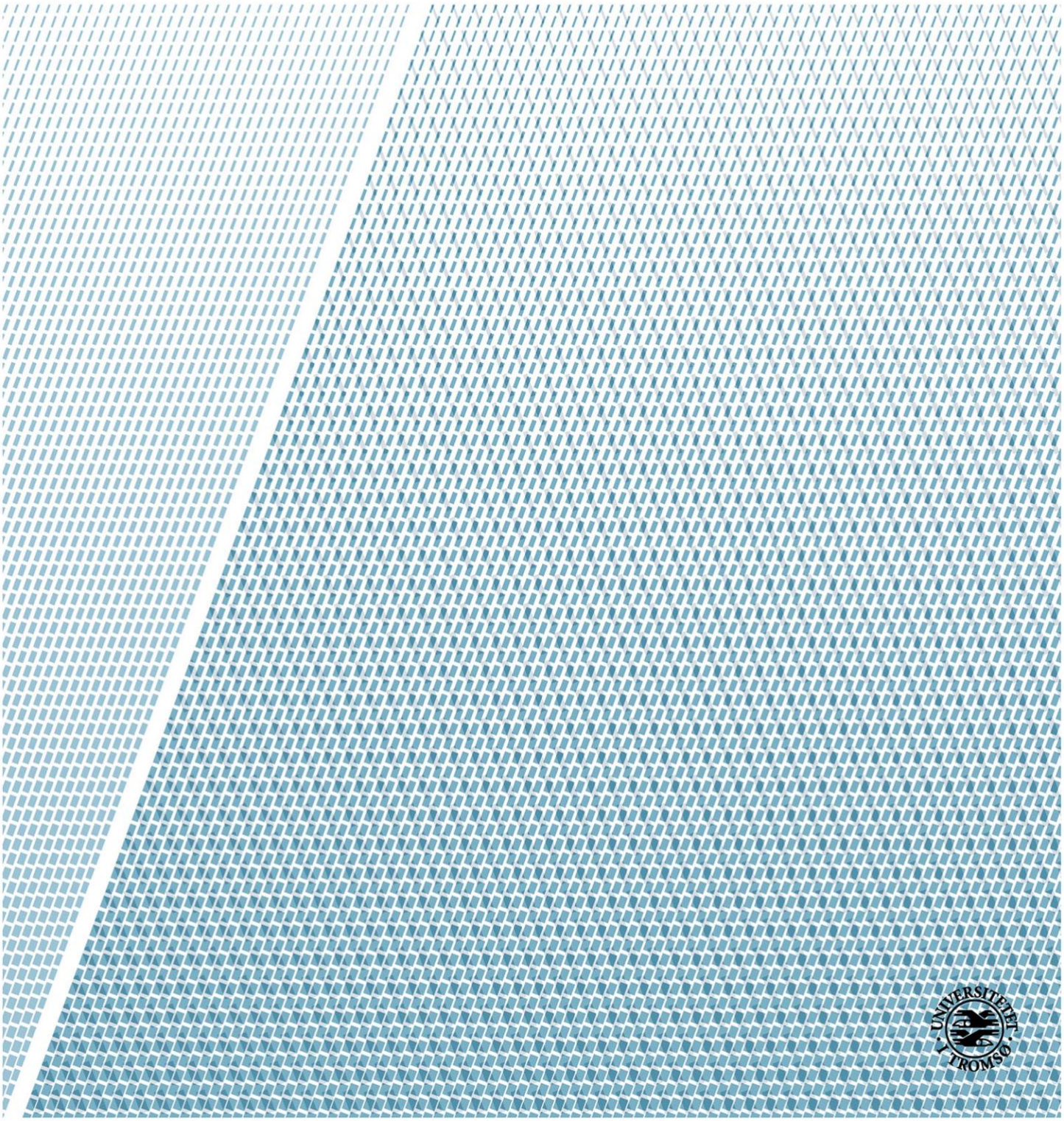
Department of Language and Culture

Diasporic Indigeneity and Storytelling Across Media

A Case Study of Narratives of Early Twentieth Century Sámi Immigrant Women

Ellen Marie Jensen

A dissertation for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor – November 2018



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Department of Language and Culture
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University of Tromsø – The Arctic University of Norway

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To Irwin Bahr,

Aurora (Bahr) Mosely,

Otto Breivik,

and
Daniel Qakiqsinauraq Karmun, Sr.

In memoriam

Abstract

Through a case study of narratives of five Sámi immigrant women from the Norwegian side of Sápmi, the study theorizes migration and subsequent Sámi American subjectivity through the emerging concept of diasporic indigeneity. Familial material culture and artistic and textual production are significant sites of memory and meaning-making; however, intangible cultural continuity foundationally expressed in storytelling constitutes diasporic indigeneity in the Sámi American context. The aims of this study are twofold: (1) to reveal and reflect on familial and community-based storytelling as an integral part of oral tradition in diasporic indigeneity in the Sámi American context; (2) to deliberate on Sámi-specific methodologies within the broader framework of Indigenous research methodologies, ethics, and interpretation where oral storytelling intersects with three media: text, photography, and video.

The articles illustrate a methodological approach to narrative research by using a Sámi conceptual framework that is reflective of a process and paradigm aligned with Indigenous storytelling epistemologies. The intersubjective research conversations and collaboratively produced life narratives are interpreted using a *temporal-spatial-narrative framework*; in this framework, contemporary stories connect the Sámi immigrant women to places in America and to places in Sápmi; further, the stories bind an often silenced or obscured past with a spoken, meaningful present.

The dissertation forms part of an ongoing trans-Atlantic collaborative project; the life narratives of the five Sámi immigrant women will be published *across media*, that is, with and through digital text, photography, and video on a web-based interactive platform. This part of the ongoing project, as well as a general-audience text published in three languages, is intended to answer the call in Indigenous studies research to co-share collaboratively-produced knowledge(s) with various communities in accessible and locally meaningful ways.

Abstrakt

Gjennom en case study av historiene til fem samiske immigrantkvinner fra den norske siden av Sápmi teoretiserer denne studien samisk-amerikansk migrasjon og subjektivitetsdannelse ved hjelp av begrepet diasporisk urfolksidentitet [diasporic indigeneity]. Generelt er materiell kultur og kunstnerisk og tekst-basert produksjon viktig for bevaring av minner og kulturell meningsdannelse. I en samisk-amerikansk kontekst finnes ofte få slike materielle kulturbærere, og historiefortelling utgjør den viktigste delen av den diasporiske urfolksidentiteten. Denne studien har et dobbelt siktemål: (1) å vise og reflektere over at muntlig familie-og lokalsamfunnsbasert historiefortelling er en vesentlig del av en diasporisk urfolksidentitet i samisk-amerikansk kontekst; (2) å vurdere spesifikt samiske metoder og tilnærmingsmåter innenfor en bredere ramme av urfolksmetodologi, etikk og tolkning hvor muntlig historiefortelling møter de tre mediene: tekst, fotografi og video.

Artiklene illustrerer en metodisk tilnærming til narrativ forskning som gjør bruk av samiske begreper i et paradigme tilknyttet narrativ urfolksepistemologi. De intersubjektive forskningssamtalene og kollaborativt produserte livshistoriene blir tolket ved hjelp av et temporært og romlig narrativt rammeverk. Innenfor dette rammeverket knyttes de samiske kvinnenes historier til steder i Amerika og til steder i Sápmi. Disse historiene binder en ofte fortiet og skjult fortid til en uttalt og meningsfull nåtid.

Avhandlingen utgjør en del av et pågående trans-Atlantisk prosjekt der de kollaborativt utviklede livshistoriene vil bli utgitt i form av digital tekst, fotografi og video på en web-basert, interaktiv plattform. Denne delen av det pågående prosjektet, som inkluderer tekst myntet på et allment publikum på tre språk, har som mål å imøtekomme et sterkt uttrykt ønske innen urfolksstudier om å dele kollaborativt produserte kunnskaper med ulike lokalsamfunn på en tilgjengelig og lokalt meningsfull måte.

Abstrákta

Dát dáhpáhus dutkan [case study] lea vihtta Norggabeale sámi nissonolbmo eallinmuitalusaid vuođul maŋŋel go sii leat Amerihkkái fárren, ja dát dutkan teoretisere fárrema ja dan čuovvovaš sámi-amerihkálaš subjektivitehta, geavahettiin dan ođđa doahpaga - sirddolašdilis álgoálbmotidentitehta [diasporic indigenety]. Ávnnasvuđot bearaškultuvra, duodje- ja dáiddalaš barggut ja čállosat leat mávssolaččat muitimii ja kultuvrralaš áddejumi oažžumii. Sámi-amerihkálaš oktavuođas dávjá gávdnojit unnán dakkár ávnnaslaš kulturseailluheaddjit – ja danin muitaleapmi lea deháleamos oassin sirddolašdilis álgoálbmotidentitehtas. Dán dutkamis leat guokte ulbmila: 1) čájehit ja reflekteret das ahte bearaš- ja báikegottiid muitaleamit leat mávssolaš oasit njálmmálaš árbevierus sirddolašdilis álgoálbmotidentitehtas sámi-amerihkálaš oktavuođas; 2) suokkardallat spesifihkka sámi metodologiijaid viiddit álgoálbmot dutkanmetodologiija rámmaid, álgoálbmot etihka ja álgoálbmot dulkoma siskkobealde, gos njálmmálaš muitaleamit leat oassin golmma medias: čállosiin, govain ja videoin.

Artihkkalat čájehit metodologalaš lahkonanvuogi narratiivadutkamii, mii geavaha doahpagiid sámegillii paradigmas, mii lea oassin álgoálbmot muitalanárbevieru epistemologiijas. Dutkanságastallamat main lea oktasašvuohta ja sohppojuvvon ipmárdus (intersubjektiivvalaš dutkanságastallamat) ja eallinmuitalusat mat leat ovttasbarggu bokte buvttaduvvon, dulkojuvvojit *áigái- ja <u>báikáičadnon</u> muitaleami rámma* siskkobealde. Dán rámma siskkobealde sámi sisafárrejeaddji nissonolbmot čadnojuvvojit dáláš muitalusaid bokte báikkiide Amerihkás ja báikkiide Sámis; dasa lassin dát muitalusat čatnet oktii vássánáiggi mii dávjá lei jávohuhtton ja čihkkojuvvon, dálááiggiin- mii lea rabas, ipmirdahtti ja oaidnoguoddi.

Dutkamuš lea oassin dáláš Atlánta-meara rasttildeaddji ovttasbargoprošeavttas gos eallinmuitalusat galget almmuhuvvot máŋgga mediaide, nu go digitálalaš čállosiidda, govaide ja videoide web-vuđot interaktiivvalaš vuogádagas. Dán oasis dan dáláš prošeavttas, lea jurddašuvvon ahte teaksta galggašii almmuhuvvot almmolaččat lohkkiide golmma gilli, mainna lea ulbmil ollašuhttit sávaldaga álgoálbmotdutkamis juohkit dieđuid ja máhtuid mat leat buvttaduvvon ovttasbarggu bokte, iešguđetge báikegottiiguin, olahahtti ja ipmirdahtti vugiin buohkaide, báikkálaččat.

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Finally, I also invoke and honor all of my ancestors, especially my grandmothers who were contemporaries of the Sámi immigrant women represented in this work.

Prologue

This work is the culmination of a Ph.D. fellowship tied to the earlier international research group Sámi and Indigenous Research. The announcement for the position explicitly called for the application of Indigenous methodologies in a case study. Indigenous methodological approaches and discussions on Indigenizing institutions and praxis are fairly standard in Indigenous scholarship globally, thus, it might come as a surprise that in the not-so-recent past one could be met with a number of defensive moves from peers and colleagues for advancing Indigenous research paradigms in Sámi research environments in the Nordic countries. Even more surprising, is that some of the defensive moves came from within the Sámi research community; the tenor of these interactions could range from skepticism and a series of defensive overtures, registered by harsh questioning and rolling eyes, to at times, outright ridicule or hostility. Perhaps the most damaging reaction to those seeking to implement Indigenous methodological approaches *and* to those who register defensiveness, is the time-old mode of challenging the Indigenous identity or authenticity of the researcher or student, a topic that deserves greater explication in a future project. Rather than dwell on these issues, I prefer to simply do the work of using Indigenous methodological approaches in my own research and accept that perhaps Sámi and allied scholars seeking to legitimate these approaches could sharpen their own arguments and find more constructive and compassionate methods of delivery. However, it goes without saying that from the outset, the reader deserves insight into the researcher and writer's motivations for writing, and knowledge of her accountabilities and commitments to various communities. Thus, it seems fitting to present my own story to elucidate my place in the greater, trans-Atlantic discussion on Indigenous research paradigms—especially in a project where storytelling is method.

In 2003, I finished my Bachelor of Arts degree in Women's Studies from the University of Minnesota. The program was interdisciplinary, writing intensive, and intentionally transformative. Feminist theory and research foundationally challenge power structures, most prominently gendered imbalances of power. The program was committed to the study of intersectional oppressions, postcolonial theory, and postmodernism. By 2003, I had also embarked on a journey to understand my own obscured Sámi background. I grew up in Minneapolis, Minnesota on the un-ceded lands of the Dakota Oyate. In keeping with my personal and political commitment to the Indigenous peoples' whose lands and waters nourished me in my formative years, I invoke the Indigenous peoples of Minnesota—the Dakota Oyate and the Anishinaabe—and their ancestors in this narrative. Through local Indigenous and environmental activism, aligned with the Dakota people's movement for recognition of sovereignty in Mni Sota, I began to recognize that I had not fully come to terms with my own Indigenous Sámi heritage.

In retrospect, a lot of my consciousness of belonging to Sápmi, the Sámi people's home, was shaped in my childhood in the US. After living in Oslo for a year as a child, I remember hearing stories that seemed to set our family apart from the Norwegians in the south of Norway. In both Oslo and Minneapolis, my father would tell my brother and me rich and detailed stories from his childhood home from the west coast of Finnmark Province. Occasionally, I would hear that my grandmother "spoke bad Norwegian." It never really occurred to me to ask how it could be that a Norwegian would speak "bad Norwegian." Later, I came to learn that Sámi was the main language used in her childhood home, and that doling out corporeal punishments was common practice in her school when children "used Lappish words." Language shift in my family—that is, from North Sámi to Norwegian—was the result of the Norwegianization policy. The Norwegianization policy figures prominently in my family narrative which forms part of a collective history from Norwegian Sápmi. My three coastal Sámi great-grandparents came from various settlements in the municipalities of Láhppi (Loppa) and Álaheadju-Áltá, Finnmark Province, and had Sámi as a home language, and my grandmother's mother was of mixed cultural origin, predominantly Finnish and Sámi from the Swedish and Finnish side municipalities of Eanodat (Enontekiö), Gárasavvon (Karesuando) and other villages all along the tributaries of Duortneseatnu (Torne/Tornio River). The oral history passed down to me by an elder in my family was that all of my ancestors had come from north of the 65th parallel; later, genealogical records aligned with this oral historical narrative that told of my ancestors' deep belonging to the west coast of Finnmark Province. My grandmother's mother's family also included a narrative of migration from various northern villages in Finnish Lapland Province and Swedish Norbotten Province to the fisheries-rich coast of the Barents Sea.

Over the years, I heard perplexing statements or assertions from peers and teachers, usually with reference to my father and family and to our vague "difference." It was not until I was twenty-two years old that I learned that the clues that were all around me were that we were, in fact, Sámi. It was during the 1994 Winter Olympics opening ceremony, when the renowned Sámi multi-artist, Nils-Aslak Valkeapää and other Sámi were yoiking, that I innocently asked my father: "Who are these people?" I understood that they were not the kind of Norwegians I came to know while living in Oslo, nor did they reflect Norwegian culture in the way that Norwegian-Americans "did culture" in the Midwest, although in retrospect I realized that we had had very limited interaction with the Norwegian American community in my childhood. He answered matter-of-factly: "They're Sámi. You know, we are also Sámi." While I have told this story a number of times and in a number of settings, and it has likely also circulated in Sámi communities, it bears repeating so that you might come to know the writer of this work on her own terms. It is also out of respect for my audience, perhaps an attempt at intersubjective understanding and shared meaning-making.

When I moved to Romsa/Tromsø in 2003 to take a master's degree in Indigenous studies, I brought with me the knowledge that I had a repressed Sámi background, that I grew up on the Dakota people's un-ceded lands for which I must take responsibility, and I brought an activist spirit shaped from praxis and studied engagement. I had read Linda Smith's seminal text *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1998) before I moved to Sápmi, in fact, it came to me as a gift from one of my instructors in the Women's Studies program at the University of Minnesota. She told me: "I imagine this will be on the reading list in your Indigenous studies program in Norway." I had no idea at that time that the gift would be the foreshadowing of a rather different approach to Indigenous studies than I had anticipated.

It has been fifteen years since I first engaged in conversations on Indigenous methodology in the Sámi research context. While some senior scholars registered skepticism, others were supportive. The decision to focus on Sámi migration and contemporary Sámi American identity came from a calling within Sámi communities on both sides of the Atlantic, that is, Sámi people in local communities had encouraged me to pursue these topics. From the outset, I was more concerned with coming to an understanding about how it could be that I had lived through my formative years with only vague or coded references to my extensive Sámi heritage; I had first sought to conduct research on the Norwegianization policy and its consequences on coastal communities in West Finnmark. But as one community historian and elder said: "You, Elle Márjá, are the right person to bring the stories of our people who left for America back to us. You are one of the lost ones who came home." It would take many more years before I put all the pieces together in a family narrative that was profoundly impacted by the Norwegianization policy. I am certainly not alone; every family in Sápmi has a story that carries the mark of colonialism. The Sámi story in Norway could be understood as a polyvocal and multi-local history that the Sámi people are still calibrating as evidenced by the ongoing public discussions around the Norwegian National Parliament's *Sannhets -og forsoningskommisjonen*[1] (Truth and Reconciliation Commission).

I attribute my development of a sense of belonging to Sápmi to long and affirming conversations with elders, friends, and relatives, and to the reindeer herders who shared stories and knowledge with me of our shared ancestral lands in Finnmark. I am grateful to local people who shared their oral tradition with me and my children, and to countless others who have reached out to me in an effort to bring me into shared meaning and consciousness in Sámi webs of relations. Of course, like countless others, I have also been met with suspicion, I have been "anthropologized"—that is, viewed through a purist ethnographic gaze—and a few times I have been dismissed as some sort of

[1] https://www.stortinget.no/no/Hva-skjer-pa-Stortinget/Nyhetsarkiv/Hva-skjer-nyheter/2017-2018/sannhets--og-forsoningskommisjonen/

cultural imposter. A friend of mine reflected on this tendency toward suspicion and called it “the mixed-girl’s burden.” But it is within this tension, between the sceptics and the supporters, that I find the necessity for approaching Sámi research from within Indigenous-centered frames. These spaces in-between are productive sites for bridging historical and epistemic divides; one “mixed-girl’s burden” is another mixed-girl’s greatest source of strength.

Finally, I also invoke my American mother in this story without whom I could not live. We cannot live with a half a heart, and the respective cultures of both of my parents shape my subjectivity. Like the other storytellers in this project, my identity cannot be contained within metrics, nor do I elevate the Sámi side of my ancestry above my Anglo-American side. I take the words of the late Sámi-Cree-Finnish-French-Cheyenne American, David Lawrence Kline, to heart who said he was 100% of all of his ancestries 100% of the time.

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Glossary

Sanit/Sámi words	English translation
áddjá	grandfather
áhkku	grandmother
áhkut	plural (nominative) form of áhkku
árran	the hearth or fireplace in the tent or turf hut
báiki	place, usually associated with “home" or "home place”
beaivi	day/sun
bearaš	family
Bieggaolmmái	wind-man (Sámi deity)
biiggát	Plural form of biigá: denotative translation is a female servant. In the reindeer herding context, she is/was indispensable as a member of a family-laboring unit.
birgehallat	to manage work, life, people, and money
birgen	to manage life
birgengoansttat	the art of coping
čuđit	murderous marauders from the East (Norwegian: *Tjudes*)
duojárat	handicraft makers
gáfestallan	coffee break
gáfestallat	to take a coffee break
gákti	Sámi traditional garment
gii bat don leat?	Who (on earth) are you?
goahti	round turf hut, usually with a sod exterior
goađit	plural form of goahti
gufihttarat	the underground people
goaŋku	arched branch for hanging a kettle over the campfire
káfastallat	to take a coffee break in Lule Sami
lávut	plural form of lávvu
lávvu	Sámi tent
noaiddit	plural form of noaidi
noaidi	Sámi shaman

Sanit/Sámi words	English translation/explanation
oahpisteaddjit	highly-skilled porters and guides using a sledge with draft reindeer
ofelaččat	plural form of ofelaš
ofelaš	pathfinder
okta	one
oktasašvuohta	community of belonging
oktavuohta	togetherness, connection, belonging
ránut	plural form of rátnu
rátnu	rug or mat (usually woven on the weighted-warped loom)
rátnogođđin	weaving on a weighted-warped loom
reaŋggat	Plural form of reaŋga: denotative translation is a male servant. In the reindeer herding context, he is/was indispensable as a member of a family-laboring unit who watches over the herds and performs other duties.
Sápmi	the Sámi people's territory covering large tracts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Kola Russia
searvi	(contemporary) a political or social organization or association
siida	A collective group of reindeer herding families or fisher families who shared territory and labored together. In contemporary usage it can also mean "community" and/or "community meeting place."
siiddat	plural form of siida
verdde	friend with a purpose/friendship tied to the social and traditional economic system "verddevuohta"
verddet	plural form of verdde
verddevuohta	system of purposeful custodial and trade/bartering friendship between families of inland reindeer herders and families of coastal fishers/farmers
vuollegašvuohta	humility

Phonetics Guide

Á: accent-a, a-like sound in bad, map

C: tse, as the English ts in tsunami, Tutsi

Č: tsje, as the English -ch, tch in church, witch

Z: eds, as in the English -ds in lads, heads

Ž: edsj, as in the English -dg in edge, budget

Š: esj, as in the English -sh in ship, smash

Đ: đe, as in the English -th in father, there

Ŧ: ŧe, as in the English -th in think, thought

Ŋ: eng, as in the English- ng in wing

1 Introduction: Themes, Articles, Narratives

On the corner of Franklin and Lyndale in South Minneapolis sits an unpretentious bar called Mortimer's that draws an intriguing crowd. Some people might characterize Mortimer's as a hole-in-the-wall dive bar reminiscent of the "/…/dark, dank bar, stinking of sorrow" from the scene in Thomas King's 2008 novel *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative* where he imagines confronting his estranged father (King, 6). Other people might characterize Mortimer's as an important social outlet in their lives. Bars like Mortimer's are notoriously evocative places for writers. One of several precursors to writing this work was inspired by a spirited conversation I had ten years ago with a motley crew of regulars, including with my Sámi American friend and distant relative, Arden Johnson. Arden is a storyteller/collaborator for this project and a grandchild of one of the five Sámi immigrant women in the case study—Albertine Josefine Svendsen (Johnson) from Árdni/Arnøy, Troms Province, in Norwegian Sápmi.

As a late afternoon regular, Arden always seemed to know the stories of the other regulars who sat at the bar. The seemingly everyday conversation—or rather, barstool unprompted story sharing—that I remember with fondness and curiosity, involved the following cast of characters: a recent immigrant man from Algeria; a second-generation Mexican-American man; a Native American man, citizen of the Choctaw Nation; and an ex-Laestadian man and an ex-Laestadian woman, both of whom had grandparents that emigrated from the Tornio River Valley in Northern Finland and Northern Sweden.

As the barstool storytelling ensued—sporadically interrupted with outbursts of revelry—we learned that the Algerian man was an Indigenous Amazigh ("Berber") from Kabyle in Northern Algeria. "I am from Kabyle. I am a Berber! I am not Arab!" he declared. His tribal language was his mother-tongue and he otherwise preferred speaking English and French over North African Arabic. The Mexican American man had reclaimed *Mēxihcah,* or his Aztec heritage, and was a proud member of one of the Minneapolis Aztec dance groups that performed at local art and activist events and community powwows. He reflected on Spanish colonialism and referred to the Choctaw man as his Native brother. The ex-Laestadian (sometimes referred to as Apostolic Lutheran in North America) man and woman both lamented the loss of deep connections to their large extended families in their mixed Finnish and Sámi Laestadian congregations; leaving the confines of the faith also meant "losing their tribe." Arden talked about his reindeer-owner great-grandparents from the Norwegian side of Sápmi and he referred to the ex-Laestadian Finnish-Sámi Americans and me as members of "his tribe;" I recognized in their three faces likenesses to some of my relatives and friends in Sápmi. While the exact details of this conversation have faded over time, I

distinctly remember that these stories all shared a thematically striking similarity: they all conveyed histories of tribal belonging and feelings of connection to Indigenous places and ancestors "elsewhere."

Now, it goes without saying that the most obvious Indigenous person of the group was the Choctaw man—his indigeneity and belonging to a home in near proximity was undeniable. He was active in the local urban pan-Native (pan-Indian) community of Minneapolis, he was Indigenous to Turtle Island and lived within a one-day bus or car ride to his landed tribal nation. His indigeneity obviously diverged from Dakota people's indigeneity, as the Dakota are the locally Indigenous people of Minneapolis and most of Minnesota, but nonetheless, he was *unquestionably Indigenous* to America/Turtle Island. The *Mēxihcah* man, by shedding "Mestizo" and claiming Indigenous *Mēxihcah* in community with others, had in effect claimed a subjectivity outside of the (racialized) discourses of nation-states and arbitrary borders (Hall "Cultural Identity and Diaspora " 233–46; Tree 1–17; Clifford 244–77; Hill and Hill 10–25). The Amazigh man was a recent arrival to North America, he himself came from an Indigenous people and asserted his tribal identity without ambiguity. His clarity of belonging undoubtedly aligned with the people of Kabyle and the Indigenous movements that took hold under postcolonial conditions after the Algerian and Moroccan independencies (El Aissati 59–72). Their Indigenous belonging to elsewhere was intelligible. These characters—the Choctaw man, the Amazigh man, and the *Mēxihcah* man—could have just as easily been a Chickasaw man, a Borana man from Oromia, and a Mayan or K'iche man from Guatemala, respectively; their stories would have featured the same characteristics and their belonging to Indigenous peoples' and places elsewhere would have, likewise, been intelligible.

But what about the descendants of the Sámi immigrants in this bar conversation? Their ancestors migrated from Northern Europe at a time when Sámi communities were experiencing late nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial processes that involved enforcement of hegemonic European nationalisms in Finno-Scandinavia. They entered the US and Canada in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America alongside Norwegians, Swedes, and Finns, and at-once assumed the role of settlers in a settler colonial nation. However, some Sámi immigrants would continue to be racially, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally set apart from their Nordic cohorts in immigrant communities, especially in the Midwest and Upper Great Lakes Region and the Pacific Northwest. In their journey across the Atlantic, along with the only belongings they could carry in their immigrant chests, Sámi immigrants would have carried the knowledge of their marked difference with them. Undoubtedly, all Sámi entering North America would have experienced some form of colonial abuse in Finno-Scandinavia prior to migration, and some of these abuses may have been push factors leading to migration in the first place. Sámi women would have been especially set apart

in migration narratives; they would have left particular gendered realities, oftentimes characterized by gender complementarity in their communities and intersectional oppression in Norwegian society, and would have entered an American system of gender characterized by the immediate codification of forfeiture of their legal agency through marriage and property laws. I write this work for the often-silenced Sámi immigrant women and their descendants, descendants like the Sámi Americans from Mortimer's in Minneapolis, who, despite trans-Atlantic migration, retain an abiding sense of connection to a "homeland" outside of the hegemonic nation-state, a homeland called Sápmi.

This project was driven by a number of questions: What can we learn from the migration stories of Indigenous Sámi women who were experiencing profound cultural, social, and political duress at the time of migration? Does migrating from Sápmi—the Sámi people's home that diverges from the spatialities and temporalities of the nation-states of Finno-Scandinavia—require conceptualization or a term that can account for their difference from their Nordic cohorts? It seems timely to develop a theoretical framework for illustrating divergent conditions of migration for people from Indigenous communities who then settle on other Indigenous peoples' lands or territories—like the early twentieth-century Sámi—as well as for Indigenous peoples who migrate from their Indigenous homelands to the former colonizer's state, or otherwise Western nation-states in Europe—like, for example, Mayans living in Spain. The developing concept of diasporic Indigeneity has been applied to Indigenous people living in diaspora, people like the Choctaw man, the *Mēxihcah* man, and the Amazigh man in the story narrated above. Diasporic indigeneity seems apt for Mayans or other Indigenous peoples from Latin America who migrated to Spain. But what about their third-generation descendants?

In this study, I claim that "diasporic indigeneity" is also an apt or fitting concept to theorize the conditions of Sámi migration and subsequent Sámi American subjectivity in descendants of Sámi immigrants, especially when oral history and oral tradition are seminal expressions of Sámi cultural continuity. Indigenous consciousness and Sámi belonging find significant expression in oral tradition in Sámi Americans living diasporic indigeneity in the US. While familial material culture and artistic and textual production are significant sites of memory and meaning-making, it is intangible cultural continuity foundationally expressed in storytelling that constitutes diasporic indigeneity in the Sámi American context.

The aims of this study are twofold:

- to reveal and reflect on familial and community-based storytelling as an integral part of oral tradition in diasporic indigeneity in the Sámi American context *and*

- to deliberate on Sámi-specific methodologies within the broader framework of Indigenous research methodologies, ethics, and interpretation in a collaborative life narrative project where (oral) storytelling intersects with three media: text, photography, and video.

With regard to stories shared in intersubjective research conversations in Sámi communities on both sides of the Atlantic, I have developed an interpretation of life narratives on a *temporal-spatial-narrative framework*. In this framework, contemporary stories generated in the collaborative life narrative project connect the immigrant women to places in America and to places in Sápmi; further, the stories bind an oftentimes silenced or obscured past with a spoken, meaningful present.

There is also a future temporal element in the ongoing development of a collaborative *transmedial narrative project*. The collaborative transmedial project seeks to both create and publish the life narratives of Sámi immigrant women in digital text, photography, and video on a web-based, interactive, platform. This part of the ongoing project, as well as a general-audience life narrative book project, are intended to answer the call in Indigenous studies research to share collaboratively-produced knowledges with various communities in accessible and locally meaningful ways.

