



Bill Harris (US)

Subject: HeartBeats September 2009



"Helping ignite culturally relevant heart worship, especially in places where Christ-followers are restricted, persecuted or unknown."

**HeartBeats**

September 2009

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## Historic Festival in Tuva



Building on over a decade of work in Siberia, Heart Sounds International ethnomusicology consultant Robin Harris went in 2008 to the Republic of Tuva (Siberia) to take part in a music and culture exploratory trip. This resulted in a request for Robin to return this summer to participate in a three-day festival of original local Christian music.

Robin arrived with a team to help support and record the event. In addition, she brought a series of video clips from previous HSI trips and projects demonstrating how people worship the Lord in various styles around the world. The three-day, four-concert festival, "Sounds of the Heart 2009" was held at the House of Folk Culture in Kyzyl, Tuva with a closing concert in a local park.

This festival was the first interdenominational music event of its kind to take place in Tuva. More than 50 participants came from six evangelical churches in Kyzyl as well as several regions of Siberia, including the Republic of Sakha/Yakutia, Buryatia, Altai, and Novosibirsk. In addition, there were delegates from *Every Nation* – a ministry focused on the indigenous peoples of Siberia.

Many came to understand Christianity in a new way by seeing and hearing clear expressions of faith through Tuvan arts. Whereas throat singing (*khoomei*) has rarely been used in Christian gatherings, it was performed at each of the four concerts of the festival. A Tuvan grandmother told us, "My daughter was stunned to hear *khoomei* at the festival. She couldn't believe that God could be worshiped in such a Tuvan way!" She now views Christianity in a whole new light.



We are seeing the beginning of a movement of festivals celebrating indigenous styles, a movement which began in the northern region of Yakutsk with two festivals of new Christian songs. Those events led to a festival in Ulan Ude (Buryatia) earlier this summer and are now developing into ongoing festivals in Tuva.

Through these festivals, indigenous Christians who were once isolated from one another are building close, supportive relationships, an important aspect of encouraging creative expression in minority indigenous styles.

The organizers and participants felt that they had gained much-needed experience. In fact, they want to build on that experience by holding another festival in Tuva again next year.

Warmly yours,

Frank Fortunato

Heart Sounds International Coordinator





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