"How Can Spirituality Make Meaning and Give Health Benefits for Sámi Elders?"
An open and inclusive form

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Indigenous people

• The Sámi are the Indigenous people in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia
• Norway is the only of our four home countries which both has:
  – ratified the *ILO Convention 169 (1990)*, and
  – signed the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)*
Nature and landscape form living

• Norway; mountain peaks and plateaus, woodlands, fields and meadows, and a long coast

• Living forms social life – how we act with each other

• Centurylong norwegianization and modernization programmes have influenced our living
Winter
Summer
Nature and landscape form ways of thinking

Materiel culture is faded out easier than non-materiel

Deep-structural elements are hidden (Myrvoll 2008).

Bodily knowledge (Ponty 1994)
Backstage and frontstage phenomena (Goffmann)

- We Sámi have found ways to meet challenges

- Frontstage:
  - Behaving as «Good Norwegians»
  - Speaking Norwegian

- Backstage (home):
  - Use of Sámi language
Materials and methods

• My own experiences as a Sami and as a Sami nurse

• As a Sámi nurse I have combined insider and outsider roles

• It is an entry to interaction

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As Sámi nurse I have experienced

• Nurses are close to the patients and their next to kin in various situations

• Suffering and uncertain situations awakes cultural bodily knowledge

• Broader worldviews than reflected by scientific medicine

• To find meaning in the situation is brought up in various situations (Travelbee 1971)
Research projects

- Qualitative method:

- Field work among Sámi Elders in monthly health – gatherings in a Sámi Culture Center
  - The researcher (me) as participating observer
  - Interviews
  - Focus group after an opening with topic, introduced by me
My experiences as nurse

• Behind the screening curtain in hospitals and other health institutions:

• Use of Sami language

• Healing

• Speaking about relatives and neighbours

• Interested in how the year is – life cycle events and how they are influenced by seasonal and interannual climate variations
Experiences from daily life in a city

I have an aunt
She points out that I so seldom visit her.
I say; “Aunty …you have a lot of contacts”
She answers: “Yes I know, but with those I cannot speak about familiar phenomena”.

An example of health Promotion

She has picked up deaths column from local newspapers – she has subscriptions of two local newspapers. We often speak about people we both know and knew – and then she finds the script-book with death columns.

I learn from here and can speak of my own childhood in Homeland and my aunt experiences that she has something to give me.

That may be a part of health promotion for an old Sámi woman living in urban area.
Results from research 1

- The Elders were engaged by spiritual themes
- They recollected memories from the past
- Homeland surroundings give feelings of well-being
- Sámi and Norwegian language were alternated in use
- Sámi as a rule used when speaking about feelings
Results 2

• The Elders express life as gift given them
• To hold out until «the day comes»
• All wonderings and questions can not be answered
• The modern medicine and its exact answers can be experienced as brutal
• Health worries were presented through narratives
Upcoming questions

• «Something can be brought to happen, is it the fate?»

• But: What is the fate?

• Dat lea oainnihuvvon

• That means:
  • Phenomena and happenings are foreseen
Dat lea oainnihuvvon

- Philosophy of life

- When you come to this world by birth you have a duty

- You have to do the best out of life

- «You should not give up and you should take your time» (Nymo 2011)
Conclusions 1

• To live in one’s homeland means:

• Care relationships to people, nature and landscape

• Mother tongue are used and calls on reminiscense

• Health gatherings represent an arena for meeting and healing Sámi identity
Conclusions 2

• The Elders wear a stigma of inferiority

• The Norwegianization has influenced on their ethnical identity and self-image

• Sámi Elders have valuable experiences to share
End of this presentation

- Rights have been won by the Sámi in Norway, Sweden and Finland the Sámi have their Parliaments

- Health and language rights:

- Interpretation services

- In Norway:
  - Center for Sámi Health Research
  - Sámi National Competence Center for mental health and intoxication (abusers)

- In Norwegian hospitals: Some acceptance of Sami’s ways to understand and explain outbreak of illness
However.....

- The rights the Sami have won is under pressure
- Consultation rights and land rights in particular:
- In the wake of climate change and attempts to «green» the economy
- there is a frontier move towards the north that smells of new-colonialism
  – Windmill farms, mines etc.
- In addition to direct encroachment effects, this also put much strain to Sami societies, also psycical strain...
  – Including hatr when non Sami notice small Sami victories..

And Sami Elders experience a historical «de javu» –being Sami is not so easy
Ethical considerations

- The project:

  has been presented for Ethical Research Committee and for Norwegian Centre for Research Data

- My aunt has given her permission to present her story.
References