As an expression of the ethics of centering the stories of Sámi women and their descendants, I invoke the five *áhkut/*grandmothers whose stories comprise the foundations of this project: Albertine Josefine Svendsen (Johnson) from Árdni/Arnøy and Duluth, Minnesota (1886–1984); Berith/Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter from Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen and Lake Lillian Township, Minnesota (1881–1954); Karen Marie Nilsdatter from Aarborte/Hattfjelldal and Duluth Minnesota (1874–1956); Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima from Ávži in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino and Nome, Alaska and Poulsbo, Washington (1866– 1949); and Risten (Kirsten) Nilsdatter Bals (herein "Risten") from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, last known location Unalakleet Alaska (1879–year of death unknown). I also acknowledge the storytellers and collaborators in this project, the North American or diaspora descendants and relatives of the grandmothers: Albertine's grandsons and daughter-in-law, Arden, Kai, and Solveig (Arneng) Johnson; Berith/Bertha Kristina's great-granddaughter, Rosalie Sundin; and Karen Marie's great-granddaughter, Anessa Andersland. I also acknowledge Mimi Bahl De Leon, who, in Sámi kinship terms, would be a *máttaráhkkut* or great-granddaughter of Kirsten/Risten Nilsdatter Bals because she is the great-granddaughter of Risten's brother, Per Nilsen Bals. In addition, I acknowledge the anonymized constellations of women and elders in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino and Aarborte/Hattfjelldal who were instrumental in shaping the narratives of Risten Nilsdatter Bals, Luhkkar-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, and Karen Marie Nilsdatter, respectively.

Antecedents to this project were earlier research and writing that manifested narrative or storytelling as method, including in my first master thesis, *We Stopped Forgetting:*

Diaspora Consciousness in the Narratives of Five Sami Americans (2005). Later, I conducted additional research and published the narratives from the master thesis into book form with the title *We Stopped Forgetting: Stories from Sámi Americans* (2012). The storytellers in the master project were third-generation descendants of Sámi immigrants. It was as a result of the reception of the master thesis and book, and through subsequent engagement with multiple communities on both sides of the Atlantic, that I came to the topics of the PhD project. The PhD project diverges from my previous research in that the anchoring subjects are the first-generation Sámi women who migrated to America, rather than the third-generation descendants. In addition, I also examine the impact that various media—both ephemeral web-based social media platforms, and photography in public and private circulation—have in shaping Sámi American subjectivities. Ultimately, the stories from the previous works and in this project are family stories that relay extended webs of relations both within North American communities and within Sápmi, and also between communities on both sides of the Atlantic. Oftentimes, various media prompt, accompany, or transmit these cross-Atlantic exchanges.

Foundationally, I have aspired to approach this project within a Sámi-centered research framework while drawing inspiration from Indigenous and allied scholarship from around the globe, a methodological approach that Chadwick Allen called trans-Indigenous (Allen *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies* xix–xxiv). In the development of an epistemological framework, I have used the terms *oktavuohta, verddevuohta,* and *gáfestallat/gáfestallan* figuratively as an invitation to and reflection on Sámi storytelling methodologies; I also use the Sámi women's craft practice, *rátnogođđin*, as a metaphor for Sámi women's life narrative production. In addition, I use Sámi place-names and family names for the subjects of the narratives. I intend this work to be interpretive, collaborative, and intersubjective. The main collaborators are the descendants and relatives of the Sámi immigrant women—all of whom were acknowledged above. The project is multi-faceted, uses a storytelling or narrative approach, and relies on co-production of knowledge. We, the collaborators and I, also seek to engage with new forms of publishing using a transmedial storytelling platform in a future project. The rationale for this is quite simple: the stories of Sámi grandmothers are worthy of multi-media or transmedial publication. My own grandmothers' stories are also "woven" into this work; it would be altogether impossible to co-shape narratives of the lives of Sámi immigrant women, together with their descendants whom I share a deep sense of kinship, while remaining distant or projecting false objectivity. The combined stories of our ancestors reveal the webs of relations that have continued to sustain us through the ages and across great expanses—even across oceans. Thus, I state my biases clearly from the outset, and I share with the collaborators in the burden and agency in making oneself vulnerable in a cultural and social landscape which, on occasion, can be daunting, yet mostly nurturing.

When I began the work of structuring this dissertation, I considered the twofold demands of writing in academia while using an Indigenous-centered storytelling framework—a framework that was best suited for community-based research that aligned with the imperatives of the collaborators for the project. While acknowledging the necessity of framing-structures and general guiding principles in article-based dissertations, this work is structured in some ways that may break somewhat with standard composition; rather than relegating the "empirical material"—in this case, five life narratives—to appendices, the placement of the narratives is in the body of the dissertation after the three articles. Hopefully, this decision makes the integrated nature of my approaches a bit more evident. In addition, in an attempt to align methodology with community-centered storytelling epistemologies, I weave story—sometimes my own—into the necessary abstractions of scholarly writing. The remainder of this extended introductory section, or "kappa" in Norwegian, contains the following: an overview of the three articles; an introduction to the five narratives as a corpus; a literature review; sections on historical and contemporary contexts; sections on theoretical and interpretive considerations; and, finally, sections on Indigenous methodologies and ethical storytelling methods. As is standard practice in article-based dissertations, the three unpublished articles and five narratives appear as separate works with their own bibliographies and pagination. While it is not standard praxis in the article-based dissertation genre to provide an extensive analysis after the articles, I nonetheless have also included a prologue that synthesizes, in story form, some of the central ideas of the dissertation.

1.1 Article Abstracts

Article I: *Oktasašvuohta*: A Sámi Conceptual Framework for Storytelling Research

The article illustrates a methodological approach to storytelling research through a Sámi conceptual framework reflecting an understanding of a process and paradigm that is aligned with Sámi epistemologies. The terms *oktavuohta*, *gáfestallat/gáfestallan*, *verddevuohta*, and *rátnogođđin* arose from within stories shared in intersubjective conversations with collaborators in a transmedial research project on narratives of five early twentieth century Sámi immigrant women. By using terms in the Sámi language in an inter-lingual text, the methodology anchors the research to the cultural worlds of the women represented in the work. By revealing the "thinking behind the doing" (Kovach *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* 40–43), I seek to epistemologically illustrate the manner in which the storytelling framework for the transmedial narrative project parallels the radical intersubjectivity of the Sámi yoik tradition.

Oktavuohta is the foundational or synthesizing term in the framework while terms for particular social practices—*verddevuohta* and *gáfestallat*—are purposeful tools that invite reflection on storytelling research as a relational, intentional, community-based method. Significantly, I also use a woman's weaving practice—*rátnogođđin*—as a metaphor for collaborative life narrative production of "weaving" multiple, sometimes fragmented, referents into a meaningful narrative whole.

The art of yoiking, like the intersubjective process of storytelling research, implies an ontology that extends beyond the limits of the self; thus, like yoikers and the art and practice of yoiking, the storytellers in my project are not interested in expressing themselves as much as connecting with others, and further, letting others speak with and through stories. Like Indigenous storytellers and stories globally, the polyvocal Sámi stories that come through in oral tradition, both in Sápmi and in North American diaspora communities, are told with and for families, communities, and entire peoples. The stories reflect connections to and continuities with communities and the social practices and places which sustain them.

Article II: *Image-Narrative-Agency*: Storying Historical Photographs as Visual Decolonization in Sápmi and Sámi America

Colonial photographs of Sámi subjects circulate globally on social media constituting visual discourses in the global flow of diasporic meaning-making in the digital age. Images and their intersecting narratives can have a profound effect on shaping subjectivities in Sápmi and in Sámi Americans living in diasporic indigeneity. Akin to Gerald Vizenor's critique of the Euro-American and Hollywood invention of *the Indian,* this article theorizes similar dehumanizing imagery of the Sámi as the visual discourse of *the Lapp;* these images have historically amplified popular stereotypes which often took shape during the period of social Darwinism and late nineteenth and early twentieth century eugenics. In the case study presented in this article, descendants and relatives of Sámi subjects narrate various historical photographs from three corpora: colonial, allied ethnographic, and early commercial portraiture. Photographs are important sites of memory, prompting storytelling in communities; the narrativizing, or "storying" late nineteenth and early twentieth century historical photographs realizes decolonizing aims and offer alternatives to the visual discourse of *the Lapp.* "Storying" photographs announces visual sovereignty, actively shapes and co-shapes contemporary Sámi subjectivities, and connects subjects and viewers to places and webs of relations structured through Sámi temporal and spatial visions. Ultimately, the intersection of historical photography with contemporary narratives creates alternative visions of Sámi peoples' enduring presence on the land and sustains webs of relations.

Article III: Photography in Life Narratives of Early Twentieth Century Sámi Immigrant Women: Memory, Agency, and Webs of Relations

This article explores the intersection of storytelling with historical photographs through a case study of five life narratives of early twentieth century Sámi immigrant women. The stories that intersect with historical photographs in the article are referred to as "photonarratives" (Hughes and Noble 4) and the research for the project materialized within a Sámi-centered epistemological framework using a storytelling methodology. The collaborators are the descendants, relatives, and associates of the five Sámi immigrant women, all from the Norwegian side of Sápmi. The photographs for the case study constitute three corpora: colonial, early commercial portraiture, and self-generated family or community photographs. Three of the Sámi immigrant women have living descendants in the US, all of whom have lived memories of the grandmothers. During research conversations with the descendants, the photographs prompted memories and poignant stories that intersected with various images of their grandmothers. Two of the women have no living descendants, thus the photonarratives were constructed mostly with information gleaned from written records, and supplemented with stories from local oral tradition in Sápmi. In the analysis of the photonarratives, I applied a *temporal-spatial-narrative* interpretive framework, as well a comparative analysis with Indigenous and diaspora studies narrative texts. What emerged was a critical tension between the photonarratives manifested through descendants "storying" the photographic subjects and the photonarratives manifested through records and local oral tradition. Bringing the stories and an expression of their grandmothers' and their own agency into a shared community of others, they bind the past with the present and bind Sápmi with the Sámi American community—in so doing, they provide a space for obscured Sámi belonging to become both visible and audible. Sharing the stories with the wider community, both in Sápmi and America, reflects the grandchildren-narrators' cultural continuity and an expression of diasporic Sámi consciousness.

1.2 Overview of the Corpus: Narratives of Five Sámi Immigrant Women from Norwegian Sápmi

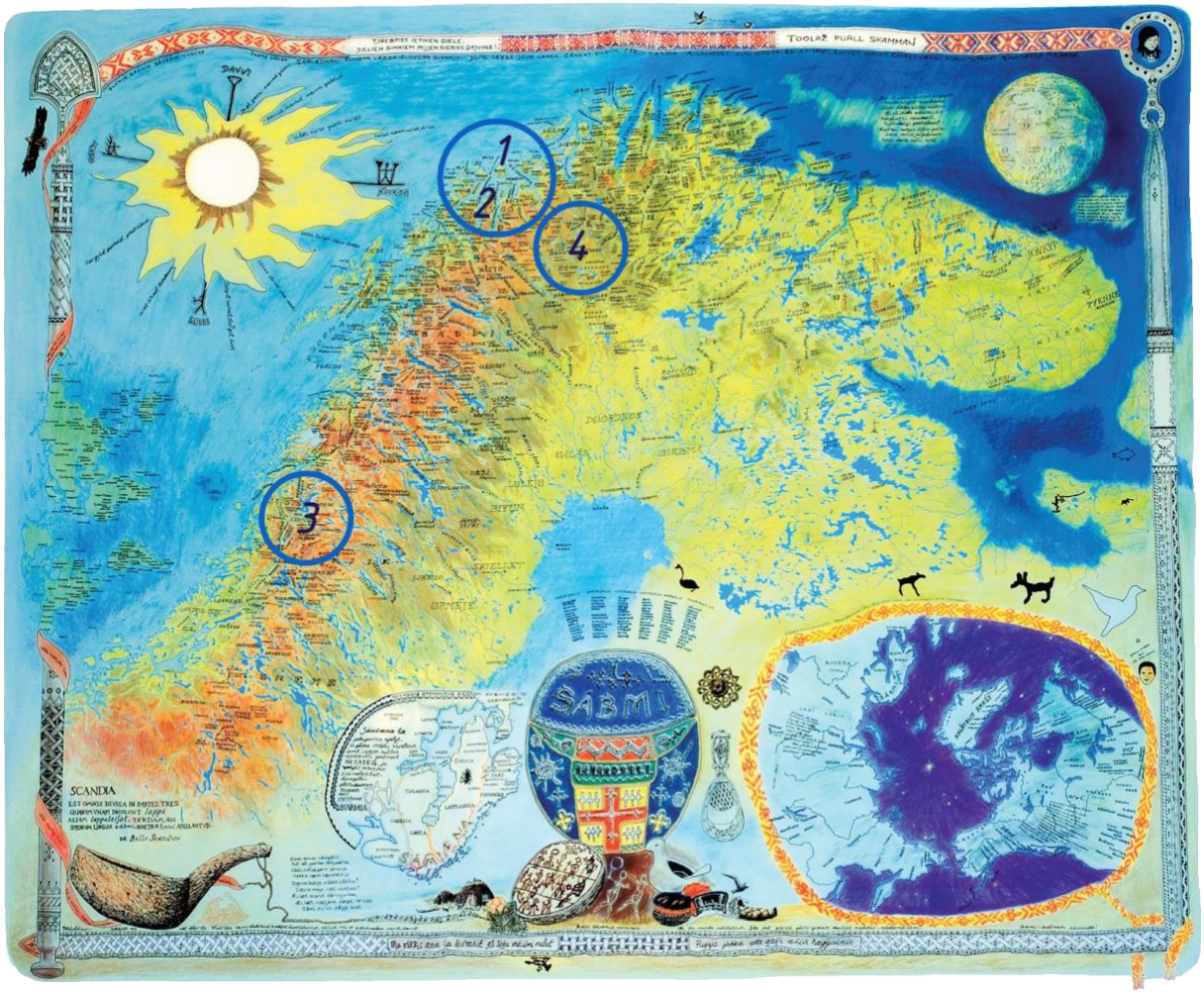

Figure I: Map of Sápmi by artist Hans Ragnar Mathisen – Elle-Hánsa – Keviselie
1 – Árdni, birthplace of Albertine Josephine Svendsen (Johnson)
2 – Ittarvuotna, birthplace of Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter
3 – Aarborte, birthplace of Karen Marie Nilsdatter
4 – Guovdageaidnu, birthplace of Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, and Risten Nilsdatter Bals

The five women—Albertine Josephine Svendsen (Johnson), Berith/Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter, Karen Marie Nilsdatter, Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, and Risten Nilsdatter Bals—are all contemporaries from the Norwegian side of Sápmi. It was not intentional that all five of the women would come from the Norwegian side of Sápmi, however, in the end, limiting the focus to stories of women from Norwegian Sápmi was a productive way of analyzing the effects of Norwegianization through the generations, that is, Norwegianization even had an effect on descendants living in diaspora.

All of the women were born between the years 1866 and 1886 and all of them migrated to America between 1902–1917: two of the women, Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Luhkkár-

Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, were from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino; two of the women, Berith/Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter and Albertine Josephine Svendsen (Johnson), were from coastal Sámi communities in Troms Province, Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen and Árdni/Arnøy respectively; and one of the women, Karen Marie Nilsdatter, was from the South Sámi area of Aarborte/Hattfjelldal. The youngest immigrant woman was twenty-one (Bertha) when she emigrated from Norway, and the oldest was forty (Luhkkár-Ánne). Anna returned to Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino toward the end of her life and told members of the community about her life in Alaska. Berith/Bertha, Albertine, and Karen Marie have living descendants, while Risten and Anna have no known living descendants. Both of the women with no known living descendants happen to come from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, but from rather divergent social, geographical, and historical backgrounds; I describe these divergences in some detail in the introduction to their narratives.

It goes without saying that all five women had the shared experience of growing up and living during the period of the Norwegianization policy and would have faced various forms of cultural and social duress from colonial pressures on Sámi communities. The Norwegianization policy was drafted in the 1850s shortly after the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852 and was in effect well into the 1900s, perhaps waning some after World War II; however, the effects of the policy are ongoing in Norwegian Sápmi (Lund et al. 121–46; Minde). Colonialism in the contexts of the lives of the five women took the direct form of educational policy (Bull 246–58; Edvardsen; Lund et al.). Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter told her descendants about enduring traumatic experiences at the boarding school. Another colonial measure that directly impacted the life of Risten Nilsdatter Bals, was the loss of grazing areas in reindeer herding communities from the closing of national-state borders in the mid-nineteenth century, and the multi-generational poverty that resulted from the fines imposed on families involved in the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852 (Zorgdrager 326–28). Three of the women, Risten Nilsdatter Bals, Berith/Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter, and Karen Marie Nilsdatter, worked "in-service" to other families as teenagers, while Albertine described her life as being an "indentured servant" from the age of eight in her older half-brothers' household; at age nineteen, Albertine Josephine Svendsen (Johnson) moved away and worked as a servant for a wealthy Norwegian household. Risten Nilsdatter Bals was also "in service" to a wealthy reindeer herding family, although the specific dynamics of the "in-service" relationship in reindeer herding communities differed greatly from working "in-service" on local Norwegian dairy farms or as domestic servants in wealthy Norwegian households.

All five of the women also have the shared experience of living during the historical period when the study of race biology and eugenics were popular in the scientific community, as well as among the majority culture elite which culminated in racialist

discourses and requisite policies imbued with social Darwinism—both in Norway and in the US (see Dillingham; Evjen). Racialist discourses are especially evident in the ship manifests and Norwegian and United States census records, but it also becomes evident in some of the stories shared by the descendants, as well as in other stories that circulate in the Sámi American community.

Presumably all five of the women would have had the shared experience of having their legal status as a subject/citizen—thus agency—undermined by codified gender norms in the American legal system, especially in matters of civil law. All of the women were documented with family names in Norwegian records, but in the US, they would at- once be legally bound to their husbands as reflected in the loss of their family names— that is, as soon as they either married in America, or arrived in America with their husbands, they would have their husband's last name. As the grandchild-narrator, Rosalie Sundin, rightfully stated: "You see, as soon as they get married, women are lost in the archives!" Sometimes women would even be referred to by their husband's first name, thus, effectively erasing Sámi immigrant women's deep ties to culture, family, place and identity which was manifested through their given family names. An example of the erasure of names and administrative agency is reflected in the name-changing of Berith/Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter from Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen. She was named after her female relatives, mostly for whom she bore a likeness, and her last name referenced her father, Lars; her name connected her to place and kin. After she married the grandchild of the founder of Lake Lillian, Minnesota, Joseph Nielson, she was referred to as Mrs. Joseph Nielson in officialdom, a common practice for most women during the early twentieth century historical period. However, this practice is set apart in the Sámi context because the Sámi experienced administrative name-changing as a result of enforced language shift and the Norwegianization of Sámi family names and place names in official government and church records. Several of the women came from Sámi-speaking families and all of them would have been in communities where Sámi was a community language. Local people in their Sámi home communities would have known them by their Sámi names. The most obvious example of this was Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima; her Sámi name not only tied her to her "clan," ancestors and extended family but to her story that forms part of local oral tradition. (Luhkkár comes from *klokker* in Norwegian, which roughly translates to "sexton" in English, I explain this in more detail in her narrative). Name-changing is most evident in the narrative of Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima; over the course of her lifetime I found her listed with multiple variations of her name in official records, and each name-shift has a story to tell. However, people who I met in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino who knew of her, always referred to her as Luhkkár-Ánne.

All of the women had the shared experience of entering the US. through one of the Eastern Seaboard immigrant processing stations—four of them entered through the

main station at Ellis Island in New York Harbor, and one of them, Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, entered through the processing station in Boston, Massachusetts. Two of the women had traveled alone with a child, Albertine Josephine Svendsen (Johnson) and Risten Nilsdatter Bals, and one of them, Risten, was unmarried. It is possible that one of the other women, Berith/Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter, also had a child with her, but it is likely that the child was recorded and processed as the son of her aunt and uncle who later adopted the boy, Oliver, and moved to Canada.

All five of the women had the shared experience of traveling as passengers in steerage or third-class, meaning that they were considered to be the least affluent in society. In New York, first and second-class passengers would be released directly at the main port, whereas steerage passengers would have to "undergo processing" which reflected the socio-economic or class system of the time; in some respects, "processing" also reflected and administratively implemented the racialist discourses of the times (Moreno). This meant that upon arrival—like hundreds of thousands of others—the five women would have had the experience of having been vetted and made to go through a battery of tests before they would be granted entrance to the United States. Unmarried women, and especially unwed mothers, could be especially suspect, making them extremely vulnerable in a process that was imbued with profound imbalances of power. Officially, they were supposed to prove that there was a male head of household that was able to provide for them. Sometimes such men would be waiting to "retrieve" them on the island; some women waited in detainment for a long time before the male head of household came to get them, and some were returned to their countries of origin (Moreno). If they had entered alone and as unmarried mothers, which at least one of them did, they even risked being arrested for fornication and deported under early twentieth century Victorian Era laws of moral turpitude (Moreno).

While none of them were marked as belonging to a race or ethnicity other than "Finnish" or "Norwegian" on their immigrant papers at the time of their arrival to the US, the immigrant processing stations, especially Ellis Island, had a number of policies directed at immigrants that were inspired by racial discourses. The "Lapps" were listed in the main reference called *The Dictionary of Races and Peoples* (Dillingham) which was used to identify "less hearty races" upon arrival. Those identified as belonging to one of the undesirable races could be made to undergo further tests and would occasionally face deportation or return (Moreno). In view of the raced and gendered system in place during immigrant processing and the extreme imbalances of power implied in that process, it is a mystery as to how one of the women, Risten Nilsdatter Bals, was granted entrance to the US as an unwed mother, traveling alone with a child and clearly not of Germanic or Northern European ancestry.

Three of the women settled in Minnesota, Albertine Josephine Svendsen (Johnson) and Karen Marie Nilsdatter in Duluth, and Berith/Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter in East Lake Lillian Township on the prairies of west-central Minnesota (the stark distinction between East Lake Lillian and West Lake Lillian is described in some detail in Bertha's narrative); two of the women, Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and Risten Nilsdatter Bals were destined for Alaska and they both would have traveled through Washington State and likely stopped in Seattle or Poulsbo on the Puget Sound before traveling on to Alaska. One of the women, Risten Nilsdatter Bals, remains "fate unknown." The three women who settled in Minnesota have living descendants, the storytellers introduced earlier: Arden, Kai, and Solveig (Arneng) Johnson (Albertine); Rosalie Sundin (Bertha), and Anessa Andersland (Karen Marie). Risten Nilsdatter Bals' son, Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals, who was later adopted as Boyne, lived in Alaska until his passing in 1948. He has no descendants. Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and her husband Johan Edvard Nilima ("Ede") did not have children.

There are four stand-alone narratives presented as their own chapters, and like the articles, they contain their own internal citations. I have also used a notes style of citations for readability for the public, and for ease of finding sources for families and communities. The title of each chapter is the women's family name, or given names, in the following order: Albertine Josephine Svendsen (Johnson) from Árdni/Arnøy, settled in Duluth, MN; Berith/Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter from Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen, settled in East Lake Lillian Township, MN; Karen Marie Nilsdatter from Aarborte/Hattfjelldal, settled in Duluth, MN; Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and Kirsten/Risten Nilsdatter Bals, both from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino and both traveled to Alaska and their narratives are combined for reasons that will be illuminated later. At the beginning of each narrative, I give a relational accounting of the collaborators, grandchild-narrators, relatives, and community members—that is, both an accounting of their relation to me as the compiler, writer, and editor—and their relation to the primary subject, the Sámi immigrant woman or *áhkku/*grandmother. Each narrative also includes at least one photograph of the subject of the narrative.

Finally, in an effort to honor the names given to the women in their families of origin in Sápmi, while at the same time honoring the names used in families and communities on the US side of the Atlantic, I will alternative or use both names throughout the work. For example, Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter was her given name, the name which tied her to both her maternal and paternal family lines in Sápmi; however, she was only ever known as Bertha in Lake Lillian Township where she spent most of her life.

2 Literature Review

To date, there are few scholarly works that have addressed the phenomenon of Sámi immigration and Sámi American identity and narratives. Earlier academic contributions include a study on the Alaskan Sámi, *Saami, Reindeer, and Gold in Alaska: The Emigration of Saami from Norway to Alaska* (Vorren) from 1994. In 2001, the late Mona Nelson-Balcer wrote a master thesis in history on the Sámi/Kven immigrant community in Lake Lillian Township, Minnesota, called *Feudal Fire: A Case Study of a North Norwegian Immigrant Community in Minnesota* (Nelson-Balcer). The historian Einar Niemi has written three articles on the subject of Sámi migration and immigrants in the North American context: "Emigration from Northern Norway: A frontier phenomenon?" in 1996; in 1999 "From Northern Scandinavia to the United States: Ethnicity and migration, the Sámi and the Arctic Finns"; and in 1995 "Nils Paul Xavier: Sami Teacher and Pastor on the American Frontier." All of the above-mentioned works were foundational texts for my 2005 master thesis *We Stopped Forgetting: Diaspora Consciousness in the Narratives of Five Sami Americans* and subsequent 2012 book *We Stopped Forgetting: Stories from Sámi Americans*, which included five narratives from third generation Sámi Americans highlighting their process of both uncovering and recovering their diasporic Sámi identity and further, the various ways that Sámi American identity is meaningful or materialized in their lives. In addition, I have written several other articles on the topic of Sámi immigration and contemporary identity and have presented my research results to both popular and academic audiences on at least thirty occasions.[1]

The most recent contribution to the development of knowledge on Sámi immigration to Alaska is the 2014 book *Sámi Reindeer Herders in Alaska: Letters from America* edited by Aage and John Trygve Solbakk and translated from Sámi to English by Kaija Anttonen (Solbakk, Solbakk and Anttonen). The book is a collection of letters sent to the Sámi Christian newspaper *Nuorttanaste* 1901–1937 ("The Eastern Star") from the Sámi who reported on their experiences, impressions, thoughts, and feelings about their lives in Alaska. Written by the first generation immigrants, the letters provide unique insights into their subjectivities and experiences. The Sámi editors of the book also included explanatory or contextualizing addendums and an introduction reflective of a Sámi worldview. The letters told about life in Alaska, reindeer herding and gold-mining, news about births, deaths, and marriages in the Alaskan Sámi community, and they also told stories about individual religious conversions. The newspaper functioned as a vehicle for the Alaskan Sámi to keep in touch with multiple people in the Sámi audience in Sápmi. A common theme in many of the letters was that the Alaskan Sámi had written

letters to their relatives and associates back home, but they never heard back from "home" in turn. They longed to hear news from relatives and friends in Sápmi.

Finally, the Sámi American publications *Báiki: The North American Sámi Journal* (1991-2013) and *Árran: The Publication of the Sámi Siida of North America* (1996–2012) and the *Árran Blog* have been invaluable resources, not only in reflecting knowledge about Sámi American experience, but in the development of Sámi diaspora consciousness and community in North America. Before the advent of social media, many Sámi Americans report that their earliest engagement in coming to an understanding of their often-repressed Sámi heritage, and seeking community with others with this shared heritage, came through these two publications.

Finally, scholarly and popular works focusing specifically on the life narratives of Sámi women are scarce. A foundational reference for this study is the English translation of Vuokko Hirvonen's Ph.D. dissertation *Voices from Sápmi: Sámi Women's Path to Authorship* (Hirvonen and Anttonen). Other seminal recent contributions toward framing spaces for the life stories of Sámi women in research and writing are the following: Liv Inger Somby's master thesis *Mus lea ollu muitalit, muhto dus lea nu unnán áigi*: *Life Stories told by Elder Sámi Women* (Somby); Siri Broch Johansen's biography of Elsa Laula Renberg *Historien om samefolkets store Minerva* [The Story of the Sámi People's Great Minerva] (Johansen); and a biography on Mari Boine by Per Lars Tonstad *Mari Boine: Fly med meg!* [Mari Boine: Fly with Me!] (Tonstad). The following have also written specifically on gender issues in Sámi communities: Rauna Kuokkanen (Kuokkanen "Indigenous Women in Traditional Economies: The Case of Sámi Reindeer Herding"), Máret Sárá (Sárá) Jorunn Eikjok (Eikjok), and Elina Helander-Renvall (Helander-Renvall "Váisi, the Sacred Wild : Transformation and Dreaming in the Sami Cultural Context").

In this project, I also enter into an ongoing conversation about Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous-centered research frameworks in Sámi research. Compared to other Indigenous research communities, these approaches have been slower to gain endorsement as valid approaches in Sámi research among some Nordic (and even some Sámi) researchers (Frandy). What has been deemed standard practice in Indigenous studies worldwide, that is, approaching Indigenous research from within critical, postcolonial, anti-colonial, postmodern, and crucially, Indigenous paradigms, has only recently started to take hold in the Nordic countries. Discussions of ethics in Indigenous research, while they are noble attempts, are often off the mark when it comes to the internal axiology of local Sámi communities and must take account of local histories and dynamics in implementation.

There have been a number of seminal scholarly interventions on the topic of Indigenous methodology in Sámi research by Sámi researchers, including early contributions from

Harald Gaski (Gaski), Rauna Kuokkanen (Kuokkanen *Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift*), and Jelena Porsanger (Porsanger 105–20), among others. Still other Sámi, Sámi Americans, and allies have used Indigenous methodologies and/or postcolonial theoretical approaches in their research projects or writing, some contributions include: Erika Sarivarra (Erika Katjaana Sarivaara); Lill-Tove Fredriksen (Fredriksen); Kristin Jernsletten (Jernsletten et al.); Elina Helander-Renvall (Helander-Renvall "Animism, Personhood and the Nature of Reality: Sami Perspectives" 44–56); Vuokko Hirvonen (Hirvonen and Anttonen); Åsa Virdi Kroik (Kroik and Joma 145–56); Troy Storfjell (T. Storfjell 114–30; T. A. Storfjell); Tim Frandy (Timothy Frandy "Harvesting Tradition: Subsistence and Meaning in the Northern Periphery"); Terry-Lee Marttinen (Marttinen 68–85); Pigga Keskitalo (Keskitalo, Maatta and Uusiautti 267–92); Camilla Brattland (Brattland, Kramvig and Verren 74–96); Britt Kramvig (Kramvig); May-Britt Öhman (Öhman 262–92); Astri Dankertsen (Dankertsen "Fragments of the Future. Decolonization in Sami Everyday Life"); Anna Lydia Svalastog (Svalastog 17–45) among others. The importance of allied scholars in the development of a Sámi-centered research paradigm cannot be understated. Notable allies who have demonstrated a deep commitment to the advancement of Sámi scholarship are Thomas DuBois (DuBois "The Same Nature as the Reindeer: Johan Turi's Portrayal of Sámi Knowledge" 519–44), Helen Verren (Brattland, Kramvig and Verren 74–96), Kaarina Kailo (Kailo and Helander-Renvall), and Thomas Hilder (Hilder).

