# BAIKI

THE INTERNATIONAL SÁMI JOURNAL

*Issue #31 Spring 2009*

photo: Marlene Wisuri

Mel Olsen, "Landscape from North Norway"

## LIVING IN TWO WORLDS

• ***Paula Palmer**: Listening for the Reindeer's Heartbeat - an Interview with **Harald Gaski** • **Elina Helander-Renvall,** Váisi: Dreaming and the Sacred Wild • **Liz Carlson**, The North American Saami: Colonized or Colonizers? • **Nils-Aslak Valkeapää's** "My Home is in My Heart," and much much more*

## IN THIS ISSUE



**Báiki: the International Sámi Journal**
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**Please visit www.baiki.org.**

## WHO ARE THE SÁMI AND WHAT IS BÁIKI?

THE BÁIKI LOGO


## MAP OF THE SÁMI AREA TODAY

Source: *The Saami: People of the Sun and the Wind,* Ajtte Swedish Mountain and Saami Museum, Jokkmokk.

The *Báiki* logo was designed by faith fjeld, *Báiki*'s founding editor and publisher, using pictographs from Sámi Drums. The reindeer symbolizes subsistence, the *lavvus* [Sámi dwellings] symbolize the extended family, the mountain behind symbolizes spirituality, and the *njalla* [storage shed] symbolizes traditional knowledge kept for future generations.

The "Sámi" [sah-mee] — also spelled "Saami" or "Sami" — are the Indigenous People of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Russian Kola Peninsula. The Sámi area in the North is called "Sápmi" [sahp-mee], and in the South "Åarjel Saemieh" [war-yel sah-mee-eh]. The nine Sámi languages are related to the Samoyedic, Uralic and Altaic language groups. There are about 80,000 Sámi People living in the Nordic countries. It is estimated that there may also be at least 30,000 people living in North America who have Sámi ancestry. Some are the descendants of the reindeer herders who came to Alaska and Canada in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and some are the descendants of Sámi immigrants who settled in the Midwest, the Upper Michigan Peninsula, the Pacific Northwest and parts of Canada during the same period.

The Sámi refer to their spiritual belief system as "the Nature Religion." Sámi society has traditionally been organized into *siidas* or *samebys* — semi-nomadic extended families who hunt, fish, farm and harvest together according to Nature's subsistence cycles. This worldview and way of life is still a part of Sámi society wherever possible.

The history of Sápmi and Åarjel Saemieh parallels that of the world's other Indigenous Peoples. Colonization and genocide began in the Middle Ages after contact with European missionaries. Sami areas were divided by national borders. and Sámi children were removed from their families and placed in boarding schools where they were taught to think and act like the colonizers. Conversion by the church and assimilation by the state set the stage for the abuse of the Sami natural resources.

"Báiki" [bye-h'kee] is the nomadic reindeer-herding society's word for the cultural identity that survives when people move from one place to another. *Báiki. the International Sámi Journal* grew out of the search for Sámi connections world wide by people in North America. After its appearance in 1991 the Sámi presence in North America was finally acknowledged.

Today the Sámi are incorporating new technologies in the revival of their languages, the *yoik,* and other traditional arts, and the Sami are in the forefront of the worldwide post-colonial renaissance of Indigenous voice and vision. Moreover, having their own parliaments in Norway, Sweden and Finland, the Sámi relationship with their former colonizers is improving as well.

## *BÁIKI* EDITORIAL PAGE

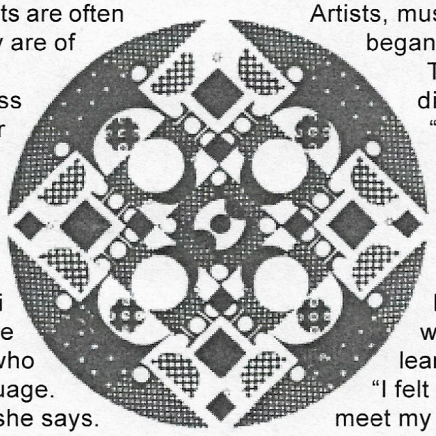
# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "BE SAAMI?" (part one)

***"The Saami have the ability to blend in by not speaking, and by not annoying anyone. In this way they have been able to penetrate all over the world."***

— Ellen Pulk Binder, Saami Elder and reindeer herder, Inuvik, NWT

Many years ago a group of Indigenous Saami reindeer herding families from Sápmi were brought to Alaska as teachers of reindeer husbandry. They were hired because they were Saami and reindeer were part of their culture. When they arrived they learned to speak the Yup'ik and Inupiaq languages and when their *gakti* wore out they began to wear Inuit clothing. Some of the herders remained in Alaska and married into Yup'ik and Inupiaq families. Three generations later their descendants are often as proud of their Saami heritage as they are of being Alaska Native.

My good friend Marita Sara Snodgrass is from one of these families. Her mother was Yup'ik and her father was Saami. His genealogy can be traced back to the 1700s in the *Kautokeino Slekter.* "I feel a very strong connection to my Saami family in Norway," she says. Marita has made two trips back to Sápmi to visit her relatives in Kautokeino where they are prominant reindeer herders who still speak *samigiella* as their first language. "I had the feeling I was coming home," she says. "There was a sense of bonding right away. They were all concerned about what happened to the ones who left for Alaska."



There is another side to the coming of the Saami to North America, however. Even as a hundred or so reindeer herders came to Alaska from Sápmi with their Indigenous identity intact, thousands of Saami were quietly coming into the Midwest among the waves of immigrants from Norway, Sweden and Finland. They did not emigrate as reindeer herders speaking their mother tongue and wearing *gakti* — they came hiding their identity. Twenty years ago I became curious about what happened to these Saami. Were they still "indigenous" when they settled so far from home? Did they kiss the Spirits of Nature goodbye when they were converted and assimilated by the church and the state?

I began to meet others who were asking similar questions. Many of us had Saami ancestry about which we knew little, except that it was treated as the skeleton in our family closet. We would meet in coffeehouses and bring with us folders filled with newspaper clippings and bits of Saami information to share and we'd sit and discuss Saami identity.

As we got to know each other, a loosely-organized grassroots community formed that soon became our extended family. Our coffeehouse meetings grew into study groups and we began to publish the periodicals *Báiki* and *Árran*. "We are misplaced children searching for who we are," a high school senior named Karen Anderson wrote in a letter to *Báiki.* Our curiosity led to the reawakening of Saami cultural consciousness among the descendants of immigrants from the Nordic countries.

Soon websites by and about the Saami began to appear on the Internet, North American libraries started collections of Saami literature, universities began to offer courses in Saami Studies, and Saami Camps with reindeer, lavvus, and educational exhibits became popular annual attractions at Scandinavian and Finnish festivals from coast to coast. Artists, musicians and politicians from Sápmi even began to pay us visits.

These amazing developments somehow did not seem to solve the question of "being Saami" in North America and trips back to Sápmi were sometimes unsettling.

Karen Anderson, now a mother in her thirties, thinks that the search for Saami identity started out as a romantic fantasy based on nostalgia for a simpler time when we were at one with Nature."Once I learned about my Saami ancestry," she said, "I felt an aching need to go back to Norway to meet my relatives — but when I went there, they were people I didn't know whose lives I didn't understand. I asked myself, 'How do I make this a part of my life?' For the first time I realized that I was an American."

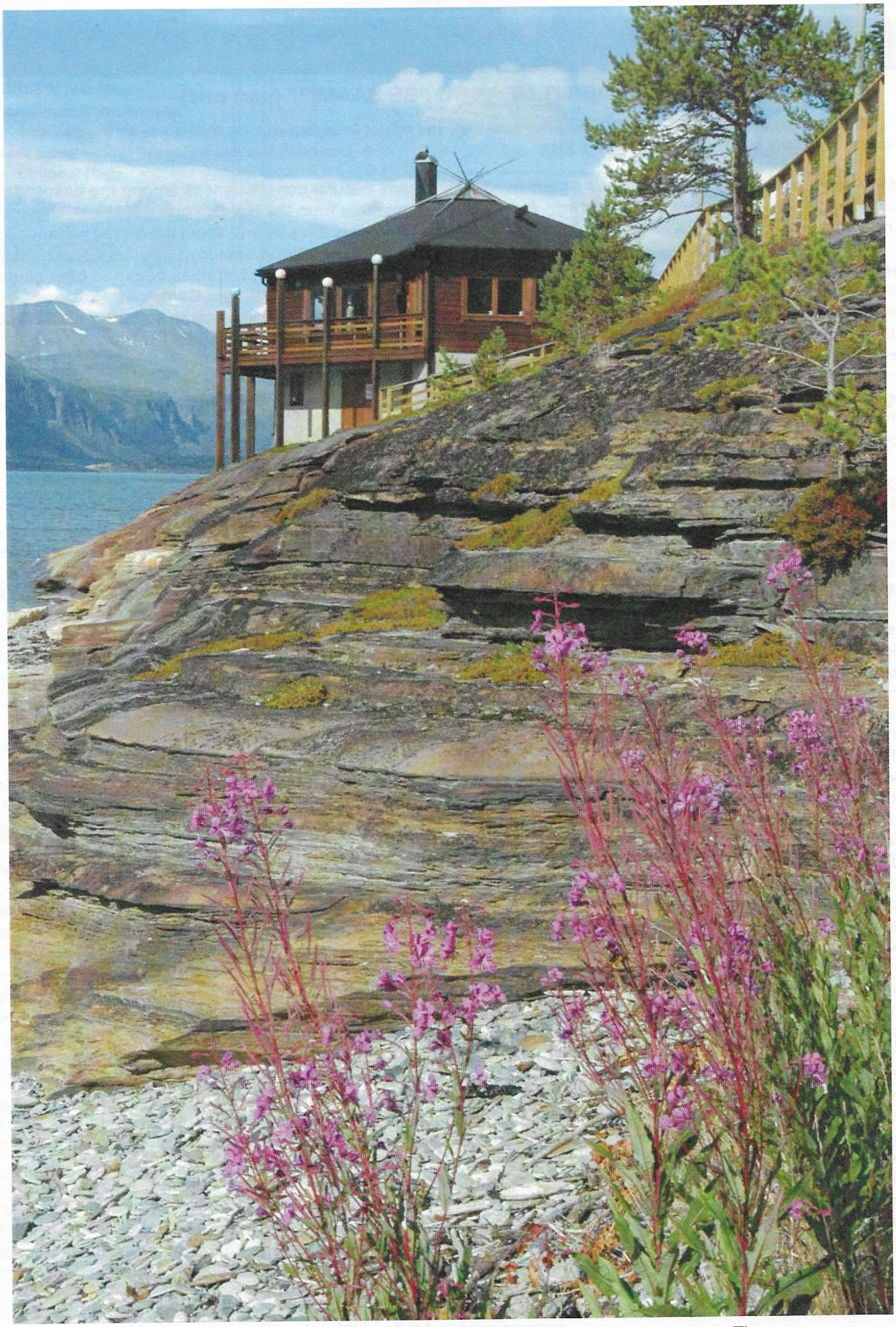
There has been an interest in DNA as a way to prove Saami identity that I think reflects the need for some kind of validation in the absence of family stories. While the scientific approach may be meaningful to some, Indigenous spokespersons point out that genetic markers analyze only a small percentage of an individual's full identity. They believe that tribal identity is *cultural* as much as it is genetic.

In *sámigiella* the word for cultural identity that travels with nomads when they migrate from one place to another is "báiki." It is sometimes referred to as the "home that lives in the heart." After I started *Báiki*, my curiosity got the better of me and for the past twenty years I lived the life of a nomad. You who are long-time subscribers will have mailed your renewals in to as many as seven different addresses as I made these migrations: San Francisco, Duluth, Minneapolis, Oakland, Anchorage, Nome, and Fairbanks. With the recent eighth migration back to Duluth a circle has been completed that includes many of the areas where North Americans with Saami ancestry live. With each generation more people from other cultures have become part of their family trees.

