

The New Policy Framework for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Peoples in Russia: Strategic Shifts in the Arctic Context

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Abstract

This article presents a systematic analysis of the updated *Policy Framework for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation*, adopted in May 2025 and in force through 2036. The document is viewed as a strategic governance tool that reflects a shift in state ethno-policy towards internal mobilization, institutionalization of engagement with Indigenous communities, and the inclusion of the Arctic among Russia's national security priorities. The analysis compares the 2025 version with its 2009 predecessor, identifying major changes in substantive priorities, legal and digital infrastructure, implementation mechanisms, and the extent to which Indigenous peoples are involved in the social, economic, and spatial development of the Arctic. Special attention is given to the Arctic vector, the economic role of Indigenous peoples, the governance model, and demographic dynamics. The study concludes that Russian ethno-policy is transitioning from a declarative approach to an instrumental one in the context of a shifting geopolitical environment.

Keywords

2025 Framework for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Peoples; Arctic; ethno-policy; sustainable development; Russia's national strategy.

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Introduction

In May 2025, the Government of the Russian Federation adopted a new Policy Framework for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation, which will remain in force until 2036 (Government of the Russian Federation, 2009). This document replaced the earlier version adopted in 2009 (Government of the Russian Federation, 2009) (hereinafter referred to as the 2009 Framework). The updated version (hereinafter the 2025 Framework) reflects a significant reorientation of Russia's strategic policy priorities toward Indigenous peoples in the context of evolving domestic and international circumstances. The 2025 Framework functions as a strategic governance document, integrating ethno-policy into the broader system of national priorities — including Arctic, demographic, and digital dimensions.

The relevance of analyzing the 2025 Framework lies in the shift in governmental planning logic concerning Indigenous peoples, particularly in light of priority economic projects being implemented on their traditional territories. The document has become an important element of Russia's strategic agenda to strengthen its presence in the Arctic — a region now officially designated as a key vector of national development. This development is especially significant against the backdrop of recent geopolitical shifts and increasing external pressure.

Compared to the 2009 Framework, the 2025 version is marked by a strong Arctic orientation, full integration into the strategic governance hierarchy, and the use of terminology associated with technological transformation and performance measurement through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). At the same time, it includes almost no references to international commitments, UN legal standards, or mechanisms of external cooperation. This may indicate a reorientation of Russian ethno-policy toward domestic regulatory mechanisms, aimed at reducing dependence on international legal frameworks.

The objective of this article is to conduct a systematic analysis of the 2025 Framework, identify its key institutional and substantive features, and track the dynamics of change compared to the 2009 version. The analysis focuses on the evolution of policy objectives concerning Indigenous peoples, the restructuring of the governance model, the expansion of digital and legal regulatory instruments, and the strengthening of the economic and ideological components of ethno-policy. Special attention is given to the Arctic as a region of strategic significance, serving as a spatial backbone of national resilience.

Methodologically, this study is based on comparative analysis of the content of both versions of the Framework, incorporating elements of discourse and institutional analysis. This approach makes it possible not only to identify formal differences between the documents but also to interpret the 2025 Framework as a reflection of broader transformations in state policy on Indigenous affairs.

This topic may be of particular interest to international researchers seeking to understand the trajectory of Russia's Arctic policy amid strategic realignment and a shifting global environment. The analysis of the 2025 Framework reveals the core domestic priorities and policy instruments shaping Russia's Arctic agenda under conditions of growing geopolitical uncertainty.

1. Evolution of Conceptual Foundations and Strategic Context

1.1. Comparative Analysis of the 2009 and 2025 Frameworks

The 2009 and 2025 Policy Frameworks for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation differ significantly in structure, content, and strategic priorities. The 2025 Framework is substantially more comprehensive, comprising 24 pages compared to 16 in the 2009 version. While retaining a six-chapter structure, it introduces a system of performance assessment using key indicators, digital monitoring tools, institutional mechanisms for implementation, and direct alignment with current strategic documents. Whereas the 2009 Framework was largely declarative, the 2025 version positions itself as an instrument of program-based planning and interagency coordination.

The document's rhetoric has also changed. The 2009 version emphasized social protection and cultural preservation, often through generalized language. In contrast, the 2025 Framework adopts the terminology of strategic governance, referencing interagency cooperation, KPIs, digital transformation, monitoring, indicators, and public accountability. This situates the Framework within the broader landscape of Russia's technocratic policy strategies at the federal level.

The document's substantive structure has become clearer and more systematic. Rather than a single overarching goal and a scattered set of seven objectives (as in 2009), the 2025 Framework articulates six strategic priorities that address environmental, economic, social, and cultural development. A monitoring system based on six categories of indicators (see Table 1a) is introduced, although specific target values are yet to be determined and will be defined in future regulations.

The organizational section has also been significantly revised. Unlike the 2009 version, which proposed a three-stage implementation process without defined mechanisms, the 2025 Framework identifies responsible institutions such as the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs (FADN) and the Ministry for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic of the Russian Federation. (Minvostokrazvitiya). It outlines forms of interagency coordination, the involvement of public councils, the use of digital databases, and mechanisms for oversight and accountability.

Greater emphasis is placed on the involvement of Indigenous organizations in the implementation of state policy. In contrast to the formal and limited mentions of communities and associations in 2009, the 2025 Framework highlights the central role of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East (RAIPON) as the state's primary partner. It foresees RAIPON's participation in business agreements, environmental consultations, advisory bodies, and international initiatives — including the educational project “School of Public Diplomacy,” aimed at preparing Indigenous representatives for engagement in international dialogue and contributing to Russia's humanitarian foreign policy agenda.

However, the 2025 text makes no reference to independent or alternative Indigenous organizations. Institutional representation is limited to state-aligned structures, indicating a tendency toward centralized and managed inclusion of Indigenous peoples within the ethno-policy system.

These institutional changes are accompanied by a redefinition of substantive priorities. The economic dimension is significantly expanded. While the 2009 Framework focused on supporting traditional forms of resource use and local infrastructure, the 2025 version emphasizes entrepreneurship, grant and leasing mechanisms, digitalization, and the integration of Indigenous peoples into value chains. Special attention is given to cooperation with registered residents of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation — commercial actors implementing investment projects under a preferential legal regime. These include enterprises in mining, fisheries, logistics, and tourism that benefit from tax breaks and administrative incentives. This enhanced economic integration of Indigenous communities into the Arctic aligns with a new geopolitical trajectory, in

which the Arctic is explicitly designated as a priority area of state Indigenous policy for the first time.

The 2025 Framework includes an expanded body of statistical data on Indigenous populations, including overall numbers, the number of registered communities, employment and birth rates, educational levels, and language preservation indicators (see Table 12). This empirical foundation is supplemented by an indicator system covering key dimensions of sustainable development and used to assess policy effectiveness.

One of the most important distinctions of the 2025 Framework is its incorporation into the broader political and legal architecture of state policy on Indigenous affairs. Unlike the neutral tone of the 2009 version, the updated document is aligned with major strategic acts, including:

1. Government Decree No. 207-r of 13 February 2019 — *On the Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation through 2025*, which emphasizes the socio-cultural and geographic characteristics of macro-regions (President of the Russian Federation, 2022);
2. Presidential Decree No. 645 of 26 October 2020 — *On the Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and National Security through 2035*, which stresses the balanced development of the Arctic, including Indigenous interests (President of the Russian Federation, 2020);
3. Presidential Decree No. 400 of 2 July 2021 — *On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation*, which defines internal resilience and sovereignty (President of the Russian Federation, 2021);
4. Presidential Directive No. 809-rp of 9 November 2022 — *On the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values*, setting value-based guidelines in areas such as family, continuity, and national identity (President of the Russian Federation, 2024);
5. Presidential Decree No. 309 of 25 March 2024 — *On the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation through 2036*, establishing priorities in demography, the economy, technological sovereignty, and spatial development (President of the Russian Federation, 2021).

At the same time, the 2025 Framework makes no reference to major international legal instruments on Indigenous rights, such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ((United Nations, 2007) or the International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 (International Labour Organization, 1989). This absence suggests a closed normative orientation focused on internal legal mechanisms.