3 Brief Introduction to Sámi America

There are at least 30,000 to 60,000 descendants of Sámi immigrants living in North America and the vast majority of them are scarcely aware that their immigrant ancestors from Norway, Sweden, and Finland came from an Indigenous people. Their ancestors moved to America alongside other Europeans, during the great waves of migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Areas in the United States where concentrations of Sámi people settled are in the following: the Midwest and Great Lakes Region, including Minnesota, Wisconsin, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and North Dakota; the Pacific Northwest, especially in Washington on the Puget Sound, Seattle and Poulsbo; and Alaska, especially on the Seward Peninsula and North Slope.

Sámi immigration occurred alongside immigration movements from Europe, mostly between 1860–1920. The reasons Sámi people emigrated from Sápmi varied greatly, but included industrial recruitment efforts, seeking religious freedom, and economic pressure, among other factors (Niemi "From Northern Scandinavia to the United States : Ethnicity and Migration, the Sami and the Arctic Finns"; Jensen "We Stopped Forgetting : Stories from Sámi Americans"; Nelson-Balcer). Stories circulate in the Sámi American community about Sámi women who were "mail-order brides" or of Sámi immigrants who were escaping some other colonial trauma. Some of the first Sámi to arrive on the North American continent that have been documented in genealogical and historical records arrived around the period of the American Civil War (Sundin). Sámi immigrants arrived in groups, in families, and as individuals. There is a tendency to view the Sámi immigration to Alaska as the first, and sometimes, only group migration of Sámi to North America. However, the first documented group migrations which included Sámi individuals and families were from the northernmost provinces of Sweden and Finland (Norbotten and Lappi, respectively) (James Kurtti) to Northern Michigan and from Báhccavuona suohkan/Balsfjord Municipality to East Lake Lillian Township in western Minnesota (Nelson-Balcer); both of these groups migrated to North America around the time of the American Civil War.

As an aside worth mentioning here, there is speculation that the first Sámi people to arrive on the American continent may have been indentured by the New Sweden colonialists in Delaware from 1638–1713 (see Fitzpatrick). The reason for the speculation was that during the historical period when the New Sweden colony was established on Lenape lands, Sweden was in control of most of Finland and part of modern-day Russia. Many of the New Sweden settlers were Finnish subjects of the Swedish crown from the Tornio River Valley. The possible Sámi presence among the New Sweden colonialists has never been fully investigated, but it is possible that Sámi were among the settlers, especially from the servant, indentured, or "peasant classes"

from the Northern provinces, which at the time had a majority Sámi and Finnish population. Another reason to speculate is that some years ago, the editors Arden Johnson and Casey Meshbesher of the aforementioned Sámi American blog, *Árran,* received an email from someone on the East Coast claiming to be a descendent of Sámi who had been indentured in New Sweden. They even claimed that their ancestors had lived in Sámi turf huts. The message was written in a hyperbolic way that could have been interpreted as if written in jest or as mockery of the whole claim to Sámi presence in North America. A follow-up email to the sender went unanswered. Despite the ambiguous character of this incident, it certainly adds to greater speculation that the first Sámi migrants to North America may have come as early as the seventeenth century.

Many third and fourth-generation descendants of Sámi immigrants took for granted that their immigrant ancestors were ethnically Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish. However, many Sámi descendants later make discoveries of Sámi lineage in their genealogies and recognize, in retrospect, that "something" seemed to set their family stories apart from mainstream Nordic immigration narratives. This is especially with regard to their families' positioning vis-à-vis other Nordic immigrant descendants in their communities. The phenomenon of descendants not knowing about their Sámi heritage makes sense given that at the time of immigration and administrative "processing" upon entering the US, there was a general tendency to conflate nationhood or the nation-state of emigration with culture and ethnicity—in other words, the nation-state of one's birth or citizenship became a totalizing force that would oftentimes be equated with modern cultural identities and communities (Jensen "We Stopped Forgetting : Diaspora Consciousness in the Narratives of Five Sami Americans").

Nevertheless, the Sámi who might have "stood out" as "other" were also racialized in America, this is especially the case at Ellis Island. There are many Ellis Island immigration oral stories in circulation in Sámi American communities, as well as stories of immigrant ancestors or contemporary Sámi Americans being described with the physical attributes "short and dark" or being referred to by the pejoratives "Lapps" or "black Norwegians/Swedes/Finns," or even the racist pejorative "ch*nk." Some less obvious discriminatory behaviors toward immigrant communities was ridiculing their North Norwegian, North Swedish, or North Finnish dialects. The North Norwegian dialect is heavily influenced by the Sámi and Finnish languages, both in cadence and syntax; Nordic immigrants from the gentrified south could have identified "suspected Lapps" in immigrant communities from their dialects and ways of being. Yet, as soon as immigrants were processed at Ellis Island, they were ethnically registered according to European nation-state logic. There are reports of immigrants from all backgrounds being given "Anglicized" names upon arrival to the US, reflecting the immediacy with which they were expected to assimilate into the dominant Anglo-American culture.

The descendants of Sámi immigrants in the US, as noted above, have been collectively referred to as Sámi Americans; however, there are also Sámi descendants in Canada who are part of the continental community; thus, Sámi North Americans is a more inclusive term. The terms "diaspora Sámi and Sámi diaspora" have also come into use in recent years. In order to narrow the focus of this project, and thus make it more feasible, I have limited the focus to narratives of Sámi immigrant women from the Norwegian side of Sápmi who migrated to the United States, specifically to Minnesota and Alaska. However, with this work I hope to also encourage the Canadian Sámi (diaspora) to continue the work of coming together and calibrating the story of Sámi migration to Canada.

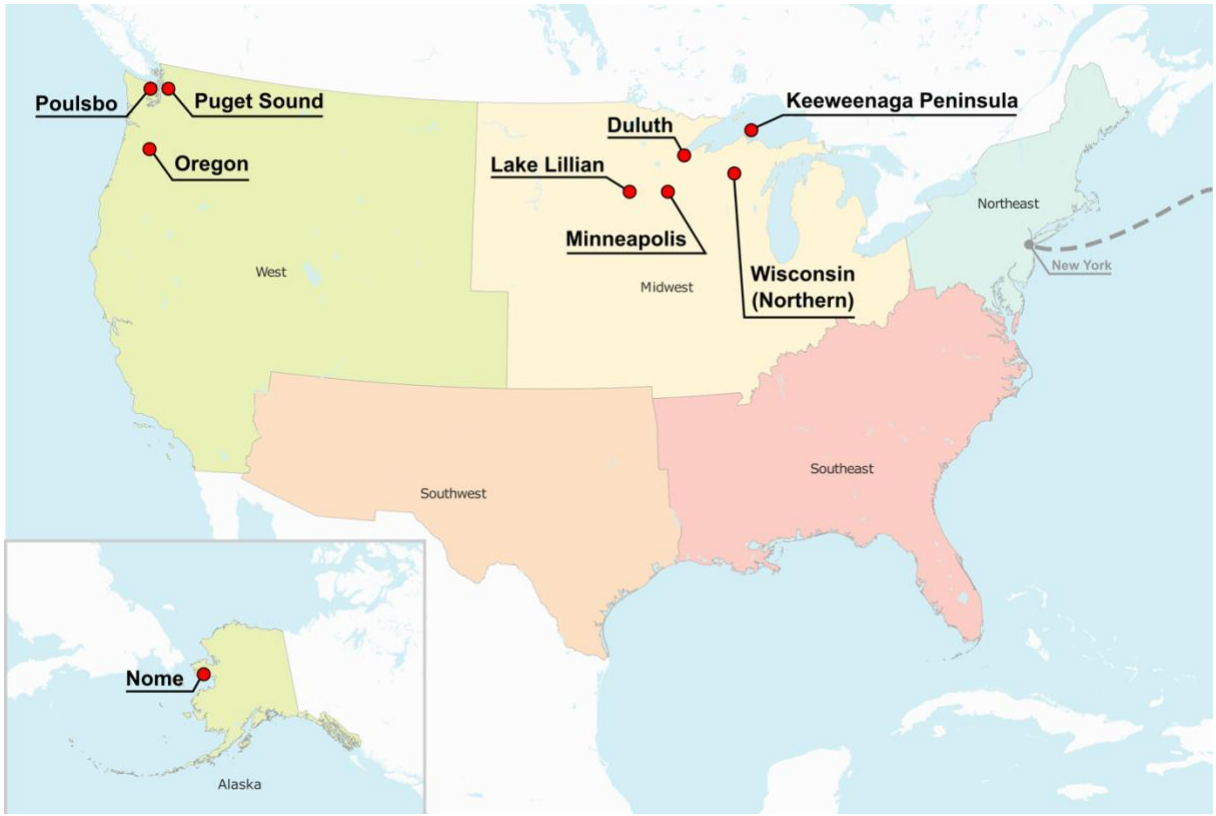

Figure II: Areas with concentrations of Sámi settlement in the U.S.. Jostein Henriksen, 2018

4 Development of Sámi American Consciousness and Community

> "The burden of having your identity dictated to you, and the wrong identity dictated to you at that, really takes an emotional toll. I think it was a big part of pretty serious depression that I had from, say, age 11 to 20 or so."
>
> –Anonymous Sámi American from the Midwest, 2018

Descendants of Sámi immigrants reside all over the North American continent, but there are areas with identifiable concentrations who have manifested public expression of Sámi cultural connections. States where the development of Sámi consciousness and belonging are evident, or have continuity from the immigration period, are Minnesota, Michigan, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska, however, one would also find Sámi descendants spread out all over the American Midwest and Upper Great Lakes regions. In the state of Minnesota, the following areas have or have had an active or visible presence of Sámi descendants: Carleton and Renville Counties, and especially the city of Duluth and surrounding areas; New York Mills in the tri-county area colloquially referred to as the "Finnish Triangle" in central Minnesota; Minneapolis and Saint Paul, especially in "Finntown" of North Minneapolis; Wright and Meeker counties, especially Cokato and Annandale, where sizable populations of Finnish Laestadians settled after the American Civil War, including some grandchildren of Lars Levi Laestadius; and East Lake Lillian Township in Kandiyohi County. In Michigan there are multiple communities on the Upper Peninsula with a strong presence of Sámi descendants, especially among Finnish Laestadian and Apostolic congregations in Copper County on the Keweenaw. In the Pacific Northwest and Northern California, the following areas also have discernable communities of descendants: Nasselle, the Seattle area and communities on the Puget Sound, especially in Poulsbo; Portland and Astoria; San Francisco and Oakland. All of these areas have been sites of some measure of development of Sámi American cultural activities and consciousness which finds expression in events, formal and informal social gatherings, publications, and festivals. Based on multiple developments in these various communities, and in consultation with others, a possible working definition for a Sámi North American or diaspora Sámi is the following:

> Largely of mixed cultural descent, Sámi North Americans or diaspora Sámi are those people living in North America who have chosen to identify with the Sámi part of their heritage. They seek to gain further knowledge about their often-obscured cultural heritage, to build community, and to make meaningful connections to both historical and contemporary Sápmi in their lives.

Few Sámi immigrants from the first generation spoke openly about their Sámi identity with their descendants, including at least three of the women in this project. Some people might find it surprising that this was also the case with the reindeer herders in Alaska and their kin in Poulsbo, all of whom had visible ties to the culture in the first generation, particularly in material culture, for example the use of implements and tools used in reindeer herding and the occasional use of the Sámi traditional garment called *gákti*. Some less obvious markers in the first generations from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino and Kárášjohka/Karasjok was use of the Sámi language in families and the maintenance of an extensive network between communities in Alaska, communities in the Puget Sound, and between these areas and communities in Sápmi. Like most immigrants in the early twentieth century, all Sámi immigrants were under intense pressure to assimilate into Anglo-American cultural norms and under intense pressure to speak English. But Sámi people had already been under pressure to assimilate into majority Scandinavian and Finnish cultures before they emigrated; at the time of migration to North America, the Sámi were facing assimilation policies, intense pressure to give up their ways of life in favor of state-sanctioned livelihoods, and ever-increasing settlement in traditional Sámi areas oftentimes tied to mining operations (Niemi "Sami History and the Frontier Myth: A Perspective on Northern Sami Spatial and Rights"; Minde; Pedersen).

A common theme in the stories shared by Sámi Americans in community with others, as well as in written texts that Sámi Americans have submitted to *Árran* and *Báiki*, is the widespread tendency among Sámi immigrant ancestors to "hide" their Sámi background (Jim Kurtti; Harkonen; Wisuri; Johnson). Still, other first-and second-generation immigrants have shared with their descendants that they hid their identities due to traumatic experiences in Sápmi prior to emigration, while others said they did not see the practical value in stating their identities openly due to the exigencies of immigration that prioritized survival over identity. Some descendants have spoken of "shame" in their families which led them to speak in hushed tones about their background—that is, that the experiences of the older generations had left them few options but to resort to silence to protect their children from "their burden." While narratives of silence and "shame" may seem like the norm in Sámi American communities, there were some first-generation Sámi immigrants who taught their descendants about their ancestry without hesitation; at times, both of these tendencies—silence and outspokenness—mingled in one particular immigrant community and even within families. Of critical importance is the fact that cultural continuity was manifested within Sámi immigrant families, even if Sámi identity was not spoken of outright (Xavier). People learned "Sámi ways" and about "things that were Sámi" seamlessly, that is, without the teacher and teachings being self-evident.

In the late 1980s, a group of Sámi descendants in Duluth established a Sámi American community—included in this group were the descendants of Albertine Josefine Svendsen (Johnson). The group was inspired by the growing international Indigenous movement; the inspiration for the development of Sámi American identity could specifically be attributed to engagement with the Sámi revitalization movement in Sápmi, especially after the Alta Dam Conflict in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Norway (see Paine). Group activities culminated in launching the Sámi American journal called *Báiki* under the editorship of the late Faith Fjeld. Solveig Arneng Johnson, a Sámi immigrant woman from Finnmark Province and the daughter-in-law of Albertine, coined the term "Sámi American" for descendants of Sámi immigrants in North America (Johnson). The group and publication became an important source of information for both Sámi Americans and interested allies. They also invested in community engagement among Sámi descendants across the North American continent, and they fulfilled a bridge-building function between the Sámi in Sápmi and Americans of Sámi descent. Early members of the community often expressed relief that they had finally found others with a shared history; that is, they found a community that understood the complexities of being descendants of immigrants from an Indigenous people, a people that few Americans knew anything about, or that Scandinavian and Finnish Americans often viewed through stereotypical or even racist lenses. Yet, the majority of Sámi descendants would be considered "white" in the North American conceptualizations of race, significantly codified by color.

The core group of organizers from the late 1980s and early 1990s initiated contact with Sámi cultural ambassadors, mostly artists, who came to America to engage with their "Sámi American brothers and sisters" as well as with Native Americans; some of these early artist ambassadors included Nils Aslak Valkeapää/Áilohaš, Hans Ragnar Mathisen/Elle-Hánsa/Keviselie, and Mari Boine. While there had always been Sámi consciousness in some immigrant communities and within families—albeit understated –this core group of early Sámi Americans signaled the movement for visible expressions of Sámi cultural descent at community gatherings, public events, and through formal educational institutions. Only a few short years after *Báiki* went into publication, conflicts arose within the core community, and some of the original group formed the *Sámi Siida of North America*, with its own publication, noted above, called *Árran: Publication of the Sámi Siida of North America* with Arden Johnson and the late Mel Olsen as editors. The publishers of *Árran* also maintained a highly informative blog for a number of years run by Arden Johnson and Casey Meshbesher.[2]

The two Sámi American publications and blog continued to be published regularly until some years ago, the most recent issue of *Báiki* came out in 2017, and the last issue of *Árran* that reached regular subscribers was in 2012. These three publication channels provided a space for readers and members of the community to write or share their own

family stories of Sámi heritage or share stories about the history of their particular immigrant communities. There were articles about trips to Sápmi and in-depth, researched articles about Sámi culture, book and film reviews, as well as news on other subjects. The editors of both publications included articles written by Sámi cultural experts—both academics and artists—from Sápmi. In addition, the editors themselves did research on subjects of interest to their readers, for example, on Sámi languages, literature, traditional crafts, and pre-Christian traditions and ways of life. Many issues of *Báiki* were fully devoted to or had sections devoted to the Alaskan Sámi experience. Finally, with the advent of social media, the publications would likely enjoy continued readership and engagement if they were in digital formats with open accessibility.

The organization formerly referred to as the *Sámi Siida of North America* changed its official name in 2014 to the *North American Sámi Searvi* (NASS)[3]; the organization has unofficial members and an official, elected board, represented by Sámi North Americans from both Canada and the United States. Another group was established in recent years called the *Pacific Sámi Searvi* (PSS), which has registered as a non-profit 501c3, and there is an informal Sámi American community, an affiliate of the *North American Sámi Searvi*, in the Minneapolis and Saint Paul metropolitan area called "Twin Cities Sámi Siida." In recent years, some of the core members of the earliest group of Sámi American activists, including Marlene Wisuri and the late Faith Fjeld, among others, established the *Sámi Cultural Center of North America* in Duluth, Minnesota.[4] Also, the Finnish American Heritage Center/Finlandia University in the Keweenaw Peninsula of Upper Michigan actively promotes Sámi heritage and culture in the geographic area, mostly under the respective leadership of James N. Kurtti (Honorary Finnish Consul for Upper Michigan & Director of the Finnish American Heritage Center) and Assistant Professor Hilary Virtanen (Finlandia University in Finnish and Nordic Studies). There are also Sámi Studies courses that are currently or have been offered at a number of Universities in the US which demonstrates the increasing academic interest in Sámi culture, political issues, and language, including at the following institutions: University of Wisconsin-Madison with Professor Thomas A. DuBois; Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma Washington, with Associate Professor Troy Storfjell; Saint Olaf College, Northfield, MN, with Associate Professor Kari Lie Dorer; and University of Texas at Austin, Professor Emeritus John Weinstock.

Sámi North Americans have a marked social media presence with multiple Facebook pages run by Sámi Americans and groups, including *Báiki*, *Saami Genealogy*, and *Pacific Sámi Searvi*, and *US and Canada Saami* the official page of the *North American Sámi Searvi*; and the *Twin Cities Sámi Siida* page is intended to be a platform for local members and supporters in planning local events. Facebook, in particular, has been critically important for a diasporic expression of Sámi American identity and a vehicle for virtual and local community-building; social media sites are also important sites for

networking and for people to make new discoveries about their (sometimes) hidden heritage. In *Narrative Networks: Storied Approaches in a Digital Age* Brian Alleyne writes:

> Social networking sites offer a way to reimagine oneself as belonging to a close community, though that community is close in a virtual sense and not necessarily a physical community. Communities are purely symbolic constructions and can be distinguished by a shared set of narratives; belonging to a community is knowing and sharing that community's stories. Facebook, as with any other SNS [social networking site] enables a kind of personal community; it affords a combination of intimacy and distance. (Alleyne 109)

Facebook has also been a vehicle for cultural revitalization, where members of North American Sámi groups engage with one another, sometimes even writing phrases and messages in one of the Sámi languages, especially among South Sámi descendants. Sámi people in Sápmi also participate in dialogues on these pages, oftentimes offering critical insight into questions around Sámi history, current events, political issues, expressive culture, and Sámi primary industries and local economies. Facebook pages have also been critical sites for international political organizing for Indigenous rights, both in the interests of First Nations/Native American issues, as well as for pressing issues in Sápmi. Thus, the diaspora Sámi community is in "digital" community with Sápmi which is configured as "homeland" (as opposed to nation-states). In a study "Preservation of Indigenous Culture Among Indigenous Migrants through Social Media: the Igorot People" Botangen, Vodanoovich, and Yu concluded:

> Facebook groups therefore can become alternative and complementing grounds to sustain indigenous knowledge. In the case of the Igorot migrants, the groups continue to provide a contemporary medium to establish virtual communities that connect them to traditional home, unite them to traditional culture, inform them about their fellows, and encourage them to promote the knowledge/…/
>
> Social media indeed has created a dynamic and attractive platform to transport the diverse cultural elements through various media forms. Its phenomenal use to actively promote indigenous knowledge makes it a vehicle for revitalization.(Botangen, Vodanovich and Yu 2310–11)

Perhaps the most important function of social media in the Sámi American context is that it facilitates gatherings in local communities where members of various Facebook pages actually meet, socialize, and participate in cultural events. Some of the loose-knit Sámi American communities, together with some of the above-mentioned US and

Canada groups, have met every two or three years for a continental gathering. Officially, it is a gathering for the North American Sámi Searvi, but local communities with capacity and concentrations of Sámi Americans in the area serve as local hosts. The organizers arrange workshops and lectures, and members and guests also have an opportunity to socialize with other Sámi North Americans and allies from across the continent. It is often in these settings that stories of ancestors are shared in community with others, sometimes in a *lávvu* (Sámi summer tent) or around a campfire complete with boiled coffee (I will return to the cultural importance of this practice called *gáfestallat/gáfestallan* in later sections).

Unfortunately, leadership at the North American continental level has consistently been fragmented due to ongoing internal conflicts driven by a small number of individuals with a propensity to focus far greater attention on organizational structure and consolidation of personal influence and positioning than on culture and community. Another challenge to Sámi American communities is the problem of various "new-age wannabees" who can easily pass as Sámi descendants with no verifiable ancestral connection to Sámi communities in Sápmi. Many of these individuals have already "made the rounds" in Native American communities before setting themselves up as on-line shamanic gurus, some seeking commercial gain through cultural appropriation or even theft of the Sámi culture.[5]

However, despite political fragmentation and inevitable conflicts, individuals, families, and local communities from across the continent manage to create meaningful connections in virtual communities. More importantly, in-person communities develop on the local level. Over the years, organizers of local events from all of the aforementioned "official," as well as informal groups, have invited special guests from Sápmi who generously share their knowledge about Sámi culture with their North American diaspora "family." Regardless of the often-disparate religious beliefs and political ideologies in the Sámi American diaspora communities, Sámi Americans find common ground, share stories, and manifest a meaningful, shared, identity in North America.

Finally, the descendants of Sámi immigrants in the US, as noted above, have been collectively referred to as Sámi Americans; however, there are also Sámi descendants in Canada who are part of the continental community; thus, Sámi North Americans is a more inclusive term. The terms "diaspora Sámi and Sámi diaspora" have also come into use in recent years. In order to narrow the focus of this project for feasibility, I have limited the focus to narratives of Sámi immigrant women from the Norwegian side of Sápmi who migrated to the United States, specifically to Minnesota and Alaska.

5 Motivation and Aims for the Project

As noted earlier, this research project developed as an outcome of my master thesis in Indigenous studies, and subsequent research and book project that addressed the theme of narratives of third generation Sámi immigrants in North America. In my experiences with the popular and academic reception of the book and other publications on the same theme, as well as in my subsequent research, it became clear that communities in Sápmi and Sámi American diaspora communities were interested in the narratives of the first-generation immigrants. Others in multiple disciplines and local communities with various backgrounds also registered an interest (Jensen "Hvem er dagens same-amerikanere? [Who are Contemporary Sámi Americans]")

Mainstream immigration narratives, colonial literature, and popular cultural representations of Indigenous peoples rarely reflect the manner in which cultural continuity follows a non-linear, interrupted—perhaps even disjointed—trajectory. Postcolonial scholars, in particular, have vociferously challenged demands for cultural purity and authenticity when communities or individuals incorporate new knowledges into their lives, whether by force of circumstance, out of an acute need, or creative resilience (see Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin). The idea of "authenticity" deployed in the interest of market capitalism or in the consolidation of nationalist interests calls to mind the double-standard often at play when mainstream and western "inauthenticity" are exonerated, while Indigenous, colonized, and diasporic peoples can be cast as "impure," "westernized," or "lost" (see Bendix). According to Gilroy, embodying a cultural identity reflective of "creolization or ethnic hybridity" is akin to a "litany of pollution" set against the rhetoric of "ethnic absolutism" (Gilroy 2). The rhetoric of belonging aligned with "ethnic absolutism" denies full community membership to individuals, families, and communities of mixed ancestry and/or to individuals, families, and communities of Indigenous peoples subjected to harsh assimilation policies, forced de-territorialization, or economic migration, all of which led to language shift and demise of material culture. When the authenticity of the Indigenous individual is challenged, it can lead to intense psychological distress (E. K. M. Sarivaara, Kaarina; Uusiautti, Satu 369–78; E. K. Sarivaara 195–220).

The discourse of purity and authenticity ultimately pathologizes large populations of Indigenous peoples (Hill and Hill 10–25) and clears the way for a number of problematic identity and representational issues with regard to modern Indigenous peoples; this might especially be the case for those Indigenous peoples who have, for various reasons, migrated from their traditional areas to urban areas (Nyseth and Pedersen 131–52; Pedersen and Nyseth; Peters et al.; Dankertsen "Samisk kompleksitet i Oslo" 216–36). Some Indigenous people have migrated due to force or profound cultural, political, or socio-economic duress (Doco), while others may have migrated voluntarily, for example, for lucrative opportunities, educational opportunities, or seeking refuge from internal strife in their local communities. Complicating the complexities of Indigenous peoples' realities are the enduring misperceptions of a false narrative of isolation; Indigenous people are often viewed as fixed in time and space, or discursively cast as "ancient ones" tied to "hinterlands" with little or no agency in defining their own

destinies. These enduring misperceptions were famously captured in the context of Jimmy Nelson's photography expedition, prohibitively overpriced book, and website called *Before They Pass Away* (Nelson); the project received a rich array of comeuppance from Indigenous peoples and their allies for its copious deployment of the trope of the "dying or disappearing Indigene" (Survival International).

Most narratives of the first-generation Sámi immigrants find expression in oral tradition within families and local communities. Stories are also increasingly shared in online communities on social media; as stated above, the importance of social media in the ongoing development of Sámi American subjectivities and communities cannot be understated and form part of the rationale for a transmedial web-based project that will reach multiple communities in Sápmi as well as Sámi North American and allied communities. Local oral historians and/or storytellers in family oral tradition have emerged as critically important sources in the shaping of the narratives in the study—all of them are engaged in "Sámi American social media."

With the exception of local oral history, there is a broad gap in knowledge about migration of Sámi people to North America in Scandinavian and Finnish immigration historical accounts; there is also a gap in knowledge on Sámi immigration and the presence of Sámi diaspora communities in North America in Indigenous studies more generally. However, in geographic areas with concentrations of descendants of Sámi immigrants in the community, the knowledge of Sámi immigration to these areas is fairly well-known, yet sparsely documented in scholarly publications. Some examples include the following areas: Poulsbo area of Washington on the Puget Sound; several communities in Minnesota including in the greater Duluth area and in the Twin Cities/Minneapolis and Saint Paul Metropolitan area; and in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan on the Keweenaw Peninsula or Copper County. Stories of ancestors and "the homeland" circulate in various communities and are often passed down inter-generationally and through networks. In addition, relatives and associates of Sámi emigrants especially from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, Kárášjohka/Karasjok, and Deatnu/Tana have a great deal of knowledge and genealogical data about their relatives, ancestors, and associates who moved to Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. In fact, at any given community event, one would find multiple individuals and families with stories to share about their relatives who moved to America, and most people are enthusiastic about sharing such stories. Thus, knowledge of Sámi immigration and contemporary identity finds significant expression in oral tradition and local oral history.

In addition to stories shared in local oral tradition, individuals and families from Sámi communities in Sápmi and the North American Sámi communities are in possession of copious genealogical records, historical documents, photographs, and recordings. The storytellers in this project, as well as others in the Sámi American and Sápmi communities, have generously shared material with me, owing to the deep interest in Sámi immigration in families and communities in Sápmi and an interest in Sámi history, identity and belonging in the Sámi American and allied communities. It was clear from the project's earliest inception that there was abundant and accessible material, yet few coherent narratives in scholarly or popular texts that have come out of this abundance of source materials. Thus, aims of this project are to fill a broad gap in narratives of

immigration from Sápmi in Sámi history and Scandinavian and Finnish immigration narratives, as well as to deliberate on the development of the emerging concept of diasporic indigeneity in a global order increasingly marked by mass migrations due to various geo-political and global socio-economic forces (see Doco; Tree 1–17; Peters et al.; Nyseth and Pedersen 131–52; Pedersen and Nyseth; Dankertsen "Samisk kompleksitet i Oslo" 216–36; Watson 268–84). This work also enters into a scholarly and community-based discussion of Indigenous-centered ethics and research methodologies with particular emphasis on Sámi-centered methodologies and interpretation of storytelling intersecting with photography and film/video in Sámi contexts.

To be clear, immigration in the case of the five Sámi immigrant women signified a break with community. Webs of relations or "community," "togetherness" and/or "oneness"—both literally and figuratively—are theorized through the Sámi concept of *oktavuohta,* which I deliberate on more extensively later in Article I. The re-connecting with community that familial and community storytelling manifests, thus, involves a necessary "suturing." If taken from within an epistemic frame more in keeping with Sámi women's craft, this suturing could rather be theorized through "weaving" fragments of a past and present into a coherent narrative. In this weaving process, descendants of Sámi immigrants draw on multiple sources or referents including stories passed down to them in families, genealogical records, historical texts, photographs, and other material cultural items. This process, likewise, involved the role of memory in shaping stories of their ancestors' lives. Multiple textual and visual referents woven into their family narratives are continually incorporated, influence memory, and become fused into a familial and community oral tradition that is in-process. Here, "textual referents" could be understood as "written texts" as well as "textiles" in the sense of material culture, like elements of Sámi dress and textile handicrafts.

"Weaving," as I have interpreted and theorized in the study, can be symbolically or metaphorically understood with reference to an ancient Sámi craft practice called *rátnogođđin* (weaving on the weighted-warped loom). Weaving metaphors are in widespread use for stories and storytelling, especially in Indigenous contexts (Lutz *Approaches : Essays in Native North American Studies and Literatures* 224–25; Driskill 331–34; Archibald 2), I use the *rátnogođđin* metaphor in this project as a Sámi-centered representation of the manner in which the narratives, despite rupture and change, come together and take coherent form which also reveal women's agency, interconnectivity, and cultural continuity. *Rátnogođđin* described by Isaksen and Antonsen is an ancient women's craft of cultural value and of value in local barter and cash economies, thus reflecting particular forms of agency (Isaksen et al.). (I return to my approach to agency and the *rátnogođđin* metaphor in "Article I"). A craft metaphor is especially relevant for this study, a study of Sámi immigrant women who brought their local handicraft traditions and knowledge to North America; undoubtedly, like immigrant women from other cultures, Sámi women used their gender-specific knowledge in transformed or innovative ways in their new environments.