In his inauguration speech, President Obama referred to "America's patchwork heritage." We are all part of that cultural patchwork and if we go back far enough we share Indigenous ancestry. It is our common source of spiritual strength for reconciliation with each other and with Nature.

(***FJELD EDITORIAL*** *continued on page 11)*

patchwork mandala: faith fjeld, 1989



Lásságámmi was Nils-Aslak Valkeapää's home that he built on a sloping rock in Skibotn. The name means "the sloping rock turf hut."

photo: "Lásságámmi," Tore Figenschau, courtesy of www.lásságámmi.no

## An Interview with Harald Gaski

# LISTENING FOR THE REINDEER'S HEARTBEAT

*We are grateful to the American Indian magazine* Winds of Change *for granting us permission to publish this interview with Harald Gaski, which has been slightly edited. The original conversation took place in the fall of 1997 when he was a scholar-in-residence and visiting professor at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Harald Gaski is currently associate professor in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Tromsø, Norway and chair of the Sami Non-fiction Writers Association. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Sami literature and culture and has been a frequent contributor to* Báiki *from our very first issue.*

*by Paula Palmer*

*Tell me about your home and your upbringing.*

I grew up on a big river, the Tana River, which by the way, is Europe's best salmon river. Salmon fishing was very important for my family, both because selling the salmon brought in a much needed income and because salmon is such a nutritious and delicious fish to eat. We also had a small farm with a few cows and sheep for milk and meat. In the winter the boys and men caught ptarmigans, primarily to sell, and some had seasonal occupations in road construction or other jobs introduced with the changing society.

*In your education before college were you in a small minority of Sami people within an otherwise Norwegian majority? Who were your classmates?*

We lived in a small Sami village surrounded by a more or less Norwegianized region, at least linguistically. All of my classmates only spoke Norwegian, and even though there were other students who knew Sami, I didn't know that until long after we had finished school and met again at gatherings where Sami was spoken. A lot of children were also placed in boarding schools, but fortunately I lived so close to the public school that I didn't have to go to boarding school.

*Were the boarding schools forced?*

Yes, the boarding schools were forced. The authorities used practical explanations for keeping students in the boarding schools, like long distances to be bussed, but primarily the whole boarding school system was established to make the kids leave their Sami language and culture behind.

*Was it the mission of the teachers to bring "civilization" to your area? Did they see their role as teaching a new way of life as opposed to learning from the Sami people and the villagers about Sami life?*

Yes, absolutely. That was the feeling of the community and the students. The message that the teachers gave between the lines was very obvious to everyone. Actually the very fact that both the public school and the boarding school were established in the village on the other side of the river contributed to norwegianizing that village. But still, on our side of the river, the parents kept up their Sami heritage and spoke the Sami language to their children. We had an understanding of our culture compared to the children on the other side of the river.

*How many brothers and sisters do you have?*

There are four of us. Things were changing in Norway as we grew up, not just in the Sami society. This was the early 1960s. My father was rather old when I came along and died from a stroke when I was very young. My parents were doing the same things their parents had done: berry-picking in the fall, paid work during the winter to the degree it was available, and small-scale farming and fishing in the summer. They obviously sensed that things were about to change and encouraged us to seek an education. They had the feeling that there was no future in the way they had been living so they wanted their children to be prepared for something else.

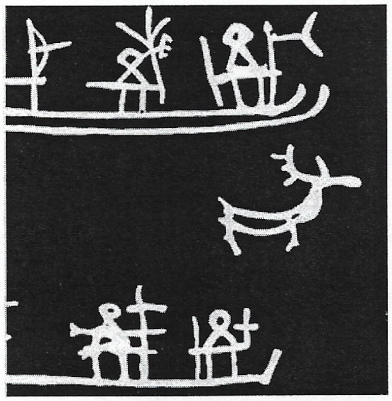
*You mentioned that you had an uncle who taught you a lot. Did he become important to you after your father died? Or was he simply a man who wanted to transmit and express to you traditional Sami culture?*

In ancestral Sami society the father's older brother had the specific assignment to teach his nephews traditional livelihoods and knowledge, so that was my uncle's task. I was more receptive to his teachings than my brother who used to say, "He's so old-fashioned." My father had chosen a way of life that was more connected to paid labor while my uncle preferred to stick to traditional values. He was not so well off economically compared to my father. My uncle worked on the farm and tried to keep up the old ways in his everyday life.

He taught me how to put out snares to catch ptarmigan and he taught me the fishing net system that's very important to catching salmon in the river. He kept teaching me these things until I could do them perfectly. He combined teaching me practical skills with telling relevant stories that accompanied the instructions. He kept on saying, "Well, you're doing good, this is good, you're improving," but on

(**GASKI** *continued overleaf)*

(**HARALD GASKI** *continued from page 5)*



**"The Great Creator gave to the Sami a living, beating heart of a two-year old female reindeer and put it in the center of the world so that when the Sami were uncertain about the future they could put their ear to the ground and listen to the heartbeat from below. As long as they heard the heartbeat, that reassured them that there would be a future. So you might say that we are one with the earth to make sure that the heart is still beating."**

*— Sami Creation Story*

the other hand he seemed to share my parents' view that this knowledge was something that I probably wouldn't need in order to make a living.

So I learned, and later on I finally understood that the skills my uncle had taught me were very useful in my academic theorizing about traditional values and worldviews among Indigenous Peoples. When I got a research job at the university I had time to sit down and think about my childhood and the things I had learned. I found out that in a way I'm still practicing those skills because I'm still "putting up snares" to catch language. In Sami the word "language" means the same as "to snare," and "language" also means a "trap." Maybe my uncle was not thinking of those things, but on the other hand he kept saying, "I don't know if you'll ever get to use these skills but it's good to know them because someday you might need them." Of course he was thinking about the possibility of being out on the tundra and surviving by being able to put up snares. It was one of those things you learned, along with to always bring extra food and supplies. So it was important to learn more than you needed to know for the time being. You were always expected to know more than what was needed in school. You needed to pick up things from stories and experiences just to be better prepared for life. This is expressed in an old Sami saying: "Knowledge doesn't weigh you down."

When I crossed the Atlantic for the first time as an exchange student I gained confidence because of my Sami upbringing. It was that "extra food" you were supposed to bring. I grew up before television and we didn't spend much time listening to the radio because we lived in a rather orthodox religious environment and were supposed to listen to the radio just for news, sports and weather forecasts. So we did group storytelling and we learned a lot from those stories, which I could draw on in my meeting other Indigenous Peoples. I was glad I remembered the stories I had listened to because then I had something to share with my new Native American friends.

My uncle also taught me that every animal has its own language. *Rievssatgiella* is the ptarmigan's language and *njoammilgiella* is the language of the hare. I learned both languages from my uncle and both had stories connected with them.

*I remember you wrote in a paper that the ancient Sami religion was utterly wiped out by the missionaries but that the creation stories are still part of the ancient understanding of the relationship between the mythical, Nature, and human beings.*

Yes, definitely, but what I meant by the traditional religion being wiped out was that we don't have the ceremonies anymore. The religious practices are gone but the Sami still have the worldview that is left in stories and in the traditional ways of singing. In the Sami religion the soul is divided into two parts. The spiritual part is free to leave the body in order to collect knowledge. A shaman must teach about this, but we don't have any real shamans left so we have lost a lot. The shaman's role in traditional Sami society was very much like the role of the medicine man in Native American communities. With the help of his shaman drum he was the one who could predict things that had to do with the local community. He could cure people and he could leave this world in a trance to collect information in other places, primarily the world where the deceased ones dwell. But he would also visit places in this world too. I think that the shaman had a kind of a mytho-poetic role in connection with rituals and ceremonies, but those parts of the traditional culture were harshly condemned by the missionaries, so most of the ceremonies and rituals have died out. There are remnants left, but too little to really to invigorate the old traditions in the way that they were practiced earlier.

*You also mentioned in your paper that the yoik is an important revival to Sami people. It is an important element both practically and symbolically for the free expression of Sami culture and identity — would you say that's true?*

Yes, the yoik is the traditional Sami way of singing, resembling Native American chanting to some extent. Yoik played an important role in the traditional Sami religion. I grew up in a community where people didn't yoik, so I didn't learn it myself, but I heard yoik as a child when we had reindeer Sami visitors in our house.

I am very interested in yoik as a lyrical way of expressing feelings. Also because I've been working with an even older tradition within yoik, the one connected with the old Sami religion and the old epic poems and stories that transmitted our traditions. One good thing about the missionaries is the fact that some of them wrote down those old yoik texts, so we still have them; otherwise they would have been forgotten, because in oral cultures things only last as long as they have a purpose and a meaning to the people. If we only had to rely on the Sami way of transmitting things orally, I'm sure we wouldn't have those old traditional epic yoiks anymore.

Modern Sami poetry is to a great extent inspired by the yoik. There is a very interesting link between tradition and modernity in the texts of the yoik and I guess even more in the music. Several musicians nowadays are inspired by yoik to be inventive and create something that isn't yoik anymore in the traditional sense. It's part of the world music movement and this has created international interest in Sami yoik as a modern music genre, while at the same time it has created a new interest in traditional yoik as well. People see that it is a source that they may utilize. I remember when I grew up yoik was thought of as backward, something only old people cared about.*Can you describe yoik?*

Yoik is a vocal genre with guttural sounds. There are several yoik dialects, and I'm sure there have been a lot of variations in the performance of the different genres. What is mainly thought of as yoik today, is personal yoiks as they are expressed on CDs, at concerts and in other public settings. *Is yoik accompanied?*

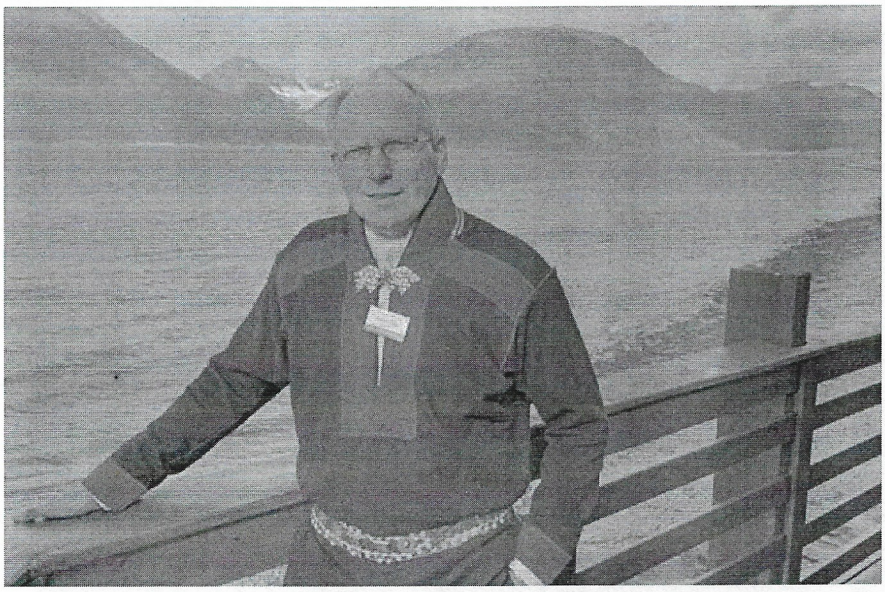


photo: Harald Gaski at Skibotn by Josef Timar

No, not traditionally, but nowadays we find yoik combined with jazz and electronics, and more or less all kinds of musical expressions. Because of Indigenous Peoples' music festivals we are also starting to hear a mixture of different Indigenous music practices and traditions combined in new ways.

