

## **Indigenous Ainu people**

The Global Definition of the Social Work Profession (2014) has a new emphasis on indigenous issues, particularly indigenous knowledge and colonialism, in accordance with the IFSW Policy Paper on Indigenous People. The proposed Asia-Pacific Regional Amplification of this definition similarly mentions indigenous and colonizing histories, while the Japanese National Amplification is also moving towards recognizing history and respecting diverse cultures in a country that is uniquely not a Western one, but still has colonizing histories.

This presentation is concerned with the indigenous Ainu people, originating in the northernmost parts of Japan. It aims to present the history of colonization and assimilation during the eras of modernization, imperialism and post-war economic growth. These societal changes have led to the current situation of the Ainu, described by contemporary statistics that indicate marginalization, such as poverty, combined with below average enrollment rates in education; symptoms of a much more serious social problem, namely the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Finally, the presentation documents efforts to establish an empowerment group initiative among the Ainu community in the metropolitan area.

The presentation also aspires to touch on environmental issues and the compatibility of indigenous Ainu values and knowledge with recent approaches in green social work.