In this sense, the 2025 Framework extends beyond humanitarian discourse to become a multi-functional instrument of state Arctic policy. Indigenous peoples are framed simultaneously as recipients of social support, economic actors, and elements of ideological consolidation. The document represents a broader strategic orientation aimed at internal mobilization amid geopolitical isolation and restricted international engagement.

Table 1. Key Differences Between the 2009 and 2025 Frameworks

Criterion	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Document Type	Social Protection Program	Strategic Governance Document
Priorities	Preservation of Traditional Lifestyles	Integration into National Development Strategies
Institutional Development	Basic Level	Formalized Interagency Architecture
Digitalization	Absent	Listed Among Priority Areas (e-services, telemedicine, registration)

Arctic Focus	Virtually Absent	Established as a Strategic Priority
Performance Indicators	Absent	KPI and Indicator System (no target values yet)
Humanitarian Orientation	Social and Cultural	Expanded to Include Economic and Geostrategic Dimensions
Statistical Basis	Fragmentary	Detailed, Includes Demographic and Economic Data
International Legal References	Mentioned Declaratively	Absent, Focus on Domestic Legal Norms

Table 1a. Performance Indicators for the Implementation of the 2025 Framework

No.	Indicator
1	Share of Protected Natural Areas in Indigenous Territories
2	Level of Satisfaction Among Indigenous Peoples with Support Measures
3	Availability of Social Infrastructure in Settlements
4	Number of Students Studying Indigenous Languages
5	Share of Indigenous Communities Receiving Economic Support
6	Number of Intangible Heritage Objects in the Federal Registry

1.2. Rationale for Updating the Framework and Mechanisms of Continuity

The revision of the Framework was necessitated by large-scale changes in demographic, climatic, social, and technological conditions, as well as by the growing importance of major economic projects in the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation, where Indigenous peoples reside. Key challenges identified include digital inequality, population outmigration (particularly of youth), declining intergenerational knowledge transmission, and the impact of climate change on traditional economic practices. These issues were either inadequately addressed in the 2009 version or mentioned only fragmentarily.

At the same time, the 2025 Framework does not reject the foundational goals of its predecessor but builds upon them as a logical continuation of the trajectory established in the 2009 edition. Legal and institutional continuity is maintained: Clause 4 emphasizes the connection to the previous version, and Clause 6 stipulates its expiration as of 1 January 2026.

Although the main priorities — protection of rights, traditional lifestyles, habitats, and livelihoods of Indigenous peoples — are preserved, the new edition significantly reinforces practical implementation mechanisms and cross-sectoral coordination. Special emphasis is placed on coordinated efforts between federal and regional authorities, primarily involving state-affiliated public organizations. The 2025 Framework introduces a renewed institutional model. Unlike its predecessor, which was largely programmatic in nature, the new version is structured as a strategic governance tool. These changes reflect an effort to adapt state policy to growing administrative complexity.

Thus, the 2025 Framework combines continuity with institutional renewal, marking a shift from declarative language to a more instrumental approach in ethno-policy amid structural and geopolitical challenges.

Table 2. Comparative Overview of the 2009 and 2025 Framework Provisions

Category	2009 Framework	2025 Framework	Comment
Legal Continuity	—	Yes	The new document officially replaces the previous one as of 1 January 2026
Goals	Rights protection, cultural and lifestyle preservation	Same goals, expanded to include economic and institutional integration	Core objectives retained, with greater emphasis on tools and implementation mechanisms

Implementation Approach	General statements, no tools	Cross-sectoral governance approach with KPIs and interagency coordination	Shift from declarative to strategic governance tool
Institutional Basis	Limited set of actors	Expanded: FADN, Ministry for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic of the Russian Federation, regions, councils, RAIPON, other bodies	Greater role for regions; formalized cooperation with associations and authorities
Indigenous Participation	Declared as a value	Embedded in implementation via agreements, representation, and education projects	Elevated role of Indigenous peoples as policy actors
Interagency Coordination	Absent or informal	Institutionalized: coordination, responsibility, monitoring	Included in the governance architecture
Strategic Integration	Not linked to other documents	Embedded in national strategic planning (Decree No. 309, Arctic Strategy, etc.)	Direct alignment with key national-level documents
New Challenges	Virtually unaddressed	Recognized: digital inequality, migration, climate, intergenerational decline	Reflects shifts in socio-technological and environmental agenda
Assessment and Oversight	Not provided	Introduced: KPIs, monitoring, indicators, implementation plan	Governance system includes formal evaluation and control mechanisms
Digital Transformation	Not mentioned	Explicit focus on digitalization, access to services, telemedicine, digital inequality	Acknowledges impact of digital infrastructure on quality of life and access
Youth and Migration Focus	Occasional mentions, no systematic treatment	Recognized as key risks and challenges	Highlights youth role in demographic sustainability and knowledge transmission

1.3. The Geostrategic Vector of the 2025 Framework

Despite its formal orientation toward domestic issues and the absence of overt political declarations, the 2025 Framework largely reflects the characteristics of contemporary Russian geostrategic thinking. Unlike the 2009 edition, the new document is integrated into a strategic model centered on internal mobilization, ideological consolidation, and self-reliant sustainable development. These characteristics are evident not only in the terminology and structural logic of the document but also in its institutional linkages, which emphasize managed and closed implementation mechanisms.

At the same time, the 2025 Framework systematically avoids references to foreign policy: it contains no mention of international conflicts, sanctions, geopolitical rivalries, or specific countries such as the United States, China, or EU member states. Topics such as NATO, cross-border cooperation, and international legal obligations are also omitted. This selective apoliticism constructs the image of a document focused exclusively on domestic tasks, reinforcing its managerial and technocratic character.

Nonetheless, the 2025 Framework references key strategic documents related to national security. Mentions of the Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (President of the Russian Federation, 2020) and the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation [4] allow the Framework to be interpreted as part of a broader strategic planning architecture. In this logic, the Arctic is viewed not only as a region of sustainable development but also as a space of strategic significance — a territory playing a critical role in securing sovereignty, demographic stability, and national security. The support for Indigenous peoples is thus framed as part of a state paradigm that merges internal stability with elements of geopolitical positioning.

Against this background, the concepts of internal mobilization — demographic, resource-based, cultural, and ideological — gain prominence. The document’s use of terms such as “resilience” and “adaptability” in response to changing natural and economic conditions (Clause 16) may be interpreted as a response to external economic constraints, including sanctions and reduced cross-border cooperation. The development of self-sufficiency mechanisms — including support for traditional land use, telemedicine, digital platforms, and language technologies — is aimed at building a resilient internal infrastructure that minimizes reliance on external resources and enhances domestic consolidation.

Digital and technological sovereignty plays a significant role in the 2025 Framework. References to the development of domestic solutions in telemedicine, AI-based automated translation systems, multifunctional digital centers, and Indigenous-language ICTs are consistent with the broader strategy of achieving technological autonomy. These elements align with the agenda of import substitution, reducing dependence on foreign digital platforms, and strengthening national infrastructure.

The ideological context of the document has also shifted. Unlike the 2009 edition, the 2025 Framework is grounded in a discourse of traditional values: strengthening the institution of the family, highlighting the social role of women, and safeguarding spiritual and cultural heritage. These elements form an ideological frame in which demographic and cultural policies are positioned not only as humanitarian measures but also as components of national security. Identity preservation, generational continuity, and social structure are presented as conditions for internal stability in a context of strategic uncertainty.

A notable feature of the 2025 Framework is the near-total absence of formalized mechanisms for international cooperation. Aside from a brief reference to the UN’s International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032), the document makes no mention of partnerships, international agreements, or legal obligations.

While maintaining humanitarian and social rhetoric, the 2025 Framework increasingly assumes the features of a document oriented toward internal sovereignty and consolidation amid global turbulence. The Arctic, Indigenous communities, digital technologies, and demographic policy serve as functional components of a broader resilience system, embedded in the strategic planning logic of the 2020s — aimed at reducing dependency on external resources, institutions, and regulatory frameworks.