*Have you found musicians and artists among Native Americans who are basing their art or music in tradition, but bringing modern elements into it too?*

Yes, I have heard several groups but I can't recall their names. I've always liked the way those new songs connect the past with the present and obviously aim first and foremost toward the future.

I want to mention something that I've noticed in the States, but which hasn't become that usual back home yet — namely to perform poetry in the same way that one performs music. I'm thinking of poets like Joy Harjo, a good friend of mine by the way, and the manner she recites her own poetry in combination with music. That's music and lyric as they originally were also practiced among the Sami, I'm sure. "Lyric" means song. Sometimes it sounds like incantation.

Sherman Alexie does somewhat the same thing when he performs his stories. They are modern and post-modern short stories that are written down as literature, but also performed as oral stories, which tie together past performance art with artistic expression of the present in an innovative and productive way. He gives his readers the opportunity to enjoy the written word while at the same time taking into account those who want to hear stories told in the old way.

It's been good to have something on the Indigenous end where we can bring people together and have them learn from one another and be inspired by each other.

The international Indigenous Peoples' gatherings are a blessing, but at the same time we ought to examine the way these events are organized. I feel to a certain extent that we have been so good at adopting the Western way of organizing entertainment that the structure becomes like television and everything is meant to fit into a frame. Nowadays if a cultural meeting were to be put together in a traditional way where time isn't the main factor, I think the young people would react against it and say that it was poorly organized. I feel we are sacrificing some of our old values by adopting another way of performing our own things. This goes for political meetings as well as cultural gatherings.

(**HARALD GASKI** *continued on page 22)*

# VÁISI
## DREAMING AND THE SACRED WILD

*by Elina Helander-Renvall, Ph.D*

*Váisi* is the Sami word for the Sacred Wild. Our worldview is based on the knowledge that we share a reciprocal relationship with all life on earth and that messages from other beings can significantly impact our lives — even in the contemporary world. We believe that animals, spirits, deities, rocks, and illnesses can manifest themselves as persons. There is no border between spirit and matter and everything in Nature is alive and sacred, entitled to reverence and respect.

In our tradition we believe in the existence of two souls, a body soul and a free soul and that human souls are similar to the souls of animals. The free souls live on after the body souls die. This similarity between the humans and non-humans leads to the realization of "we-ness." The Sami artist/shaman Nils-Aslak Valkeapää wrote in a poem that "we are stones, plants, animals, fish, water, wind, earth, and sky."

Our worldview is closely connected with shamanism, a state of mind that emphasizes concern for oneself, one's family, one's community and one's environment. Its main elements are trance, drum, song and help from spirits. The *noaidi*, the Sami shaman, is a visionary and healer who can perceive sacred realities, gain power from Nature and be of service to others. Dreaming is an integral aspect of shamanism. Per Simma, a Sami healer, expresses this by saying that when people sleep their free souls travel. The *noaidi*, Nila Pirak

Acrylic on paper: Elina Helander-Renvall, "Center of the World," 1999

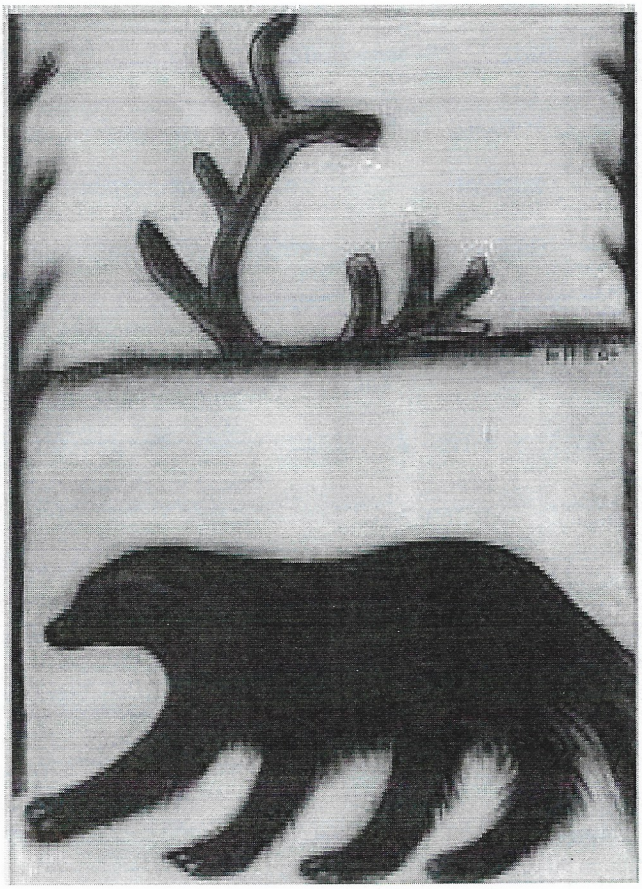
soul-traveled to the Land of Death where he met his relatives and saw the lands where he himself would one day be reborn and work with reindeer.

It is important to pay attention to dreams. They are messages from the ancestors and the spirits. Through dreams humans can discover who they are, what they should be doing, what their future possibilities are and any obstacles they might have to face. Even today, some of our healers become aware of their abilities and their calling through dreams.

People get overall advice regarding everyday life through their dreams. This happens because in the dream state there are none of the conceptual limitations that a person is hindered by when awake.

It is common for us to discuss dreams — to *guorahallat nieguid* — with family members and close friends. My parents used to talk about their dreams while drinking their morning coffee. The sharing of dreams is a form of storytelling. The dreamer must structure the dream before revealing it to others, placing its contents in a story that can be told to the local community. The Sami writer Kerttu Vuolab states that "All the things we were taught were through stories." What dreams and stories tell us is usually part of our cultural worldview. In some cases, the processing of a dream takes many years, so dreams are not always shared immediately after the dreaming occurs. Many times listeners will add something to a dreamer's statement. In doing so they take part in the interpretation of its contents. Some Sami analyze dreams with the aid of symbols, whereby the meaning of a dream can be linked to its opposite, for instance, if one is afraid in a dream, in reality the dream may point to success in life.

Dreams are a form of mythic discourse that appears in different ways to each person. We believe that a dream contains a personal component, a solution to a problem, and/or some sort of practical wisdom. The dream-world mythic messages are normally kept secret because overt activity in relation to these dreams can create problems in the discourse that is taking place. In our storytelling tradition, there are two levels of mythic discourse: an everyday level that is easily understood, and a second, deeper, level that is understood by those who have a personal relationship with spirits and/or animals. This deeper level, the communication between humans and animals and spirits, is something that *noaidis* use to acquire knowledge. The *noaidi* Aslakka Siiversen Siiri used to discuss matters with the dead; and in the South Sami language there is a verb, *soedattet*, that means to talk with the dead in a such a way that the dead answer. During the early period of colonization the Sami used the deeper level to send messages of resistance to each other. A strong belief in Christianity can inhibit mythic discourse.



Sami hunters and fishermen receive relevant information through their dreams, learning which fishhook to use, where the fish will bite, or where the moose will travel during hunting season. Hunter Aslak Aikio said in an interview that hunters have a way of knowing things. "I don't know what it is," he said. "At night I get this feeling that I must hurry to this place and when I arrive, there is an otter there — of course!" The communication that governs such interpersonal relationships between hunters, herders, animals, spirits and the land also takes place in ceremonies, stories, yoiks, prayers and conversations.

We have many stories about humans and animals collaborating. Animals have conscious ways of doing things. In *Muittalus Samid Birra* [*Turi's Book of Lappland*], Johan Turi wrote that animals can influence humans, for instance that a wolf can make a herder drowsy when she/he is watching reindeer. Bears can influence humans in a similar way. During a series of interviews that I conducted in northern Norway about Sami customs, a former reindeer herder from Sirma told me that once when he was sleeping in a *lávvu* [a Sami tent], a wolf suddenly showed up and stayed with him throughout the night. This took place when there were still many wolves in the north. The herder

(**HELANDER-RENVALL** *continued overleaf*)

Acrylic on paper: Elina Helander-Renvall, "Wolverine and Reindeer," 2007

# WHAT DREAMS AND STORIES TELL US IS USUALLY PART OF OUR CULTURAL WORLDVIEW

believed that the wolf needed protection because it had been excluded from the pack.

We believe that reindeer like the people who communicate with them. This relationship is reciprocal. Humans protect reindeer and reindeer take care of humans. Reindeer are teachers and models for humans on how to survive. We have learned much about the weather from them and they sacrifice themselves to meet our human needs for sustenance. Earlier, when wolves threatened reindeer, a herder would calm the reindeer by talking to them, and it is said that when the Sami *noaidi* Nila Pirak talked to wolves he was able to keep the pack away from the herd. In olden times, Sami herders used to sing yoiks to wolves and wolverines to keep them away from reindeer. Nils-Aslak Valkeapää could talk to birds. He said that in his childhood he understood their language better than he understood the language of human beings.

*Boazolihkku* [reindeer luck] comes from proper behavior towards the lands and all the beings living on the lands. We follow certain rules when moving through landscapes, when camping, or when gathering firewood or plants. A herder may ask the *Gufihtar* [the Underground Spirits] for permission to use a particular location for herding and when herders leave their summer camps they give thanks to the lands for their willingness to take care of the reindeer. We regard the *Gufihtar* as friends who have the power to help us in many ways, advising, warning, protecting and comforting. *Gufihtar* live a life that is parallel to human life and they sometimes share their wealth with us. A Sami Elder once told me that she had made an agreement with the Underground Spirits that she would live in a good way and not disturb them. In return, the *Gufihtar* protected and increased her herd.

There are many rules to follow with respect to the words we use when talking about animals. Certain terms or names are avoided if they are deemed disrespectful or dangerous, and the intentions of humans to hunt are never voiced. My mother used to call moose "big meat" and "big reindeer" during moose-hunting season. The Southern Sami say that they plan to "eat" a reindeer rather than that they plan to "kill" one. The Northern Sami have many names for reindeer that describe their nature, such as *gieris* [loving], *siivu* [quiet], and *duhkoraddi* [playful]. The same descriptions can in many instances be used for humans, and other animals are described in similar ways. In the Southern Sami language a wolverine is referred to as *saurak vaisje* [a persistent animal] because wolverines never tire. Land, too, is given human characteristics. Johan Turi wrote that the lands are so beautiful that they laugh, and when people are sad, the lands, the stones and the trees cry with them.

*Elina Helander-Renvall, Ph.D. is a Sami reindeer owner from Utsjoki, Finland. She works as a senior scientist at the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland. Her book* Silde:Sami Mythic Texts and Stories *has been translated into many languages. In 2004 she co-edited with Tero Mustonen* Snowscapes, Dreamscapes: Snowchange Book on Community Voices of Change *about global warming in the Arctic.*

## ABOUT THE PAINTINGS:

"Art gives back to people something they have lost. It is in this sense that my art contributes to reintegrating Sami belief systems and worldviews into current Sami society. My paintings speak to our traditional relationship to Nature, to animals, to the earth, as one that is integral to the sustenance of all life on the planet, and that is respectful of all living beings on earth."

*—Elina Helander-Renvall*

Acrylic on paper: Elina Helander-Renvall, "Wolf," 2007

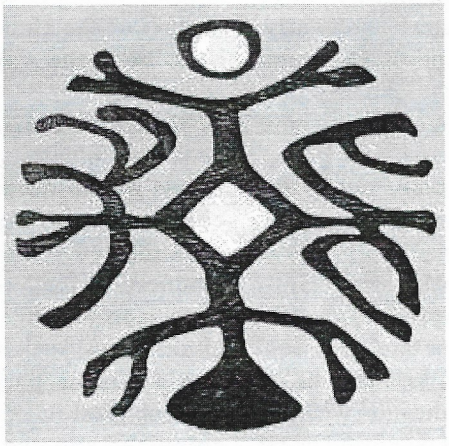
(FJELD EDITORIAL continued from page 3)

# THE ARTIST: LIVING IN TWO WORLDS

"Born a twin there are two of us: the one I am — whatever that means — and the one I wish to become. Thus in my art twins become one."

