The proposed research focuses on how two coastal Chukotka communities have adapted to the political and economic changes that have afflicted post-Soviet Russia in general and its Arctic indigenous communities in particular. The villages of Sireniki and Lorino are situated on the Chukchi Peninsula and their indigenous majority populations are Siberian Yupik and Maritime Chukchi respectively. The residents of Lorino are known as successful sea-mammal hunters, who excel in native language use, the conduct of cultural festivals, and the sale of subsistence products. Sireniki, on the other hand, does not do as well regarding these domains. At the same, Sireniki was known 20 years ago as a model community in that regard.

The question guiding this thesis research attempts to explain the reason for contemporary differences between these two communities and how they got to where they are today. In order to provide answers, the methods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, archival and library research were used. Preliminary analysis of the data revealed several factors of relevance: the geographical location of the communities, local relocation and cultural histories, their local leadership patterns, as well as the activity levels of the local hunting associations. At this point, the strength of local, indigenous leadership seems to be the central factor responsible for how differently Lorino and Sireniki have developed since the end of the Soviet Union.