Table 3. Geopolitical Content of the 2009 and 2025 Frameworks

Category	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Direct Geopolitical References	Absent	Absent
Mention of Foreign States	None	None
International Initiatives	UN only (general rhetoric)	UN only (Indigenous Languages Decade)
The Arctic in Policy	Not emphasized	Key element of national security
Self-Sufficiency and Import Substitution	Mentioned sporadically	Central element of institutional logic
Digital and Technological Sovereignty	Not addressed	Emphasis on domestic technological solutions
Ideology and Values	Neutral rhetoric	Promotion of traditional values, family, and identity
Ideological Orientation	Social protection	Demographic and cultural mobilization

1.4. Arctic Policy in the Context of the 2025 Framework

The 2025 Framework significantly strengthens its focus on the Arctic zone, viewing it as a key strategic space within the system of Russian state policy. Unlike the 2009 version, which mainly referred to the Arctic as a traditional settlement area for Indigenous small-numbered peoples, the new version interprets the region as an element of national security closely tied to territorial planning and regulatory governance.

The text of the Framework contains explicit references to strategic documents that define the state's Arctic policy. Chief among them is the Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and Ensuring National Security until 2035 (President of the Russian Federation, 2020; 2021).

The Framework also cites several legal acts that constitute the practical foundation for Arctic-related Indigenous policy:

- Government Order No. 978-r of 7 May 2021, *On the State Support Program for Traditional Economic Activities of Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation* (Government of the Russian Federation, 2021a);
- *Responsibility Standard for Residents of the Arctic Zone in Their Relations with Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North*, approved by the Ministry for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic of the Russian Federation in 2020 [10];
- *State Program for the Development of Agriculture and Regulation of Agricultural Product, Raw Material, and Food Markets for 2013–2030* (Government Decree No. 717 of 14 July 2012), which includes provisions on agro-industrial development in the Arctic (Government of the Russian Federation, 2012).

Thus, in its updated form, the Framework treats the Arctic not only as a traditional homeland for Indigenous peoples but also as a priority direction of state policy. The region is embedded in the normative and strategic regulatory system, as evidenced by references to key legal acts and state programs. Mention of standards for engagement with Arctic zone residents and measures to support traditional livelihoods reflects a push toward institutionalizing governance mechanisms in the Arctic. In this way, the Framework becomes integrated into a broader strategic planning system, with Indigenous communities recognized as full-fledged participants in Arctic policy.

Beyond the regulatory framework, the document outlines institutional mechanisms for including Indigenous peoples in Arctic governance. In particular, it highlights the practice of tripartite agreements among Arctic zone residents, regional authorities, and Indigenous representatives, aiming to establish stable formats of interaction at the regional level. The Ministry for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic of the Russian Federation is assigned a coordinating role, along with the Public Council of the Arctic Zone — an advisory body established under the Ministry in 2020.

A comparison with the 2009 version underscores a qualitative shift in how the Arctic and Indigenous participation are conceptualized. The earlier document did not treat the Arctic as a distinct policy area: there were no references to regional strategies, and the Arctic was mentioned solely as a place of settlement, without links to national security or administrative institutions. One notable innovation in the 2025 Framework is the creation of a federal registry of persons identified as Indigenous, along with regional-level tracking mechanisms. These are intended to standardize approaches and establish a data foundation for planning and delivering support.

The 2025 Framework reflects a transition from fragmentary mention of the Arctic to its full institutional incorporation as a zone of strategic focus. The Arctic dimension is embedded in the architecture of national policy, encompassing social, economic, and ethnocultural aspects. The involvement of Indigenous peoples in regional governance is enshrined as a structural component

of sustainable development. The Arctic emerges as a critical element of Russia's territorial sovereignty and national interests within the modern state planning model, where Indigenous peoples are viewed as active participants in Arctic policy.

Table 4. Arctic Component in the 2009 and 2025 Frameworks

Parameter	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Direct references to Arctic strategies	Absent	Yes: Presidential Decree No. 645 (2020)
Number of regulatory acts explicitly related to the Arctic	0	4 (including strategy, support program, standard, and state program)
Arctic as an independent object of governance	No	Yes: Arctic zone designated as a priority in the state governance system
Mention of coordinating institutions	No	Yes: Ministry for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic of the Russian Federation, Public Council of the Arctic Zone
Agreements between businesses and Indigenous peoples	Not mentioned	Yes: practice of tripartite cooperation
Link to national security	Absent	Yes: through the Arctic Zone Development Strategy until 2035
Arctic as a multisectoral space	Not emphasized	Yes: social, economic, and ethnocultural aspects

2. Mechanisms of Implementation and Institutional Innovations

2.1. Governance Model for the Implementation of the 2025 Framework

The 2025 Framework is structured as a comprehensive governance instrument, incorporating legal foundations, institutional coordination, administrative procedures, educational initiatives, and monitoring mechanisms. One of the key institutional innovations is the introduction of a procedural planning mechanism: the document mandates the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs to approve an implementation plan for the Framework's provisions within six months. This level of specificity was absent in the 2009 version, which approached planning primarily as a descriptive and recommendatory process, lacking integration into execution and oversight systems.

This approach is further developed through enhanced interagency coordination. Unlike the 2009 Framework, the updated version clearly defines the modalities of interaction among federal, regional, and municipal authorities, Indigenous representatives, and industrial stakeholders. Such a model is particularly relevant in the Arctic zone, where high environmental sensitivity and infrastructural vulnerability necessitate ongoing consensus-building between state actors, businesses, and local communities.

The legal component of the Framework is significantly more detailed. Beyond a general commitment to legislative improvement, the 2025 version introduces specific areas of legal regulation: ensuring Indigenous peoples' access to natural resources, implementing compensation mechanisms for loss of habitat, allocating land plots, and securing property rights. It also envisions institutionalized procedures for damage assessment and legal enforcement monitoring, marking a shift from declarative rhetoric to actionable implementation.

Administrative infrastructure development is addressed through provisions such as establishing regional ombudspersons for Indigenous rights, creating specialized units within executive bodies, and forming representative and advisory councils at both regional and municipal levels. These measures aim to institutionalize Indigenous participation in governance and improve coordination across different levels of government.

The document also emphasizes the importance of digital and mobile solutions to increase access to essential services. These include nomadic education formats, telemedicine services, and mobile multifunctional centers tailored to the settlement patterns of Indigenous communities in remote areas. In addition, the Framework highlights the need to train professionals in education, healthcare, cultural support, language preservation, and legal services, thereby strengthening the human resource base essential for implementing ethnopolitical policy.

A system of monitoring and performance evaluation is integrated into the 2025 Framework, covering indicators such as access to basic services, levels of social support, conditions of linguistic and cultural environments, and satisfaction rates among Indigenous peoples. The Government of the Russian Federation is responsible for the implementation and oversight, underscoring the Framework's incorporation into the broader strategic governance system.

In contrast to the 2009 version, the updated document contains clearly defined legal, institutional, and coordination mechanisms. Their practical effectiveness will depend on coherent action by public authorities, consistent funding, and the robustness of local administrative infrastructure.

Table 5. Organizational and Administrative Provisions in the 2009 and 2025 Frameworks

Category	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Implementation Plan	Absent	Mandatory, with a specific deadline (6 months for plan development)
Interagency Coordination	General guidelines	Clearly structured across levels of government and actors involved

Regulatory and Legal Basis	Declarative	Specific directions: resources, compensation, land, property rights
Authorized Bodies	Not mentioned	Explicitly provided: ombudsmen for Indigenous rights in Russian regions
Registers and Accounting	Absent	Introduction of a federal register of persons belonging to Indigenous groups (para. 51)
Monitoring System	Underdeveloped	Covers service coverage, support, language, culture, feedback mechanisms
Effectiveness Evaluation	Absent	Introduction of indicators (KPIs), including satisfaction and effectiveness levels
Civic Participation	Recommendations	Institutionalized: public councils, hearings, partnerships

2.2. Economic Integration and the Institutional Role of Indigenous Communities

The 2025 Framework reflects a shift from a model based primarily on social support toward an approach grounded in a structured economic integration framework. The document emphasizes the need to combine the preservation of traditional lifestyles of Indigenous peoples with the broader objectives of socioeconomic development in Arctic and northern territories. Indigenous communities are viewed as participants in regional modernization processes, and their inclusion in the economy is seen as a component of sustainable regional development, with careful attention to cultural and environmental sensitivities. Implementation mechanisms span legal, institutional, financial, and organizational instruments designed to align state priorities with the needs of local communities.