*by Elle-Hánsa / Keviselie / Hans Ragnar Mathisen*

It never ceases to amaze me why so many well-known artists lived in very poor conditions, and that their fight to survive was a constant threat to their freedom to create. It most certainly had an impact on their life span, and consequently on their work. Just think of what marvelous music masterpieces we could have had if Georges Bizet had lived longer, not to speak of Franz Schubert or Wolfgang Mozart. Or Vincent van Gogh, who in his lifetime is reported to have sold only two paintings, both of them to his brother Theodor, and now after they are both gone, his work sells for millions.



In western society "successful" artists are often treated as demi-gods. Lucky devils! Art has more than ever taken over the status and territories of religion. I think that the true status of artists is somewhere in between above and under — in the midst of society, not outside it. Art does not depend on the status of the artist. It depends on his/her conscience and spiritual awareness and in the long run, that is for each artist to decide.

The artist, like the Sámi *noaidi* or shaman, should have the ability to transcend borders, and through that ability come up with creative solutions to problems. This sometimes calls for sacrifice. "Sometimes an artist has to choose between being an artist or being famous," a colleague of mine once said.

Good artists deserve their fame, but fame is a treacherous aim and making art to please buyers in order to survive easily stands in the way of creative freedom.

As a Sami artist, Sápmi, my homeland, is of prime importance — as are all homelands. I do not believe in the "globalization of art" in the sense that all artists should fit into a certain style or technique. Any widespread style or technique has had a local start somewhere. By being locally-based, art is universal, it is a question of being rooted or not. In my art I try to contribute to the understanding that our globe is unique and vulnerable, precious and life giving, as long as we do not harm it and so do damage to ourselves. I believe that art and artists can help change the human condition for the better.

## ABOUT THE MOTIF:

When asked the meaning of the word "máilbmi," Elle Hánsa replied, "The simple meaning is 'world,' but I put into the motif a balance between opposites that consist of wholeness — a world trying to keep its balance."

*The work of Elle Hánsa / Keviselie / Hans Ragnar Mathisen has graced almost every* Báiki *since our very earliest issues. This editorial and the woodblock print "Máilbmi" reflect the theme of this issue.*

A few years ago we put up a Saami *lavvu* in the garden of an urban farm in Oakland. From time to time a group of women from the Bay Area would come together there. We'd build a fire in the center of the *lavvu*, sit in a circle, yoik and sing songs from the Sweat Lodge, and tribal chants from Africa, and then we'd have soup.

Most of the women there identified with just one culture, saying that they were Pomo Lakota, Wampanoag, Dineh, Saami, etc. One afternoon I suggested that we invite all of our ancestors to sit there around the fire and as the women named the many places where *all* their ancestors came from we realized that the whole world had joined us.

*— faith fjeld*

## RECONCILIATION

— Anne Dunn

All the battles legend-long
Still lie about us.

Weapons at hand
We stand.

Spread now your pale hands
Toward the warmth
Of my small fire.

Gather now my robe
Around your thin shoulders.

Dip now your dry bread
Into my soup.

Take now your stick
To strike my broken drum.

When you hear my song,
We will dance.

*Anne Dunn is an internationally-recognized Ojibwe storyteller, poet and author. She lives in Minnesota on the White Earth Reservation. This poem is taken from* Uncombed Hair, Poems by Anne Dunn, *a collection of her recent poetry. (Loonfeather Press, PO Box 1212, Bemidji, MN 56619)*

# THE NORTH AMERICAN SAAMI: COLONIZERS OR COLONIZED?

*by Liz Carlson*

In *Báiki* Issue #16, 1996, Hans Ragnar Mathisen wrote a letter from Sápmi suggesting that most Saami immigrants to North America were unaware that they were moving into stolen land. He recommended that a declaration of understanding and solidarity be created between the Indigenous Peoples of North America and Indigenous immigrants. Mathisen also seemed concerned with the reputation of North American Saami when he said we should ensure that Native Americans understand that "you did not come as conquerors" and that the declaration would "decategorize the Saami People as aggressors and destructors of Native American culture."

Mathisen's letter raises important questions regarding the identity of North American Saami people. In what ways are we or have we been identified with the colonizers and in what ways are we or have we been identified with the colonized in both North America and Scandinavia?

While many believe that colonialism ended in North America with the Declaration of Independence in the U.S. and the Repatriation Act in Canada, others disagree. I believe that colonialism is far from being a thing of the past and is alive and well in what have been called "settler societies." Although no longer colonies of England, settler societies such as the United States, Canada and Australia have been settled by English, French, other white European immigrants and their descendants. These settlers have retained political control of lands that have never been returned to the original inhabitants. This has established a colonial dynamic that has continued into present times. This has sometimes been referred to as "neo-colonialism" and at other times as "colonial consciousness." Both consist of a continuation of colonial ideologies and social/economic relations. As such, some members of these societies have belonged primarily to colonized and oppressed groups while others have belonged primarily to colonizing and oppressive groups with still others belonging to both.

Certainly there is much variety in the ancestries and experiences of North American Saami. Some may have emigrated to North America recently, retaining important aspects of Saami culture, some have ancestors who may have emigrated generations ago, and some have mixed ancestry and have "passed for white," denying their Saami heritage out of the shame of internalized colonization.

There are perhaps as many scenarios as there are North American Saami. Mathisen's letter encourages us to identify as colonized and to distance ourselves from the colonizers. However, for many of us, myself included, an identification with just one category, colonizer or colonized, is far too simplistic.

Growing up "white" of Swedish and German ancestry with no knowledge of my Saami ancestry, I was fully socialized into the U. S. dominant society. I had every privilege of any other blonde, green-eyed American. I did not suffer from race-based oppression. Having absorbed the oppressive colonial mindset associated with the dominant society, I know I have acted from this colonial consciousness and have been complicit in the oppression of others. I have absorbed the social hierarchies of colonialism, the racism, gender and class biases, among others. I have acted out of the values of competition, individualism, and anthropocentrism (a belief in the supremacy of human beings over other living beings).

Yet there are other parts of me. I carry the intergenerational effects of the colonial oppression of my Saami ancestors and I carry the knowledge of their history. I know some of what they had to give up in order to become white Americans and I can imagine the pain it must have caused them. I also carry an internal sense of dissonance with the dominant society. I, along with many other North American Saami people, have a natural affinity for and connection with Peoples and cultures Indigenous to North America based on our shared Indigeneity. By the nature of my ancestry in the historical and present context of the United States, I have been both the colonizer and the colonized.

Written in 1957, Albert Memmi's book *The Colonizer and the Colonized* is one of the deeper treatments of colonial psychology that I have encountered. It has important ramifications for the situation of North American Saami. Memmi's own historical and social location afforded him a unique perspective on the psychological functioning of both the colonizer and the colonized. His ancestry was Italian Jewish and Jewish Berber. He was born in Tunis in 1920 to an economically-impoverished family. Being Jewish and being educated situated Memmi in the middle. He affiliated with both the colonizers and the colonized, yet truly belonged to neither.

In exploring the consciousness of both groups, Memmi concludes that the only options left to the colonized are to assimilate or to revolt. Memmi's description of this type of revolution is liberation through the recovery of self: of pride, original culture and religion. Many Indigenous peoples have described this as "decolonization," not national decolonization, but rather the decolonization of colonial consciousness.

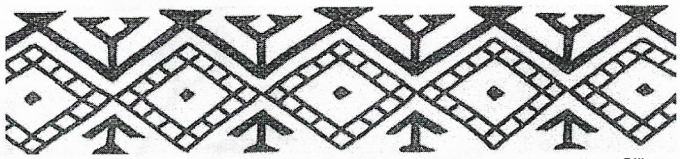
The options Memmi sees for the colonizers are less hopeful. Those of the colonizing group can either leave the colony or stay to work for change. But those who stay will be in conflict with their own relatives and will never

truly belong to the colonized should h/she seek to align with them. Those of the colonizing group who accept and agree with their position as colonizers will live a defensive, fearful, and restricted existence — ultimately "poisoning their souls," according to Memmi.

Although it is difficult work, I believe it is important to sit with the hopelessness of Memmi's portrayal of the colonizer— to sit with the personal ramifications of colonialism and to grieve them. In my mind, this is a first step towards decolonization of the colonizer consciousness. Although it remains underemphasized in his analysis (he believes it is unlikely to occur), Memmi sees decolonization as a deep transformation of the circumstances and personality of the colonizer — a difficult and painful process.

As North American persons with Saami ancestry, I believe it is essential for us to examine the ways in which we have been colonized and/or have become colonizers. Once we have acknowledged and explored these elements, we will have begun the process of decolonization and of healing the ways in which we have internalized the aspects of colonialism in our lives. Engaging in these processes individually and collectively can then serve to reduce trauma, fear, and oppression in our communities and in our world.

*In addition to her Swedish, Saami, and German ancestry, Liz acknowledges the ancestors of the Anishinaabe (Sandy Bay First Nation, Manitoba) and Cree Family of Byron Roulette into which she has been adopted. She is currently a doctoral student in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba where her work has been focused on issues around colonialism and decolonization.*



pattern: Ojibwe

# KINDRED SPIRITS

## *(For my Saami brothers and sisters)*

## — Al Hunter

I
Beneath an autumn moon,
a peak rises out of the northern shores of Lake Superior.
"Who else calls this valley home,
this valley of memories and kindred spirits?"

II
In October
at dawn it seemed
cold enough to crack teeth.
Frost covered the meadow below and the hillside above.
We need to be up there before sunrise, I tell my companions.
We are going to greet the sun from that hill.
Making our way through frost and cold in silence,
the peak rose before us in the stillness, in the warming hands
of first light.

At the pinnacle, in a circle of trees,
we prepared to greet the sun.
With the first breath of the Pipe,
a circle of birds,
a circle of song.

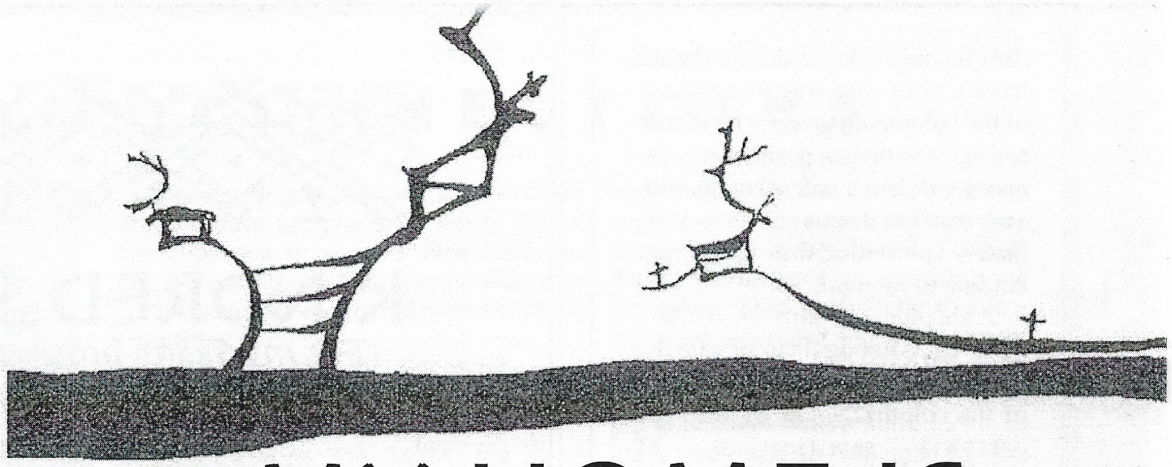
As the sun rose,
a beam of light danced across the waters,
a voice sounded from the east.

