russia and China



photo by The Seed Co.

Nanai people live in Vostok, the Russian Far East and some in China. Of 12,000 who are Nanai ethnically, only 1,390 still speak the Nanai language.

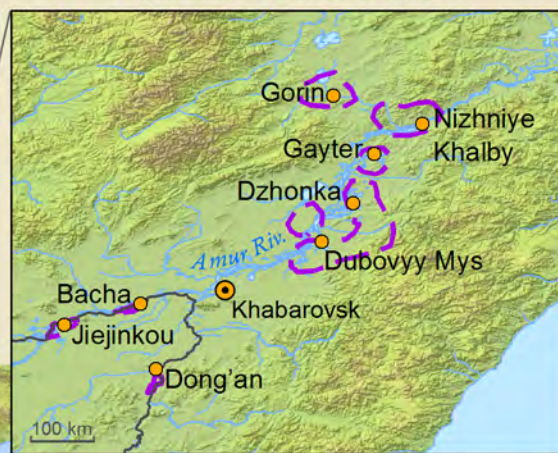
Spring comes late to Nanai country. Ice on the Amur River can be 3 feet thick after a winter where temperatures plummet to 40 degrees below zero. Yet life thrives here. Ice fishermen find success even on the coldest days. In the bustling village of Troitskoye, parents don't push strollers. They pull sleds. And inside the Full Gospel Church about 25 believers gather to worship. The congregation reflects the areas mix of people—the ancient Nanai culture and the modern Russian culture.

The main road runs parallel to the Amur River through a vast birch forest. Villages are 20 kilometers apart, spaced originally as winter resting points for horses and riders.

Fishing frames life for most in this region. In September, when the red salmon run, everyone is at the river. A few weeks work provides families with enough fish for the long winter and beyond. For those who fish commercially, it provides an income stream.

The village of Troitskoye is only a 3-1/2 hour drive on good roads from Khabarovsk, the biggest city in the Russian Far East. When children grow up and move from their small villages to Khabarovsk for school and career opportunities, they assimilate into the Russian culture—including, sometimes into Christian churches. For them reading Bible stories in Russian presents no barrier. But for the elderly Nanai people, those stories are part of a culture not their own. Up river reindeer herders roam the tundra. But across the region this people group's traditions, stories and language are disappearing. So rather than translating the Nanai language into written scripture, translation is in oral stories. The older people who still speak Nanai have a hard time learning to read their language but hearing it orally is appreciated instead.

### NANAI HOMELAND



**Primary Religion:**

Christianity

**Disciples (Matt 28:19):**

Percent unknown

**Churches:**

Yes

**Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):**

None

**Population (date):**

12,000 (2010)