The Framework stresses the importance of supporting and modernizing traditional economic activities — including hunting, fishing, reindeer herding, and artisanal crafts. Proposed measures include access to natural resources and land plots, infrastructure development, creation of distribution channels, targeted training programs, and the ecological modernization of economic practices through the use of renewable energy sources. Ethno-tourism is also presented as a potential driver of economic growth.

Moreover, institutional support for kinship- and territory-based communities has been strengthened. These are now seen as autonomous economic actors engaged in entrepreneurship, environmental monitoring, and technological modernization. This approach aims to embed the traditional sector within a broader regional development framework aligned with state interests.

The Framework provides for financial incentives and investment support. In addition to grants and subsidies, it outlines new instruments such as leasing programs, interregional cooperation mechanisms, and simplified access to financing for small and medium-sized enterprises engaged in traditional resource use. These measures aim to strengthen the economic base of communities and increase employment among Indigenous populations.

A prominent focus is placed on the participation of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic economy. The Framework supports the conclusion of tripartite agreements between government bodies, Arctic zone residents, and Indigenous representatives. Such agreements include obligations by businesses to provide vocational training, employment opportunities, purchase of community-produced goods, and integration of Indigenous peoples into value chains. These provisions institutionalize previously informal partnership mechanisms and reflect the state's intention to ensure structured participation of Indigenous communities in the socioeconomic development of Arctic territories.

Special importance is attributed to the sustainability of remote and hard-to-reach settlements. Priority measures include improvements in logistics infrastructure (e.g., the “Northern Supply” mechanism), development of local production and agro-processing, and deployment of renewable energy sources to reduce dependence on centralized supply systems. These initiatives are intended to improve quality of life and ensure basic socioeconomic sustainability in northern communities.

A key distinction from the 2009 version is the institutionalization of the economic role of Indigenous communities. While previously portrayed mainly as recipients of social support, they are now formally recognized as full-fledged economic actors capable of participating in public-private partnerships and environmental and innovation programs. This legal recognition affirms their economic subjectivity and expands the tools for their integration into regional development.

Table 6. Economic Role of Indigenous Peoples in the 2009 and 2025 Frameworks

Aspect	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Main focus	Preservation of traditional lifestyle, social protection	Integration into the resource economy, institutionalization of community roles
Economic framework	Support for SMEs, trading posts, traditional crafts	Public-private partnerships, grants, digitalization, bioresource exports, leasing, interregional projects
Role of Indigenous peoples	Recipients of support	Economic agents, partners with the state and business
Participation in industry	Not specified	Regulated through agreements with Arctic zone residents
Environmental component	Present, but lacks monitoring instruments	Participation in environmental protection, ecological monitoring, and use of renewables

The monitoring system set out in the Framework (see Table 1a) covers six key areas, although specific numerical targets are to be determined in a separate implementation plan. Despite the absence of fixed KPIs, the Framework draws on an extensive empirical base detailing the current socioeconomic conditions of Indigenous peoples (see Table 12). Trends include steady population growth, relatively high birth rates and levels of professional education, and a significant proportion employed in traditional economic sectors.

As of the end of 2024, 46 agreements had been concluded between Indigenous representatives and Arctic zone residents, indicating gradual expansion of institutionalized forms of cooperation. In terms of language policy, 26 Indigenous languages are taught across 20 regions of the Russian Federation, with 7 included in the federal textbook registry — underscoring sustained attention to cultural and linguistic heritage preservation.

However, the monitoring section lacks specific quantitative indicators for such areas as coverage by support measures and the number of intangible heritage objects, leaving room for further clarification.

In summary, while preserving the priority of traditional lifestyles, the 2025 Framework presents a more elaborate implementation framework than its 2009 predecessor, incorporating legal, financial, and organizational mechanisms. Indigenous communities are officially recognized as legitimate participants in socioeconomic processes, thereby expanding their institutional engagement with both public and private stakeholders.

The absence of fixed indicators can be interpreted in two ways: on one hand, as a sign of flexibility and adaptability to regional diversity; on the other, as a factor that complicates objective evaluation and reduces transparency and accountability. Compared with the 2009 version, the new document is notably more systemic, integrated into strategic governance, and committed to institutionalizing the economic and cultural role of Indigenous communities.

2.3. Industrial Projects in the Arctic and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The 2025 Framework demonstrates notable institutional progress compared to the 2009 version. At the same time, it maintains a degree of ambiguity concerning the assessment of the impact that large-scale industrial projects have on the traditional way of life of Indigenous communities.

The Framework avoids directly referencing specific initiatives — such as Yamal LNG, Arctic LNG 2, Vankor, Bovanenkovo, the Talander field, Pestsovoye, and Utrenny — and instead uses general language, for example, “industrial companies, including those in the fuel and energy sector.” This rhetorical approach enables the document to avoid open criticism, preserving flexibility of interpretation depending on the context.

Nevertheless, it is evident that these general references pertain to major corporations operating actively in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, including NOVATEK, Gazprom, Rosneft, and Lukoil. Their involvement accounts for a significant share of infrastructure and resource development in the region. However, the Framework does not include institutionalized procedures for assessing the impact of such projects on Indigenous peoples’ habitats, lifestyles, or social structures.

Despite its formally neutral tone, the document outlines key regulatory mechanisms for interaction with the industrial sector. It highlights the requirement for binding agreements between companies and Indigenous representatives, calls for the application of the Arctic Zone Residents’ Responsibility Standard (Ministry for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic of the Russian Federation, 2020), and introduces compensatory measures, including provisions for damage compensation.

As of the Framework’s drafting, 46 Arctic zone residents had entered into agreements with public authorities and Indigenous representatives. However, the document provides no details on the identities of these companies or the contents of the agreements, which limits transparency and hinders external evaluation.

This approach positions the Framework as a step toward the institutionalization of corporate responsibility while deliberately avoiding potentially sensitive legal or public discussions concerning specific projects and their effects on traditional lifeways.

A key element in the new version is the recognition that “intensive industrial exploitation of natural resources” in areas traditionally inhabited by Indigenous communities has reduced opportunities for certain traditional economic practices. Although the Framework does not specify particular sectors or regions, the context suggests that oil and gas production areas — such as the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Nenets Autonomous Okrug, and the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) — are primarily in view.

Thus, the Framework acknowledges the consequences of industrial activity for traditional lifeways, but does so in a generalized and neutral manner, avoiding evaluative language.

Compared with the 2009 version, the 2025 Framework features a higher degree of legal specificity. While the earlier document merely mentioned the need for compensation for habitat loss, the new version introduces concrete tools — agreements with industrial entities, corporate responsibility standards, and procedures for assessing and compensating damage.

Nonetheless, both versions retain a cautious tone, avoiding references to specific companies or projects. This likely reflects an effort to maintain political and legal neutrality and to reduce the risk of the Framework being interpreted as a basis for public criticism of industrial actors.

In summary, the 2025 Framework represents a step toward institutionalizing cooperation between the state, industrial stakeholders, and Indigenous communities. It establishes key regulatory elements — agreements, corporate standards, compensation mechanisms — while maintaining a neutral tone and generalized style of presentation.

This approach reflects the document’s dominant methodology: an emphasis on regulatory detail combined with strategic restraint and a deliberate omission of project-specific, corporate, or geographic references that could prompt legal or public scrutiny.

Table 7. Evolution of Approaches to Interaction with Industrial Residents

Indicator	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Mention of specific projects	Not present	Not present (generalized wording such as “industrial companies in the fuel and energy sector”)
Reference to industrial companies	None	Indirectly mentioned (para. 23), without company names
Geographic specification	Territories of traditional settlement	Arctic zone of the Russian Federation
Impact on Indigenous peoples	Habitat degradation (general statement)	Reduced opportunities for traditional economic activity (para. 30)
Regulatory mechanisms	Recommendations on compensation	Agreements, corporate responsibility standards, procedures for impact assessment and compensation
Mention of conflicts	Not present	Not present; neutral language and indirect references used
Level of institutionalization	Declarative	Systematic, legally codified

2.4. Financing the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic

The 2025 Framework represents a structurally and substantively enhanced model of state policy focused on comprehensive support for Indigenous Peoples. Unlike the declarative and fragmented 2009 version, the updated Framework marks a shift toward a multi-tiered system of budgeting, interagency coordination, and performance evaluation grounded in specific managerial and financial instruments.