We acknowledged the sun.
We acknowledged the *nagamon.**

We acknowledged the *yoik.**
We acknowledged the kindred spirits,
singing, coming home....

**nagamon* is a song in the Ojibwe language, **yoik* is a song in the Saami language

*Al Hunter is a citizen of the Anishinaabe Nation. He lives in Rainy River First Nations, Ontario. As a member of the Caribou Clan his responsibilities include reconciliation, peacemaking, and the preservation of the artistic, creative traditions of the Anishinaabeg. He has been the Project Coordinator of Native Teachers for the Seventh Generation, and has taught in the Indian Studies Department at the College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, MN. This poem is taken from his second book of poetry, The Recklessness of Love — Bawajiganan gaye Ni-maanedam, Wiarton, ONT: Kegedonce Press, 2008. (www.kegedonce.com)*



# MY HOME IS

My home is in my heart
it migrates with me
The yoik is alive in my home
the happiness of children is heard there
herd-bells sound there
dogs bark
the lasso hums
in my home
the fluttering edges of coats
the leggings of the Sami girls
warm smiles
My home is in my heart
it migrates with me

You know it brother
you understand sister
but what do I say to strangers
who spread out everywhere
how shall I answer their questions
that come from a different world

How can I explain
that one can not live in just one place
and still live among all these fjelds
You are standing in my bed
my privy is behind the bushes
the sun is my lamp
the lake my wash bowl

How can I explain
that my heart is my home
that it moves with me
How can I explain
that others live there too
my brothers and sisters
What shall I say brother
what shall I say sister

They come
and ask where is your home
They come with papers
and say
this belongs to nobody
this is the Nation's land
everything belongs to the State
They bring out fat dirty books
and say
this is the law
it applies to you too

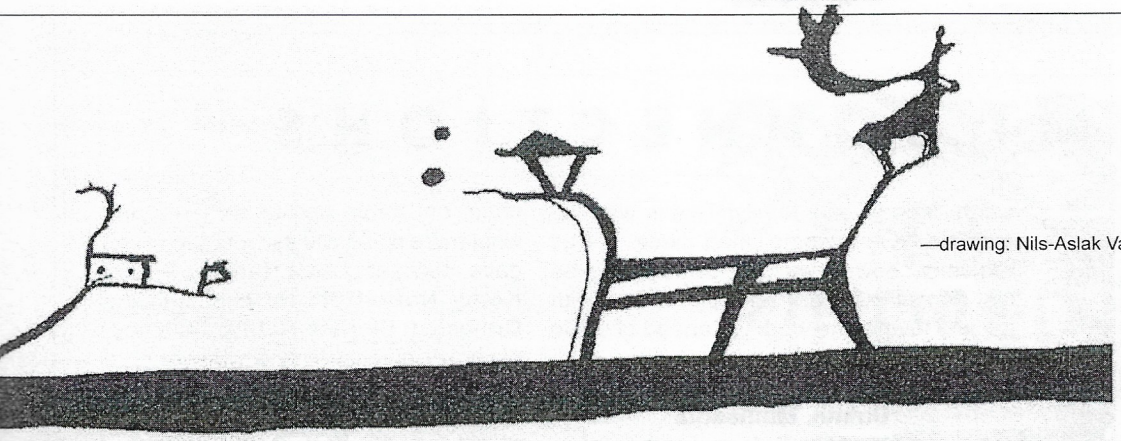
What shall I say sister
What shall I say brother
You know brother
you understand sister

But when they ask where is your home
do you then answer them all this
On Skuolfedievvá we pitched our lavvu
during the summer migrations
Čáppavuopmu is where we built our goathi
during rut
Our summer camp is at Ittunjárga
and during winter our reindeer are in Dálvadas

You know it sister
you understand brother

Our ancestors have kept fires on Allaorda
on Stuorajeaggis' tufts
On Viiddescearru
Grandfather drowned while fishing
Grandmother cut her shoe grass in Šelgesrohtu
Father was born in Finjubákti in burning cold

And still they ask where is your home



—drawing: Nils-Aslak Valkeapää

# IN MY HEART

***— Nils-Aslak Valkeapää***

They come to me
and show books
Law books
that they have written themselves
This is the law and it applies to you too
See here
But I cannot see brother
I cannot see sister
I say nothing I cannot
I only show them the fjelds

I see our fjelds
the places we live
and hear my heart beat
all of this is my home
and I carry it
within me
in my heart

I can hear it
when I close my eyes
I can hear it
I hear somewhere
deep within me
I hear the ground thunder
from thousands of hooves
I hear the reindeer herd running
or is it the noaidi drum
and the sacred rock
I discover somewhere within me
I hear it whisper sound shout call
with the thunder still echoing
in my breast

And I can hear it
even when I open my eyes
I can hear it

Somewhere deep within me
I can hear a voice calling
and the blood's yoik I hear
In the depths
from the dawn of life
to the dusk of life

All this is my home
these fjords rivers lakes
the cold the sunlight the storms
The night and day of the fjelds
happiness and sorrow
sisters and brothers
All of this is my home

Of course I recognize you
even if you are not wearing a Sami dress
You are my brother
you are my sister

Even though we have never met
I recognize you
and if you wanted to hide
something would still move in your heart

You are my brother
you are my sister
I love you

"My Home is in My Heart" is taken from the English translation of *Ruoktu Válmmus [Trekways of the Wind]* by Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (DAT 1985). In the North Sami language the word for "home" and "heart" is the same. The translators Harald Gaski, Lars Nordstrom and Ralph Salisbury have granted *Báiki* permission to reprint this poem. Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1943-2001) was a Sami spiritual leader who expressed his love for his People in his art, poetry, yoik and film.

# SAAMI CONNECTIONS

SIIDDA logo: Mel Olsen

## FINNFEST AS A MODEL

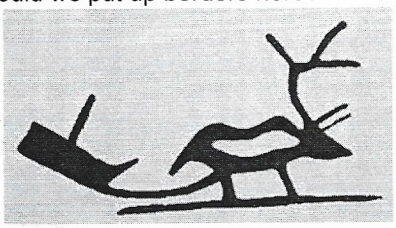
Dear Friends, I think we might look to the FinnFest 2008 model for inspiration in handling our North American Sami affairs. I served on the Duluth FinnFest committee. We recruited people with a variety of skill sets and used people very effectively in their particular area of expertise. Working together we "did our own thing," which resulted in an event of amazing breadth and depth. In the process we achieved a level of fellowship and friendship that I will cherish for the rest of my life.

At the Duluth FinnFest we who were also members of the SIIDA were drawn together by a beautiful opening ceremony which honored our tradition and flag, meaningful and informative presentations, musical performances, good fellowship, and remembrances of our Elders who have passed over.

But in the past and continuing right up to the present day, we have had some heated differences of opinion and style that have often been hurtful and divisive. Perhaps it is time to come together to celebrate the many talents possessed by our members and to acknowledge that not everyone works in the same way with the same set of skills or even with the same goals. I ask you to join me in celebrating our writers, artists, musicians, publishers, poets, lavvu and gakti makers, makers of duodji, organizers, fund raisers, reindeer herders, birch bark weavers, educators, exhibit designers, photographers, camp builders, grant writers, drummers, archivists, historians, genealogists, spiritual leaders, yoikers, web masters, keepers of language, travelers, respectors of Elders, preservers of the Earth, friends, and family. This is who we are. We have accomplished much. Let us remember how far we have come during the last almost 20 years and look ahead with joy and love to the work yet ahead of us. In friendship,

**Marlene Wisuri, *siidaeamit***
**Duluth, Minnesota**
**<mwisuri@cpinternet.com>**

*Editor's note: the SIIDA, the Sami Immigrants' Descendants' Association, was envisioned by the late Alyce Ruikka of New York Mills, MN in 1992. The first meeting was held the following summer at Finn Creek. When our fledgling community began to experience growing pains, Alyce wrote a letter to "Saami Connections." Here is an excerpt:* "We must all hang together. The study and promotion of Sami culture isn't for individual glory or to merely teach it in the schools. It should be available to all in order to make ours a strong community. It should not be broken into Finnish Samis, Norwegian Samis, Swedish Samis, etc. The Sami freely cross these borders so why should we put up borders here?"



## *BÁIKI*: THE NOMADIC SAMI JOURNAL

The *Báiki* editorial office returned to Duluth last fall, making one last nomadic migration. In *Greetings from Lappland*, Nils-Aslak Valkeapää praises the nomadic lifestyle as being environmentally correct in that one cannot acculumulate very many possessions and must make good use of what one has. Leaving all my household effects and my car behind in Fairbanks, I brought with me the important things: books, research papers and cat. Thanks to the following "Báikers" for helping to fill up *Báiki's* new home with warmth and beauty:

**Karen Anderson**, for her power tools and painting expertise; **Gerry Filiatreault** for helping me find a car, and Gerry's sister **Jeanne** for giving me their grandmother's kitchen table; my cousins **Bob** and **Kathie Nelson** for transforming a big empty space into a cozy living room complete with braided rug, sofa in Saami colors, rocking chair, end table and brass lamp and what more could you ask for? they even gave me a set of American flag dishes; **Kathy Nordstrom** for checking out **Craigslist**; **Sterling Rathsack** for four big boxes of rescued and lushly-revived houseplants; and to **Marlene Wisuri** for finding this wonderful apartment in a big old Minnesota house surrounded by many trees, and for helping to turn the bedroom into a *boudoir* and the front porch into a bed and breakfast.

I am also grateful to **Jim Vileta**, Business Librarian, University of Minnesota-Duluth, for sharing his knowledge and expertise.

**faith fjeld**
**Duluth, Minnesota**
**<faithfjeld@q.com>**

## WWW.BAIKI.ORG

The Reindeer Project Chronology on your website is great! Nathan Muus tells a fascinating and complex story of intrigue and drama that has a place of importance to Alaska Natives, Sami people, the North American Sami and the public in general. It's about business deals, missionary zeal, gold mining, bad debts, starvation, marriage and murder and how the complicated web of politics, the unlikely cast of characters and unforeseen weather conditions affect every episode.

**Karen Anderson**
**Duluth, Minnesota**
**<karen-hilja@hotmail.com>**

## BE A BIRTHDAY TWIN

I'm an editorial researcher at *Woestijnvis*, a Belgian television production house. I'm sending you an e-mail regarding our new documentary project. We have selected 20 Belgians who are wondering what their life would have been like if they had been born somewhere else on this planet. We are looking worldwide for their "Birthday Twins," people who were born on the same date and year and who are the same gender. The Belgians will visit their "Birthday Twins" and compare their lives and ways of thinking. We have already filmed episodes with a Chilean inmate and a Namibian school teacher.

# SAAMI CONNECTIONS

We are looking for a Sami "Birthday Twin." Could you help us by publicizing this in *Baiki*? Please contact me for additional information. Thank you.

**Annelore De Donder, editor**
***Woestijnvis* Birthday Twins Project**
**Vilvoorde, Belgium**
**<twins@docfish.be>**
**(www.woestijnvis.be)**

Here are the birth dates of the Belgians we have selected:

**WOMEN**

5 April 1943
2 May 1950
20 July 1963
24 March 1964
26 March 1975
27 December 1979
24 July 1982

**MEN**

29 April 1933
18 July 1948
19 July 1948
25 September 1949
11 February 1952
18 January 1956
5 May 1956
30 December 1960
24 July 1962
14 January 1965
27 January 1965
5 February 1969
1 December 1971
3 May 1981

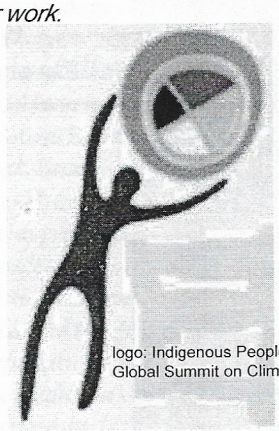
drawing: America Meredith

## ART FROM AMERICA

I've enjoyed *Báiki* for years. Enclosed is a CD with scans of four of my pen and ink drawings which you are welcome to use for your magazine. Reading the Saami efforts to preserve their language, land rights and culture is highly inspiring as they parallel those efforts by tribes here in the U.S. Keep up the good work!

