

Ethnopoetic philology and the power of narrative for endangered voices

(Alexander D. King, Franklin & Marshall College, USA)

Ethnopoetics lies at the juncture of linguistics, comparative literature, anthropology, and activist politics. It is more of an approach than a discipline, and was inspired by the realization that indigenous oral literature, or ‘orature’ was of equal literary merit to that of the ancient and modern literary languages. Ethnopoetic analysis requires close attention to the form and performance of oral narratives, looking for patterning in phonology, morphology, syntax, as well as repetitions in word use and larger units. I will present some examples of the power of stories in the lives of Koryaks, who are indigenous to Kamchatka, Russia. The material comes from a documentation project by Valentina R. Dedyk and me (funded by a grant from the Endangered Languages Documentation Project).