Funding is structured around six priority areas: environmental protection and natural resource use, support for traditional economic activities, improvement of living conditions, education and language support, community development, and the preservation of ethnocultural heritage. For each of these areas, the Framework outlines concrete implementation measures, such as compensation for environmental damage, Indigenous participation in environmental assessments, infrastructure development for traditional livelihoods, targeted workforce training, and subsidized distribution channels for community-produced goods.

This level of institutional specificity sets the 2025 Framework apart from the 2009 version, in which comparable provisions were stated in general terms and lacked legal or organizational mechanisms.

The range of funding sources has also been significantly expanded. Whereas the previous version relied primarily on the federal budget, the new Framework envisions contributions from all levels of government — federal, regional, and municipal. It also incorporates existing state programs, including the State Program “Implementation of State National Policy,” support measures for the agro-industrial complex (including specialized reindeer herding initiatives), and grant and subsidy tools for small and medium-sized enterprises and Indigenous communities.

A major innovation is the inclusion of the private sector in the financing architecture. The Framework formalizes the participation of Arctic zone residents in fulfilling social and economic commitments to Indigenous peoples, including partnerships in vocational training, employment, and procurement of community goods.

One of the key developments is the formalization of the planning process. The Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs is tasked with preparing and submitting to the Government of the Russian

Federation an implementation plan for the Framework within six months. This plan is to include deadlines, budget allocations, and a division of responsibilities — thus adding operational clarity and administrative control to the system.

Accountability and oversight mechanisms are integrated into the broader structure of state governance. These include mandatory reporting, the creation of specialized registries, and the development of performance assessment tools based on indicators such as access to services, levels of satisfaction, and the condition of infrastructure and cultural environments. The Russian Government is designated as the body responsible for implementation, underscoring the Framework’s status as a strategic instrument of national policy.

Additional emphasis is placed on expanding measures in education, culture, and information policy. In contrast to the 2009 version — which focused primarily on language preservation and elements of folklore — the new Framework calls for the introduction of nomadic schools, digitalization of education, training of ethno-pedagogues and linguists, and support for museums, ethnocultural centers, ethnic media, research initiatives, and programs promoting intangible heritage. This shift reflects a move from a narrow preservationist approach to a technologically supported and comprehensive model of ethnocultural development.

In sum, the 2025 Framework constitutes an institutionally mature model of state policy toward Indigenous Peoples. It clearly structures priority areas, funding sources, and implementation mechanisms, including targeted planning, interagency cooperation, private sector engagement, and monitoring systems. In contrast to the primarily declarative nature of the 2009 version, the updated Framework is based on formalized procedures and instrumental approaches — ensuring its strategic coherence and relevance for the long-term regulation of the socioeconomic and cultural development of Indigenous communities.

Table 8. Institutional and Financial Mechanisms

Category	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Funding priorities	General formulations without specification	Six targeted areas: environment, traditional economy, living conditions, education and language, communities, culture
Funding sources	Primarily the federal budget	All levels of government budgets, state programs, grants, private sector and Arctic zone residents
Planning	Not specified as a mandatory procedure	Action plan by FADN with deadlines, funding volumes, and responsibility allocation
Monitoring and accountability	Not regulated	Government responsibility, monitoring system, indicators for coverage, satisfaction, and development
Private sector involvement	Not provided for	Institutionalized: agreements with residents, corporate responsibility standards
Transparency level	Low, declarative nature	Enhanced: KPI system, reporting, interagency coordination

2.5. Indigenous Peoples as a Driver of Arctic Development

The 2025 Framework for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation up to 2036 outlines a comprehensive approach to demographic sustainability and population retention in Arctic and sub-Arctic territories. The document is focused on shaping socioeconomic and institutional conditions that not only preserve the population size of Indigenous communities but also ensure their active participation in Arctic sustainable development processes. In this context, the emphasis shifts from a protective model to an instrumental one — viewing demographic potential as a development asset.

Particular attention is given to high birth rates among Indigenous peoples, which are presented as demographic capital requiring government support through infrastructure development and the strengthening of family institutions (paras. 11, 34). At the same time, youth outmigration is identified as a major risk that could undermine cultural continuity and economic stability in Indigenous communities (para. 31). Thus, demographic stability is interpreted as a key condition for the sustainable functioning of Arctic regions.

The transmission of traditional knowledge, the development of educational programs, and language initiatives (paras. 40, 42) are integrated into demographic policy as long-term mechanisms for maintaining sociocultural cohesion and intergenerational continuity. This approach reinforces the link between demographic policy, ethnocultural development, and overall regional sustainability.

The Framework provides for the integrated development of Indigenous living environments, including transport, digital, and housing infrastructure, as well as healthcare systems — such as telemedicine and mobile multifunctional service centers (paras. 36v, 39a–i). These measures aim to enhance the viability of Arctic territories, increase the attractiveness of remote settlements, and counter migration outflows.

Special emphasis is placed on job creation and support for entrepreneurial activity. The development of small and medium-sized businesses, the promotion of local entrepreneurship, and the introduction of subsidies (paras. 38z, 39g) are considered both as tools for sustainable economic development and as mechanisms for forming the human and social core of Arctic regions.

In parallel, mechanisms for integrating Indigenous peoples into the Arctic zone economy and regional governance are being expanded. The Framework institutionalizes interactions with Arctic zone residents (para. 23), supports the development of processing industries, ethno-tourism, distribution infrastructure, and the preservation of traditional natural resource use (paras. 38, 41d). These initiatives aim to integrate Indigenous communities into macroeconomic processes, promote their economic autonomy, and reduce dependence on paternalistic support models.

Thus, the document promotes a model of active Indigenous participation in Arctic development that departs from earlier approaches centered on isolated support and administrative oversight.

The financial basis for demographic sustainability includes a wide array of tools: grant and investment support, educational and cultural programs, vocational training, cooperation development, and platform-based interaction with public authorities (paras. 6, 20, 23, 38z, 40). These mechanisms help create conditions for the socioeconomic integration of Indigenous peoples and promote population retention in Arctic and sub-Arctic areas.

The institutionalization of Indigenous participation in governance is implemented through the creation of councils, the conclusion of agreements, and the introduction of coordination procedures. This broadens the scope of governance and helps adapt regional policies to the specific conditions of local territories.

Comparison with the 2009 Concept reveals a major shift — from a declarative to an instrumental approach. Whereas earlier measures related to demography, infrastructure, and social support were described as desirable yet lacked implementation mechanisms, the 2025 version builds a systemic model that connects demographic parameters with economic policy, spatial development, and institutional instruments.

In conclusion, the 2025 Framework establishes a long-term foundation for the development of demographically sustainable, institutionally integrated, and economically active communities in the Arctic. It reflects a transition from a paternalistic support model to a participatory one, in which Indigenous peoples are recognized as active agents of sustainable development and regional stability.

Table 9. Approaches to Sustainable Development

Direction	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Demographic policy	No clear objectives formulated; birth rates and migration mentioned indirectly	High birth rate emphasized as demographic resource; youth outmigration identified as a risk
Intergenerational continuity	Mentioned declaratively	Presented as a systemic goal: family support, knowledge transmission, language and cultural continuity
Living environment	General statements on living conditions	Specific measures for infrastructure, housing, communication, telemedicine, and digital services
Employment and entrepreneurship	Insufficiently developed; measures described in general terms	Comprehensive support system for SMEs, subsidies, training, and promotion of local business
Digitalization and telemedicine	Not addressed	Included as key areas of spatial and social development
Economic integration	Focus on tradition preservation without macroeconomic linkages	Traditional resource use integrated into the Arctic economy: processing, distribution, partnerships
Financial and institutional support	Possibility of subsidies mentioned fragmentarily	Comprehensive measures: grants, investment, participation in councils, coordination mechanisms, digital platforms

2.6. Institutionalization of the Regional Role of Indigenous Peoples

The Framework for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation until 2036 marks a transition to a new phase of spatial planning and governance. For the first time, territories of traditional Indigenous habitation are presented not as peripheral or auxiliary, but as active components of state strategy. This is particularly evident in the case of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation, which is designated in the document as an autonomous macro-region with distinct administrative, legal, and strategic characteristics.

The geographic shift in focus and the designation of the northeastern periphery as a strategic support zone reflects key priorities of national policy — ranging from resource development and security to the sustainable reproduction of the ethnocultural environment. The document addresses not only the territories of Indigenous habitation but also the institutional infrastructure related to culture, education, and human rights.