**America Meredith**
**Santa Fe, New Mexico**
**<ahalenia@yahoo.com>**
**www.ahalenia.com**

*Editor's note: America Meredith is a Swedish-Cherokee artist and a hereditary member of Aniwodi, the Red Paint Clan. We are grateful for her gift to us. Please visit her website for more information about America and her work.*



logo: Indigenous Peoples' Global Summit on Climate Change

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' GLOBAL SUMMIT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

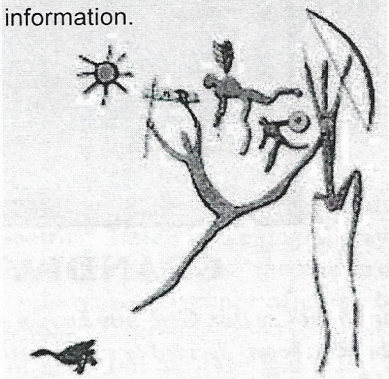
This year, from 20 to 24 April, Indigenous representatives from the Arctic, North America, Asia, Pacific, Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean and Russia met in Anchorage, Alaska to express their solidarity as Peoples living in areas that are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The Sami representatives were Olav Mathis Eira, Stefan Mikaelsson, Gunn-Britt Retter, and Laila Spik.

Gunn-Britt Retter spoke about changing animal migrations, longer growing seasons and the appearance of new pests. She said the Saami are scrutinizing the actions by governments and industries undertaken in response to climate change such as building wind farms and biofuel plants. The Saami have created their own international study group called Ealat, to maintain the reindeer-herding culture in spite of the changing weather patterns that make it more difficult for reindeer to find food, she said.

The delegates to the Global Summit reaffirmed the sacred connection between land, air, water, oceans, forests, sea ice, plants, animals and human communities because it is the basis for earthly existence.

Indigenous Peoples are deeply alarmed by the accelerating devastation brought about by unsustainable development. They are experiencing profoundly adverse impacts on health, human rights, traditional livelihoods, food systems and their very survival. Indigenous Peoples have a vital role in defending and healing Mother Earth through their knowledge, spirituality, sciences, experience and relationships with their traditional lands, waters, air, forests, oceans, sea ice, other natural resources and all life. The Global Summit reaffirmed that the future of Indigenous Peoples lies in the wisdom of the Elders and the restoration of the sacred position of women.

Thanks to Arctic Portal, the Indigenous Peoples' Center for Documentation, Research and Information, and the Indigenous Environmental Network for this information.



logo: Indigenous Peoples' Center for Documentation, Research and Information

## BACK ISSUES OF *BÁIKI*

I have intended to order the back issues of *Báiki* and try to establish if my ancestor was a Sami, Finn, Swede or a combination. Is there any way I can get a set of the back issues, preferably on disc? Thank you.

**Doren Koste**
**Tacoma, Washington**
**<dkurho@comcast.net>**

*Editor's note: We no longer offer complete sets of the back issues but we are organizing some of the* Báiki *articles on specific topics.*

*Saami Connections provides our readers with a place to share their stories, comments and news. We welcome your emails and letters and reserve the right to edit them. Email <faithfield@q.com>*

## LAVERN BUDROW (1930 - 2009)

LaVern Budrow was a member of the White Earth Band of Minnesota Chippewa. His daughter Tonia Budrow Johnson is also an enrolled member of the White Earth Band and she has Finnish-Sami ancestry through her mother, Ida Mae Rantala Budrow. Tonia's granddaughters are named Julia and Jada. One day when Julia was sick and staying home from school at her Grammy Tonia's, she said, "We need to make Grandpa Vern a life bracelet." Later when her sister Jada came home, the three of them brainstormed about important parts of Grandpa's life and picked out the beads. Each bead they added represented a special aspect of his life. In the last month of his life the bracelet became very important to LaVern and he repeatedly asked to hear about it. He had truly walked The Good Path.

## GRANDPA VERN'S LIFE STORY BRACELET

*The Great Creator, God, also known as Kitchi Manitou* ***(bright blue bead)*** *decided to send a little Indian boy* ***(small light blue bead)*** *to earth to have a human being experience. This boy was born into the White Earth Ojibwe Nation* ***(black bead with white flower)*** *and named LaVern Budrow — also known as Walking Eagle. Life for an Indian was not easy back then hence the black bead, but the white flower on it represented hope. Vern loved Nature* ***(flat rock brown bead)*** *and had a strong connection to the earth. Playing baseball* ***(round white bead)*** *was another of his outdoor passions.*

*He met Ida Mae at the young age of 10* ***(silver heart)****, and they became childhood sweethearts. They married and began a family of their own* ***(clear bead)****, first two girls* ***(purple beads)****, then three boys* ***(blue beads)****, and finally three more little girls* ***(purple beads)****. Through his lifetime, Vern taught his children to love the Lord as his mother Lena had taught him* ***(silver cross)****. His life journey was full of service, being a father and husband, working in the mines* ***(straight coal bead)****, fighting fires* ***(red round bead)****, and serving as fire chief. He taught his children to live off the land* ***(brown wooden bead)****, to hunt, to fish, and to enjoy and cherish God's creations. He loved the cabin and campfires* ***(orange bead)****. He had a love for the elder brothers — the dogs, birds, and wild creatures — as well.*

*As his children began to marry, they gave him many granddaughters* ***(pink bead)*** *and grandsons* ***(light blue bead)****. Through the years, his love for his wife Ida continued to grow stronger as they celebrated their silver years* ***(silver heart*** *and* ***silver bead)****. Great grandchildren came later adding more joy to his life* ***(purple bead)****. In his elder years, he became a master carver* ***(wooden bead with a carved star)****, and an accomplished recording artist who sang and played guitar with country music legends* ***(turquoise bead*** *and* ***guitar)****.*

*His Indian heritage became brighter when he assisted in creating and serving on the Iron Range Tribal Council. Vern's dream was to preserve his Nation's heritage. The bead, which was black before is now blue, representing a turn from darkness to brightness* ***(blue bead with white flower)****. The white flower imprinted on it continues to be hope for his tribal Nation. LaVern Budrow became a well-rounded human being having learned the lessons life laid out for him* ***(dark blue bead)****. He peacefully rejoined the Great Creator* ***(bright blue bead)*** *in the Spirit World on Wednesday, May 27, 2009 with his wife and children at his side.*

*— Tonia Budrow Johnson*

**Vern's bracelet can be seen in color on our back cover.**

# HELEN SARA NIEMEYER (1927 - 2008)

## HONORED DESCENDANT OF ALASKA'S REINDEER HERDERS

**MEMORIES OF HELEN SARA NIEMEYER**
**our Mother, Grandmother, Sister, Cousin, Friend**

*She loved to garden.*
*She cut up a moose at age 81.*
*Her moose stew was better than anyone else's.*
*She was always interested in her grandchildren.*
*She broke her hip and walked around on it for ten days before having surgery.*
*She usually got what she wanted.*
*She focused her life around the welfare of her family.*
*She served a great cup of coffee.*
*She never wanted a big fuss made about her.*
*She cooked the best carrots ever.*
*She had one of the best smiles and laughs; it kept her forever young.*
*As much as anyone could, she kept Acey in line — and she kept up with him.*
*She was always interested in others and wanted the best for them.*
*She was witty and funny and had a big heart.*
*She was thrifty and enjoyed finding a bargain at a garage sale.*

Helen Sara Niemeyer was one of Alaska's pioneers. She was born in Akiak on the Kuskokwim River east of Bethel. Her mother was Mary Waska, a Yup'ik woman from Akiak and her father was Mikkel ("Mike") Sara, a Sami reindeer herder from Kautokeino, Norway. Helen survived the death of her mother and other family members in the tuberculosis epidemic of the 1930s and so at an early age she developed the enduring strength that served her the rest of her life. Her family testifies to her feisty and resilient nature as she grew up, gold mining and herding reindeer in the foothills of the Kilbuck Mountains with her father.

Helen met her husband Acey in 1948 when she was managing the laundry at the Clarks Point Cannery, Bristol Bay. He was in the U.S. Air Force. After they married she accompanied him to fourteen different bases and for the next twenty-four years she raised their six children while he was away on military assignments. One by one the children moved to Alaska when they grew up, but Helen and Acey retired in Texas. One day a tornado roared through Corpus Christi, took the roof off their house and destroyed everything they had. That was when Helen and Acey decided to follow their kids and return to Alaska.

Helen was a typical Alaska Native woman. Her greatest joy was being surrounded by her family and close friends. She loved Nature and traveling and enjoyed gardening, camping, cooking, sewing, reading, berry picking and dipnetting. Helen also enjoyed playing the 10-cent slot machine also known as "the one-armed Bandit." A catch of salmon or a jackpot of coins both brought smiles to her face.

Helen was proud of her Sami heritage and Acey was seriously interested in it too. Together they did extensive research on the Reindeer Project and the contributions of the Alaska Sami, making special trips to archives in Alaska and Canada. Helen was featured in the Johs. Kalvemo 1994 video documentary on the Alaska Sami, and she was consulted by James Michener when he was writing *Alaska*. In the book, the fictionalized character of reindeer herder "Mikkel Sana" was based on Helen's father, Mike Sara.

Helen Sara Niemeyer was preceded in death by her beloved husband Acey, Ret. Lt. Col. Allen C. Niemeyer. She is survived by her sister Julia Hansen of San Jose, California; her children Diane, Mike, Burt, Cindy, Jan and Joe; her grandchildren Jamil, Lesley, Amy, Andrew, Kevin, Katie and Igor; and her great-grandchildren Sophia and Dylan.

At Helen's request she was cremated, as was Acey two years before. Their remains will be united at Fort Richardson National Cemetery in Anchorage July 22.

Thanks to Julia Hansen (Helen's sister) and Lois Stover (Helen's cousin) for helping to tell her story.

*—faith fjeld*

a Genealogy Column by Donna Matson

# OUR GATEWAY ANCESTORS

## ROJU-ELLI: DOCUMENTING A LEGEND

### PART ONE

You may have read in *Báiki* about the powerful and enterprising Saami woman Roju-Elli who killed a bear with an axe handle. Samuli Paulaharju (1875-1944), the Oulu-based folklore collector and author, immortalized her in his 1922 book *Lapin Muisteluksia* (*Memories of Sápmi*). Paulaharju's works are valuable documentations of oral histories, and in this column I am attempting to determine the difference between fact and fiction relating to Roju-Ẹlli, "Noisy-Elli," and my own family.

Roju-Elli (Larm-Elli in Swedish) got her nickname because she had a strong voice and when her reindeer sled was loaded with valuable possessions they made quite a racket when she was on the move.

Paulaharju says Roju-Elli from the Pokka family was the wealthy widow of a man from Kyrö in the mountainous region north of Kittilä. Later she married an Unari Lake Saami man, Lassi Kallatsa, the descendant of a Sodankylä clergyman who had had children with his Saami housekeeper. According to the oral histories, Roju-Elli had three daughters, Saara, Riitu and Elli. Saara married Joopi Sassali from Sassali Lake near Sodankylä, Finnish Lapland; Riitu moved to a neighboring lake, Kierinki, and married Matti Ristilä; and Elli (Ellin) married Niiles from Seipäjärvi.