6 Approaches to Theorizing Oral History, Oral Tradition, and Storytelling

I use the concepts of oral history, oral tradition, and storytelling in this project on a continuum or as a set of practices or modes of oral communication that relay personal experiences, multiple knowledges, and beliefs. Oral history, in a more general sense, refers primarily to shared experiences within the diasporic Sámi communities. In the case of Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, the two women with no known living direct descendants, I have primarily relied on written records alongside stories shared in local oral tradition from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino. In many ways, my approach to "oral tradition" and "oral history" aligns with Cruikshank's definition in: "Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues":

> Broadly speaking, oral tradition (like history or anthropology) can be viewed as a coherent, open-ended system for constructing and transmitting knowledge. Ideas about what constitutes legitimate evidence may differ in oral tradition and scholarly investigation […]
>
> Orally narrated accounts about the past explicitly embrace subjective experience. Once considered a limitation, this is now being recognized as oral history's primary strengths: facts enmeshed in the stories of a lifetime provide a number of insights about how an understanding of the past is constructed, processed, and integrated into one's life. […] (Cruikshank 408)

Cruikshank also reflects two approaches to analysis of oral history, both approaches are important in this project; one approach addresses power relations and social history, and another interprets the ways "such narrative forms influence and anchor memory" (408). The analysis may also address the in-process, flexible, and unfolding nature of stories told in diasporic oral tradition. In the context of the lives of the Sámi immigrant women or grandmothers in this project, oral tradition was manifested intergenerationally in families, but also within communities—that is, stories about Sámi ancestors, beliefs, and knowledge that had been shared in families would make their way into Sámi immigrant networks, effectively becoming one of the threads of the fabric that sustains webs of relations. Another definition that is germane to my approach to storytelling in this study is Hartmut Lutz's treatment of oral tradition and its connection to modern Native American literature:

> Much of the oral tradition is didactic in character, telling people about their origin (past), about their (present) position within the world and what their identity is relative to others, allowing them to continue (future). Thus, past, present and future, mythic time, historical time and individual experiences are included, to strengthen tribal identity. (Lutz *Approaches : Essays in Native North American Studies and Literatures* 198)

While oral tradition in Sápmi shares characteristics with Lutz's description above, crucial to understanding oral tradition in Sámi American communities is that one must

take account of the repressed indigeneity of the first-generation immigrants. At least three of the women were not explicitly vocal about their Sámi background, yet they still transferred knowledge to their descendants. Cultural knowledge is often embedded in stories, that is, encoded in the stories are worldviews, values, and behavioral norms and beliefs. Family stories, or the action of storytelling, is intended to teach; storytelling is a tool for passing on practical knowledge, as well transferring deep cultural codes which are rarely, if ever, explicitly named. The listener processes the story, interprets, and participates and the whole process is reciprocal or dialogic:

> The action of using storytelling in and of itself as a pedagogical tool is important. It is not a direct instruction, but it cultivates the way that people exist in relationship to knowledge and belief. It empowers people as individuals to decide what they think themselves—a sort of democratization of interpretation, which is related to fundamental principles underlying Indigenous and postcolonial scholarship (Timothy Frandy "Personal Communication").

In Sámi literary scholar Vuokko Hirvonen's study on Sámi women's "path to authorship," with specific reference to the oral tradition, she writes:

> Just like other peoples who have learned to write only during the last few generations, the Sámi, too, have kept and passed down their knowledge orally from generation to generation. The narrative tradition is a living tradition which has influenced, and still influences, the works of authors/…/Today's Sámi poetry, in turn, is very much based on the tradition of yoiking. However, the influence of the oral tradition is most visible in the reminiscence literature of the Sámi. (Hirvonen and Anttonen 58)

Imbued in the in-process nature of diasporic oral tradition are the ways in which individuals from disparate religious, political, or regional backgrounds collectively draw on memories and stories in an effort to make sense of the colonial experiences of their ancestors. I cannot count the number of times that the descendants of Sámi immigrants (as well as many people in Sápmi) have rhetorically posed questions in community gatherings with others: Why didn't they tell us (they are/were Sámi)? What happened over there (in Sápmi)? What does this family story mean? In the process of drawing on memory and sharing stories, they collectively seek to make sense of an obscured past.

Oral tradition and knowledge transferred orally does not necessarily follow a linear pattern of transmission in storytelling in Sámi America, rather, stories circulate in communities and webs of relations. A few examples of stories that circulate in the diaspora Sámi community include the following: stories about ancestors yoiking in the presence of their children and grandchildren; stories about the underground people—*gufihttarat*—(Abbott); stories about the northern lights (Kline); and stories about inter-generational and cross-Atlantic curses and "karmic revenge" (Sundin). Cultural continuity and transmission of Sámi knowledge from first generation immigrants to their descendants was often sporadic, obscured, variable, and context-dependent. In families and in local communities, Sámi beliefs and knowledge were passed down, but may not

have been called "a Sámi thing." This is especially the case in the narratives of Berith/Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter, Karen Marie Nilsdatter and Albertine Josephine Svendsen (Johnson), all of whom had knowledge of healing arts, handicrafts, and medicinal herbal remedies. Albertine also told stories about the "underground people"— *gufihttarat)*— (see Helander-Renvall *Silde : Sami Mythic Texts and Stories;* Rasmussen) to her descendants; in Bertha's East Lake Lillian community in western Minnesota, there are several stories in local oral tradition that reveal Sámi ontologies; and Karen Marie harvested and used medicinal plants for healing, knowledge she almost certainly learned from women in her childhood in Aarborte/Hattfjelldal.

Not unlike other diasporic or Indigenous peoples, Sámi Americans often meet fragmented and confusing histories that often led to people "seeking" to understand better the source of these historical complexities. Descendants with an interest in their family narratives, like the descendant collaborators for this project, must reconcile with a number of challenging discourses, including the discourses of the European nation-state—in this case, Norway—and with absolutist ethnic discourses foundationally expressed through the discourses of race and nation (Hall *New Ethnicities* 223–27; Anderson). As a result, those seeking an understanding of their obscured family narratives, engage in a process of "suturing" the "ruptures" of a history effected by both colonialism, which in the case of the five women takes the direct form of the Norwegianization policy, and immigration which signals a break with community (Hall "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 233–46). Drawing on memory and sharing stories in community with others, while seeking to suture the ruptures of colonial history, becomes a mode and a method of decolonization. In addition to decolonizing their own ancestors' histories, many descendants of Sámi immigrants are often vocal and engaged political allies and accomplices of Indigenous peoples on whose lands their ancestors settled, in the case study, this especially includes the Dakota Oyate and Anishinaabe/Ojibwa in Minnesota.

7 Sámi Women as Agents of History

> The historical limitations placed on women have more often than not been a starting point rather than the final statement about women's lives. Women living under all manner of conditions and in all times have created meaning, purpose, beauty and dignity in their lives despite the limitations placed upon them by the larger society.
>
> – Carol Hymowitz and Michaele Weissman, 1977

In one of few studies that have focused attention on the everyday lives of Sámi women from local communities from the Norwegian and Finnish sides of Sápmi, Liv Inger Somby sought to "understand and learn more about our oral traditions, about the past that mobilizes the present time and gives us the reflection about the future generations in Sápmi" (Somby I). She sought to investigate why the lives of everyday women in Sápmi have been "hidden" as legitimate stories for understanding the Sámi people's history and future. Her main sources were the stories told by twenty-seven Sámi women about their lives, all of whom were born between 1895– 1930: "Usually the oral tradition is rich among the Sámi people, there are many good storytellers" (II). Ultimately, her study poses the question: What knowledge do we lose when half of the population is under-represented and at times silenced in the history of a people?

My aims for focusing attention on the lives of five Sámi immigrant women share many of the same motivations as Somby's study. I recognize the depth and breadth of knowledge in familial and community oral tradition, especially passed down through generations of women to their descendants. Local women's knowledge was often crucial to survival, and storytelling was integral to the maintenance and regeneration of kinship ties. Further, the five Sámi women in the study were not passive subjects in historical events – they were, rather, active agents of history, shaping their own lives and destinies and the lives and destinies of their families. Immigrant women have been and continue to be instrumental in the development and maintenance of communal life. The stories of the five Sámi immigrant women in this study complicate popular misperceptions of Indigenous peoples, as well as popular perceptions of womanhood in late Victorian America (Marsh). By sharing the stories of these five women, the collaborators and I seek to create a space for the voices of immigrant women whose lives have often been relegated to the "unremarkable" in earlier immigration history. In accounts from the early twentieth century, women did not often "make recorded history" in America and might have made headlines when they violated gender norms or demanded space and voice in the public sphere (Smith-Rosenberg 20). There is a critical need for women's historical narratives to be addressed on a par with men's, and a need for Sámi immigrant narratives to be addressed on a par with other immigrant groups, in particular, narratives from the majority cultures of Scandinavia and Finland.

The narratives of immigrant women from Indigenous communities deserve special attention because of the intersectional experiences of oppression as women, as an Indigenous people, and as immigrants; in the case of the women in this study, socio-

economic class undoubtedly intersected with other forms of oppression at various times in their lives. The historical narratives of Sámi immigrant women can shed light on the experiences of contemporary Indigenous women who break free from particular conditions as Indigenous women in settler states and migrate to new areas or countries, where they often encounter profound imbalances of power. The ways these women not only survive, but thrive, in their new homes, oftentimes reveal resilience and creativity despite socio-economic, cultural and linguistic challenges. Thus, an interdisciplinary approach, situated in an Indigenous-centered epistemological framework and methodology alongside theorizing through a gendered lens, is warranted. This approach will help shed light on the unique experiences of Sámi immigrant women who left a gender system characterized by complementarity in communities in Norwegian Sápmi and entered a vastly different gender system in America on the tail end of the Victorian Era imbued with profound imbalances of systemic and institutional power (Smith-Rosenberg 11–52). With regard to gender complementarity and women's agency in traditional Sámi society, Kuokkanen wrote:

> Like women in many other indigenous and traditional societies in the world, women in Sámi society historically were regarded as equal to men, a dynamic characterized by a symmetrical complementarity of domains, roles, and tasks (Bäckman 1982). As a result, Sámi women were independent and possessed power and control over certain domains. Often these spheres were domestic and private, but in some cases, they were also economic. Traditionally, reindeer-herding women in particular were often in charge of their family economies (Solem [1933] 1970; Sámi Instituhtta 1979; Bäckman 1982). (Kuokkanen "Indigenous Women in Traditional Economies: The Case of Sámi Reindeer Herding" 3)

Many working-class immigrant women, including Sámi immigrant women, were socially, politically, and culturally positioned in ways that required creatively maneuvering the American gender system—discursively, economically, and administratively. According to Annelise Orleck, the views that women in the Victorian Era, whether wage-earning or domestic-laboring or rural farm-laboring, were somehow passive objects of history was a myth propagated by writers of male-centric history (Orleck 250– 69). Contemporary women's history scholars have demonstrated women's historical agency through linkages or continuities in domestic work, wage-earning work, labor organizing, religious organizations, and rural and urban local communities in the early twentieth century. The women in the study manifested such linkages in their families and communities. However, what sets the women in the study apart from their contemporaries is that their narratives also reveal subtle manifestations of Sámi cultural continuity and the adaptation of local Sámi knowledge or women's knowledge(s) in their lives and livelihoods in America, which for some of them, was elemental to their survival. In a sense, the stories of Sámi immigrant women reflect "gender, class, and ethnicity as continually constructing one another, as dynamic forces shaping social relationships rather than as static identities" (261).

At least two of the women—Karen Marie Nilsdatter and Albertine Josephine Svendsen—assumed the formal position of head of household. Assuming the role of

head of household likely did not seem very remarkable to the five women in the study, as it was fairly common in Sápmi. In coastal communities, for example, men could be away from the local settlements for long periods of time while they were fishing. It was ultimately women who had the primary responsibility for animal husbandry and harvesting on the subsistence farms. The women would also collectively raise the next generation of children. In both reindeer herding and fishing and subsistence farming families in Sápmi, women were responsible for the household economy, there was an old adage that whatever cash the husband of the household earned, he turned it over to the wife of the household. Oftentimes women brought cash into household economies from crafting and sewing highly lucrative goods, women were often able to bring more cash into the household economy than their male counterparts. After settling in America, Albertine Josephine Svendsen (Johnson) formed part of the working class in Duluth, Minnesota; they both worked in factories or as laborers and they both lived in west Duluth, where the vast majority of the people were immigrant factory workers and laborers. Working class women in early twentieth century America—like Albertine Josephine Svendsen—had greater personal autonomy over their own lives than many of their white, Anglo-American, middle and upper-middle class contemporaries.

Another important dimension of the historical period when the five women migrated, was that the discourses of eugenics often culminated in xenophobia toward "exotic" immigrants, and immigration policies often echoed these sentiments (see Jones 3373–76). Race and racialization determined by color and other physical racialized markers of difference play out in some of the narratives, both in historical records and in stories told by their descendants. Yet, it goes without saying that most of the women would have been considered "white" in the racial-regime in America, significantly codified and configured by skin color. The experience of having been racialized in Norway based on culture and other socially ascribed physical differences—sometimes color-based, but not always—makes for a confounding and ambivalent positioning in the racial order in America.

In addition to the main themes in the research question, the stories in the study merit additional interpretative attention to the following questions framed within a gendered lens: In what ways do stories of Sámi immigrant women diverge from the popular perceptions of linear cultural continuity in immigration and Indigenous discourses? Further, in what particular ways is Sámi cultural continuity manifested in the lives of descendants? Are there particular forms of Sámi-centered women's agency that are revealed in the narratives of Sámi immigrant women? I have endeavored to view agency through an intersection of both feminist and indigenist theoretical frameworks. MJ Maynes, Jennifer Pierce, and Barbara Laslett, in a "cross-disciplinary examination of analysis of personal narratives" theorize the following with regard to agency, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity in narrative research:

> Personal narrative analysis, we argue, demonstrates that human agency and individual social action is best understood in connection with the construction of selfhood in and through historically specific social relationships and institutions. Second, these analyses emphasize the narrative

> dimensions of selfhood; that is, well-crafted personal narrative analyses not only reveal the dynamics of agency in practice but also can document its construction through culturally embedded narrative forms that, over an individual's life, impose their own logics and thus also shape both life stories and lives. (Maynes 2)

In addition, they seek to analyze the "subjective and intersubjective character of analysis of personal narratives" (3). Approaches to agency and subjectivity in an Indigenous methodological framework could consider an interpretation of the manifestation of Vizenor's concept of *survivance* in the narratives of the five Sámi women in this case study. *Survivance* is largely understood to be mean survival plus resistance, refusing to be a victim, and, especially apt for the narratives, "a quality and condition of remaining imaginative under domination and getting on with things" (Utne Reader). Another approach to analysis of claiming and exercising agency within Sámi epistemological frameworks might consider the concept of *birgengoansttat*—the art of coping—theorized in Lill-Tove Fredriksen's study *Depicting a Sámi society between tradition and modernization: The strategies of coping in Jovnna-Ánde Vest's trilogy Árbbolaccat (...mun boađán sin maŋis ja joatkkán guhkkelebbui... Birgengoansttat Jovnna-Ánde Vesta románatrilogiijas Árbbolaččat*). Liv-Inger Somby in her study on the lives of Sámi women, discussed above, also theorized that silenced histories also reveal *birgen* and *birgehallat* which Somby defines as "to manage life" and "to manage work, life, people, and money" respectively (Somby 1–3).

Manifestations of continuity and adaption included a reliance on or continued use of the skills the five women had acquired as girls and young women in Sápmi, like sewing, weaving, knitting, harvesting of herbs and roots for medicine, as well as knowledge of other healing arts. These skills and continuities enabled some of them to persevere in their new homes, especially economically, but perhaps also socially and culturally. That is, they did not leave everything behind, they were not "lost" and facing a blank slate of meaning, rather, like most immigrants, they brought their cultural knowledge and sense of belonging with them and creatively wove together new tapestries of meaning and continuities.

8 Diasporic Indigeneity in Sámi American Contexts

In earlier research (Jensen "We Stopped Forgetting : Diaspora Consciousness in the Narratives of Five Sami Americans" 22–36) and drawing on diaspora theories developed by Steven Vertovec (Vertovec 277–99), James Clifford (Clifford 244–78), and Stuart Hall (Hall "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 233–46), I theorized diasporic expressions of belonging in third-generation Sámi Americans as a form of consciousness. Vertovec laid out three forms of diaspora that are operative in the field of Diaspora Studies: diaspora as social form, diaspora as mode of cultural production, and diaspora as a type of consciousness. Derived from the Jewish experience, diaspora as social form is the "classic form" of "Diaspora" (with a capital "D") with the most important characteristics being forced exile, maintenance of a visible group identity, and institutional, political, and economic attachments to "home." Diaspora as mode of cultural production reflects the worldwide flow of cultural meaning-making in media, film, literature, and visual art in hybridized forms. Diaspora as a form of consciousness reflects "a state of mind and hybrid identity" (qtd in Jensen) and is reminiscent of Paul Gilroy's concept of "double consciousness" (Gilroy). In the Sámi American context, "building community" is often more about the historical connection "there" (in Sápmi), than similarities "here" (in North America) (Jensen "We Stopped Forgetting : Diaspora Consciousness in the Narratives of Five Sami Americans" 25).

Clifford theorizes that "diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension" that is, diaspora "has been consisted negatively by experiences of discrimination and exclusion and positively with historical heritage, contemporary cultural, or political forces" (Clifford 253). In a discussion of the apparent tension between "diasporic" and "tribal" communities, he concludes that they "share a zone of relational contrast, including similarity and entangled difference" (254), illuminated in the following:

> Tribal cultures are not diasporas; their sense of rootedness in the land is precisely what diaspora peoples have lost. Like diaspora's other defining border with hegemonic nationalism, the opposition is a zone of relational contrast, including similarity and entangled difference/…/ (253)
>
> 'Tribal' predicaments, in certain historical circumstances, are diasporic. For example, inasmuch as diasporas are dispersed networks of peoples who share common historical experiences of dispossession, displacement, adaption, and so forth,/…/when it becomes important to assert the existence of a dispersed people, the language of diaspora comes into play, as a moment or dimension of tribal life/…/(254)

The category or condition "diasporic indigeneity" captures the contemporary experience of living the "zone of relational contrast" described by Clifford. Anthropologists in the last decade have coined diasporic indigeneity to describe expressions of identity in contemporary Indigenous migration within continuous geographic areas, particularly with regard to migration from rural to urban areas. In a study of Maya migration to

Massachusetts and their cultural engagement and political solidarity with the locally Indigenous people, the Wampanoag, Erich Fox Tree defines diasporic indigeneity as the following:

> Diasporic indigeneity is an emergent mode of identity characterized by immigrants claiming indigenous status in their new places(s) of residence, based on their status as colonized indigenes in the place (s) where they or their ancestors lived formerly, and a corresponding re-imagining of their homeland as geographic super-territory that includes both places/…/While diasporic indigeneity does not reverse colonialism, it nonetheless does represent a small-but-growing popular challenge to the colonialist and nationalist mythology, morality, and political-economic domination experienced by all Native peoples across the Americas. (Tree 1)

An important dimension of the conditions from which Fox Tree theorizes is the historical and contemporary interconnectedness of Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas; that is, he conceptualizes diasporic indigeneity from a continent where many hundreds of distinct Indigenous peoples have maintained ties despite arbitrary nation-state borders. In a similar study of the urbanization of the Indigenous Ainu people of Japan, Mark K. Watson contests the representations of Indigenous peoples as "rooted and sedentary" which makes the visible presence of Indigenous peoples in urban areas appear "strange and out of place" (Watson 268). In contrast to Fox Tree's study based in the Americas, Watson theorized and conceptualizes from within the country where the Ainu are the only Indigenous people. The discourses of belonging are defined and shaped by the dichotomizing rhetoric of "rural" and "urban," which he argues "essentializes a false distinction between the hypermobility of modern life and the timeless, local insularity of Indigenous societies," and critically important for my case study, "such totalizing ideas, however, trivialize the affective ties to place from those living elsewhere in diaspora, through memory, temporary visits, and family" (Watson 271–2). Both Watson and Tree point to the articulation of Indigenous identity in diaspora in creative expression. Watson also emphasizes the dynamics in the relationship of the Ainu and the Japanese majority, and Tree stresses the distinction of the Maya as "immigrant Indigenous" and the Wampanoag as "locally Indigenous."

The Sámi American experience shares some basic features with Indigenous identity as described by Tree and Watson. However, it is important in this regard to make abundantly clear that Sámi migration to North America requires a long-term historical view that points to how the phenomenon of Sámi immigration in one respect manifests a striking inverse of the settler/native divide. Sámi immigrants may have left their homelands at a time of increasing pressure from Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian settlement in Sámi areas and during a period of colonial duress, but when Sámi people arrived in North America, they, as a matter of course, assumed the role of the settler. Critically important to emphasize, the collaborators in this study do not make claim to "indigenous status in their new places(s) of residence, based on their status as colonized indigenes in the place(s) where they or their ancestors lived formerly" (Tree 1) in the way that Tree attributes to the Maya in Wampanoag lands. However, Sámi Americans could be said to maintain "affective ties to place from those living elsewhere in diaspora,

through memory, temporary visits, and family" (Watson 271), in this case, that place or homeland is Sápmi. This sentiment is perhaps reflected in the popularity among Sámi Americans of the poem "Circle of Life" by Nils Aslak Valkeapää, especially the lines "My home is in my heart, it travels with me" (Valkeapää 119–25).

Of course, in a like manner with the meeting of Indigenous peoples and settlers the world over, there were successful unions between majority culture and Sámi families; thus, many Sámi people migrated to North America together with their Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish spouses or they were already from multi-cultural and multi-lingual families. The settler/native divide, like any dichotomy, can be misleading as it has the potential to obscure the multiplicity of cultural belonging that has taken shape over many generations in Northern Scandinavia and Finland, as well as in North America. Two of the grandchild narrators are descended from multicultural unions, and the vast majority of North Americans with Sámi ancestors come from culturally mixed backgrounds. However, theorizing diasporic indigeneity in the Sámi American context must take account of the particular dynamics at play when members of an Indigenous people migrate and, for all intents and purposes, become settlers on other Indigenous peoples' sovereign territories. Many contemporary Sámi Americans are acutely aware of this tension and express a strong sense of solidarity with Indigenous peoples of North America, as noted above, both as allies and accomplices. For some Sámi Americans, part of an expression of their Sámi identity in diasporic indigeneity is building community with and standing in solidarity with locally Indigenous peoples. It is almost a given that in local and global Indigenous movements for sovereignty, there will inevitably be Sámi American allies on the front lines (Jensen 'Kurt Seaberg" 76–81). Recent expressions of this were Sámi Americans' visible and vocal activism at Standing Rock (Bonogofsky).

To be abundantly clear, Sámi Americans are not in "a Diaspora," in the classic sense of the term attributed to groups forcibly de-territorialized or forcibly deported (Braziel and Mannur 1–22) nor can they obviously make claim to Indigenous status in North America in the ways that contemporary Indigenous peoples from Central and South America have claimed, as described by Fox Tree above. Diasporic indigeneity in "Sámi America" is rather an expression of identity that disrupts the totalizing colonial discourses described by Hall (Hall *New Ethnicities* 223–27) and redresses assimilationist policies, and European nationalism—all of which effectively silenced Indigenous identity, sometimes in Sápmi, but significantly also in America (Jensen "We Stopped Forgetting : Stories from Sámi Americans"). It is hardly surprising that in the absence of a discursive framework for conceptualizing Indigenous identity and belonging in a historical diasporic condition, Sámi Americans would find common cause with both Indigenous peoples of North America and some immigrant populations who, like Sámi people, were regarded as "Europe's Others" during the rise of nineteenth and early twentieth century European nationalism (see Anderson). While the project is developed within an Indigenous-centered research paradigm, Diaspora Studies, in particular narratives from Jewish Americans and their corresponding memory projects, have been particularly fruitful for interpreting the intersection of photography and life narratives of Sámi immigrant women in North America, including in the work of Marianne Hirsch on postmemory (Hirsch "Postmemory.net"; Hirsch *The Familial Gaze;* Hirsch *Family Frames:*

Photograhy, Narrative, and Postmemory) and Nancy Miller on photography in silenced family narratives (Miller 1–29).

Inspired by Fox Tree and Watson above, as well as Clifford's formulations of "Diaspora belonging" as formulated by the dialogic of "loss and hope," I theorize diasporic indigeneity in historical and contemporary Sámi America as a dialogic of "consciousness" and "condition"; that is, Sámi Americans express a consciousness of Sámi belonging flowing from a homeland called Sápmi, while living in a permanent diasporic condition. This dialogic is significantly expressed in oral tradition. Importantly, the claim of living in a diasporic condition is only tenable when it reflects a consciousness of Sápmi as "homeland"—this consciousness signifies a spatial and temporal divergence from totalizing discourses of the European nation-state. In other words, claiming diasporic status as a majority culture immigrant, with an identity that aligns with the nation-state of one's birth or descent (Norway/Norwegian) would be tenuous at best, if not outright incoherent.

9 Life Narrative Across Media

The contemporary practice of producing historical and personal narratives across media is gaining ground (Ryan 1–40; Herman 47–75; Alber and Hansen 1–14). Framing historical narratives of the five Sámi grandmothers across media asserts that their stories merit—or even demand—ways of telling that engage multiple audiences across a spectrum of ages, cultures, and locations, and across various media. Through narrative paradigms co-created with the research partners or collaborators, Sámi Americans can better understand their family stories in context, their own experiences, and come to terms with the complexities of their grandparents' silencing of Sámi identity.

The inspiration for the co-production of transmedial life narratives and a documentary book project derived from my engagement with the Sámi American community. In connection with my previous research on narratives of third generation Sámi immigrants, and in an effort to uphold my responsibility to "give back" to communities involved in co-production of knowledge (L. T. Smith 162; Kovach *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* 45), I came into contact with multiple audiences in various communities where there was also a significant presence of Sámi Americans. It was not unusual at these events for people to come with photographs of their grandparents and in interaction with others, share their family stories while seeking visual clues in the photographs for Sámi identity or belonging. There was often a seamlessness in these interactions—people who had just met seemed to effortlessly chat about the complexities of Sámi identity in America. In breaking with the protective silence of previous generations, they began a process of healing the ruptures of historical assimilationist policies by providing spaces for the representation of their grandparents' life stories.

Afterward, I realized that perhaps I had not recognized this as remarkable, because as a second-generation Sámi American myself, I had rather taken it for granted that Sámi people tell stories about their ancestors. I had grown up hearing stories about my father's home in Finnmark Province/Sápmi, and oftentimes he told us detailed stories while we were looking at family photographs. Thus, historical photographs in my own life had prompted familial memory (Hirsch *Family Frames: Photograhy, Narrative, and Postmemory* 6–7). Also, I came to realize that in descendants' longing to understand the silences and confounding tropes in their families' narratives, they had collected copious public and immigration records, photographs, letters, books, and other material cultural items. Each item seemed to represent its own story-thread, and when the stories were woven together, they would articulate a (sometimes-silenced) historical narrative of their grandparents' lives before and after immigration; the process of weaving fragments of meaning into a coherent story or narrative is also highly interpretive and intersubjective (Maynes 95–125).

In the process of shaping, or collaboratively producing (weaving), life-narratives of Sámi immigrant women together with their American descendants, I have come to understand that photographs and other material culture items have been integral to defining Sámi American "narrative spaces" (Hughes and Noble 4–8). Oral tradition is

thus manifested in families and communities and could be argued to constitute the fabric of diasporic indigeneity in the Sámi American context. Oral tradition reflects intangible cultural continuity, but it is often strongly associated or intersects with tangible material cultural items in a family. Included in this are immigrant chests, clothing, jewelry, Bibles and other books, and photography. Material culture are mnemonic devices that prompt stories which bind both the items and their owners to places, belonging, knowledge, and time (Lutz *Phd Seminar*).

Through many years of engagement with local people in Sápmi and Sámi American communities, it has become clear that historical photographs are important critical sites of narrative production (storytelling) and raise critical questions around Sámi and Indigenous identity. Photographs have narrativity and intersect with oral tradition and collaborative life-narrative production; akin to intertextuality, Hughes and Noble interpret the intersection of photography and narrative as "phototextualities" (Hughes and Noble 1–6). Further, in multiple fields, film and video are utilized as a methodological and pedagogical tool, as well as for co-sharing of co-produced knowledge with Indigenous communities in collaborative projects, for example in the project "Wiigwaasi – Jiimaan – These Canoes Carry Culture," a collaborative project with the Lac du Flambeau Ojibwa tribe and the University of Washington, Madison (see Cederström).

Further, using film as a method, rather than only a voice recording, has meta-textual value, that is, body language, performative oral patterns (i.e., use of silence, vocal inflection) simply do not appear in texts and are limited in a voice recording. Filming conversations enabled me to better understand storied accounts in relational contexts by interacting with them using as many senses as possible.

The method of both recording and publishing stories through film and video is especially valuable in providing a space for the voices of marginalized people(s) to come through. Film or video intersecting with research that are directly published online have the potential to provide a medium or frame for self-representation for Indigenous peoples to tell about their own lives and cultures, on their own terms, unmediated and unfiltered by various editorial, production, funding, or commercial interests. To that end, many of the research conversations for this project, and especially storytelling intersecting with photographs, will likely form important material for a future transmedial project. While the filming was rudimentary, some of the material, or "media," is quality enough for open viewing on an online platform. In keeping with the stated aims of sharing co-produced knowledge with communities in locally meaningful ways, the online platform and documentary book project will continue to take shape collaboratively with the descendants of the immigrant women. Further, in order to reach the multiple communities that continue to contribute to the project, I will seek funding to ensure that the stories are accessible in multiple languages, namely English, Sámi, and Norwegian.