Several constituent entities of the Russian Federation have established positions for Commissioners on Indigenous Rights, while regional and municipal administrations have gained expanded competencies. Universities have launched educational programs aimed at training professionals to work with Indigenous communities. These measures lay the institutional foundation for strengthening the status of northern territories as hubs for ethnopolitical development and sustainable governance.

Table 10. Distribution of Regional Roles

Region	Role and Functions	Direct Reference
Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	Traditional settlement areas; Commissioner for Indigenous Rights	Yes (para. 20)
Kamchatka Krai	Commissioner; university-level training	Yes (paras. 6, 20)
Krasnoyarsk Krai	Commissioner; Siberian Federal University	Yes (paras. 6, 20)
Sakhalin Oblast	Commissioner for Indigenous Rights	Yes (para. 20)
Magadan Oblast	Commissioner for Indigenous Rights	Yes (para. 20)
Republic of Buryatia	Public Commissioner; Buryat State University	Yes (paras. 6, 20)
Murmansk Oblast	Arctic University; Commissioner	Yes (paras. 6, 20)

Republic of Karelia	Petrozavodsk State University — ethnopedagogy and Indigenous specialist training	Yes (para. 6)
Tomsk Oblast	Tomsk Pedagogical University	Yes (para. 6)
Saint Petersburg	Herzen University — Institute of the Peoples of the North	Yes (para. 6)
Moscow	MGIMO, RANEPA — governance and legal training for Indigenous issues	Yes (para. 21)

The Northwestern Federal District is of particular interest in this context. Although not designated as a separate macro-region within the Framework, its regions are actively involved in implementing key areas of state policy on Indigenous affairs. The district serves as an educational, expert, human rights, and cultural center, providing institutional support, academic guidance, and public representation for Indigenous peoples.

Universities in Saint Petersburg, Petrozavodsk, and Arkhangelsk play a significant role in personnel training, linguistic research, and the development of ethnocultural programs. Meanwhile, the region's human rights and expert organizations contribute to improving the legal framework. This underscores the multilevel nature of the Framework's implementation, where even regions not explicitly mentioned in the document may serve as strategic platforms for supporting Indigenous communities.

Table 11. Participation of Northwestern Federal District Regions in Implementing the 2025 Framework

Region of NWFD	Mention in the Framework	Main Functions
Republic of Karelia	Yes (para. 6)	Petrozavodsk State University — training, linguistics
Murmansk Oblast	Yes (paras. 6, 20)	Arctic University, Commissioner
Saint Petersburg	Yes (para. 6)	Herzen University, ethnocultural expertise, staff training
Nenets Autonomous Okrug	Indirect (paras. 9, 10)	Traditional settlement area of Nenets
Arkhangelsk Oblast	Indirect (paras. 9, 10)	Historic settlement area of Indigenous peoples, administrative linkage with NAO

Compared to the 2009 version, the 2025 Framework reflects a shift from a fragmented and geographically unstructured model to a clearly articulated system of spatial governance. While earlier editions treated Indigenous territories mainly as subjects of protective policies, the current version positions them as platforms for implementing state strategy. This is evident in the development of administrative structures, educational programs, human rights institutions, and cultural centers, all integrated into a targeted governance system.

For the first time, the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation is institutionalized as a priority area for ethno-political policy — in alignment with the State Strategy for the Development of the Arctic until 2035. This approach not only affirms the territorial dimension of state policy but also introduces a new form of regional agency, whereby territory is viewed as a full-fledged actor in socioeconomic and ethnocultural processes.

In summary, the 2025 Framework establishes a spatial-programmatic foundation in which territories serve not only as recipients of state policy but also as active agents in its implementation. This signifies the maturity of the territorial dimension of ethno-politics — evolving from declarative recognition to a system of strategic participation and institutional cooperation.

3. Social Dimension, Participation, and Constraints

3.1. Demographic and Social Trends among Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic

In contrast to its previous version, the 2025 Framework is based on the 2020 national census, marking a shift from a declarative to a more analytically grounded approach. This transition reflects an effort to shape public policy on the basis of empirically verified data.

According to the most recent census, the total number of Indigenous small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East (hereinafter referred to as Indigenous peoples) stands at 261,000, comprising 40 officially recognized ethnic groups. Over 95% reside in 29 constituent entities of the Russian Federation designated as traditional settlement areas. Between 2010 and 2020, the Indigenous population increased by 3,100 people, with 12 groups — including the Nenets, Chukchi, Evenks, Khanty, and Dolgans — demonstrating moderately positive growth. However, most groups are still experiencing population decline, while the Mansi population remains stable. Overall, the demographic picture is one of simultaneous population growth in some groups and sustained decline in others.

The largest ethnic groups remain the Nenets (around 50,000), Evenks (39,000), Khanty (31,000), Evens (20,000), and Chukchi (16,000). Their main settlement areas continue to be concentrated in the Nenets and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrugs, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, Krasnoyarsk Krai, and the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), which demonstrates the continued stability of historical and cultural settlement landscapes despite urbanization and migration trends.

The 2025 Framework not only presents current statistical indicators but also emphasizes the changing role of Indigenous peoples in regional development. Unlike the 2009 version, which focused mainly on preserving cultural heritage and legal recognition, the updated version highlights socioeconomic indicators, reflecting an expanded conceptual scope of state policy on Indigenous affairs.

A key demographic indicator is the birth rate, which consistently exceeds the national average (ranging from 1,564 to 2,553 births per 1,000 women aged 15 and older, compared to the Russian average of about 1,500). Particularly high birth rates persist in rural Arctic districts. Improvements are also seen in education: among 16 ethnic groups, the share of those with vocational secondary education reaches 248 per 1,000 persons (versus a national average of 137), while the percentage of Nenets lacking basic general education has decreased from 25% to 10%. The combination of high birth rates and improving educational outcomes can be seen as a sign of growing social resilience.

Traditional economic activities remain significant in certain groups: among the Tofalars, Chelkans, and Tubalars, up to 35% are employed in such activities, compared to a national average of only 1.6%. These traditional forms of employment are increasingly combined with part-time or seasonal work and other forms of supplementary economic activity.

Institutional infrastructure continues to develop: as of the end of 2024, there were 1,661 registered Indigenous communities. These communities play a particularly vital role in remote and hard-to-reach areas, where they often serve as the only local institutions sustaining both economic activity and cultural continuity.

Table 12. Demographic Indicators in the 2009 and 2025 Frameworks

Indicator	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Indigenous population size	~244,000 (estimated)	261,000 (2020 census)
Population dynamics	No numerical data	+3,100 (2010–2020); growth in 12 peoples, decline in 27
Birth rate	Not mentioned	1,564–2,553 per 1,000 women aged 15+ (above national average: 1,500)

Education level	General statements	Up to 248 per 1,000 have vocational secondary education (16 peoples); decrease in uneducated individuals
Youth outmigration	Implied indirectly	Recognized as a major issue (Clause 31)
Employment in traditional sectors	Not specified	Up to 35% in certain groups; 1.6% nationwide
Indigenous communities	Formally referenced	1,661 registered communities (as of end 2024)

The new version of the Framework significantly expands its infrastructure and economic sections. It provides a more detailed description of transport, communications, and public utilities in traditional settlement areas. Economic factors affecting resilience are also addressed, such as high logistics costs, unstable demand for traditional products, limited market access, and shrinking land use areas due to industrial development. These considerations point to a more systemic approach to infrastructure and economic conditions in Indigenous territories.

Table 13. Infrastructural and Economic Challenges

Indicator	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Infrastructure quality	General statements	Issues with transport, internet, and utilities
Economic risks	Indirectly mentioned	High logistics costs, market instability, seasonality
Industrial development	Mentioned declaratively	Identified as a threat; importance of agreements with companies emphasized
Community institutions	Briefly mentioned	Key element of remote area economies (1,661 communities)
Digitalization	Not mentioned	Tool for development (including telemedicine, online services)

In the field of culture, the Framework records an expansion in Indigenous language education: as of 2024, instruction was offered in 26 languages across schools in 20 regions of the Russian Federation, with textbooks for seven languages included in the federal list. Nonetheless, there are ongoing risks to linguistic and cultural continuity, driven by reduced intergenerational knowledge transmission and youth migration.