When I met my Kallatsa cousins in Sodankylä, they told me we were descended from Roju-Elli but that they had no idea of when she lived. I later heard from several families here in the U.S. who also said she was their ancestor and they conjectured that a great-great-great-great grandson of hers had been born in 1851; but the other names and the time-frames in Paulaharju's book suggest a more recent date.

So began an intriguing genealogical conundrum – how does one find solid documentation of such a legendary person? As it turns out, the answer lay in the Finnish church / tax records, and just like every serious genealogical research project, it was necessary for me to start with the nearest documented family members and dates and slowly work my way back.

It took me years, but with the help of LDS microfilms and online access to Finnish church records, which were also used for the purpose of collecting taxes, I learned the true identity of Roju-Elli. She was Elsa Henriksdotter Riimi, born on September 4, 1763 or 1766 (there was a variation in the documents). Her father was Henrik Riimi (also Rijm, Riijmi), a nomadic reindeer herder born in 1737 (place not yet pinpointed) and who died in 1795 in Muonio. Elsa Riimi's mother, Carin Olofsdotter, was born in 1739 and appears to have died in her thirties. It was Roju-Elli's daughter Margaret who married the Saami man named Johan Pokka.

Roju-Elli's first husband was indeed Johan Anderson Kyrö, sometimes mistakenly written as Johan Larsson. His biological father was not a Kyrö. "Kyrö" was his stepfather's name. Johan was born out of wedlock to Anders Andersson Marakat, a Saami man from Enontekiö, and Sara Ericsdotter Löfman, a minister's granddaughter from the Tornberg family — prior to her marriage to Lars Hindriksson Kyrö. In comparing the LDS documents and the Finnish church / tax records with the findings of Paulaharju, I was able to see germs of truth mixed with the changing stories that have been passed down from mouth to mouth.

Roju-Elli and Johan had six children, two of whom were boys. Identifying them illustrated for me some classic pitfalls in Nordic genealogy, the most common being mistaking place names for surnames, which can result in erroneous genealogies.

Until the late 19th and early 20th centuries, surnames were not used by the so-called "common people" in the Nordic countries as are used today. Before then surnames were only in usage by the "higher-born" nobles, the clergy, and people in certain esteemed professions or who held public office. Once you know the ins and outs, the patronymic system, combined with the use of dwelling places, is an extremely reliable way to track ancestors.

In Part Two, my next column, I will track Roju-Elli and Johan's children. I hope to publish some original images from church records, depending on my ability to obtain permission.

In the meantime, I would like to hear from any of you out there who are descendents of this remarkable woman. Today she would be known as Elsa "Roju-Elli" Riimi Kyrö Kallatsa.

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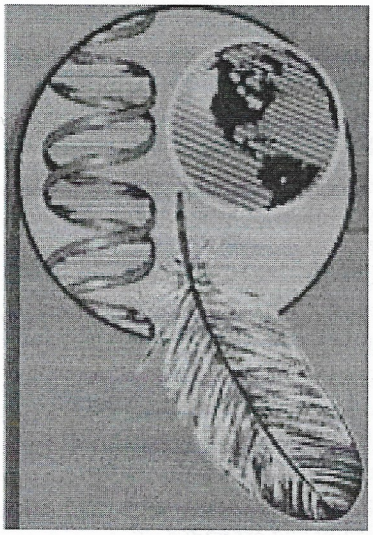
or
<dmvortex@gmail.com>

# INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND GENETIC RESEARCH:
## A CONFLICT BETWEEN WORLDVIEWS



logo: Indigenous Peoples Council on Biocolonialism

*by Rauna Kuokkanen*

This year the worldwide Genographic Project to map the history of humankind and explore the origins of different Peoples decided to collect Sami genes. Around the world, Indigenous Peoples have opposed this project, and in May, 2006, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues recommended that it be suspended. In the U.S. almost every federally-recognized tribe has declined to participate. In their view, the Genographic Project is a continuation of the Human Genome Diversity Project (HGDP), the project that came to be known as "The Vampire Project" among Indigenous Peoples because researchers seemed to be more interested in collecting their blood than in their well being in today's society.

## GENES FOR SALE

Researchers consider Native peoples to be of historic interest since they have been geographically isolated, making their genetic heritage more homogeneous than that of people in urban areas. They believe they can cure certain illnesses with such unique genes. In 1993, for example, the U.S. Ministry of Health tried to patent a cell line from 24 Hagahai People on the Solomon Island of Papua New Guinea to help cure leukemia. The Hagahai individuals had given permission to take blood samples for other research, but not to be patented. When the government of Papua New Guinea protested against the patent application, the process was stopped in 1999, but Hagahai DNA is still for sale on the Internet.

Another example is from the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation on Vancouver Island, Canada who, in the 1980s, gave permission to an English geneticist to take 800 blood samples to study arthritis. In 2000, representatives of the Nuu-chah-nulth, demanded the return of their blood samples because the researcher had used them for a project for which the Nuu-chah-nulth had not given permission.

Three years ago, in a *New York Times* series called "The DNA Age," Amy Harmon wrote: "Geographic origin stories told by DNA can clash with long-held beliefs, threatening the world view some Indigenous leaders see as vital to preserving their culture."

Is it acceptable, then, to apply Western concepts to the family lineages and the creation and migration stories of Indigenous cultures? At the core, there is a conflict between worldviews. While western scientists argue that everybody wants to know their origins and that only science can provide the answers, Indigenous Peoples argue that their genealogies are embedded in their oral histories, cultural practices and native languages.

## WITHOUT CONSENT

Indigenous Peoples have opposed genetic research since the beginning. One of the main reasons is because the samples have been used for purposes other than those for which permission was granted, and, as the previous examples indicate, this concern is very real. Research without consent is considered to be unacceptable and unethical, not only by Indigenous Peoples, but also according to the guidelines of mainstream research.

The Human Genome Diversity Project ("The Vampire Project") was riddled with so many ethical and scientific problems that it failed to receive the support of UNESCO and the U.S. Science Council. However, the objectives of the HGDP have been revived in the Genographic Project. It intends to collect 100,000 Indigenous DNA samples in order to establish a database of genetic information. This project is a collaboration between the National Geographic Society, IBM Corporation and the Gateway Computer Foundation.

The way in which the Genographic Project attempted to gain access to Sápmi is questionable. A woman contacted Sami University College about collecting blood samples from Sami men to use in the Genographic Project but when she was asked, she denied responsibility for the project's objectives. The Sami University College was given only two days to respond to her inquiry – a timeline within which it was impossible to become familiar with the project's goals. With global research such as the Genographic Project, inquiries should come directly from the principal investigators, not from a go-between whose role is unclear.

## GIVING BACK

After centuries of being studied, measured, and categorized in order to serve various colonial interests, Indigenous Peoples now require that research must emanate from the needs and concerns of Indigenous communities instead of those of the researcher. We are not resources to be exploited for such purposes as advancing academic careers. Over the past fifteen years Indigenous scholars have increasingly urged academics and researchers to acknowledge their responsibilities to Indigenous communities as part of the decolonization process.

(**KUOKKANEN** *continued on page 24)*

(**HARALD GASKI** *continued from page 7)*

*What do you think can be gained by having the kind of exchanges that you're talking about for Indigenous artists, performers, professors, etc, from around the world?*

Indigenous people have learned a lot from each other. We've seen that there are people in other places on this planet who think in the same way as we do. We also see that traditional values still have meaning for modern people. It may sound problematic to be both traditional and modern at the same time, but I think it's possible. Things have changed, and our movement should never become regressive or nostalgic, but we need to honor the values of our ancestors.

The whole idea of Indigenousness is linked to our belonging to and depending on Mother Earth. This is not a romantic idea, and it's not a cliché, even though it may sound like one. If we stop caring about the environment — the living and breathing Nature that surrounds us — we become alienated from our own background and then there is no need for Indigenous Peoples anymore, because we've given up our obligation to be caretakers of our Mother. There is a Sami myth in which we are reminded that we must listen to the Earth's inner voice and relay its message to the world. We have been told that when the Great Spirit created the people who were to become the ancestral mothers and fathers of the Sami, he knew the difficulties that awaited them. In order to give them faith in the future, something in which to believe and comfort them in trying times, he placed the living beating heart of a two-year-old female reindeer at the center of the Earth so that each time the Sami felt their existence threatened, they could put their ears to the ground and listen for the heartbeat from below. If the heart was still beating, their future would be secure. The heartbeats are connected to the rhythm of the songs that were created to praise the contrast between Samiland's harsh tundra and the soft, warm lap of Mother Earth.

Western society has removed itself so much from Nature that they don't even understand its voice anymore. This is our task in the United Nations, in world politics and in our own home communities. When Indigenous people express themselves naturally, we aren't understood. I know they won't listen to talk like this anymore at the UN. It would only be characterized as romantic. I feel it is our responsibility to understand our own traditions and values and at the same time learn the Western system so that we will be able to choose words that can be understood by both societies. We have a special responsibility and we need a new way of expressing our views. It's a challenge to us. We can't just go on criticizing the Western world, we need to come up with good advice to the world leaders. There has to be something in the way we express our message that is not being understood. Communication has been broken and it needs to be fixed. We, the Indigenous Peoples, have an obligation to fulfill. Therefore it is our challenge to make the world listen to us.

*How many languages do you speak?*

Not that many. I grew up with Sami as my first language, and I learned Norwegian in school and then English. I studied Finnish for a while because of my Finnish roots, but actually never managed to become fluent in that language.

*How many children do you have?*

Two.

*Do they speak Sami?*

Yes. I'm married to a Sami woman so we only speak Sami at home. It was a new situation for many Sami parents our age to start speaking Sami to their children because of what they'd experienced. In the 1950s and 60s several families gave up the Sami language and only spoke Norwegian, so when they got to school they did not know Sami. For a while it looked as though Sami really was going to die out as a language. But then there was a revival in the late 60s and 70s when parents started to speak Sami to their children. I guess it was a shock for the teachers to find out that they hadn't succeeded in their attempt to norwegianize their students. Today we have a Sami school system in the core Sami areas where Sami is the main language of instruction all the way from preschool to the college level.

*So now from kindergarten through college the Sami language is being taught?*

Yes.

*What is your perception of Native American interest in and knowledge of other Indigenous Peoples around the world?*

One of the interesting parallels that I've experienced between the Sami and other Indigenous ways was when I visited Diné Community College in Tsaile, Arizona. The Navajo told me about their cosmology and worldview. I didn't ask a lot of questions. As I was leaving I got a nice compliment. "You are like the Navajo," they said. "You never ask." I was glad they gave me that compliment and I started to think about my own upbringing. We were brought up like that too. You learn things and are taught things and then you are allowed to ask. Eventually you will be given much more information than you originally had asked for.

In some respects, however I find the Native Americans to be very different from the Sami. Perhaps that is because North America is so big. If you are Navajo and travel from Arizona to Washington, DC it is a longer distance than the whole of Samiland so that might be one explanation. In international Indigenous collaborations, the American Indians have had their main focus on U.S. and North American issues rather than taking a leadership role globally. Maybe it's because they have so many problems nationally that they feel they don't have the power and resources to take on the rest of the world. I feel that a strong international Indigenous community would benefit all Native peoples. Today no minority can survive in isolation. We are all in this together.

Paula Palmer was Health and Environment editor for *Winds of Change* when she conducted this interview. She is currently the executive director of the Global Response Environmental Action and Education Network.