10 Spatial-temporal-narrative framework

My HOME IS IN MY HEART
it migrates with me
*
Somewhere deep within me
I can hear it
a voice calling
and the blood's yoik I hear
In the depths
From the dawn of life
to the dusk of life

All of 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
and I carry it in my heart

– Nils-Aslak Valkepää, 1997

As an analytical tool for interpretation of the life narratives, I have developed a *temporal-spatial-narrative framework*. Intepretation using the framework maintains that contemporary stories generated in diaspora connect the Sámi immigrant women to places in America and to places in Sápmi; further, the stories shared in oral tradition bind an oftentimes silenced or obscured past with a spoken, meaningful present. Ultimately, this interpretive framework arose from within the research conversations and from analysis of the narratives as a corpus. Several common features emerged across the stories told in oral tradition, which reflected one of several central overarching questions: What did it mean to be Sámi immigrant women from Norwegian Sápmi, leaving Sámi places, and arriving and settling in American places in the early twentieth century? That is, the women's stories participate in a broader global discussion on early twentieth century travel, location, belonging, and meaning-making when humans migrate from a particular temporality and spatiality and move into another, oftentimes disparate, temporality and spatiality. The thematic stories arising from these larger concerns form critical aspects of the narratives (Sassen 215–32).

Several Indigenous studies scholarly and literary works inspired honing my approach, including the following: Keith H. Basso's 2001 study *Wisdom sits in Places; Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*; the 1999 anthology *Stories Migrating*

Home: A Collection of Anishinaabe Prose edited by Kimberly M. Blaeser; Hartmut Lutz's 2015 essay *For Indigenes "the land is deep in time," but for Immigrants "the language has no Mother"* (121–141). Stories and languages *arise from places*, thus, narratives and the languages that sustain them are intersubjective with the land. Critically, these three works also address movement, migration, and rootedness, both figuratively and literally. This study is invested in lands/spaces/locations as inseparable from language/stories; one could argue that I seek to reflect relational or foundational ontologies of "storied places." Yet "storied places" also travel with their subjects, akin to the poetic lines by Nils Aslak Valkeapää/Áiloháš, cited above: "My home is in my heart, it travels with me" (Valkeapää 119–26).

Further, the narratives reside within temporalities framed within visions of Norwegianization (colonial time) and the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852 (colonial time of intense duress); the spatial ground is "Sápmi," rather than "Norway"—importantly, the distinction did not emerge as a polarity, but rather as part of a process of reconnecting to Sámi heritage. That is, in oral tradition, the stories are framed outside of nation-state spatial and temporal ontologies; *crucially*, in the case of the five narratives, Sámi American conceptualizations of "history" and "place" exist, unapologetically, outside of hegemonic temporal and spatial nation-state (see also Rydving). The grandchildren's stories interpreted on this alternative *temporal-spatial-narrative framework*, reflect an insistence on their ancestors' belonging to Sámi places, even when some of the places are contemporaneously viewed as "colonized," "totally assimilated," or "Norwegianized." Their stories also situate their ancestors' narratives within temporalities outside of standard or dominant nation-state historiographies. In the case of the five narratives, temporalities are framed within the long-term consequences of the Norwegianization policy and the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852 in their ancestors' lives, both before and after migration. Notably absent from their storied accounts, were references to Norwegian independence from Denmark and later Sweden, or references to the Vikings or the Viking Age. The storytellers were not necessarily deliberately formulating a "counter-narrative" to nation-state logics, rather, they speak from a position of "a break" from the continued Norwegianization policy that their grandmothers had experienced before migration, and which their relatives continued to endure well into the twentieth century.

11 Approach to Indigenous Studies in the Project

This research is situated within interdisciplinary Indigenous studies; for the purposes of this project, I view and engage with Indigenous studies as a broad discipline, encompassing the integrated study of Indigenous knowledge traditions and philosophies, the study of particular ways of life and expression, and Indigenous-centered ethical, epistemological, ontological, and methodological frameworks. Further, the project focuses on the ways in which all of these concerns come through in *narrative tradition*. Like many fields of study—including postmodernism, feminist studies, critical studies, and postcolonialism—my view and approach to Indigenous studies is in keeping with prevailing Indigenous and allied scholarship in the field; this is an approach that is unapologetic about skepticism toward some of the premises of western academic discourse and scientific tradition, while at the same time seeking to offer viable, Indigenous-centered alternatives (G. H. Smith see; L. T. Smith; Kovach *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts;* Kovach "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research" 40–48; A. C. Wilson 69–87; S. Wilson *Using Indigenist Research to Shape Our Future;* S. Wilson *Research Is Ceremony : Indigenous Research Methods;* Tuck and Yang 1–40; Frandy and Cederström; Deloria; Kuokkanen *Reshaping the University : Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift;* Nakata).

In Indigenous studies scholarship aligned with Indigenous paradigms, I participate in research using methodologies reminiscent of Scott Lauria Morgensen's succinct description in *Destabilizing the Settler Academy: The Decolonial Effects of Indigenous Methodologies*:

> The academy forms within settler societies an apparatus of colonization. Indigenous researchers critically engage its colonial power by practicing Indigenous methodologies: an act that also implicates non-Indigenous people in challenging the settler academy. Indigenous methodologies do not merely model Indigenous research. By exposing normative knowledge production as being not only non-Indigenous but colonial, they denaturalize power within settler societies and ground knowledge production in decolonization. An activist impetus thus informs Indigenous methodologies, yet "activism" typically fails to invoke their full implications. Whereas "activism" in a settler society may invest social justice in state rule, decolonization anticipates that rule's end. (Morgensen 805)

Indigenous studies, as I undertake it here and in keeping with the scholarly works I rely on, seeks to reflect the nature of Indigenous epistemic traditions in narrative traditions. That is, it is important to note from the beginning that in an Indigenous context, knowledge, systems of ethics, ways of life, and all forms of cultural expression generally do not occupy separate spheres but are continuous and form a relational framework that resists strict boundaries. While my work resides comfortably in the humanities, or Liberal Arts in North America, my approach is also necessarily interdisciplinary. I seek to begin my inquiry toward co-production of knowledge foundationally within stories

in families and communities, which is secondary to an inquiry based within traditional academic disciplines. I also do not foreclose allied scholarship or non-Indigenous contributions to understanding lives and the interpretation of Indigenous stories (Lutz "For Indigenes "the Land Is Deep in Time," but for Immigrants "the Language Has No Mother"; DuBois "Folklore, Boundaries and Audience in the Pathfinder"; DuBois "The Same Nature as the Reindeer: Johan Turi's Portrayal of Sámi Knowledge"; Emberley; Castor "Reading Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony : Apocalyptic Vision or Ecological Re-Vision?"; Castor "Claiming Place in Wor(L)Ds: Linda Hogan's Solar Storms").

Indigenous studies that apply a decolonizing lens and praxis work in the interest of Indigenous peoples with a view to creating frames for the voices of Indigenous peoples to come through in research and writing. It recognizes inherent power imbalances on multiple levels of society, including the academy, reflected in the conviction that Indigenous knowledge has traditionally been undermined or disregarded in the western academy. I refer to the definition of "Indigenous epistemes" in keeping with Rauna Kuokkanen in *Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift*:

> Episteme is a fairly broad and flexible concept that covers aspects of epistemology, philosophy, cosmology, ontology, and religion, as well as various practices stemming from these, without being limited by them. Especially in many indigenous contexts, these dimensions are all inseparable and interconnected. (56–57)

When Indigenous studies scholarship takes Indigenous epistemes as foundational, it forms part of an intellectual emancipatory movement, equally important as other Indigenous claims to sovereignty. I also interpret postcolonial theory and texts as integral to Indigenous studies scholarship; I attribute some of my earliest exercises of "decolonizing the (my) mind" to "classic" postcolonial texts, for example Franz Fanon's 1952 book *Black Skins, White Masks*, Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism*, and Gayatri Spivak's 1995 article *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Fanon and Philcox; Said; Spivak 24–28). Postcolonial approaches to theorizing—when viewed in terms of a postcolonial condition temporally defined as "after conquest" with the goal of emancipation—reside on a continuum with Indigenous studies approaches to theorizing (Lutz *Phd Seminar*). An important contribution to the discourse of Indigenous issues in postcolonialism is Ato Quayson's *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process* (2000) where he posits postcolonialism as "a long *process* rather than a series of events" (Quayson 3).

However, I recognize the inherent tensions in drawing on secular and especially Marxist discourses in some postcolonial scholarship in Indigenous contexts where "Spirit" and "Reason"—as Deloria reminds us—reside comfortably within holism or relationality (Deloria). Another aspect of postcolonial discourse that leads to unease in Indigenous scholarship is the historical re-inscription of western-state logic by anti-colonial, nationalist movements for independence, that is, with arbitrary, geo-political borders on the land. The notion of "land ownership" and "tilling the soil"—advanced by the eighteenth century western outlook as the penultimate human condition before salvation

itself—set against (the myth of) "the Nomad" had disastrous consequences for Indigenous peoples (Bassett). Sovereignty over treaty lands in North America and sovereignty in the form of governance structures like *the Finnmark Act* and *Finnmark Estate* (Ravna) aside, the idea of land ownership and arbitrary borders in nation-state alignments has been antithetical to most Indigenous peoples' worldviews or ontologies. This is evident in the oft-cited adage by Indigenous peoples in the Americas and Nordic Countries: "we did not cross borders, borders crossed us."

Some Indigenous studies scholars have pointed to the idea that there is nothing "post" about living in "deep settler colonialism" for Indigenous peoples, which at face-value has currency in many Indigenous studies circles (Allen *Blood Narrative : Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts* 34). Most of the foundational anti-colonial texts—such as Fanon, Said, and Spivak—laid the foundations for the discourse of "decolonization" and "postcolonialism" theorized from within the conditions of independence movements. These discourses had a clear "after independence" and "after Empire" temporality; a country like Algeria is a germane example, where all of the European French colonialists departed *en masse*, while the French nationals that remained became Algerian nationals with allegiance to the new or post-independence state. Importantly, Indigenous studies scholars have pointed to how indigenism is the representation of contemporary expressions of survival while living under permanent conditions of colonial domination, while also pointing out that for Indigenous peoples, living in western settler states, there will never be a mass exodus "back to Europe" (Allen *Blood Narrative : Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts* 35–36). Most Indigenous studies scholars of late theorize from the position of "settler colonialism" as opposed to "extractive colonialism" (Shoemaker).

The adage that there is "nothing 'post' about postcolonialism in settler nations" has perhaps been in circulation since Ann McClintock's assertion from *The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term Postcolonialism*: "By what fiat of historical amnesia can the United States of America, in particular, qualify as 'post-colonial' – a term which can only be a monumental affront to the Native American peoples currently opposing the confetti triumphalism of 1992" (McClintock 87). Appreciation for *indigenism* signals a politics of action rather than reaction (G. H. Smith), a movement toward *indigenizing*, and scholarship that "centers the Indigenous" (Allen *Trans-Indigenous Reading Across*).

One of the most influential contributors to narratives of survival in the field of Indigenous studies is the Anishinaabe (Ojibwa) scholar, poet, novelist, editor, and critic Gerald Vizenor (mentioned several times above) and his powerful theoretical device(s) of *survivance* (and *continuance*)—that is, not just survival, but survival plus resistance. These theoretical devices—presented here from *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*, comprise foundational interpretive approaches to the narratives in the case study. One could argue that Vizenor is deliberately evasive in theorizing, perhaps to avoid capture into western epistemic tradition's narrow bounds:

> The nature of survivance is unmistakable in native stories, natural reason, remembrance, traditions, and customs and is clearly observable in narrative resistance and personal attributes, as in the native humanistic tease, vital irony, spirit, cast of mind, and moral courage. The character of survivance creates a sense of native presence over absence, nihility, and victimry/…/ (Vizenor 1)

> Native survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not mere reaction, however pertinent. Survivance is greater than the right of a survivable name. (85)

Indigenous peoples' storytelling has been fundamentally important in Indigenous societies for transmitting knowledge and teaching lessons. In contemporary society, contemporary Indigenous storytelling and stories of and by Indigenous people remain important locally, but also globally, for reflecting Indigenous peoples' modern realities. Many Indigenous storytellers have moved beyond "talking back" to the center from the margins, and are engaging in storytelling globally (Lutz *Approaches : Essays in Native North American Studies and Literatures* 9–10).

Social media, film, and literature have provided a medium for greater Indigenous visibility and audibility in the modern world. With the aid of social media platforms, broad-based international movements, such as "Idle No More" and "No DAPL" at Standing Rock, have been instrumental in shaping modern representations of Indigenous peoples' communities, continued struggles, and lives. However, the discourse of the "dying Indigene" persists in popular representations that are not unlike early twentieth century salvage ethnography; these modern salvage ethnographic discourses are met with modern counter-discourses in film and video works such as "We are still here" (Jannok and Sunna) and "We Shall Remain" (Zwonitzer and Rapley). The modern multi-media discourse of the "dying Indigene" was notably reflected in the project *Before They Pass Away* (Nelson), as noted earlier, a project that was met with robust comeuppance from multiple Indigenous peoples and their allies from every corner of the globe (Survival International). Despite the continued necessity of deploying such counter-discourses or reactive discourses, Indigenous studies scholars have also been at the forefront of shaping discourses that move beyond center-periphery and reactive discourses to discourses and theories of *survivance* and *continuance* (Vizenor 85; see also G. H. Smith).

Finally, to return to the discussion of tensions between some approaches to postcolonialism and some approaches to Indigenous studies, I take inspiration from the late I-Kiribati and African American scholar, Teresia Teaiwa in "The Ancestors We Get to Choose: White Influences I Won't Deny." In a discussion on her Pacific Island Studies program's deep engagement with Antonio Gramsci's early twentieth-century anti-fascist *Prison Notebooks* Teaiwa wrote:

> […] Gramsci has been integral to our teaching program for our final-year students. Gramsci helps us to see how other theories with white origins might

> be shaping or manipulating us into consent. Gramsci helps us think about culture in very politicized ways. Gramsci opens the door for my students – not just to theorize (as something to learn or apply) but to theorizing (as something to do for themselves).
>
> […] Engaging broadly with theory and theorists of all kinds is part of exercising intellectual agency and is a necessary foundation for achieving fuller self-determination for Native and Indigenous and Pacific peoples in the academy. Sovereign intellectuals have nothing to lose by admitting that some white men, white women, and white people are part of our genealogies of thinking whether we like it or not. Some white men, white women, white people, are the ancestors we get to choose. (Teaiwa 52–53)

No one single individual nor local community nor tribe nor Indigenous people have uniform experiences. Drawing on approaches to decolonizing lands and minds and considering sovereignty in multiple ways demands openness with a dash of pragmatism; we are faced with the question: "what works?" Indigenous-centered approaches to research would do well to resist re-inscriptions of ideologies of "purity" and "contamination" in theorizing. To do so would be to fall into a colonial-mindset or trap which postulates impossible double-standards. Like Gramsci in Teaiwa's illuminating example above, exercising "intellectual agency" and "achieving fuller self-determination" for Indigenous studies scholars requires that we acknowledge postcolonialism and allied scholarship as "part of our genealogies of thinking" and apply them when they work.

12 Indigenous Methodologies

Oral tradition and storytelling are epistemologically on a par with the written word in my approach to Indigenous methodologies. In this collaborative research project, multiple contributions to Indigenous-centered research have shaped my own methodological, conceptual, and interpretive approaches. Margaret Kovach's *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, her "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research" and Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* were foundational in the development of my research design. In the ongoing discussions of Indigenous methodologies grounded in Indigenous paradigms—and with particular value for this project—Kovach's and Wilson's works offer direction on the alignment of Indigenous ways of knowing, self-in-relation in research and writing, and the inherent value of narrative and storytelling as integral and interrelated parts of Indigenous methodology and knowledge-production.

In addition to Kovach's and Wilson's collaborative methods and story in their own works on methodology, I have also been inspired by Jo-Ann Archibald, Waziyatawin/Angela Cavender Wilson, Kristin Jernsletten, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Maori) for their contributions to legitimating and integrating intersubjective oral histories and storytelling as methods in Indigenous scholarship. Archibald frames her "storywork" approach using the metaphor of basket-weaving and the underlying principles of "respect, reverence, responsibility, reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness and synergy" in *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Archibald 2). In her 2005 study, *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives*, Waziyatawin uses oral history and oral tradition as the principal sources and structures the text within Dakota language, epistemologies, and ontologies, stating: "/…/ this book relies on and privileges Indigenous oral tradition, specifically the stories of Dakota elder Eli Taylor" (Wilson and Taylor 1). Each bilingual chapter heading reflects a central theme in the collective story of the Dakota people, shaped and defined within the Dakota language. Likewise, Kristin Jernsletten frames her doctoral study *The hidden children of Eve: Sámi poetics Guovtti ilmmi gaskkas* (Jernsletten et al.) within oral tradition and storytelling through multiple voices, including the prominent voice of her father, the late Sámi language professor, Juhu-Niillas-Nils Jernsletten. Finally, in the second edition of Smith's seminal work from 2012 *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, she underscores the necessity of narrative approaches in Indigenous research projects to reflect collective histories, and especially the importance of including women and elders:

> Storytelling, oral histories, the perspectives of elders and of women have become an integral part of all indigenous research. Each individual story is powerful. But the point about the stories is not that they simply tell a story, or tell a story simply. These new stories contribute to a collective story in which every Indigenous person has a place. (L. T. Smith 145).

Narratives form a critical aspect of most modern human research methodologies in the social and health sciences, humanities, and law—indeed, all peoples all over the world

tell stories (Goldstein 125–45; Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou; Skott-Myhre, Weima and Gibbs; Leary). In this Indigenous-centered project, additional aims of using story as method are the following: to humanize obscured or silenced subjects of historical processes; to contribute to purposeful community-building and sustaining webs of relations; and to contribute to the ongoing process of de-colonization. I draw inspiration from multiple scholars—Sámi, global Indigenous, and allied—while ultimately seeking to ground the work in a polyvocal Sámi perspective; in this sense, I also approach the project from a "cosmopolitan Indigenous perspective" in research (Gaski 117). Personal histories, life-narratives, oral histories rendered in written form, or autobiographies have historically not been as common a genre in the Sámi context as in other Indigenous contexts—certainly not to the extent that they are in North America, rather, self-representations have come through in what Vuokko Hirvonen and Veli-Pekka Lehtola have described as heterogenic reminiscence literature:

> It is typical of Sámi reminiscence literature to be heterogenic works that contain mythological, historical and (auto)biographical features. Therefore, the term *reminiscence literature* (see also Lehtola 1997b: 76) describes such literature better than the term *biography* or *memoir*. Through their stories, the authors tell their descendants how they and their ancestors have lived and what they have believed in and thought. Indeed, in reminiscence literature we can find the whole gamut of oral tradition from the actual experiences the person has had or heard about to various beliefs, superstitions, tales and stories…(Hirvonen and Anttonen 83)

One of the challenges that I grappled with early on when seeking to use Indigenous-centered frameworks and methodologies in a narrative study, was the not infrequent incommensurability with historical truth claims in some institutions that confront the researcher using intersubjective storytelling and story as method, story as knowledge-seeking and story as co-production of knowledge (Maynes 98–125). Theorizing and conceptualization also arose from within stories in this project. In a positive local development, ethical and integrative narrative research has gained ground in Norwegian research institutions and has offered transformative scholarship in multiple fields in the Norwegian academy, especially in qualitative research in the Health Sciences, for example in the recent anthology *Idioms of Sámi Health and Healing* edited by Stein Mathisen (see also Blix).

In addition to working together and consulting with the collaborators, both in Sápmi and in Sámi American communities on approaches to life-narrative writing, I have also sought insight from global Indigenous scholars and allies in framing an approach that might more closely align with Sámi epistemologies and ontologies. The approach I have chosen takes to heart Wilson's formulation of relational accountability (S. Wilson *Research Is Ceremony : Indigenous Research Methods* 97– 100), self-in-relation, self-location, and Kovach's idea that "relationships are elemental to story-based methodology" (Kovach *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* 98).

Kovach achieves the aim of applying story as method, story as co-production of knowledge, and story as knowledge-seeking by incorporating her own story into her study; stories are also reflected in the inclusion of thematic conversations with several other Indigenous scholars. Thus, storytelling and collaborative meaning-making elucidate the theoretical and interpretive themes of several chapters, including in conversations with the following Indigenous scholars: Michael Hart (Cree) (68–74); Graham Smith (Maori) (87–93); Jeannine Carriere (Metis) (103–108); Cam Willett (Cree) (117–120); Laara Fitznor (Cree) (134–140); and Kathy Absolon (Anishinaabe) (150–155). Similarly, Wilson assumes the role of the storyteller in his study in three formats: direct discourse with the reader, with letters to his sons, and in conversations with other scholars; here he introduces himself as the storyteller:

> The use of an Indigenous research paradigm when studying Indigenous peoples requires the holistic use and transmission of information. Consequently, I present the information in this study in a way that is more culturally appropriate for Indigenous people by taking the role of storyteller rather than researcher/author. Indigenous people in Canada recognize that it is important for storytellers to impart their own life and experience into the telling. They also recognize that it is important for storytellers to impart their own life and experience and thus adapt the information to make it relevant and specific to their life. (S. Wilson *Research Is Ceremony : Indigenous Research Methods* 32)

By using a storytelling strategy or methodology throughout the text, Wilson strikes a balance between a conversation or oral form of communication and the necessary abstractions of academic discourse. With reference to Lee Maracle (see Maracle 7–11) and Craig Howe (see Howe 161–79), Mallory Whiteduck points to the continuities between orality/story theory, and history; indeed, storytelling and stories are not merely methods and empirical material to be analyzed, but they are co-produced knowledges, theories, and histories derived from intersubjective exchanges within communities. The co-production of knowledge with transformative potential is intended for multiple communities, including the Sámi and Sámi American communities, global Indigenous communities, as well as academic communities. Also, the approach to storytelling research entails a good deal of responsibility on my part to "do right by the people." Admittedly, "doing right by the community" can lead to more sleepless nights in the process than "doing right by the academy." With regard to using story as method, Kovach writes:

> Story, as a method, is different from culture to culture, and so its application falters without full appreciation of the underlying epistemological assumptions that motivate its use. Indigenous people versed in their culture know that sharing a story in research situates it within a collective memory. Likewise, Indigenous researchers ought to know of the deep responsibility of requesting oral history –i.e., an individual recounting of a particular happening. A researcher assumes a responsibility that the story shared will

> be treated with the respect it deserves in acknowledgement of the relationship from which it emerges. *(*Kovach *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* 97*)*

It was critically important in my approach that I honored my commitments to the individuals who shared their lives with me, that I created a space for their subjectivity, and that I represented the stories of their grandmothers and relatives ethically. In my approach, I did not set out to "find facts," although archival research was a necessary component of composing narratives of the five women. However, I still interpreted the records through a decolonizing and gendered lens and recognized that there are stories behind the records as well; as Cherokee scholar and author, Thomas King writes: "There are no Truths. Only Stories" and "Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous" (King Green Grass, Running Water 432; King The Truth About Stories : A Native Narrative 9). The often-quoted proclamation by postmodern historian Hayden White also has currency in my approach: "History is no less a fiction than the novel is a form of historical representation" (White 23). The process of writing and producing collaborative life narratives, especially of Indigenous women, comes with particular responsibilities, which is perhaps best captured in Wilson's attention to "relational accountability"—his approach has been germane for the development of my own methodology as an imbedded member of several communities and a researcher seeking to build a bridge between the value of story and the academy. On the topic of oral storytelling and accountability, Wilson tells us:

> Accountability is built into the relationships that are formed in storytelling within oral tradition. As a storyteller, I am responsible for who I share information with, as well as for ensuring that it is shared in an appropriate way, at the right place and time. In receiving the story, you as an active listener are responsible for putting the story into a relational context that makes sense for you and for listening with an open heart and open mind. If you choose to pass along the story or my words, you also take on the responsibilities of the storyteller yourself. The relationships that we build with an Indigenous research paradigm shape and redefine the concept. In your joint ownership of this concept, you are also accountable for how you use it. (S. Wilson *Research Is Ceremony : Indigenous Research Methods* 126– 27)

In addition to considering the relational and reciprocal aspects of using stories shared in methodologies, and representing stories responsibly, I am also obligated to apply an interpretive lens that does not inadvertently engage in what Kuokkanen refers to as "epistemic ignorance":

> What I call epistemic ignorance refers to the ways in which academic theories and practices marginalize, exclude, and discriminate against other than dominant Western epistemic and intellectual traditions. In the process of producing, reproducing, and disseminating knowledge, these "other" epistemic and intellectual traditions are foreclosed to the point that generally there is very little recognition and understanding of them. In other words,

> epistemic ignorance as a concept is not limited to merely not-knowing or a lack of understanding. It also refers to practices and discourses that actively foreclose other than dominant epistemes and that refuse to seriously contemplate their existence. Epistemic ignorance is a form of subtle violence. When other than dominant epistemes and forms of knowing are not seen or recognized, they disappear. (Kuokkanen *Reshaping the University : Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift* 66).

Some of the most enriching conversations I have had since my "return" to Sápmi have been with knowledgeable local people who shared insights and stories of the land, waters, and life in their communities; many of these stories also made references to the metaphysical, and to ontologies that have been met with suspicion, ridicule, and dismissiveness by some secular and scientific academics or laypeople. These conversations also included references to epistemologies and place-names, concepts in the Sámi language, and taken-for-granted local "truths" that can be altogether challenging to translate, linguistically or culturally. The content of these exchanges and the difficulties in their translation into dominant epistemologies also characterized some of the themes in the research conversations I had for the project. Britt Kramvig, in an article on dreaming in a coastal Sámi community, addresses the continuity of Sámi epistemic practice, and the way that dreams shared within communities also form part of collective memory and attachments to places, despite colonialism: "Western scientific epistemology is enacted to keep categories clean and in place, distinctions are made between the real and unreal, the natural and supernatural, culture and nature. Sámi epistemic practice reconnects to the past and future whereby community is formed" (Kramvig 114). Kovach writes that "all knowledge is needed," but that academic institutions are often uncomfortable with what she refers to as the "inward knowing" and "outward knowing" dichotomy.

> The proposition of integrating spiritual knowings and processes, like ceremonies, dreams, or synchronicities, which act as portals for gaining knowledge, makes mainstream academia uncomfortable, especially when brought into discussion of research. This is because of the outward knowing versus inward knowing dichotomy. Yet all ways of knowing are needed, and the Cree ancestors knew this. They knew about the inward knowing and valued it highly. In fact, this inward knowing was a central, integral component to how they approached the buffalo hunt and their most deeply sacred ceremonies. They were able to share teachings through stories about their experiences, passed on using the oral tradition, and it was respected as legitimate. Why would research be different? (Kovach *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* 68)

In terms of a methodology for narrative writing and interpretation, I choose to "stay in the trenches" with storytellers and their stories and recognize that "all knowledge is needed" and that oral tradition should be "respected as legitimate." I seek to avoid appropriating narratives with deep meaning to their tellers, followed by dissecting them into parts that become unrecognizable. I am especially concerned about the potential for the stories of the women and the stories of their descendants to be decontextualized and

evacuated of their locally embedded meaning. I take the potential harm in audience reception in co-produced narratives as seriously as I take the ethics of their co-production; in other words, I seek to mediate potential for harm and avoid opening up for "subtle forms of violence" enacted through "epistemic ignorance" (Kuokkanen *Reshaping the University : Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift* 66).

Finally, Chadwick Allen's approach to trans-Indigenous methodologies is especially applicable with respect to the interpretive framework for the life narratives and photonarratives. Allen's approach of situating Indigenous literary studies with a view toward "*recovery* and *interpretation*" and "their multiple interactions as a yoked set" (xvii) has influenced my approaches to both production and interpretation of life narratives. In a series of interventions on current Indigenous scholarship, he posits the following as ways forward for trans-Indigenous scholarship that moves beyond traditional comparison of "like" texts and brings various Indigenous literature(s) and arts into productive juxtapositions: "Scholarship *Across*" (xix–xxii), "Making *Across*" (xxii–xxvi), "Readings *Across*," (xxvi–xxxi) and "Identities *Across*" (Allen *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies* xi–xxxiv). Indeed, I have engaged with the life narrative writing from Indigenous peoples globally, as well as the scholarship and writing of allies with a view to bringing them into conversation with the narratives of Sámi women. In addition, I have engaged with Sámi artistic, social, and craft practices as elements of a Sámi conceptual framework that can provide metaphors or symbols for both production and interpretation of life narratives. My approach to trans-Indigenous scholarship seeks shared meaning through bringing life narratives and photo narratives into conversation with multiple texts across multiple media. I view drawing on the seminal works of non-Sámi Indigenous scholars as well as allied non-Indigenous scholars' approaches to Indigenous methodologies as a form of trans-Indigenous scholarship.

In this work, I set out to articulate a methodological approach to storytelling research through a Sámi conceptual framework reflecting an understanding of a research process and paradigm that is aligned with Indigenous storytelling epistemologies. Inspired by Sámi scholars Gaski, Porsanger, and Kuokkanen, as well as through "everyday" conversational research with Sámi friends and relatives, I formulated the framework using Sámi terms and concepts. The framework consists of the social practices—*verddevuohta* and *gáfestallat*—as purposeful tools that invite reflection on storytelling research as a relational, intentional, community-based method. Significantly, I use a woman's weaving practice—*rátnogođđin*—as a metaphor for collaborative life narrative production of "weaving" multiple, sometimes fragmented referents into a meaningful narrative whole. *Rátnogođđin* also symbolizes Sámi women's agency and subjectivity in the narratives. The Sámi epistemological concepts of *oktasašvuohta*—the community of belonging – and its derivative *oktavuohta*—togetherness, oneness, unity—serve as overarching interpretive devices in the framework.

13 Ethical Methods in Research Conversations

Ethics in a general sense, and Indigenous-centered ethics in a specific sense, have guided my work since the inception, even from the choice of topic for the project. That is, the choice to focus on Sámi immigrant narratives came from a calling within the Sápmi and Sámi American communities. It was through my relationships with these communities that this project took shape and it was research that Sámi in Sápmi and diasporic Sámi communities valued. As stated earlier, part of the motivation for publishing a general audience life narrative book and transmedial web-based platform address this calling, which is also centered in Indigenous and/or community-based ethics of representation. Ethics are not split off from other aspects of execution of the project, they are interrelated and interdependent; I have also had to be mindful of institutional and national ethical frameworks in human subject research. Meeting disparate ethical demands often requires Graham Smith's formulation of "strategic concessions" (quoted inKovach *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* 40) . The intention is for ethics to come through in my choice of methods and methodology, and epistemological framework—my choice of centering the framework around the Sámi concept of *oktasašvuohta* (the community of belonging) is intended to reflect these interrelationships.