The Arctic zone is presented as a macroregion with both high demographic potential and heightened vulnerability. Major challenges include industrial pressure, limited transportation and digital accessibility, and the need for stable support mechanisms such as subsidies, grants, and private-sector involvement in social initiatives.

Table 14. The Status of Indigenous Peoples in the Western Arctic: Shifts in Approach

Direction	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Industrial pressure	Formally mentioned	Clarified via corporate responsibility and agreements with residents
Reindeer herding	Pasture support	Integration into agro-industrial and regional programs
Land rights	Reform required	Issue acknowledged; no solutions yet
Native language education	Declarative statements	26 languages in 20 regions; textbooks in 7 languages on the federal list
Demographics	Growth in some groups	Confirmed by 2020 census; special emphasis on Nenets, Khanty, Chukchi

The 2025 Framework features greater data verifiability, a broader set of state support tools, and the inclusion of systemic monitoring parameters. However, certain aspects remain declarative — particularly those related to land rights and the consequences of industrial development.

Additionally, interagency coordination mechanisms are presented in general terms and require further clarification.

Despite positive developments in education, digital infrastructure, and demographic trends, a number of structural challenges remain. These include sustained population outflows from small settlements, weakened intergenerational continuity, assimilation risks, and limited access to the resources required for maintaining traditional lifestyles. These challenges are especially acute in the western Arctic, where industrial development goals intersect with the need to preserve Indigenous cultural and social stability.

3.2. Indigenous Public Organizations

The Framework for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation until 2036 provides for the expansion and structuring of indigenous public organizations' involvement in the implementation of state policy. Unlike the 2009 version, the document presents a more systematic approach to interaction with Indigenous associations at the federal, regional, and local levels.

At the core of this system is the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East (RAIPON). The association is expected to perform not only representative and human rights advocacy functions but also to serve as a full-fledged partner to the state in programmatic activities, education, expert cooperation, and international engagement. The expansion of its role is facilitated, among other things, through the creation of institutional alliances, such as the Sustainable Development Training Program jointly implemented with the RANEPa since 2024.

Regional and local communities are regarded by the Framework as independent actors in economic and social life. They are granted access to targeted programs and grant mechanisms. Particular emphasis is placed on their involvement in concluding agreements with Arctic Zone residents — major companies operating in these territories. This mechanism is designed to increase transparency, develop social partnerships, and mitigate conflicts related to natural resource use and benefit distribution.

In addition to supporting associative and community forms of self-organization, the Framework emphasizes the importance of creating public structures under governmental bodies. Special focus is placed on the development of consultative mechanisms across different governance levels. Notable among these are the Public Council of the Arctic Zone under the Ministry for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic of the Russian Federation, as well as councils of Indigenous representatives under regional authorities. Their functions include not only consultations and expert reviews, but also participation in monitoring the implementation of policies, thereby contributing to elements of co-governance.

Since 2021, the School of Public Diplomacy has been operating at MGIMO University with support from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The program is aimed at training Indigenous representatives for participation in international and interregional initiatives. This and similar programs reflect the expansion of educational and foreign policy forms of engagement, moving the Indigenous agenda beyond purely cultural or economic domains.

Organizations involved in the implementation of the Framework also participate in the development of professional and ethical standards, as well as in organizing cultural, environmental, and educational projects. A key area remains cooperation with the business and scientific communities, particularly in the context of sustainable environmental management and the development of social partnerships. As a result, a multi-level and functionally differentiated

system of public participation is being formed, combining federal coordination with local practices.

The 2025 Framework reflects a shift from a fragmented approach to a holistic and structured model of civil society participation. Its architecture integrates national associations, regional and local communities, public and expert councils under government authorities, as well as educational and diplomatic initiatives. This indicates an aspiration to build sustainable forms of partnership between the state, business, and Indigenous representatives. At the same time, the degree of Indigenous participation in strategic decision-making remains limited: key parameters of involvement are still defined within the framework of state and corporate interests — especially in the Arctic context.

Table 15. Participation of Indigenous Public Organizations

Parameter	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Types of organizations mentioned	AIPN (functions not specified); communities as part of traditional lifestyle	AIPN, regional and local communities, public and expert councils, educational initiatives
Functions and tasks	General: human rights protection, support for traditional activities	Participation in program development, human rights protection, agreements, educational and international initiatives
Institutional mechanisms	Not specified	Consultative councils, expert review mechanisms, participation in monitoring, standards, including regional and federal advisory bodies, public reviews on environmental and investment issues, <u>monitoring of program implementation</u>
Participation in governance	Not formalized	Representation via councils, participation in <u>agreements</u> , expert roles
Education and international initiatives	Not provided for	Programs for training public representatives, participation in international forums
Interaction with business	Not mentioned	Participation in agreements with companies, development of corporate responsibility mechanisms
Level of formalization	Low, fragmented	Higher: defined roles, mechanisms of interaction, forms of partnership

3.3. Problem Areas and Limitations of the 2025 Framework

The Framework for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation until 2036 is a strategic planning document that outlines the main directions of state policy toward Indigenous peoples. While covering a wide range of topics and adopting contemporary language, an analysis of its structure and comparison with practical sources reveals several methodological constraints and ambiguities, particularly regarding the implementation mechanisms of certain provisions.

One of the notable features of the Framework is the lack of clearly defined priorities. Despite its considerable length (over 100 clauses), the areas of activity are presented as equally significant, with no prioritization or phased strategy. This undermines its usability as a full-fledged planning tool. In contrast, the 2009 version had a more compact structure and clearly outlined priorities such as access to resources, support for traditional lifestyles, and the development of trading posts.

Table 16. Structural Features of the 2009 and 2025 Frameworks

Parameter	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
Structure	6 sections, 7 objectives, block-based format	More than 100 points, wide thematic scope without structured division

Prioritization	Highlighted priority measures and directions	No hierarchy of objectives; all areas presented as equal
Internal consistency	Logically complete sections, thematic cohesion	High thematic fragmentation, weak interlinkage between sections
International context	Mentioned selectively (UN, Arctic Council)	Absent

The absence of conflict analysis is also a key limitation. The Framework does not address documented instances of land disputes or public protests, including those in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Chukotka, and the Norilsk region. This omission narrows the analytical scope of the document and complicates the comprehensive assessment of social risks in resource-intensive regions.

The demographic section of the Framework highlights the high birth rate among Indigenous populations but fails to articulate a strategic goal related to population maintenance or growth. Although youth outmigration, primarily from rural settlements, is noted, there are no concrete measures proposed to curb or compensate for this trend. The absence of a coherent approach to population dynamics and demographic sustainability hinders the development of targeted policy in this domain.

A noteworthy ideological feature of the text is the repeated use of generalized rhetorical constructs such as “woman-mother,” “traditional family,” and “spiritual and moral values.” These formulations recur across sections without clarification of their practical implications or empirical basis. The Framework overlooks the internal diversity of Indigenous value systems and social models shaped by levels of urbanization, access to education, and integration into market relations. In many respects, these ideological elements replicate the broader discourse of Russian state policy rather than reflect the cultural specificities of Indigenous communities.

The technological section of the Framework declares the rollout of telemedicine, digital services, and high-speed internet in remote areas. However, it fails to address critical preconditions such as energy supply, transportation logistics, and qualified personnel — all of which are necessary for the practical implementation of digital initiatives in Arctic and hard-to-reach regions. According to data from the Ministry of Digital Development and regional administrations, the baseline infrastructure in many northern settlements remains insufficiently developed, posing a barrier to implementation. It is possible, however, that these technical and resource-related challenges will be addressed in the forthcoming implementation plan currently under development.

Another limitation is the absence of a broader international context concerning Indigenous rights. The Framework makes no reference to Russia’s international commitments, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, participation in the Arctic Council, or engagement with the UN Human Rights Council’s mechanisms. The 2009 version, though limited, did include such references. The omission of international standards diminishes the comparability of the Framework with global benchmarks. For instance, UNHRC Resolution A/HRC/EMRIP/2022/3, adopted by the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, emphasizes the integration of international norms into national strategies, especially in areas such as education, healthcare, governance, and access to resources.

