

## **The legacy of Éva Schmidt. A lifework on, to and for the Khanty**

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Undoubtedly, the most influential researcher in the field of Ob-Ugric studies in the 20th century was Eva Schmidt (1948–2002), a Hungarian scholar, linguist, folklorist, and ethnographer. During an exceptional career, she created a vast oeuvre through her professional knowledge, field experience, language skills, and personal commitment. This consists not only of her specific scientific achievements, given her intellectual influence has had a profound impact on Hungarian, European, Russian, not the least the local – indigenous – science and the communities she researched.

Besides her personality, what makes Eva Schmidt’s lifework truly unique is her series of fieldwork: in 1970, after decades she was the first European scholar to reach the Khanty, namely, the village of Tugiyany on the banks of the Ob. In 1971, and again in 1980 and 1982, she had the opportunity to do fieldwork. From 1991 to 2002, she was active in the first Khanty folklore archive in the town of Beloyarsk in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, which she herself had initiated. There, in addition to her fieldwork activities, she also played a prominent role in shaping the emerging scientific life of the Ob-Ugric peoples.

Her interests were wide-ranging, if we were to name the main themes, they certainly included traditional folklore, questions of mythology and belief, dialectal differences, as well as the history of individuals, families, ethnic groups, and settlements. In her scientific papers, she studied, among other things, the system of folklore genres, the Ob-Ugric song culture, the bear cult. Furthermore, she also researched the interpretation of materials collected by earlier fieldworkers, but in her legacy there are also grammar descriptions, dialect grammars, and various materials to support language revitalization.

The presentation will concentrate on Eva Schmidt’s career, her scientific activities, and her legacy. The focus will be on the processing of the legacy and the results so far, through which the contents of the oeuvre and the legacy will be presented. To understand this, we must define the core issues: what, why, and for what purpose did Eva Schmidt conduct research? In order to answer this question, it is essential to change our perspective, as she taught us: beyond the importance of Ob-Ugric studies for Hungarians (and for science in general), what opportunities does field research offer for the individuals and the community being researched? The presentation will highlight that, while conducting her research with world-class scientific

precision, Éva Schmidt was working primarily not for academic purposes but for the Khanty and Mansi peoples themselves.