Ethical methods in Sámi research might also recognize that it is customary in many Sámi communities to give an accounting of one's local or regional connections when one meets new people in the community. That is, it was important for the people I met, especially when I entered their homes, for them to know who I was and how I fit into the local web of relations. Who are my kin? Where is my place (communities/settlements/regions) in Sápmi? How do I connect or through whom do I connect to their community? One might say that this accounting of oneself is akin to the scholarly act of "locating oneself," but in an informal, culturally internal, and Sámi relational way. In the Sámi language, one might ask: *Gii bat don leat?* The denotative translation would be: "Who (on earth) are you?" Outsiders who are not familiar with these codes, and especially when the question is translated into North Norwegian—*Kem e du?* —might experience this as intrusive or intended to exclude the newcomer, when in many cases, it is actually a question intended to include the newcomer. What local people are usually really asking is: "How do you relate to us (here) in this place?" The question is intended to *manifest inclusion*, relationships, or perhaps simply *oktavuohta*—togetherness, oneness, unity

On the topic of non-Sámi researchers getting offended or uncomfortable "with all the questions" when one is a visitor in a Sámi community or home, one local Sámi student, after having the experience of an outsider reacting negatively to being asked to give an accounting of himself, told me:

> "If a guest in our community is entering someone's home and they are seeking knowledge and then they get offended by the giver of that knowledge

> asking questions about who they are, then it is rude! If someone is going to ask our people what they know, that person better be prepared to be an open book and tell about themselves. That is how it is in our community!"

With regard to writing, it is customary in Indigenous methodologies, especially in North America, to give credit and honor collaborators, storytellers, and people who shared their knowledge with a researcher by name—a practice that is widespread and most certainly derives from internal cultural protocols in North America. In this project, and in consultation with others, some of the storytellers and people who shared knowledge from Sámi communities in Sápmi have been anonymized. However, like the Sámi American collaborators, all of whom have agreed to be identified by name, I introduce and honor both the named and anonymized Sámi collaborators and their contributions to the project in the introductory sections preceding the narratives.

There are a number of reasons why the practice of identifying collaborators by name is not a simple taken-for-granted in all communities in Sápmi. Reservations on the part of collaborators and helpers to "stand out" and be identified in research projects could be attributed to a number of internal cultural norms, as well as other factors. There is a long history of exploitative research practices in Sápmi where powerful, outside researchers have come into Sámi communities, extracted knowledge, and given little or nothing in return. The Sámi, like many other Indigenous peoples, often claim to be the most researched people in the world, succinctly expressed in a witty local adage: "The typical Sámi family in the 1970s was a mother, father, two children, one dog, and one social anthropologist."

Another factor is a cultural norm concerning humility—*vuollegašvuohta*—as one friend said, "it literally translates to 'to be low'." In other words, it has not been customary among the Sámi to put oneself above others or to stand out, and if one does put themselves above others in a way that could be perceived as haughty, like yoiking oneself, it is considered bad form. In a book of Sámi proverbs collected by Harald Gaski, *Time is a Ship That Never Casts Anchor* (Gaski and Thorstensson), there are several passages that could reflect a tendency toward humility, including the following proverbs, with interpretive commentary by Gaski in parentheses:

> *There the horse shat*
>
> *in the water*
>
> (Said about people who brag about themselves. Another way of expressing the same idea as: self-bragging reeks.) [134]
>
> *The work itself*
>
> *brags about the one*
>
> *who performed it*

> (You should never boast about your own work – something today's Sami should remember as well. This saying is yet another example of the notion of Sami criticism, the assessment, used to be very indirect. In time, one would likely find out who was good at hand-work, story-telling, and, in modern times, writing.) [135]

It has been part of my usual research process, and daily life in Sápmi, to simply reach out to knowledgeable friends and acquaintances to consult on cultural and language matters. Culture is learned, and I fully recognize that I have limitations in understanding as a "returning Sámi" with fairly rudimentary skills in the Sámi language. (As an aside, Sámi friends have often noted that as a "returning Sámi" I probably can see Sápmi "with fresh eyes.") Reaching out to knowledgeable people was especially important in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino and in Aarborte/Hattfjelldal, the home communities of Risten Nilsdatter Bals, Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, and Karen Marie Nilsdatter, respectively. I was more in my "comfort zone" with regard to Berith/Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter's and Albertine Josephine Svendsen's coastal Sámi communities because of my own coastal Sámi background. On multiple occasions, I consulted friends who shared insights and helped with language and local cultural practices and norms; most of them insisted that it was "not a big deal" and absolutely did not need to be named in the text. Others simply "wanted to help," especially when it came to people with whom I have closer ties. Every time in this project where I have written "one friend told me," or "as a friend of mine said" I am invoking my helpers and acknowledging intersubjective exchanges or a manifestation of "self-in-relation"—an expression of my relational accountability.

Some factors related to anonymizing are challenging to ethically represent without falling into the trap of violating the very issue I seek to avoid, namely, conflict in small, tightly connected, local communities. Another factor has to do with a history of unscrupulous Norwegian journalists and others fetishizing Risten Nilsdatter Bals' story. In the context of research and writing on her unknown fate, multiple people have overstepped boundaries, violated basic ethics, and violated journalistic and research integrity causing harm to collaborators and to me (see Jensen "We Stopped Forgetting : Stories from Sámi Americans"). In the case of Risten Nilsdatter Bals' and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima's narratives, the nature of the stories shared, their content and meaning, could be interpreted as "airing dirty laundry" by some readers, or relegated to mere "women's gossip" especially by readers with little or no understanding of the local communities from which stories with this knowledge derived. There are aspects of the stories that would make for especially "juicy" headlines or "clickbait" if sensationalized in the interest of self-advancement for unscrupulous journalists or filmmakers—*some* of their codes of ethics are antithetical to Indigenous research methodologies.

In view of past experience and present knowledge, anonymizing oral sources and collaborators has been especially imperative in the co-production of narratives from local communities in Sápmi where I must meet the requirements of the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee's *Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law, and Theology*. However, I am aware that internal ethical protocols within Indigenous communities and institutional ethics committees often

diverge on key points, in fact, Indigenous academics and their allies could write volumes on these incongruences. Again, I have settled on Graham Smith's formulations in this regard: in order to sidestep the trappings of "the politics of distraction" (G. H. Smith) I have had to make a "strategic concession" (quoted from Kovach *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* 40) of anonymizing some storytellers while also acknowledging them and their rich knowledge and critical contributions, this I do in the introductions to the individual narratives.

If a collaborator was fulfilling her/his role in an official capacity as an employee of a research institution, publisher, museum, government agency, or municipality, the person is named accordingly. Other local people, especially those who shared photographs and insight for context, but were not storytellers with knowledge of the women for the life narratives, are also identified by name. Importantly, many of the collaborators fulfilling their roles in official capacities had personal commitments or community-based connections and personal investments in the narratives of the women, revealing their own sense of "relational accountability."

In my approach to a storytelling method, I was inspired by the conversational method Kovach developed in "Conversational Approach to Indigenous Research," succinctly characterized in the following description:

> The conversational method is found within qualitative research. However when used in an Indigenous framework, a conversational method invokes several distinctive characteristics: a) it is linked to a particular tribal epistemology (or knowledge) and situated within an Indigenous paradigm; b) it is relational; c) it is purposeful (most often involving a decolonizing aim: d) it involves particular protocol as determined by the epistemology and/or place; e) it involves an informality and flexibility; f) it is collaborative and dialogic; and g) it is reflexive. (Kovach "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research" 43)

In an effort to signal a commitment to "relational accountability" and to reveal my "thinking behind the doing," the words I choose here will hopefully reveal these commitments and linkages to Sámi epistemology. The process of collaboratively shaping a narrative is necessarily dialogic. I use a specific nomenclature in the project: in place of "subjects of research" for the Sámi immigrant women, I refer to them as "Sámi immigrant women" or alternatively as "the grandmothers"; in place of "informants" I will refer to their descendants and relatives and associates—the main collaborators in this project—as collaborators, storytellers, and grandchild-narrators. In sections that do not specifically address life narrative writing, I refer to the process as collaborative life narrative production; this is intended to reflect the transmedial and oral dimensions of the research. While written text is inevitably privileged, it is a goal to reflect the importance of oral telling in this project. Other collaborators from local communities I refer to as oral historians or local experts; this is in an effort to reflect the relational nature of their contributions and that local knowledge is on a par with mainstream or national historical records. Most local historians shared information that came through in local oral tradition, but some of them also provided texts, photographs,

and records, along with some of their own family stories and interpretations; all of the knowledge they shared helped shape the narratives.

On the topic of nomenclature, I have also used the term "elders" to denote the grandmothers and grandfathers who shared stories with me in research conversations in the following locations: Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino; the South Sámi area within and in the vicinity of Aarporte/Hattfjelldal; Unalakleet and Nome Alaska; and Duluth, Minnesota. While I have settled on using the English term "elder", it is important to express that in many Sámi communities, especially where the majority have North Sámi as their mother tongue, all elders would be referred to as an *áhkku* and *áddjá* or grandmother (old woman) and grandfather (old man) respectively. The terms are imbued with a sense of respect, especially for their knowledge. It stands to reason that an *áhkku* and the veneration that Sámi people have traditionally had for her is akin to other Indigenous peoples' veneration of grandmothers. On a number of occasions, I have heard Cree and Mètis friends tell stories about their *kookum* with the deep sense of love or veneration that many Sámi express with regard to their *áhkku*–grandmother. I was told many years ago on my first visit to Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino that it was customary that one should always greet the elders first when entering a room or home, and that it could be considered bad form if one did not acknowledge an *áhkku* if one were to meet her on the road. It goes without saying that the knowledge of elders, especially women elders, is seminally important in this project. Elders are often closest to the oral tradition, a tradition that is rich in genealogical, local historical, and traditional knowledge of hunting, harvesting, herding, crafting, and the extensive Sámi lexicon that supports these traditional knowledge practices.

It is also important to reveal my role and relational accountability in the research process in North America. The grandchildren-narrators are part of a loose-knit Sámi American community in which I am also an active member when I return to the US—these narrators are friends and people I feel a deep sense of kinship; I have a crucial responsibility to represent them and their stories ethically. While, it goes without saying that the grandchild-narrators in North America were the storytellers and I, the compiler and writer, even the compiling and writing process in the narratives themselves reveal the mark of the grandchild-narrators, as well as community members. As part of my approach to ethics of representation, the grandchild-narrators were given the opportunity to read and provide editorial feedback on the narratives which they helped shape or "weave"—a method referred to as "reciprocal ethnography" by folklorist Elaine Lawless (Lawless 197–205). Another reason I refer to the grandchildren-narrators as research-collaborators, storytellers, and family oral historians is to make clear that they are the experts in their family stories and while the process was collaborative and dialogic, the narratives would be distant and sparse without their deep knowledge and commitment to their grandmothers' histories.

From the very beginning of the project, I consulted with some of the grandchild-narrators—Rosalie, Anessa, Arden, and Kai—about the direction of the project, even at the level of theory and method. With the narratives of the two women, Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, who have no living direct descendants, I consulted with local people from the community in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino and also with

Mimi from Washington State. Mimi is the great-great niece of Risten Nilsdatter Bals, however, in Sámi kinship terms, Risten is considered an *áhkku*/grandmother to Mimi because her great-grandfather was Risten's brother. With the grandchild-narrators for the project, I have clarified my role as an embedded member of both the Sámi community in North Norway and a member of the Sámi American community in the US, and I also clarified my obligations as a scholar and author. With anyone who provided information, whether through a more "formal interview" with a local expert, or through a long, informal conversation with the descendants, I explained my role and made it clear that they had a voice in the shaping of the outcome of the project and/or that I would remain in touch with them about the outcomes. I also told them about my obligations to give something of value back to the communities who provided their time and support to the project. The grandchild-narrators are especially invested in the outcome of the project, which as mentioned earlier, is threefold: the dissertation, the documentary book project, and a transmedial digital platform for the life narratives. In the long conversations with the grandchildren narrators, I sometimes filmed them with either my laptop or cell phone, without much regard for the quality from a technical point of view.

In addition to research visits and conversations with the collaborators for the project, it was also critically important in my methodological approach to connect with the lands and living communities in the areas from which the five women in the case study had emigrated, as well as the areas to which they immigrated in Minnesota, Alaska and Washington State. Over the course of the research period, I visited several communities in Sápmi to gain a deeper understanding of the contexts the grandchild narrators had heard stories about in oral tradition, and to connect with some of the places that came through in memories, life narratives, and photonarratives. In the first section of each narrative, I give an accounting of these visits to collaborators, lands, and communities.

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Notes

1. See listings in this section's bibliography.
2. http://arran2.blogspot.no
3. https://www.facebook.com/groups/206865919326820/
4. https://www.samiculturalcenter.org/
5. http://www.newagefraud.org/smf/index.php?topic=4868.msg42691#msg42691

Article I

Oktasašvuohta: a Sámi Conceptual Framework for a Transmedial Storytelling Research Project

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Oktasašvuohta: a Sámi Conceptual Framework for a Transmedial Storytelling Research Project

Introduction

At the outset, it is fitting to present an adage that could be understood to reflect Sámi ontologies and ethics that are central to the methodology I developed for a transmedial storytelling research project: *Mii buohkat gullat dan stuorra oktasašvuhtii* – "We are all part of the community of belonging" (Solbakk). This adage is reminiscent of a sequence from the famous 1987 film by Sámi filmmaker Nils Gaup called *Ofelaš* (English: *Pathfinder*) (Gaup et al.). In the sequence, the *noaidi* (Sámi shaman), Ráste, imparts a lesson to the young, distraught Áigin whose family was ruthlessly murdered by the marauders from the East called *čuđit* (*Tjudes* in the film's subtitles). The astute *noaidi* recognizes that thoughts of revenge have distorted Áigin's vision and consciousness of belonging to *oktasašvuohta*. Ráste reminds Áigin that indeed čuđit (*Tjude*s) breathe the same air (quoted directly from the original English subtitles from the film):

> "Your mind is clouded with thoughts of revenge. You must remember, we are all but parts of the whole. We are children in a greater family. The *Tchudes* [čuđit] have forgotten this. Don't you forget it."
>
> "My family is dead. I am all alone."
>
> "You may feel that way, but you are bound up in the greater family. You are not free, unshakable bonds hold you to us."
>
> "How do I trust something that can't be seen?"
>
> Ráste covers Áigin's nose and mouth as if to suffocate him.
>
> "You still can't see it?" Áigin struggles to break free and breathe again.

> "But now you can feel that something is there. You can't see it in the air, but your very existence is tied to it."
>
> Ráste lets go of Áigin.
>
> "In this way all things are bound together, intertwined. No man can ever tear himself apart from the whole. But it can happen that he loses sight of the whole. When he does, he is like the Tchudes [čuđit]. Men who have lost the path. They stumble blindly towards self-destruction."[1]

The concepts described in this article could be understood to flow from the ontology of *oktasašvuohta* as reflected in the film *Ofelaš* (see also DuBois), an ontology that is similar to many other Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies that bear out Vine Deloria's description of the oft-cited adage in North American Indigenous communities: "We are all relatives":

> "We are all relatives" when taken as a methodological tool for obtaining knowledge means that we observe the natural world by looking for relationships between various things in it. That is to say, everything in the natural world has relationships with every other thing and the total set of relationships makes up the natural world as we experience it. (Deloria 34)

Oktasašvuohta, when applied as a practical interpretive device for understanding relationships in a living world, aligns with Deloria's statement. Like the ontology embodied in the statement "We are all relatives," *oktasašvuohta* could be viewed as foundational in Sámi storytelling research methods and narrative interpretation.

Before moving on to the theoretical and interpretive aspects of this article and in keeping with an ethics of centering the stories of the Sámi immigrant women and storytellers in the project, I present them here: all five of the Sámi women moved to North America between 1902–1917, the first three women listed settled in Minnesota and the last two listed settled in Alaska: Albertine Josefine (Svendsen) Johnson from Árdni/Arnøy; Karen Marie Nilsdatter from Aarborte/Hattfjelldal; Bertha (Berith) Susanna Kristina Larsdatter from Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen; Kirsten (Risten) Nilsdatter Bals from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino; and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima/Luhkkár-Ánne from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino. For the Sámi immigrant women, I use the term *áhkut*/grandmothers and I refer to the descendants, relatives, and associates of them—all of whom shared stories for the project from oral tradition—as storytellers, collaborators, or community partners. During my research period, I met with the storytellers in their

homes as well as other locations, and at times I even traveled with them to places of importance in their family narratives. Family and local oral tradition are equally important to written texts in shaping the transmedial narratives; transmedial refers to the intersection of orality with written text, photography, and film/video. Formally, I refer to the "memory work" (Kuhn and McCallister 1–17) inherent in these meetings—especially with regard to stories that intersect with photographs—as "research conversations"; this approach is akin to Kovach's approach in "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research" (40–48). I also gained interpretive insight from friends, colleagues, and relatives through everyday interactions and informal conversations. Importantly, by using concepts from the repository of knowledge in the Sámi language, I seek to foundationally anchor the research to the cultural worlds and ontologies of the women that this project represents. The Sámi terms used in the framework are practical, everyday terms that invite reflection on storytelling as a relational, intentional, community-based practice.

Margaret Kovach's "Creating Indigenous Frameworks" inspired the design of a storytelling-based research framework in this transmedial project (Kovach *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* 39–54). Kovach emphasizes centering Indigenous epistemologies in research methodologies and revealing the "thinking behind the doing" through the research framework (39). The term framework is used somewhat loosely or as approximate for a set of concepts that figuratively or imaginatively reveal the "thinking behind the doing" in my application of storytelling methods and in the interpretation of narratives in Sámi diaspora communities. Storytelling in everyday life and in research, like the concepts described in the framework, all constitute the scaffolding of *oktasašvuohta*—a community of belonging. Thus, the Sámi conceptual framework described here manifests a research process shaped by Indigenous storytelling epistemologies (Emberley 39–55); I focus on epistemologies encoded within terms in the Sámi language and conclude with their alignment with the radical intersubjectivity manifested in the Sámi yoik tradition. The yoik tradition in all of its various local manifestations is seminal in the Sámi culture, especially as oral tradition (Gaski "The Secretive Text : Yoik Lyrics as Literature and Tradition"); leaving out the yoik tradition in any discussion involving oral tradition and storytelling would be indefensible (Stoor). The terms or concepts I describe that form the framework *arose from within stories* shared with me in family and local oral tradition in the collaborative transmedial project; importantly, the concepts are also significant in my own family narrative (see Whiteduck). I weave my own family narrative into the ongoing project as a form of intersubjectivity in storytelling research methods, as well as to remain grounded in the principles of relationality and accountability in interpretation.

Indigenous Methodology in Sápmi and the Paradox of Language Shift

The use of Indigenous terms that reveal foundational values, ontologies, and epistemologies in research and teaching is standard practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand and fairly widespread in Turtle Island/North America (Kovach *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts;* Smith; Whiteduck; Wilson and Taylor). The practice of conceptualizing research and education through inter-lingual texts and presentations has been manifest in *Kaupapa Māori* (Pihama et al.; Smith). The following is one of many descriptions of the practice in Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Dr. Papaarangi Reid's 2001 report *Kaupapa Mäori Principles and Practices: A Literature Review*, a report that resonates with the intention behind my conceptualization of a storytelling research framework through Sámi terms, especially *oktasašvuohta*:

> Tuakana Nepe (1991:15) discusses Kaupapa Mäori in relation to the development of Kura Kaupapa Mäori. She states that Kaupapa Mäori is the "conceptualisation of Mäori knowledge" that has been developed through oral tradition. This is the process by which the Mäori mind "receives, internalises, differentiates, and formulates ideas and knowledge exclusively through Te Reo Mäori." Nepe situates Mäori knowledge specifically within Te Reo Mäori. Kaupapa Mäori knowledge is not to be confused with Päkehä knowledge or general knowledge that has been translated into Mäori. Kaupapa Mäori knowledge has its origins in a metaphysical base that is distinctly Mäori. As Nepe states, this influences the way Mäori people think, understand, interact and interpret the world. (Smith and Reid 9)

Sámi scholars, including Harald Gaski, Rauna Kuokkanen, and Jelena Porsanger, have advanced the use of terms in the Sámi language in criticism, methodologies, and theorizing (see also Jernsletten et al.). Gaski has signaled the value of using Sámi terms in Sámi research, including in "cosmopolitan" approaches to research, criticism, and writing. The cosmopolitan approach brings Indigenous perspectives into dialogue and exchange across the globe; the trans-Atlantic and trans-Indigenous aspects of this narrative study could fairly be viewed as a cosmopolitan approach. With regard to cosmopolitan approaches, Sámi methodologies, and terminology, Gaski writes:

> A cosmopolitan perspective includes an analysis grounded in a common disciplinary and methodological approach to the subject matter, while simultaneously being aware of specific linguistic and cultural conditions that affect the analysis. It would, for instance, be completely feasible to use Sami terms and so-called "Sami understanding" in a cosmopolitan analysis, but

> these things would then have to be explicated and made accessible to an international reader, and not exoticized and ascribed an aspect of esoteric knowledge. (Gaski "Indigenism and Cosmopolitanism: A Pan-Sami View of the Indigenous Perspective in Sami Cultural Research" 114)

Further underscoring the possibility or even necessity of using Sámi terms relevant to cosmopolitan-oriented research from within Sámi cultural contexts, Gaski writes: "In regard to Sami culture and cultural expressions, this suggests that Sami normative values, along with ethical thinking and terminology, *must be used* (my emphasis), to form the basis of analysis of Sami art, literature and music for instance" (119). In other words, approaches to storytelling research within diverse Sámi cultural frames—especially when applying Indigenous methodologies—would be problematic if the researcher did not use Sámi concepts.

Likewise, in an essay on Sámi literary criticism and aesthetics from 2000, "Towards an 'Indigenous Paradigm' from a Sami perspective," Kuokkanen deliberates on potential approaches to developing a Sámi-centered research paradigm. In the section titled "Contemporary Indigenous Writers as Cultural Pathfinders" she explains the significant role of modern Sámi writers in carrying "Indigenous paradigms" forward. Further, she conceptualizes their work through a number of Sámi terms signaling the inherent value of using and making Sámi terms visible, even as metaphors in an Indigenous literary and cultural studies text written in English and intended for a global audience:

> Therefore, they are like *ofelaccat* (sic), or "cultural pathfinders" in their work of maintaining and sustaining their cultures. Writers also rely heavily on the power of words and symbolic language just as *noaiddit*, shamans used to do (Kailo and Helander, 1998:165). We know that language is power through its means of creating realities (see Ashcroft et al., 1989:44; 89) /…/ Sami and other Indigenous writers who continue to write in their own languages are also like *duojárat*, or "handicraft makers." They have to work actively with their mother tongues, which they did not learn to write in schools but which they have learned to write later, often as adults and now want to pass them on to the next generations. (Kuokkanen 425–26)

Kuokkanen's statements on "symbolic language" and the power of language to "create realities" are especially germane to storytelling epistemologies; also, the acknowledgement of diversity among Sámi writers and their agency in learning to write the language as adults has particular relevance for the *oktasašvuohta* storytelling framework in the transmedial narrative project. Language is one of the most important modes through which we

(humans) manifest connection, belonging, and community; thus, it is rather poignant that the descendant storytellers in North America have engaged with Sámi languages (both North Sámi and South Sámi) in some tangible way, particularly in their insistence on using Sámi place-names rather than Norwegianized names for their grandmothers' home places. Some of them have even actively sought to learn Sámi in acknowledgement of the cultural worlds embedded in the ancestral language of their Sámi grandparents.

In an essay entitled "Sami Concepts and Modern Indigenous Approaches to Theorizing Their Culture," Porsanger explicates a number of Sámi language terms and addresses the use of Sámi terminology in modern research contexts while drawing on traditional knowledge, bringing into focus abstractions and specific knowledge and making them generalizable. With explicit reference to Indigenous methodologies, Porsanger writes:

> Celebration of Sami diversity makes the voice of the diverse Sami groups heard. Sami research can find inspiration in a great variety of Sami traditions, diversity of Sami views and Sami perspectives, in Sami philosophy and epistemology. The use of Sami epistemology, which deals with the nature and ground of knowledge, and with ways of knowing, especially with references to the limits of and validity of knowledge, can be useful for the development of researcher methodologies. The use of a variety of Sami concepts is a challenge for Sami researchers. Modern ways of theorizing can be developed, and thus Sami research can be modern without being separated from Sami tradition. (Porsanger 62)

In the development of a storytelling research paradigm in the transmedial project, I was especially inspired by Porsanger's attention to a diversity of voices in Sámi research, as well as in an endorsement of leading Sámi terminology with specific local meanings into "modern ways of theorizing" for international scholarship. For Indigenous communities, these diversities ought to be inclusive of not only recognized Indigenous strongholds and cultural practice, but also of the marginalized families and communities who have endured different sets of consequences from the colonization process, including varied degrees of acquiescence to aspects of forced cultural assimilation, like language loss, economic isolation, and lateral violence within the Indigenous community itself.[2]

Despite implicit encouragement of the scholars quoted above, I note at the outset that attempts at devising a conceptual framework using terms in a threatened Indigenous language—in this case the Sámi language—for social and cultural practices and women's craftwork inevitably have to deal with the politically and personally fraught subject of language shift. That is, in threatened language environments, researchers and writers who

are not fluent in their ancestral Indigenous languages can be met with defensive purism when conceptualizing in the language in an inter-lingual, or primarily English language text. Engagement with the language straddles a difficult line depending on the social, cultural, and political location of the researcher. On the one hand, it raises the question of the right of Sámi cultural outsiders to engage with internal epistemological frameworks in their research (to be clear, by outsider, I am referring to researchers with no regional or ancestral ties to the Sámi language and culture). In such cases, is it appropriation or is it the responsibility of the researcher to engage in insider epistemological frameworks when working with Sámi communities? On the other hand, is it acceptable that researchers from Sámi communities who have endured language shift be denied the right to re-engagement with the language in their research, especially if they have otherwise inherited Sámi epistemology and knowledge through a non-Sámi language?

In a general discussion of threatened language environments, Nancy Dorian discusses the important role of compromise in revitalization efforts in threatened language environments (Dorian); likewise, Erika Sarivaara and Pigga Keskitalo argue for mediating structures in Sámi language revitalization, an approach that relies on constructive conflict resolution and a rejection of essentialist notions of language ownership or exclusivist language domains (Sarivaara and Keskitalo). My approach to explicating and theorizing the subject of familial language shift is through sharing an auto-ethnographic account; that is, I attend to the socially and politically fraught subject by simply narrating my own family story (see Whiteduck; Skott-Myhre, Weima and Gibbs; Wilson and Taylor). Our story is but one of thousands of stories and my motivation for sharing it does not come from a place of lamentation or from within a narrative of ongoing victimization, but rather as a testimonial to Sámi people's contemporary agency in the current movement for truth-telling and reconciliation in Norwegian Sápmi. I also note that the Sámi language and language loss in families are ongoing themes in several of the narratives of the Sámi women in the transmedial storytelling project.

Decolonizing the Discourse of Belonging

In Sápmi, cultural belonging and political rights—or simply, the right to vote in the Sámi parliaments in Norway, Sweden and Finland—are directly tied to the Sámi languages (see Sarivaara; Berg-Nordlie and Skogvang; Bjerkli and Selle). A person qualifies to vote if the potential voter has Sámi as one's own mother-tongue, or as an ancestral language. In the Norwegian Sámi context, a person can vote if he or she, a parent, grandparent, or great-grandparent has or has had Sámi as a home-based language. Also, the child of a registered voter is automatically entitled to register to vote, thus, the definition allows for continuity of political rights in families where language shift occurred several generations ago (Berg-

Nordlie and Skogvang). The policy was drafted by the Sámi people themselves, thus the policy emphasizes the importance of the language to group belonging. Notably, there is far greater language loss among the coastal Sámi populations than among the inland Sámi (Høgmo 395–416; Eidheim 50–67). Like thousands of others, my family narrative is marked by the enduring effects of Norwegianization, most evident in language shift (Bull 246–58; Minde 121–46). I share in the collective, ongoing project of reclaiming the Sámi language among coastal Sámi people; in this effort, I use the term "relearner" with inspiration from the section "We are all relearners" in Darrel R. Kipp's 2000 report on tribal language revitalization in North America titled *Encouragement, Guidance, Insights, and Lessons Learned for Native Language Activists Developing Their Own Tribal Language Programs* (5). In my personal language relearning endeavor, I am set apart as a Sámi and American who grew up in Minnesota with English as my first language, with Norwegian as my second language, and with mostly Norwegian-speaking relatives in Norwegian Sápmi, many of whom heard the Sámi language in their childhoods in coastal communities, but were not taught the language at home or in school. In the inevitable ebbs and flows of this effort, I continue to draw inspiration from many Sámi people who have relearned the Sámi language as teenagers and young adults and have used the language actively. Many of these linguistic "pathfinders" (Kuokkanen 425) have passed it on to their own children, and/or have gone on to become prominent authors, poets, actors, teachers, and academics using the Sámi language; this is another testament to Sámi agency in reclaiming our ancestral language.[3]

The following is a roadmap to my familial Indigenous linguistic inheritance. On the Sámi side of my family, two of my great-grandparents had Sámi as their mother-tongue and their primary home language. They were North Sámi speakers and would have used the west-Finnmark coastal dialect, which I understand has few, if any, remaining speakers. One of my great-grandparents had Sámi as one of two home languages, Sámi and Norwegian. My grandmother's mother, while a Norwegian speaker to the best of our knowledge (she died when my grandmother was five years old), had at least a passive knowledge of Finnish or Kven; she also had Sámi lineage from Gárasavvon/Karesuando and Eanodat/Enontekiö, which could certainly imply that she heard the Sámi language in her family. One of at least two, perhaps three, of the languages spoken in the respective homes of both of my father's parents' childhood homes was undoubtedly Sámi; in other words, the majority of my paternal ancestors were Sámi and had the Sámi language as their mother-tongue and main language. Regardless of each individual's active skills in the language, the language was a feature of their everyday lives, it was foundational to their local ontologies and would have shaped their consciousness of place and belonging.