(**HARALD GASKI** *continued on following page)*

(**HARALD GASKI** *continued from previous page)*

## ADDENDA

Báiki *editor faith fjeld asks Harald Gaski some questions related to the 1997 interview:*

*You refer to the myth in which the Creator tells the Sami that they must listen for the reindeer's heartbeat. Have you heard other Indigenous Peoples refer to similar myths and what some call their "original instructions"?*

It's not an instruction, it's a comfort. If the Sami are frightened about their future as a People, we can find solace in the fact that the heart is still beating. Indigenous peoples have always honored their environment and have learned much from the animals and the birds.

I remember a wonderful story that I was gifted with in Botswana. We were a group of Sami and San who met at a hotel in Gaborone. San are the Indigenous people in the southern part of Africa. The headwaiter seemed to have a hard time finding us a table in the restaurant, but as Indigenous People we were used to this kind of treatment, and we were in no hurry so we finally got a table. We ate and laughed and had a good time, as Indigenous people always do when we get together. In order to honor his Sami guests, one of the San Elders told us a story.

Eland (*Taurotragus oryx*) is the world's largest antelope and the San believe that God is especially fond of him. God used to smuggle honey to Eland. They talked and had fun together, but God's wife became suspicious because He spent so much time away from home. Eventually she had their son shoot Eland. While Eland's life was ebbing away, but while he was still standing, tears appeared in his eyes and when he finally fell, his right foreleg pointed up towards heaven as a token of the love he felt for God. Eland still is one of the most respected animals among the San, and every time he's shot, and before he dies, tears appear in Eland's eyes.

I could move around the world with such stories that are a strong reminder to us human beings about our place in the bigger system — not as superiors but as equals.

On the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua the neighbors of the Rama Indians call the Rama language "Tiger language," in an attempt to look down upon the people and their culture as not being human. But every Rama knows that the person who has a command of the Tiger language never has to fear them because Tiger will never attack one who speaks his tongue.

In a similar way the old Sami respected the linguistic skills of the Bear so much that they believed they could understand human talk. Bear would take precautions if a Sami used the word "bear" when he said he was going out to hunt. So the hunter would use a metaphorical name for Bear so he would not understand that he was the subject of the hunt.

The thing that makes us humans different from the Bear is the ability to understand metaphors. If Bear was called "The Old Man in the Valley," or "The Moss-Clad One," he wouldn't know that people were talking about him and he would be unprepared for the hunter.

*The drum is an integral part of Indigenous ceremonies. Is the Sami drum the "heartbeat of the two-year old reindeer?" When the missionaries "wiped out" the shamans, does this mean that the reindeer's heart is no longer beating?*

There is a connection between the heartbeat of the young female reindeer and the drum and the yoik. Whether or not the heart is still beating is very much dependent on how the Sami treat Nature. I think we need to make ourselves worthy of the heart to go on beating.

*In North America, Indigenous ceremonies are powerful sources of cultural renewal and healing. We who are not considered to be "Indigenous" need cultural renewal and healing too, but who can teach us?*

This is also something that doesn't have easy answers. I'm not so sure that the Sami ceremonies were similar to the Native American ones you refer to. People living so far from each other had very different ways of cultural renewal and healing practices. Yoiking was a very powerful practice among the Sami in the old belief system and people learned from birds and animals. Maybe it's not so much a question of reviving old and lost ceremonies, but rather a challenge to find new ways of letting people in. Indigenous Peoples cannot survive in isolation anymore, therefore we need to be more open to educating others and cease to be esoteric, but at the same time be cautious of the other pitfall: becoming exotic and new age.

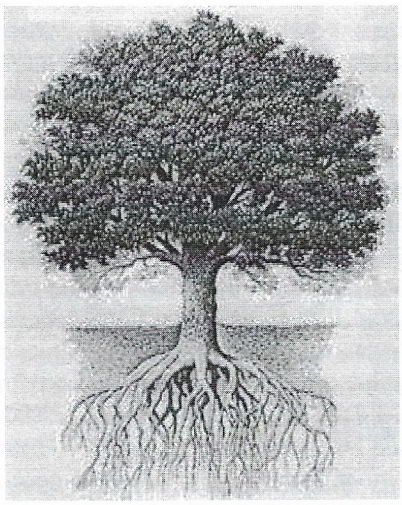
*In Nils Gaup's Pathfinder there are several Sami ceremonies. Were they made up for the film? In the ceremony in the final scene, was the yoiking of the siida members that "even older yoik tradition" you refer to?*

Those were made up for the film, based on thorough studies of the few sources we have for the way the ceremonies were conducted. A lot of the written sources are from the missionaries, so we have reason to believe that they are biased, because it was important for them to make the Sami practices seem as heathen and pagan as possible, while stealing the name of the Sami's main god, Ipmil (Jupmele in South Sami) and making it into the Christian god. This definitely contributed to confusing the Sami. Sami shamans even began to include the Christian cross as a symbol on the drum.

The worship of the Bear and the taboos related to it are very well documented. They underline the closeness the Sami feel to every living creature. The yoik, like I said, had several expressions, among which different versions may have survived in different geographical areas, but the most religious ones went underground and were forgotten over time. They needed to be performed while the whole siida, the whole group or community, was gathered. The collective yoiks bound the siida together and reconciled the belief in a future for the Sami. Therefore we still are around and will be around for quite awhile I think.

*Thank you, Harald.*

(KUOKKANEN continued from page 21)



scratchboard illustration: Michael Halbert

## OUR FAMILY TREE

A family is about two groups of people who meet, join and steadily grow, generation by generation.

In addition, each new generation becomes a new family. Our families, being similar to that of the oak tree, slowly spread our branches forth and search for a place in life's world, remaining healthy from the nourishment of our roots. In time our seeds also create new life.

Recording this chain of events, this chain of life itself, is a crucial part of our family tree. For without this record, there would be no evidence of our family's journey through time. Their toils and labors would be forgotten; their joys and sorrows would also be forgotten. Our life stories and the faces of those we knew and loved would forever be forgotten.

*— Reynold James Syria, Independance, Minnesota*

Today, researchers are expected to "give back," to conduct research relevant to Indigenous Peoples and to distribute the results in an appropriate and meaningful way. The Indigenous principle of giving back calls for commitment. Academic practices and research are no longer to be used as a tool of colonization, a way of exploiting our knowledge. Culturally appropriate research practices must include the participation of the community, the acknowledgment of traditional genealogical structures and the eradication of the detrimental elements that have become the hallmarks of what is commonly known as "Indigenous research."

## INFORMED CONSENT

Free and informed prior consent is a basic right of Indigenous Peoples and should be the backbone of ethical research. The researcher must give correct and full disclosure of the research project and its objectives. This includes a detailed explanation of how the material is going to be used and what the potential benefits and/or possible harmful effects of the research will be. Moreover, the acquired information must be presented to the community in an accessible format. Information should be made available in Indigenous languages and oral presentations should use non-technical terminology. Consent must be given voluntarily and may be withdrawn during the research process.

While consent is relatively easy to obtain from individuals, one of the most pressing questions has been collective consent. Even if the samples have been taken from just a handful of individuals, the results have been interpreted and applied to an entire population. The Tonga People, considered to be "unique human specimens" by the Autogen Genetic Research Company, refused the company's plans to study their DNA because collective consent had not been given.

## UNCLEAR BENEFIT

The Genographic Project is interested in Indigenous Peoples only as resources for research. They claim that Indigenous Peoples aren't actually "indigenous" to their homelands, but rather that they are "immigrants" from other regions. They are also attempting to collect our genes "before we go extinct." There are better ways than genetic research to help Indigenous Peoples survive.

Indigenous Peoples are not alone in criticizing the Genographic Project and its objectives. New York Medical College cell biologist and professor of anatomy Stuart Newman has questioned whether genetic research provides any clear or final proof of human heritage or the history of human kind. The DNA of each People is so diverse that comparing the genes of an individual to an entire population is very difficult.

Maori scholar Aròha Mead also argues that human history from the Western scientific perspective might be written in genes, but from the Indigenous *cultural* perspective human history is written in language and oral tradition.

Indigenous Peoples know who they are and where they come from. The Sami know their heritage and thus, do not need genetic research.

*Rauna Kuokkanen, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor of Political Science and Aboriginal Studies at the University of Toronto. She is Sami from the Finnish side of Deatnu (the Tana) River. She is the author of* Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes *and* The Logic of the Gift *(UBC Press, 2007) and the editor of the anthology on contemporary Sami literature* Juoga mii geasuha *(Davvi Girji 2001). She is a frequent contributor to* Báiki. *Rauna's blog: rauna.wordpress.com*

## ABOUT THE MEL OLSEN COVER

photo: Marlene Wisuri

Detail from cover "Landscape from North Norway" shows the layering of yarn and texture changes.

Mel Olsen (1938-2007) was an active member of the North American Sami Siida, producing many articles and illustrations for *Báiki* and serving as a founding editor, with Arden Johnson, of the newsletter *Árran* for which he also wrote and did graphic design. An accomplished printmaker and fiber artist, Mel's artwork reflected his interest in the natural world and his Sami heritage. Mel's weavings were seen in the first ever Sami American art exhibits in Superior, WI, Ironworld (Chisholm, MN), and Grand Marais, MN.

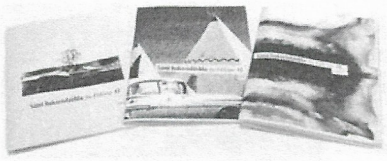
The technique that Mel used for "Landscape from North Norway" is called surface crochet, a way of "painting with yarn" by which a design is created in fiber with color, layers and texture. It is one of his series of large wall hangings. This piece is 124 by 147 centimeters and was done between 2001 and 2002.

Besides the vibrant landscape itself, there are many other, more subtle, Sami touches, such as the red, yellow, and blue colors of the Sami flag that are woven into the lower right hand corner of the border. The border itself is constructed differently from the body of the piece — a customary feature of Sami design. The hanging yarns suggest the warp-weighted loom. It is as if Mel gives a hint of those traditions using a totally different technique.

"Landscape from North Norway" is from the collection of Rudolph and Solveig Arneng Johnson of Duluth, MN, whose Sami roots are in the north of Norway. Sally and her late husband Rudy were close friends of Mel. "One day he came to visit us," she recalls. "He said to me, 'I'm making you a tapestry.' A few months went by and he came over again. 'Where do you want your tapestry?' he asked and I pointed to our living room wall. Two weeks later he brought it over."

Thanks to Mary Erickson, Solveig Arneng (Sally) Johnson and Marlene Wisuri. — *faith fjeld*

## IN THE NEXT ISSUE



In the previous Issue #30 of *Báiki* you saw the first of a series of "fanzines" featuring Sámi architecture. Joar Nango, the artist, is a 29 year old Norwegian Sámi. At the moment he is living and working in Berlin. He has an MA in architecture from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim. As part of his diploma work concerning Sámi architecture Joar wrote, edited, and published a small fanzine called *Sámi Huksendáidda.*

Fanzine #1, *Sámi huksendáidda: For Beginners*, was an overview of traditional and contemporary Sámi architecture.

Fanzine #2, *Sámi huksendáidda: Goes To America*, is a comparative study between the architecture of the Mi'kmaw people of eastern Canada and the Sámi people and will be the centerfold of the fall issue.

Fanzine #3, *Sámi huksendáidda: Fanzine #3 Does Reality,* presents a number of studies and projects by Joar Nango. Among these projects are a week-long workshop in Kirkenes that explored Arctic identity and the art of building with snow, fire and ice, a small sleeping cabin in Birtavarre, and an artist's residence in Lásságammi, Skibotn.

Fanzine #4 will investigate modern nomadic living. It is currently under construction.

We will be publishing excerpts from Joar's 'zines as centerfolds in forthcoming issues. If you are interested in purchasing the 'zines, or if you are just generally interested in the theme of Sámi architecture, please feel free to contact Joar at: <joarnango@gmail.com>.

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