In summary, the 2025 Framework constitutes a strategic document with a broadly declarative orientation and a strong emphasis on positive rhetoric. However, several critical areas remain underdeveloped. The lack of acknowledgment of conflict situations, resource constraints, and international obligations reveals a selective policy agenda. In the next stages — namely, in the action plan and accompanying regulatory documents — a more thorough elaboration of these issues will be necessary. Otherwise, there is a risk that the Framework’s provisions will remain largely formal and fail to translate into

3.4. The 2025 Framework and the Governance of Indigenous Peoples in Russia

The Framework for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation until 2036 is a politico-administrative document with significant analytical potential—for both evaluating the internal dynamics of national policy and enabling international comparisons in the fields of Arctic governance, ethnopolitics, Indigenous rights, and postcolonial studies. Compared to the 2009 version, the 2025 Framework marks a clear shift toward the functionalization and instrumentalization of limited Indigenous participation in the state system, without granting actual political subjectivity. The document institutionalizes normative, ideological, and technological mechanisms of inclusion into centralized governance, reflecting an evolving state approach to Indigenous affairs in the context of the Arctic and the Russian North.

The issue of governability is primarily addressed in the 2025 Framework through the lens of administrative control and centralized regulation. In contrast to the 2009 edition, which emphasized constitutional guarantees and international legal norms, the new version intensifies vertical mechanisms such as task compliance control, digital monitoring, and personalized registration. These elements signal a transition toward a biopolitical model in which Indigenous peoples are increasingly treated not as self-organizing subjects but as objects of state administration. From a postcolonial perspective, this logic may be interpreted as the institutionalization of internal colonialism, whereby indigeneity is codified through federal registries and participation in advisory structures—without the provision of direct political representation.

The Framework places geostrategic emphasis on the Arctic, a sharp departure from the 2009 edition, which focused primarily on supporting traditional lifestyles and subsistence economies. The Arctic is framed as a priority macroregion tied to objectives of economic resilience, demographic security, and resource mobilization. This regional strategy is accompanied by a cultural narrative: references to folklore preservation, support for nomadic family structures, and the symbolic “feminine principle” in Indigenous culture. Such presentation provides soft symbolic legitimation for the exploitation of sensitive territories through the logic of resource control. The combination of geoeconomic objectives and ethnocultural imagery reflects hybrid governance models wherein peripheral control is coupled with identity-based discourse.

The document also demonstrates a move away from a universalist legal paradigm. Despite some declarative references to international principles, the text omits mention of foundational legal instruments such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), even though Russia endorsed it at the UN General Assembly. Instead, the Framework constructs an autonomous legal system in which international norms are supplanted by domestic regulations, procedures, and mechanisms. This inward-facing legal approach is analytically significant in comparative law, illustrating a case of normative closure in the ethnopolitical domain and limited incorporation of international standards into national policy frameworks.

Notable changes are also evident in the conceptualization of indigeneity. The 2025 Framework increasingly treats Indigenous peoples as objects of administrative accounting embedded in digital monitoring and programmatic tools. This shift from a cultural interpretation of indigeneity (as in the 2009 version) toward its functionalization in governance mirrors a biopolitical logic wherein ethnicity is framed not as a basis for collective recognition but as a classificatory parameter for resource distribution and intervention planning—without extending political participation.

The economic role of Indigenous peoples is articulated in predominantly utilitarian terms. They are portrayed as labor and infrastructure resources involved in industrial projects across the North and Arctic, as well as partners in contractual arrangements with energy-sector corporations. Their contribution to regional social stability is emphasized, reflecting the functionalization of

Indigenous participation within an extractivist development model, while issues of resource redistribution and enhanced decision-making remain underdeveloped.

The Framework also places strong emphasis on digital transformation. Priority measures include the introduction of telemedicine, mobile state service centers, and artificial intelligence tools for language support. These initiatives are intended to improve service accessibility in nomadic and hard-to-reach areas. However, a gap exists between this modernization rhetoric and the actual state of infrastructure, particularly in terms of energy, logistics, and staffing.

Compared to the 2009 version, the ideological content of the 2025 Framework is significantly more pronounced. Emphasis on the traditional family, spiritual and moral values, and the maternal role of women indicates an alignment of the ethnopolitical agenda with the core tenets of Russian state ideology. This rhetoric may be interpreted as an attempt to integrate Indigenous peoples into the construct of a “traditional majority” within a broader framework of conservative modernization. Consequently, Indigenous cultural specificity is partly displaced by generalized normative templates.

In sum, the 2025 Framework constitutes a normative structure of ethnopolitical administration marked by heightened ideological content and the growing geostrategic relevance of the Arctic. Its combination of ideological and managerial imperatives can be interpreted as an effort at internal consolidation amid increasing centralized control and ideological dominance. The document is of analytical value for comparing governance models that regulate cultural diversity, adapt international norms, and formalize Indigenous inclusion within socio-economic and administrative systems. In this context, one can trace a clear shift from a culturally humanistic approach to a more instrumental model, in which indigeneity is primarily treated through functional and managerial categories.

Table 17. Evolution of State Policy Towards Indigenous Peoples

Criterion	2009 Framework	2025 Framework
International law	References to treaties, UN	No mention of UNDRIP, ILO Convention No. 169; formal affirmation of adherence to principles
Arctic	Episodic mention, no macro-regional context	Strategic priority; linked to energy sector, resource mobilization, and demographic resilience
Role of Indigenous Peoples	Objects of support and protection	Administrative partners, agreement participants, regional stability resource
Ethnicity	Cultural and social identity	Functional category; object of digital monitoring and program management
Ideology	No ideological components	Focus on 'traditional values', maternal role, spiritual and moral model
Digitalization	Absent	Development of telemedicine, AI services, mobile service centers; modernization rhetoric amid infrastructural limitations
Governance structure	Soft centralization, support for local self-governance	Strengthening of the vertical: monitoring, reporting, federal control; limited participation in strategic decisions

4. Conclusions

The new Framework for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation until 2036 reflects a radical transformation of the state's ethnopolitical strategy. It reconfigures the previously humanitarian and declarative model of 2009 into an institutional, technocratic, and strategically oriented approach. For the first time, ethnopolitics is integrated into the overall architecture of national strategic planning and spatial governance, gaining a programmatic structure, a monitoring system, and an interagency coordination mechanism.

The 2025 Framework establishes the Arctic as a priority domain of state policy, wherein Indigenous Peoples are positioned not merely as recipients of social assistance but as full participants in economic, environmental, and ideological processes. Ethnic diversity and the cultural heritage of northern peoples are reinterpreted in the context of demographic resilience and internal mobilization. The document highlights the need to foster a sustainable living environment, modernize infrastructure, support entrepreneurship, and strengthen professional training, particularly in remote Arctic regions.

A key trend is the formalization of the economic agency of Indigenous communities. These communities are recognized as actors in public–private partnerships, participants in value chains, and contributors to environmental monitoring. Simultaneously, the technological and digital components are reinforced: significant attention is devoted to telemedicine, nomadic education, the development of digital platforms, and Indigenous language ICTs—aligning with the broader state objective of achieving technological sovereignty.

The Framework also signals a shift toward normative closure and an inward focus on domestic legal mechanisms. The absence of references to international obligations and the emphasis on national strategic documents indicate the emergence of an ethnopolitical model oriented toward sovereignty, manageability, and institutional stability. This approach aligns with broader trends of internal consolidation in response to geopolitical turbulence and sanctions pressure.

Nonetheless, certain limitations persist. Notably, the Framework avoids direct assessment of the impact of industrial projects on Indigenous traditional lifestyles, relying instead on generalized rhetoric. Representation of Indigenous interests remains largely institutionalized through state-affiliated structures, leaving open the question of the actual involvement of independent initiatives.

Thus, the 2025 Framework should be viewed not merely as a sectoral document but as a marker of a paradigm shift in the state's approach to Indigenous affairs. It formalizes a transition to a new model—comprehensive, instrumental, and oriented toward internal resilience. Indigenous Peoples are positioned as a vital resource for demographic, economic, and cultural consolidation in strategically important regions. The Framework sets the parameters for long-term governance of ethnocultural space in the logic of national stability and reproduction. In the face of ongoing internal and external challenges, the effectiveness of its implementation will be a key indicator of the success of Russia's Arctic policy and territorial development model.

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