For many Sámi people, the aspect of Norwegianization that leads to the most anguish is the stories of our grandparents' relationship to the Sámi language. Boarding schools were a tool of the Norwegianization policy, however, not all Sámi children attended boarding schools. The Norwegianization policy was part and parcel of the entire educational system; thus, local schools were mandated to implement the policy and were equally fervent in their efforts to force language shift as the boarding schools (cf. Lund et al.; Edvardsen). My grandmother and her brothers attended a local school as young children, and I have the "inherited memory" (Hirsch) of my child grandparents' small hands meeting the assimilationist's switch when they slipped up and "used Lappish words" (Johnsen). After hearing the story several times from various tellers, the "inherited memory" of my child-grandmother enduring this humiliation and cruelty has at times haunted me. The image this memory conjures up is particularly chilling as a mother and I recall being especially troubled by it when my own children began school. Over the years, another story has unfolded in my family narrative, sometimes in fragments, sometimes accompanied with tears, other times with stoicism: my grandmother and her brothers were mistreated by Norwegian adults who referred to them as "Finnunger"—in this context, a pejorative for a Sámi child—when they were walking home from school. The thought of my child-ancestors being beaten at school, taunted on their walk home by heartless adults and coming home to a cold house, absent a loving mother (a victim of the Spanish flu) has left a lasting wound in my consciousness. This has been especially painful considering that these are the reasons our grandparents did not tell us about their repressed Sámi background—they were trying to protect us from the burden of humiliation and shame they endured in the most formative years of their lives.

Clearly the language shift in my grandmother's home took hold as a result of school and local experiences, as well as the colonial policy that made it mandatory for landowners to have a command of the Norwegian language. Under these conditions, the adults in my grandmother's home had no real options but to speak Sámi amongst themselves and speak Norwegian to the children. "This was a way to protect their children from the hurt and humiliation they were forced to endure as children. This is one of the most painful consequences of colonization," as Dakota scholar Waziyatawin wrote with regard to the consequences of language loss and the tendency for Indigenous parents to forego using their mother-tongue with their children (A. C. Wilson 81).

In another section of Darrel R. Kipp's report on tribal language revitalization entitled "Parents Did Not Teach the Language Out of Love," he succinctly presents the shared history of language shift in many Indigenous communities and the shared contemporary situation of language revitalization today:

> Here's a story: Parents did not teach the language because they loved us and they didn't want us to suffer, to be abused, or to have a tough life. Because our parents loved us and our grandparents loved us, they tried to protect us from the humiliation and suffering that they went through. If you truly love your parents and grandparents, you can reconcile that. Because we live in an enlightened age today, opportunities are available to us that simply were not available to our parents. (Kipp 8)

Finally, I take the words of the Mi'kmaq elder, Albert Marshall, to heart. In a pivotal conversation in 2007 that changed my self-perception and attitude toward relearning the Sámi language, he told me something to the effect of the following, which I have carried with me for many years:

> The most important traditional knowledge for me is to know who I am. I am a Mi'kmaq and I speak my language. As long as I know who I am, and I speak my language, it doesn't matter where I am in the world /…/ No individual owns knowledge; it cannot be bought and sold/…/ I sense that you have an insecurity when you say who your people are, if someone has made you feel that way, remember that there are people who will want to steal your energy, it's your job to protect yourself /…/ It's important to always use the language that you have, use what you know. You don't have to feel guilty for not being perfect—use what you have and what you know. Remember, that your language developed on the land with the ancestors. It's the language and the land together that make us who we are. (Marshall)

By connecting with the Sámi language in my research and writing as a relearner of the language—even if my use and writing is imperfect—I claim the agency my child grandmother was denied during the colonial period of Norwegianization. However, I can attest that my grandmother and most Sámi women of her generation would not want to be cast as victims in this account; they did what they had to do to survive, to protect their children, and move on with their lives. When a nation-state was instrumental in attempting to wipe out a language, leading to language shift by thousands of people, any use of the language and increasing its visibility could fairly be viewed as an act of decolonization. In this effort, I approach the task of developing a framework using terms in the Sámi language with gratitude to my many teachers, both official language teachers and friends, and to the multiple members of the Sámi community—especially Sámi people who are fluent in their mother-tongue—who encouraged me and helped me with some formulations.

Concepts in a Sámi Storytelling Research Framework

In the following sections, I introduce each of the four concepts *through story* or *a storied* reflection. As mentioned above, the concepts came to me from within stories on my research journey and further, in my writing process. I conclude each section with an interpretation and explicate the ways the concepts are lived, experienced, or enacted in the historical and contemporary context of the narratives in the study. The introduction and story are followed by a description of how the concept is operative in the ongoing storytelling or narrative project; the stories also reveal connections, not just within Sápmi, but also between Sápmi and the Sámi diaspora in America. The storied concepts are intended to reveal how Sámi storytelling epistemologies and ontologies guide the "thinking behind the doing*" (*Kovach *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* 40–43*).*

Oktavuohta

The foundational concept is *oktavuohta,* which could be understood to mean connection, togetherness, contact, oneness, unity. *Oktasašvuohta*—the community of belonging—derives from or is closely related to *oktavuohta.* As discussed above, Jelena Porsanger deliberates on a number of Sámi terms that reflect Sámi traditional knowledge yet could also be used in contemporary research contexts, including the term *oktavuohta* where she writes: "*/.../oktavuohta* describes a relationship between more than two things, which are interconnected and make a one, *okta*" (Porsanger 66).

In the epistemological storytelling framework, I use the term in the sense reflected in the artistic image created by the Sámi artist Hans Ragnar Mathisen—Elle-Hánsa—Keviselie[4] (figure 1, below) and with the meaning of it I derived from within a story he shared with me. The story and the image reflect how I intend the term to represent an overarching concept that is foundational for all of the other concepts in the framework.

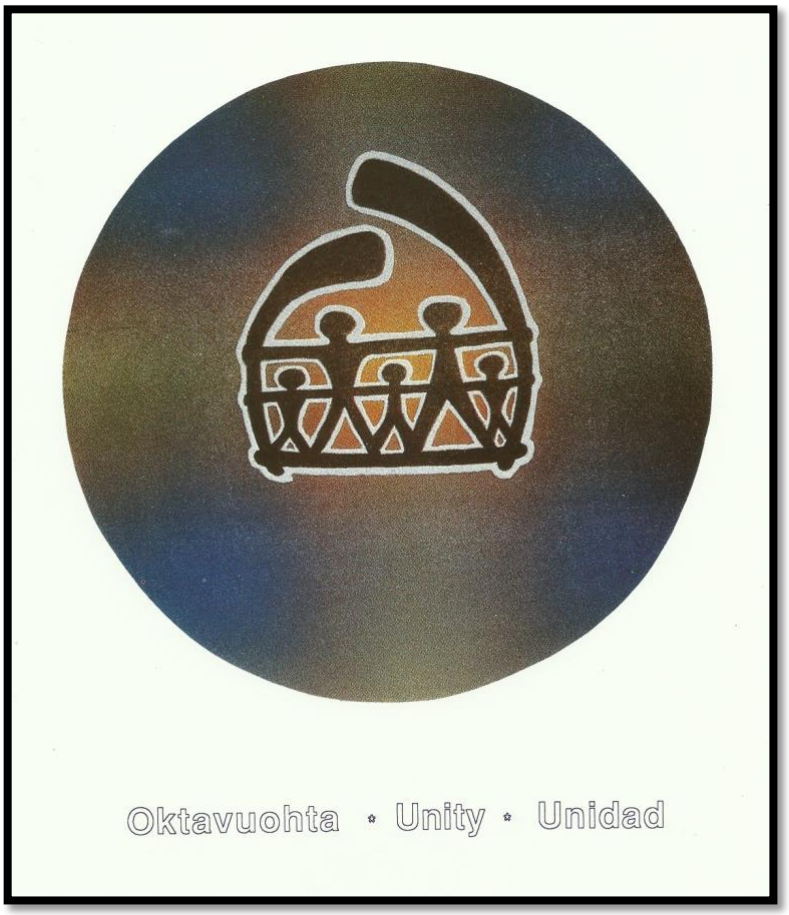

Figure 1: Hans Ragnar Mathisen—Elle Hánsa—Keviselie

In the old days, the Sámi didn't have their own silversmiths, so they would usually go to a Norwegian silversmith with a design. The first Sámi silversmith, Aslak Siri, came to me and asked me if I could come up with some designs or symbols for the Sámi pendants. He knew me and I knew the Siri family. I started by looking at the drum symbols. One striking symbol is *bieggaolmmái*, or the wind-man, he is depicted with having at least one shovel, sometimes two. He is standing with the two shovels that are triangular and they have one pin pointing down. I thought that was a very typical and recognizable symbol—*bieggaolmmái*—the wind-man. He uses the shovels to shovel the wind from his caves onto the earth. And whenever he decided that there was enough wind for the poor people, he would shovel the wind back again. So that is the story behind that. I modified the shovels to become kind of an arc, or more rounded and bent them toward each other but with an opening. That was the first stage of the development. Then, instead of one figure, I had two and then added a little child in-between them, stretching his hands up towards the parents. Then I made the

> *oktavuohta* symbol as it is now by adding two more children, not stretching upwards but holding each other's hands, attached to the parents. I was studying at the art academy when I finally decided to make a print of it. First, I made sketches and drawings, first a black and white drawing, then a woodcut, and finally the lithograph, the one that you see now.
>
> Family is, of course, very important for me, because for most of my childhood I didn't have a family. I grew up in an institution. I did not call the image *bearaš*—the Sámi word for family—because you know, a family can be anything. Everyone can see it is a family, I don't need to repeat that, so I chose *oktavuohta* which means "togetherness." *Oktavuohta* is also symbolic of whatever background, age, gender, ethnicity, or whoever we are. We are really one family. *Oktavuohta* is an idea that transcends many cultures. Togetherness reflects the meaning better than unity, because unity can be forced, it can be uneven, political or institutional. (Mathisen)

Elle-Hánsa is an important figure in Sápmi and in the Sámi American communities, and in a sense, he has lived a life reflective of the sense of *oktavuohta* that he conveys in the story: "we are all really one family." He was one of the first Sámi cultural ambassadors to visit Sámi Americans and even met one of the grandmothers in the project, Albertine Josefine Johnson from Árdni/Arnøy in her home in Duluth. She is one of the women whose stories form part of the transmedial storytelling project; thus, the symbol reflected in his artwork and the concept itself are especially relevant for the conceptual framework. Throughout his life, Elle-Hánsa has traveled to different places in the world, building relations and community with various peoples, and particularly Indigenous peoples. He was an early Sámi activist in the movement for Sámi rights, where he brought art together with activism. When he was visiting some Native Americans in Minneapolis in 1975 (or 1976) he heard there was a Sámi librarian in Duluth who was an initiator of Sámi American cultural revitalization. That librarian was Rudolph (Rudy) Johnson, Albertine Johnson's son. Elle-Hánsa then traveled to Duluth and met Rudy and his family, and remembers meeting the elder, Albertine. At the time he met her, she was in her nineties, and she spoke some Sámi with him. On his artist's website, Elle-Hánsa included an article that Rudy Johnson had written about Sámi American cultural belonging, and in connection with a memorial Elle-Hánsa wrote on the advent of Rudy's passing in 2007, he reminisced about his meeting with the Johnson family in Duluth:

> […] They have two sons and a daughter, one of their sons Kai had already studied Sámi language in Kárášjohka, and spoke it well. Rudy's mother was

> also there sitting in her rolling chair [rocking chair] with her handwork knitting. She asked if I knew where Árdni was, a large island [Arnøy in Norwegian] in Romsa/Troms county used by her relatives for summer pasture of their reindeer herd. She spoke a little Sámi, but would rather speak Norwegian, a child of the time of harsh assimilation policy. She told Rudy as a child in Duluth: "Speak English, people will think we are foreigners!" […] (Mathisen "Guest Authors")

Elle-Hánsa is perhaps best known for his artistic maps of Sápmi where he exclusively uses place-names in the Sámi languages. His maps have covered multiple regions and large tracts of the Sámi homelands. Countless Sámi people and Sámi Americans have his maps hanging in their homes, and people are especially delighted to receive maps from their own areas. When Elle-Hánsa visited Rudy's home, Rudy brought out a map, exclaiming: "Have you seen this map of Sápmi with all the names in Sámi?" To which, Elle-Hánsa responded: "Seen it? I made it!"

Elle-Hánsa visited the Johnson family several times over the years, and he has been instrumental in connecting other Sámi artists and cultural ambassadors with the Sámi American community. He shared Sámi knowledge with the diaspora Sámi family, and has collaborated on projects, for example with the Sámi American Kurt Seaberg in the development of the well-known Sámi calendar "Saami Spirit Calendar." The Johnson family has also visited Elle-Hánsa in Romsa/Tromsø several times and on one of their visits he commissioned an exhibition featuring some of Solveig Arneng Johnson's paintings during the Nana Indigenous Festival in 1998.

Oktavuohta—togetherness and connection—is foundational in maintaining communities and identities over time and across great divides. A consequence of colonialism is the rupture of connections and community, but maintenance or continuity of communities is sutured through storytelling. In the framework, *oktavuohta* is both a common and denotative term for "connection and togetherness," as well as an epistemologically foundational concept that synthesizes the other terms in the storytelling framework.

Verddevuohta

Verddevuohta embodies a particular manifestation of *oktavuohta*, but rather than "togetherness" or "connection" in a broad sense, *verddevuohta* is a distinct system of relationships between the inland reindeer herder Sámi and the more sedentary fishing/farming coastal Sámi with inter-generational shared ties to specific places. Traditionally, and especially before the Norwegianization policy, a *verdde* or "friend," in the coastal-inland relational way, fulfilled an important function in family and community

life. I have heard it referred to as "friendship with a purpose." The coastal Sámi lived in a more sedentary pattern, they were mostly small-scale farmers and fishers; many coastal families kept sheep and some milking cows and their husbandry was the primary responsibility of the women. The men were fishers who were often away from home for extended periods of time, and while they were away, women assumed the role of the primary head of household. The reindeer herding Sámi were, of course, nomadic and would pasture their herds most of the year on the inland tundra-plateau. In the late spring, they would move their herds to the coastal areas where the reindeer would graze for the summer. The group of reindeer herding families who labored, migrated, and grazed their herds collectively was called a *siida.* Historically, the coastal Sámi communities, like my own ancestors, were also organized into fishing *siiddat* (plural form of *siida*).

Each reindeer herding *siida* had a traditional summer place on the coast, and the coastal Sámi *siida*, or community from that shared place, would receive them. The groups of families would trade and labor together and shared in a sense of kinship; there could be a great need for labor during the migration and calving season, and the coastal people were essential in fulfilling that need for the inland people. Some inland families would keep a few sheep on the coast with their *verddet* (plural form of *verdde*) on the coast, and in turn, the coastal people might keep a few reindeer with the inland people's herds; the custodial husbandry sustained both relationships and met material needs for fur, wool, and meat (Evjen).

One of my family's inland Sámi *verdde*, referred to the system of *verddevuohta* as "kinship in the heart," and this definition is suitable for my own experiences of a contemporary extension of *verddevuohta* in my life and research process. Our *verddet*, the members of the family or *siida* who were part of traditional *verddevuohta* with my family, have been influential in my sense of belonging to our shared ancestral places in west Finnmark. They were some of the first people who reached out to me when I moved to Sápmi, they welcomed me, and told me about my obscured heritage. In acknowledgment of our web of relations tied to our shared ancestral places, they educated me through stories that form part of the local oral tradition. It was customary in *verddevuohta* to receive one another, and this practice extends into our modern lives.

Another reindeer herder friend of mine described the contemporary practice of *verddevuohta* as a friendship that is deeply tied to shared places on the coast. The friendship is maintained in contemporary times, even though many of the coastal people have moved away and the reindeer herders are no longer dependent on the remaining coastal people to labor with them over the summers. She said:

> I think about it, we still need each other. Even though we don't need to work together like before. In the summer, our children will meet their children, some of them even start to date. They are friends and hang out together. We may not need them for the work anymore, but we still need the friendship. *Verddevuoht*a is so important to our place; it really is about the place.

In the same sense of the contemporary form of *verddevuohta* described above, my *verddet* have also been instrumental in my research process. It was through some of their connections that I came into contact with key collaborators in the Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino community who shared knowledge from oral tradition with me about two of the grandmothers, Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima whose narratives form part of the storytelling project. It was especially important to building trust with collaborators, especially elders, that I had been introduced into the local social web of relations through my *verddet*—or otherwise through another local person who trusted me. All of the people in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino who welcomed me into their homes had rich knowledge which came through oral tradition and storytelling. After the research conversations, and later in this process, people from the community have called me with information and insights, fed me, hosted me, and connected me with other knowledgeable people in their local oral tradition. It is, perhaps, a case of what Kovach refers to as "inward knowing" that people from the community with important knowledge would reach out to me at moments in my research and writing process when I most needed encouragement and insight (Kovach *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* 68).

The coastal Sámi grandmothers Berith Susanna Kristina Larsdatter, from Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen, and Albertine Josefine (Svendsen) Johnson, from Árdni/Arnøy, specifically told their descendants stories about experiences with their own reindeer herding *verddet.* Similar relationships, that is, purposeful friendships tied to places, continue in all of the Sámi areas, undoubtedly also in urban areas. Experiences of shared meaning-making come through in oral tradition in stories shared in North America; despite colonial ruptures, and fragmentation of community due to migration, purposeful, place-based relationships continue in contemporary forms. Thus, *verddevuohta* becomes operative in the storytelling project and framework as an analogy for the ways storytelling research practices invoke social relationships (connections) tied to places.

Gáfestallat/Gáfestallan

Like *verddevuohta, gáfestallan* represents a particular manifestation of *oktavuohta*—togetherness—but unlike *verddevuohta* with the system of relationships it involves,

gáfestallan manifests connection very concretely tied to a physical space that takes on a larger significance: a social space that also conveys and embodies a sense of belonging. *Gáfestallat* as a verbal form means "to take a coffee break" with the corresponding noun, *gáfestallan*, meaning "coffee break"; these are their general denotations, but do not necessarily connote the extensive social dimensions of their meanings. The verbal form suggests a process and a deliberate, intentional, creation of social connection through making and drinking coffee. Traditionally, *gáfestallat* involved a more elaborate cooking, or boiling, of the coffee than a contemporary coffeemaker, a process I detail below. Many people continue to boil coffee in this way in the North, and drinking coffee together is a fairly everyday aspect of creating and maintaining social connection. Recent manifestations of *gáfestallan* in academic settings include a trans-national research network which made use of the term *káfastallat* to conceptualize a series of Sámi-centered scholarly meetings; on the *Samelands fria universitetet* blog, the author (ostensibly May-Britt Öhman) describes the use of the term for the network in the following:

> Káfastallat means drinking coffee together in Lule Sámi and relates to an activity among Sámi (and others) the everyday casual conversations which are an important and integral part for maintenance and development of (Sámi) culture and social/kinship/intellectual/scientific relationships. Káfastallat is about developing relaxed conversations regarding important issues and research led by Sámi in relation to Sámi/Indigenous realities, aspects of livelihood, methodologies and decolonization. We emphasize in particular the wish/need to develop safe and nurturing spaces for Sámi persons for these discussions. (Öhman)

In the winter of 2015 two Sámi scholars, Ánde Somby and Lill Tove Fredriksen, took the initiative to host a *gáfestallan* in the warmth of the *Joho Niillas goahti,* the traditional Sámi turf hut named for the late Nils Jernsletten on the Romsa/Tromsø campus of UiT, Arctic University of Norway. Again, this was an intentional way of bringing people into community, manifesting *oktavuohta*—togetherness through the social practice of *gáfestallan.*

Some of the steps involved in *gáfestallat*—in the traditional sense—might be first to gather and split the wood for the fire, make the fire, and then find an arched branch, called *goaŋku,* to hang a kettle over the fire. The water is boiled and then the coffee grounds are poured in, and the coffee is ready when the grounds have settled to the bottom of the kettle. The coffee drinkers, often a group, might have waited with some anticipation until the coffee grounds had settled, especially if they had been working in the cold and were eager for a

bit of sustenance.[5] *Gáfestallan* could also include serving dried and salted reindeer meat. If the *gáfestallan* was held in the *lávvu* (Sámi tent) or in the *goahti* (a round turf hut, usually with a sod exterior), the coffee pot might hang over the fire on a chain. It was an aspect of daily life to cook coffee in this way when one had guests, or if one had been working and needed a break.

I consulted several Sámi friends about the more traditional social practice of boiling coffee over a fire, they described it as something they remembered as "peaceful," "warm," and "important to our place and belonging." It was likely a seamless and natural part of life for the inland and coastal people in *verddevuohta* to cook coffee together, which would have been shared together on long summer days during the time of the midnight sun. But in a contemporary setting, it is in the deliberate sense of creating and using spaces that relationships are formed and maintained and carry over into modern practices.

The practice and sense of *gáfestallan* described above carried over into the Sámi American community and are reflected in the stories of the Sámi immigrant women and their descendants in the project. At a recent Sámi American gathering, in the sweltering heat of a summer day on the banks of the Mississippi River, a Sámi American woman came with a kettle that had been passed down to her in her family. She said, "I need to cook the coffee!" with a sense of purpose. She proceeded to cook the coffee over a fire, or in this case, a BBQ provided by the park, but the spirit of cooking coffee to create and maintain social relations tied to spaces came through. We all sat together while each of us drank what amounted to several tablespoons of coffee and smirked at the thought of how strange this ritual might have seemed to other picnickers in the park. While a group of people drinking coffee together is not that remarkable in and of itself, even on a sweltering hot day, it was the intentionality and reflection of Sámi cultural continuity that was meaningful. The kettle, in effect, became a "mnemonic device" that brought forth stories the Sámi American remembered about her grandmother "cooking coffee" over a fire (Lutz *Phd Seminar*). Cooking and sharing coffee, even in an "untraditional Sámi way," became part of sustaining social connections in a contemporary Sámi American community.

That story brings to mind a time when some Aboriginal Canadians asked a group of Sámi: "How do you open an event, like in a spiritual way?" I registered a touch of judgement in the question, but the person inquiring was not aware that the Sámi way of connecting to places and forging connections was different than their own ways. Perhaps the Sámi way is seamless and simply continuous with other aspects of life, a taken-for-granted that outsiders may not recognize as significant. One of the Sámi said: "What do we do? We cook the coffee!" Cooking coffee for the deliberate purpose of sustaining social

connections is ceremonial in the Sámi context. To enter into a collaborator's home, as I did both in Sámi America and in Sápmi, and not be offered coffee, could be interpreted as a sign of not being fully welcomed. I am relieved to report that in all of the research conversations with collaborators who shared their knowledge through stories in oral tradition, both in Sápmi and Sámi America, I was served coffee. Drinking coffee together became a natural part of the social connection and intersubjective exchange. In the research project and framework, I use *gáfestallan* as both a literal and figurative term for the intentional creation and maintenance of social connections in storytelling research practices.

Rátnogođđin

Rátnogođđin embodies *oktavuohta* in that it brings together or connects fibers, elements from nature, knowledge, collaboration, and continuity into a unified whole, represented by the *rátnu*—the rug or mat that is the final product. The English term for *rátnogođđin*[6] would be "weaving on a weighted-warped loom"; it is an ancient technology that has been used in many places throughout the world, including ancient Greece and Egypt, and also in various places in Sápmi. It is most associated with coastal Sámi communities in North Troms and Finnmark, as well as among the East Sámi ("Skolt"). The community that has the most documented and notable continuity of this practice is found in Gáivuona suohkan—Kåfjord municipality, North Troms. In 2001, Lene Antonsen and Kjellaug Isaksen created a richly detailed handbook titled *Rátnogođđin-Greneveving*. The practice was also the subject of early allied scholarship by the Norwegian researcher and curator Marta Hoffman who wrote her PhD study on the practice in the 1950s (Hoffman); notably, she also filmed some of the weavers engaging in the practice.[7] Later, Hoffman was instrumental in the Norwegian Folk Museum commissioning *ránut* (plural form of *rátnu*) from that community. Through Hoffman's collaborative research method and allied sense of responsibility to the community, an ancient weaving tradition that had almost gone out of practice was renewed and the value of this knowledge was brought to light.[8]

In some communities, *rátnogođđin* was a collaborative effort or project in family life. All members of the family could contribute to the production; the men might be responsible for shearing the wool from the sheep and constructing the loom from branches and logs, but it was women's weaving techniques that were highly valued for the rest of the process and the outcome. It was also a natural part of family life to transfer the knowledge of the process to the children in the family, thus, knowledge was reproduced collaboratively. Further, it was also not uncommon to give thanks to the sheep for their contribution, also reflective of connections between elements, humans, and animals, yet another expression of *oktavuohta*.

In the coastal Sámi communities, it constituted a vital contribution to the household economy, on a par with fishing, farming, and harvesting from nature. Fishing, farming, and harvesting guaranteed food and wood for the household and the community, but the sale and trade of *ránut* (plural of *rátnu*) brought cash into the household economy. The sale of *ránut* would have been especially lucrative at the annual markets. Everything the women needed for the practice was readily available in nature: the wool came from their own sheep; the branches and logs used to build the loom were harvested from wooded areas nearby; and the stones used as weights were also collected locally. The entire process was practical, portable, and did not require a lot of space (Isaksen et al.).

Ránut were used for a variety of purposes, including: for bedding and blankets; for something warm to sit on; as a floormat or rug; and for the door or outer layer on the nomadic Sámi *lávut* (plural form of *lávvu*). They were important in the trade relationship between the coastal Sámi and inland Sámi reindeer herders, and certainly would have been common in trade between *verddet* in *verddevuohta*. In the constellation of families meeting and visiting in the coastal areas where interconnectivity was a normal part of life, a woman who was especially talented at weaving would have been highly valued. Through oral tradition, people from the community and from other communities might come to know about talented and skilled weavers. One can certainly imagine the coastal and inland people having *gáfestallan* together while sitting on *ránut,* and the theme of a talented weaver may have even been a topic of conversation. Notably, like other Sámi craft implements (see Oskal), *ránut* have mostly gone out of everyday practical usage, but they are still produced and displayed for their aesthetic value, both in private homes and in institutions.

Spinning, weaving, knitting, sewing, and other crafts are important themes in the stories told about the lives of the women in the case study; crafting and handiwork skills reflected particular forms of women's agency and cultural continuity, both before and after migration. While "weaving" is a common metaphor in many storytelling epistemologies, especially in Indigenous women's storytelling (Archibald 2; Driskill 331–34; Lutz *Approaches : Essays in Native North American Studies and Literatures* 224–25), I have chosen this particular Sámi women's craft practice, *rátnogođđin*, as a metaphor for the process of "weaving" multiple referents or "story-threads" together into a meaningful, coherent, and useful whole and for its distinctive relevance to the stories of Sámi women and their agency.

Figure 2: Communities of belonging are sustained by stories tied to places and social, cultural, and material practices. "Oktasašvuohta Storytelling Research Framework." Graphic: Bjørn Hatteng. 2018

Conclusion

Clearly, the framework I have presented would not live up to the rigor of a certain type of "scientific research framework" where concepts are set and synthesized in advance of starting a project and promptly calibrated to "the various aspects of the question." Rather, the storytelling research framework manifests Sámi terms that arose from the stories themselves; thus, the terms shaped my thoughts and feelings about the research process, and provided interpretive insights and a Sámi-centered ethic. The terms, taken separately, or as a set of related terms, are an invitation to engage Sámi epistemology and social practices in a project that includes the diverse voices of trans-Atlantic Sámi descendants and Sámi in Sápmi. Normalizing the active use of our collective ancestral language in international scholarship serves as a point of connection that opens up for greater engagement with and visibility for Sámi as a living language. I use the terms figuratively, much the same way that Shawn Wilson uses "ceremony" in the book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (S. Wilson). Is research *really* that thing that most of us understand to be ceremony? Most of us will likely conclude that Wilson is using the term "ceremony" figuratively, that is, when research is conducted in a certain way, it bears features of ceremony, or it can be like or as a ceremony, or simply ceremonial. Similarly, *verddevuohta, gáfestallat/gáfestallan* and *rátnogođđin* invite reflection on ways of connecting and enacting togetherness or *oktavuohta* in conversational research methods; thus, the term *oktavuohta* synthesizes the general framework. Storytelling as connecting affirms, upholds, and constructs *oktasašvuohta,* or the community of belonging.

While *oktasašvuohta* and *oktavuohta* are foundational ontological and epistemological concepts representing community, connection, and belonging in the transmedial storytelling research framework, the "togetherness" they manifest is not one of uniformity, but made up of a diversity of inter-connected elements, in this case, the social practices of *verddevuohta* and *gáfestallat/gáfestallan* and the material or craft practice of *rátnogođđin*. Unity alongside diversity could be said to be in keeping with the spirit of the most central manifestation of Sámi subjectivity: the time immemorial tradition of Sámi yoiking. As stated in the introduction, in order to reflect on storytelling practices in Sámi culture, it is necessary to acknowledge the yoik tradition as foundational to oral tradition. Yoik tradition is perhaps one of the most illustrative examples of Sámi ontology and could be reflective of the sense of *oktasašvuohta* in the storytelling framework. As Ánde Somby, among others, defines yoik, "one does not yoik about someone or something, one simply yoiks someone or something" (Somby). In a short essay titled "Yoik and the theory of knowledge"—which like yoik itself, has powerful concentrated meaning—Somby writes:

> Yoik varies from place to place just as language does. They may be anything from melodic, epic yoiks to imitations of bird sounds. Within each "yoik dialect" there are "yoik idiolects," or personal variations. Thus, yoiking is not a phenomenon of a uniform society, but belongs to a world of diversity. (Somby)

Thus, yoiking manifests interconnectedness and intersubjectivity while belonging to a "world of diversity." In yoiking others rather than about others, and in adhering to the fairly strict norm that one never yoiks oneself, Sámi yoik tradition is at odds with traditional western scientific logic and epistemology (Gaski "The Secretive Text : Yoik Lyrics as Literature and Tradition"; Somby). Like the ontology and epistemology of the *oktasašvuohta* storytelling framework, one could also view yoik as being at odds with a seminal aspect of western art and literature in its emphasis on self-expression, and the view that individual subjectivity limits our direct experience of the world. The yoik implies an ontology that extends beyond the limits of the self; thus, like yoikers and the art and social practice of yoiking, the storytellers in my project are not interested in expressing themselves as much as connecting with and letting others speak with and through stories. Like Indigenous storytellers and stories globally, the polyvocal Sámi stories that come through in oral tradition, both in Sápmi and in North American diaspora communities, are told with and for families, communities, and entire peoples. The stories reflect connections to and continuities with communities and the social practices and places which sustain them. As one writer in a diverse world of Sámi people, by thinking and writing through everyday Sámi concepts, I seek to demonstrate epistemologically the manner in which the *oktasašvuohta* storytelling framework for the transmedial narrative project parallels the radical intersubjectivity of the Sámi yoik tradition.

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Notes

1. The sequence with the original English subtitles can viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCZ2OV3YobU
2. A few examples of lateral violence in the Sámi community that have been represented in media and literary texts include the following: sexual abuse and harassment; school bullying based on codes of cultural purity and the pathologizing of people of mixed cultural descent; bullying and social exclusion of individuals from families from the "wrong side" of the historical event called the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852. Another form of lateral violence which comes up in conversation with reindeer herders, is the experience of getting harassed or bullied in coastal communities during summer grazing, sometimes by descendants of coastal Sámi people; oftentimes the abusers in these cases are referred to as "self-hating Sámi."
3. To name just a few are the following: Associate Professor Torkel Rasmussen; Associate Professor Lill Tove Fredriksen; poet and visual artist Synnøve Persen; author and performer Siri Broch Johansen; President of the Norwegian Sámi Parliament Aili Keskitalo; artist and author Hans Ragnar Mathisen; and author Sigbjørn Skåden.
4. The following is a short description of the meaning of the artist's three names: Hans Ragnar Mathisen is his given, legal name; Elle-Hánsa is his Sámi name, meaning "Elle's Hans," or the Hans that belongs to Elle; Keviselie is the name given to him by the Angami Naga people. For more on the people of Nagaland see: *A Naga Odyssey: Visier's Long Way Home* by Visier Meyastetsu Sanyü.
5. For a historical image of *gáfestallan* see: https://digitaltmuseum.no/021015712358/gafestallan-kafferast
6. For a historical image of *rátnogođđin* see: https://digitaltmuseum.no/011013369427/greneveving-14-anne-hansen-kjar-veven-manndalen-1955
7. For one of several short films by Marta Hoffman see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXyaj16AmLg
8. To view a retrospective program on her project and work, see: https://tv.nrk.no/program/ftro00004687/veven-i-manndalen

Article II

Image-Narrative-Agency: Storying Historical Photographs as Visual Decolonization in Sápmi and Sámi America

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Image-Narrative-Agency: Storying Historical Photographs as Visual Decolonization in Sápmi and Sámi America

Introduction

The case study presented in this article forms part of a larger, ongoing project on oral tradition, transmedial storytelling, and diasporic Indigeneity in Sámi America. A foundational understanding in the ongoing project is that photography and visual imagery are often crucial to shaping Sámi consciousness and subjectivities; further, textual and oral narration or "storying" historical photographs manifest decolonizing aims in Sápmi and in diaspora communities. Visual discourses also "circulate" on social media, both within and between Sámi communities in Sápmi and North America. The act of narrativizing late 19th and early 20th century historical photographs—referred to in this study as "storying photographs"—realizes decolonizing aims in multiple ways, including: reversing colonial erasure; announcing "visual sovereignty" (Raheja); and working to actively shape and co-shape contemporary Sámi subjectivities. Through storying photographs, viewers and photographic subjects connect to places and webs of relations structured through Sámi temporal and spatial visions.

In this article, I propose that photographs and their intersecting narratives oftentimes engage in "mapping" the ancient, multi-faceted, polyvocal, and polyfocal development of Sámi consciousness of place and belonging in Finno-Scandinavia; this approach is inspired by the concept of "mapping" described by Anna Lydia Svalastog's essay "Mapping Sámi Life and Culture" (Svalastog 17–45). I also take inspiration from the following texts: Kathleen J. Martin's readings of Indigenous visual material emphasizing a living and enduring presence on ancestral land in "Native footprints: Photographs and stories written on the land"; Michelle Raheja's revisioning Indigenous "visual sovereignty" in ethnography in *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty and Representations of Native Americans in film*; and Jeff Corntassel's and Mick Scow's concept of "everyday acts of resurgence" in "Everyday Acts of Resurgence: Indigenous Approaches to

Everydayness in Fatherhood." I present a series of photographs with corresponding narratives that manifest multiple decolonizing aims. As an ordering device, I have distributed the photographs and corresponding "photonarratives" (Hughes and Noble 4–8) into three corpora with an approximate periodization: (1) colonialist photography (1880–1920); (2) allied ethnographic (1880–1920); (3) early commercial portraiture (19001920).

One of the methods for generating photonarratives was inspired by Margaret Kovach's "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research" (Kovach 40–48). The conversational method in the Sámi-centered contexts of the project employs many of Kovach's characteristics, but with some local adaptations. The following characterizes the conversational method in this project: research conversations that led to "storying photographs" were linked to Sámi places (spatialities), webs of relations, and temporalities. In addition, research conversations were relational, purposeful, informal, flexible, collaborative, reflexive and/or intersubjective; and critical for this study, interpretations employed a decolonizing aim (43). Several of the photonarratives were generated through family and community orality and "photographic memory work," (Kuhn and McCallister 1–17) and some were also generated alongside textual production; all of the conversations that generated photonarratives were prompted by historical photographs of Sámi subjects. Conversations or exchanges featured informality and were often simply a seamless aspect of my everyday life in Sápmi. Some of the photographs in the study circulate on social media and therefore figure prominently in a world-wide web of visual meaning-making that shapes the subjectivities of Sámi viewers living in diaspora. Other photographs in this study circulate within families and local communities where oral tradition plays a significant role in shaping narratives that intersect with the images. In the first section of the article, I provide a review of the Sámi as historical subjects of colonial photography and the ongoing visual discourses such imagery manifests. Through a series of three photonarratives and interpretations with decolonizing aims, the second section of the article addresses these historical and contemporary colonial visual discourses.

Visual Discourse, Colonial Photography, and the Sámi in Global Perspective

Photography has been employed for a variety of colonial purposes, including documentation, surveillance, commercial art, and (pseudo-) scientific research. Perhaps the most pervasive use of photography was in the theory and practices of racial typing, eugenics, and salvage ethnography. Photographic material constituted empirical justifications for colonization and settlement on the lands of peoples that were deemed "vanishing races." According to John Tagg: "Documenting, record keeping, surveillance and evidence were all central to the development of the modern nation-state and colonial

societies and photography was a key component of this development" (Tagg 15). Colonial governments often commissioned photographers to collect and carefully archive photographs of the lands appropriated and the peoples facing de-territorialization and forced assimilation. Professional photographers worked in tandem with colonial researchers, and in addition to their notebooks, travel logs, and skull-measuring equipment, researchers had their photographic equipment ready to take aim. The popular adage from Linda T. Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*—"They came, they saw, they named, they claimed" (Smith 83)—could easily be amended to: "They came, they aimed, they shot, they framed."

Photographic materials, mostly embellished or stylized portraits of presumably vanishing Indigenous peoples—an erroneous supposition informed by social Darwinism—were not only used as evidence in (pseudo-) scientific inquiry but were also consumed by members of the colonial majority cultures in exhibitions and travel publications. Most colonial photographic practice was characterized by great imbalances of power. Such photographic practices also left behind what Nielssen and Lien refer to as "a photographic legacy" in Sápmi, and the ongoing contemporary global circulation of colonial photographs and racialized imagery continues to lend implicit support to ongoing denigrating stereotypes of Sámi people (Nielssen and Lien 298).

There is an increasing number of scholars in various fields addressing the legacy of colonial photographic practice in Sámi contexts (cf. Dobbin 128–43; Heith 41–58; K. O. K. Olsen 3–20; Porsanger). Three contributions to the development of the discourse of colonial photography and ethnographic exhibition in Sápmi that have influenced this study are the following: Bjørg Evjen's study on race-anthropological research in the Lule Sámi community of Divtasvuodna/Tysfjord in 1914 and 1921; Nielssen and Lien's study of the use of photography in the RiddoDuottar Museum in Kárášjohka/Karasjok, and Baglo's (2014) study on Sámi agency in live ethnographic exhibitions in Europe and North America.

In her broad study of race anthropological research, "Measuring Heads: Physical Anthropological Research in North Norway," Bjørg Evjen reflects on the imbalances of power in research conducted in Sápmi. A seminal case from her study reveals the events around the time that Kristian and Alette Schreiner conducted anthropomorphic body and skull measurements—accompanied by photographic documentation by Johan Brun—of the Lule Sámi population of Divtasvuodna/Tysfjord in 1914 and 1921. As part of an internationally funded project, grounded in the theories of social Darwinism, the Schreiners and Brun sought to determine whether the Sámi people were of the "short-sculled race."

Evjen's article opens with a quote from a local Divtasvuodna/Tysfjord informant, perhaps confirming the researchers' and photographer's intentions:

> My Sámi grandmother had just returned from the woods when the researchers started their measuring. In fact, she didn't even get time to tidy herself up before they began to measure her. That's why she looks so disheveled on the photograph. It seemed as if they wanted it that way. (Tysfjord Sámi, in Evjen, unpublished, 1)

The (pseudo-) scientific agenda of the Schreiners was apparent: they were among a number of race-anthropological researchers who collected bones from Sámi graves and sent them to the Ethnographic Museum in Oslo for further study (8–9). In a positive, contemporary turn of events, the Schreiner photographic collection has been repatriated to the Lule Sámi community and the Árran Lule Sámi Centre has official ownership of the material. The Centre and local community are engaging in decolonizing the photographs by identifying the subjects and empowering the subjects' families to story the photographs on their own terms (Alanen).

Hilde Nielssen and Sigrid Lien's study reviews the RiddoDuottar Museum in Kárášjohka/Karasjok and contemporary Sámi artists' use of photography and reflects on "taking history back" and the use of colonial photographs in "new ways." They employ an interrogation of the historical role of photography in Sámi society through an accounting of the use of photography in multiple abuses of power by "representatives of the state," including missionaries, policemen, state-sponsored ethnographers, eugenics researchers, and boarding school personnel. Importantly, in interviews with the Sámi museum staff, we gain a better understanding of the full impact of the use of photography in colonial abuses, that is, through Sámi people's own views in the following excerpt:

> [...] "We were lined up," the staff repeatedly said when talking about their photographic legacy. Photographs taken of the Sámi were typically characterized by formal, standardized poses. Many of them were typological portraits of individuals or groups. The way the staff talked about these photographs revealed how their particular character evokes a whole range of situations, settings and contexts where the Sámi people were "lined up" to be photographed: the measuring of skulls as the ultimate image of racial discrimination; the stereotypes and misunderstandings of ethnographic accounts. There were other related oppressive tools of the "Norwegianization" policy, where Sámi children were sent to boarding schools to become proper Norwegian citizens and where it was forbidden to speak Sámi; and pastors'

> wives or representatives of Sámi Mission Society who engaged in all kinds of civilizing projects of health and hygiene […] (Nielssen and Lien 295)

The curators reflected a disdain for the colonial photographic practices of the Norwegian state, which Nielssen and Lien theorized formed a "Norwegian-European-colonial visual culture and perceptual regime" (296). Despite the abusive legacy of colonial photography in Sápmi, the Sámi-led museum had embarked on a number of projects with decolonizing aims. One of the projects included repatriating images and archiving them in Sámi epistemological frameworks by using Sámi concepts in the Sámi language for cataloguing. Another project was holding temporary exhibitions of colonial photographs where the relatives and descendants of the images are invited to story the photographs, thus recasting the negative legacy with positive associations.

Finally, in a study on live or professional ethnographic exhibitions in Europe and North America in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Catherine Baglo interrogates the lack of attention paid to Sámi agency in contemporary scholarly discussions on live exhibitions. Her study sets out to "challenge the dominant trope of victimization by sketching out a more complex history of these tremendously popular displays as they developed across the 19th and into the 20th centuries" (Baglo 136). Rather than viewing the Sámi as "hapless victims" she reveals how the Sámi "exploited these exhibitions to their own ends when their way of life was becoming increasingly difficult." By working together with the descendants of the subjects of these exhibitions, she revealed the alternative and nuanced narratives of the local Sámi communities from which the subjects of these exhibitions had been recruited. Many of these displays were also the subject of photographers and the photographs likely enjoy continued global circulation, thus, her study effectively creates a space for the descendants and relatives of these images to "story" these images on their own terms.

The visual and textual discourse of "the Lapp"

Dwelling within the "Norwegian-European-colonial visual culture and perceptual regime" described by Nielssen and Lien (296) is what I term the "visual discourse of *the Lapp*"; this visual discourse circulates in various media and reveals the historical and ongoing racialized and colonial imagery of the Sámi people. Akin to Gerald Vizenor's conceptualization and critique of the popular Euro-American discourses of *the Indian*, *the Lapp* is a stereotypical, European-invented image that closely corresponds with racialized textual discourses of the Sámi as Other. The most overt example of the racialized figure of *the Lapp* lacks agency and is dirty-faced, weathered-and-worn, drunk, and wearing clown-like renditions of "Lappish costume." The discourse of *the Lapp* also closely aligns with

the "European-invented" image of "Indianer" famously promoted by the 19th century German author Karl May. Lamentably, the constructed image of "Indianer" continues to permeate the cultural landscape in Germany; Lutz characterizes the obsession with May's invented "Indianer" with the coinage and apt essay: "German Indianthusiasm: A socially constructed German National(ist) Myth" (Lutz 157–74). European, especially German and the Nordic-states' nationalism's reliance on self-constitution against the mythic image of the Indigenous other was a facet of Norwegian nation-building. In the case of early 20th century Norwegian nationalism, degrees of "humanness" for the (mythologized) stoic, hearty, Germanic Norwegian farmer, were largely measured against the image or myth of the Sámi nomad (cf. Niemi; Oskal; Pedersen). The visual discourse of *the Lapp* has likely enjoyed its greatest historical currency within European nationalist paradigms.

Historical colonial photographs of the Sámi, some of which were taken in the service of rising European nationalism, were often staged to capture particular, stereotypical effects—these photographs can also be understood to comprise the visual discourse of *the Lapp*, especially when they appear alongside or intersect with corresponding colonial texts. Especially representative of such colonial texts are the entries on "the Lapps" in the *Dictionary of Races and Peoples* of 1911 (Dillingham 88–89) and *The World Encyclopedia* of 1949 (Jones 3873–77); both of these sources reveal the discourse of *the Lapp* in the use of disparaging adjectives and phrases, often aligned with eugenics, such as "dark," "dwarfish," "roundheaded (sic)," "love of drink," "cruel," "selfish," "dirty," and "destined to die out." While these particular texts enjoy limited circulation or contemporary legitimacy, the corresponding imagery from the time of their authorship and publication continues to circulate globally on various media platforms. Such images have inspired racialized carnival costumes, disparaging tourist postcards, and have even appeared on white nationalist and white supremacist propaganda.[1]

Perhaps the most disturbing of colonial-era photographic collections that capture the abuses of data gathering methods of race-anthropologists, which laid the foundations for the visual discourse of *the Lapp,* is Prince Roland Bonaparte's late 19th century collection. His exploits into Sámi peoples' communities resulted in photographing 200 subjects, many of whom were compelled to pose for front-view and side-view shots, in a way reminiscent of modern mug shots; this monumental work was published under the title *En Laponia* (Escard). Many of the Sámi subjects also endured anthropomorphic skull and body measurements, famously captured in the image with a rather telling title: "Measuring Lapps."[2] Bonaparte—like many of his cosmopolitan elite companions—took an interest in race anthropology and he was heavily endowed economically to pursue his expansive ventures to this end. Like many of his contemporaries, he was fascinated with classifying

humanity into a series of distinct “races.” Bonaparte’s collection on the Sámi continues to enjoy circulation, thus manifesting ongoing discourses of *the Lapp.*

Like all racialized or otherwise degrading imagery, the visual discourse of *the Lapp* undoubtedly leads to negative associations about the Sámi and can also lead to negative self-images among the Sámi people themselves. A facet of the ongoing circulation of the Bonaparte collection is that a number of the photographs—including "Measuring Lapps"—are in private ownership and under copyright of a gallery in Connecticut (USA) that sells them as "fine art" for a small fortune.[3] Yet despite the exploitation of these images for commercial gain, they have also been re-purposed by Sámi artists, including in the 1988 Nordic Prize for Literature book of poetry by Nils Aslak Valkeapää in *Beaivi, Áhčážan* (*The Sun, My Father*), and in the Imaginary *Homecoming installation* by Jorma Puranen (Edwards 317–32).Thus, contemporary Sámi have reclaimed colonialist photographs and images produced in the service of racialized agendas, given storied and humanizing accounts of the subjects, centered the agency of Sámi subjects, and reversed colonial discourses of erasure. Confirming Corntassel and Sow’s formulation of “everyday acts of resurgence,” one finds powerful counter-discourses to *the Lapp* expressed through “everyday acts of storying.”

As with any visual medium, viewers engage subjectively with the “story” reflected in the photograph, that is, they draw from their own history, position, and subjectivity in their interpretation of the visual narrative in the photograph; thus, viewers engage in a negotiated, dialogic reading. In much the same way that Baglo has sought to present a more nuanced view of Sámi participants in live ethnographic exhibitions, I also seek to present a nuanced view of the Sámi as subjects of photographs by presenting various photographic practices and their corresponding output. To be clear, not all photographs of the Sámi taken during the period of intense state colonization (circa 1860–1945) could be fairly characterized as victimization or forming the discourse of *the Lapp*, rather, some of the Sámi subjects actively engaged in photographic production on their own terms, thereby exercising their agency. Even photographs taken under colonial duress can reveal subtle instances of Sámi people taking command of their own subjectivities, thus revealing “visual sovereignty.” In other words, past photographic practices have been imbued with subjugation alongside empowerment. The visual discourses of these distinct, yet not necessarily mutually exclusive practices, must also be viewed and analyzed in relation to the contemporary use and misuse of historical and colonial photographs and images on various media.

Storying Colonialist Photography

Figure 1: (original caption) "A Lapp family, Norway." Library of Congress (1890–1900)[4]

Neutral or unproblematic images of Sámi subjects develop into visual discourses of *the Lapp* when the narrative intersecting the image is framed in colonial and racializing terms. Such is the case with the photonarrative I present in this section. This photograph is illustrative of the circulation and continued use (and abuse) of photographs taken of the Sámi during the colonial period of Norwegianization. The genesis of the photograph is not clear, nor is the practice or particular aims of the photographer up for review. At issue here are recent abuses associated with the use of this photograph which are emblematic of the discourses of *the Lapp* (Figure 1) and the subsequent storying of the photograph with decolonizing aims. This photograph has been published in academia and websites, and has been discussed on social media and blogs. It even made its way into a Bernie Sanders presidential campaign video highlighting American diversity—to the delight of descendants of Sámi immigrants in the USA and to the descendants of the subjects of the photograph (Larsson). However, the names of the subjects of the photograph and their stories are not included in the above-mentioned uses, rather, the original caption from the Library of Congress "Lapp family, Norway" frames the narrativity of the image. But it was the de-humanizing use of the photograph in a 2015 television program in Norway that raised the ire of Sámi people, and especially the descendants of the subjects in the photograph, including the UiT, The Arctic University of Norway researcher Ketil Lenert Hansen (see K. L. Hansen "Ethnic Discrimination and Health: The Relationship between

Experienced Ethnic Discrimination and Multiple Health Domains in Norway's Rural Sami Population"). Incidentally (or serendipitously), Hansen's research in the field of health sciences concerns the consequences of racial discrimination on the health of the Sámi people; he is also the grandson of the second child from the right, Inger-Anna (Inga) Andersen Svonni (figure 1).

The abuse of the photograph occurred on the popular reality program, *Paradise Hotel*, which used this image to "rank" participants according to the "lowest rung" of humanity; and if that was not enough, the score that accompanied the clip of the photo was a traditional yoik (T. Schanke; T. E. Schanke). Hansen, with the support of many other Sámi people, lodged a complaint against the program together with the leader of the *Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman*; the Ombudsman concluded that the program had discriminated against the Sámi people (Barka and Solheim). The issue was also taken up by the Sámi press and was vociferously reviewed and debated on social media and blogs, and also by Indigenous Studies academics (T. Olsen).

Shortly after these events and after ruminating on the fact that this photograph has enjoyed wide circulation and heated discussion, I ran into Ketil Lenert Hansen on the University campus. We had an "everyday" conversation about the photograph and his involvement in addressing the abuses associated with it. Later that day, he sent me an article he had written for the local historical association in the geographic area reflected in the photograph and I have since followed up with him on the content of it and on the ongoing transmedial project. The photograph was taken in his own ancestral area where other descendants of the subjects of the photograph continue to live and work as modern reindeer herders. In order to provide a space for the voices of descendants of colonial era photographs to come through in this project, below I include the extended text that accompanied the photograph in Hansen's article (my translation):

> *This photograph was taken in 1897 down by the seashore south of Heggedals River's outlet in Kanstadbotn (Sámi: Gánasvuotna). The reproduction was made by Photolab AG Zurich. The photograph was originally a black and white and was later colorized using the technique called photochrom. It is a lithographic technique for colorization of black and white negatives, followed by printing. On the photograph, one can see my grandmother Inger-Anne (Inga) Andersen Svonni (the second child from the right). She was born 14 March 1894 and died 24 August 1964; she is buried in Lødingen cemetery. When the photograph was taken she was three-years-old. She is held by her mother, Elen Olesdatter Sarri Svonni, born 17 September 1859 in*

> *Kanstadfjord. The boy to the right is Tomas Peder Andersen Svonni, born near Sortland, 19 September 1890. Tomas died 5 December 1965 and is buried in Lødingen. Tomas was the uncle of Inge Andersen, who lives on the farm Langnes in Kanstad. The woman on the left is Ingrid Olesdatter Sarri Inga, born in 1862 in Sarre, Sweden in the Nikkaluokta area (Sámi: Nihkkáluokta). In front of her is her daughter Inga Nilsen Inga, born in 1894 in Lunkan, Kanstadfjord. In the "komsa"[5] is Karen Nilsdatter Inga, born in 1897 in Kanstadfjord. The komsa is encased at the Tromsø Museum today. The man in the middle of the photograph is Nils Andersen Inga. He was born in 1853 in Jukkasjärvi, Čohkkiras in Sweden. Nils was married to Ingrid. In the front of Nils is Ole Nilsen Inga who was born in 1887 in Sortland.*
>
> *By, Ketil Lenert Hansen, UiT, The Arctic University of Norway.* (K. L. Hansen "Berømt Bilde Av Samefamilie Fra Kanstadfjorden 1897" 48–51)

Here, Hansen gives a storied account of the subjects of the photograph and places them on Sámi land, in Sámi places, and in Sámi webs of relations in the area. Hansen is not simply "putting names" to subjects, rather, he engages in a radical act of "re-humanizing" his family against a colonial visual framework that has historically warped Sámi people's humanity. He does this first and foremost for the local community and for his own relations. Further, he contextualizes the history of the photograph in a Sámi temporal frame and revisions sovereignty of the subjects. In addition, he reflected on the photograph as a material object that has been reclaimed and "reframed" as a "family picture" rather than as a floating emblem of the discourses of *the Lapp.* The interpretive lens reflects self-in-relation, where one gives an accounting of oneself through one's connections to larger webs of relations and to Sámi places. In the sections of the publication following the photo-history, he crafts a documentary accounting of his family's continued livelihood in reindeer herding on the land with accompanying contemporary photographs where all of the subjects are named. Like many other Sámi engaged in the process of reclaiming photographs of their people, Hansen offers a vision of cultural continuity and knowledge among descendants, and their continued presence on and lived engagement with the land. By storying the photograph, Hansen engages in decolonizing the visual discourse of *the Lapp*, and in contrast to narratives of colonial erasure, he manifests narratives of what Martin refers to as an "active interpreted present" (2) among the Sámi families in Gánasvuotna/Kanstadbotn.

Storying allied ethnographic photographs: Ellisif Wessel

Like other Indigenous peoples around the world, the Sámi have always had friends from their majority culture neighbors. In this section, I honor the contributions of one of these allies whose work stood out as an alternative to the disparaging images left behind by the social Darwinists and their racial typography photographs that upheld the visual discourse of *the Lapp.* In more recent history, and at the risk of falling into disfavor with majority culture society, late 19th century and early 20th century allies chose to stand alongside the original peoples in the areas where they lived or worked. Some early Norwegian allies included ethnographers and photographers who lived and worked in solidarity with the Sámi (as well as other oppressed populations).[6] One such allied ethnographic photographer was Ellisif Wessel—a woman who socially, politically, and personally defied the gender and class norms of the southern Norwegian gentry of her time (Wikan; E. Johansen; Øyen).

Born in 1866 in Østre Gausdal in Oppland to upper-class parents, Ellisif Wessel would have seemed like an unlikely friend of ethnic minorities, Indigenous peoples, and the working-class. In 1886, at the age of twenty, she married Andreas Wessel, who had been assigned to be the municipal physician in Girkonjárga/Kirkenes, Mátta-Várjjat/Sør-Varanger, the easternmost municipality of Finnmark Province. The couple represented a small number of Norwegian settlers from southern Norway who migrated to the border area of Russia, Norway, and Finland. Soon after they settled in the area, Ellisif and Andreas would be regarded as respected friends of the local communities in the area, including ethnic Finns, Russians, North Sámi and East ("Skolt") Sámi. During the Wessels' tenure in Finnmark, municipal physicians would travel around extended geographic areas on rotation and Ellisif often accompanied Andreas on his travels. Along the way she would photograph the highly variable landscapes of the area, as well the people she met in small settlements or communities. Later, she would become active in the socialist movement and advocated for the rights of workers; she also photographed workers in their working lives, especially the miners and the labor and socialist movement's strikes and demonstrations. At a pivotal moment in Sámi history in the area of modern-day Girkonjárga/Kirkenes, she also advocated for Sámi rights when a mining operation was set to displace a traditional Sámi settlement (Øyen).

One feature that sets Wessel's photographic practice apart from many of her majority culture contemporaries was her manifestation of allied responsibility to the communities in her midst (Øyen): she photographed the places and people in intersubjective contexts that undoubtedly co-shaped her own values as well as the values of the photographic subjects[7]. Rather than upholding particular racialized discourses, such as detached ethnographic "racial typing" portraits, Ellisif Wessel's photographs humanize the subjects.

The subjects are photographed in their everyday lives on their traditional lands while engaging in their traditional livelihoods. In other words, they are not stylized or posed to fulfill a particular racial stereotype, but are at once a reflection of the subjects' everyday realities. In contrast to the photographic legacy characterized by colonialist photographers who came into Sámi areas without invitation, took anonymous, detached, racial-typing portraits, and gave nothing back to the communities they transgressed, Wessel named most of the subjects of her photographic practice and lived in community with the subjects. One could argue that through her practice, she and the local subjects mutually co-shaped their subjectivities. She was also known to develop the photographs in her private lab and gift them back to the local people she photographed in the community. A manifestation of local people's agency in shaping their own historical narratives, is the fact that many local descendants are the owners of the material and have donated originals and copies to the local museum, Grenselandmuseet/Borderland Museum. When local people also share stories from oral tradition with relevance to the materials donated, the material enacts a consciousness of place and belonging for descendants of the photographic subjects.

As stated above, it was not uncommon for Wessel to develop photographs to give back to the subjects themselves, or to give members of a local community landscape photographs from their area. Steinar Wikan writes one such story in his 2008 biography of Ellisif Wessel. The story of this photographic gifting corresponds well with the photonarrative to follow; Ellisif gifted photographs to her Sámi hired-hands and friends, Ole Must and Per Savio (pictured in Figure 2 below) when they were hired as part of a Norwegian team on a British-led expedition attempting to reach the South Pole in 1900. In fact, it was Ellisif who had facilitated the contracting of Must and Savio for the expedition. She had known Must and Savio since they were children, and they had worked for her as *oahpisteaddjit (*plural form of *oahpisteaddji*)—highly-skilled porters and guides using a sledge with draft reindeer—among other tasks. She vouched for their superior skills, competence, and reliability. On the day that Must and Savio were to depart for the long and dangerous journey to the South Pole, she came to the send-off at the pier with a gift for them should they become homesick: photographs of their home (Wikan 56).

The year 2016–2017 marked the sesquicentennial of Ellisif Wessel's birth. The municipality held multiple events over the year and had installations of Wessel's photographs in various locations (Skum). One of them was in the square in Girkonjárga/Kirkenes; in contrast to the mostly rural, permanent, and seasonal settlements of Wessel's time, contemporary Girkonjárga/Kirkenes is a northern, multi-cultural, multi-lingual industrial city economically shaped by mining, shipping, and tourism. It also has a visible militarized presence from the era of the Cold War and is marked by its placement

near the meeting of the Russian, Norwegian, and Finnish national borders—known locally as "borderlands." When the Wessels moved to the area, the majority of the local inhabitants were Skolt and North Sámi people whose livelihoods were based in fisheries and reindeer herding. There were also Northern Finns and Russians living in proximity, and a small number of Norwegian fishers. Prior to heavy industrialization and the colonial policy of Norwegianization, the multicultural population lived interdependently. With the influx of mining and other industries, Norwegianization of the entire population—Sámi, Kven, and Russians, hastened. The Second World War had a particularly devastating impact on the local population; after the reconstruction of Finnmark, like many other coastal localities impacted by burning and bombing in WWII, Sámi presence in the area was effectively erased in the official narrative and in local material culture. Many of the Sámi who remained in the area could be said to embody repressed Indigeneity in their own traditional territories in Mátta-Várjja. That particular narrative forms part of the biographical film *Solveig: The Life and Artwork of Solveig Arneng Johnson* by Kiersten Dunbar-Chace. The film features the Sámi American elder, Solveig Arneng Johnson, Solveig grew up in Girkonjárga/Kirkenes and has shared stories with the Sámi American community about her youth and the time she got to have tea with the local legend Ellisif Wessel. She has also shared poignant stories about the consequences and pain of the suppression of Sámi identity during her childhood, stating something to the effect: "We weren't allowed to be Sámi when I was growing up" (Dunbar-Chace). The historical trajectory of Girkonjárga/Kirkenes "becoming" the city of Kirkenes, reflects colonization of a place where Indigenous people had lived; the presence of Sámi people in the city is one of both economic-driven migration from rural places into "the (now) city," but also, and crucially, the continuity of a Sámi presence in the area since time immemorial. Both of these groups have been part of the whole-scale (re)vitalization of Sámi subjectivity and consciousness in Sápmi, and especially in Girkonjárga/Kirkenes; an important dimension of this (re)vitalization is that many Sámi in the area engage in everyday acts of storytelling, sometimes tied to visual imagery, a perhaps fortuitous act of decolonization.

I visited the city of Girkonjárga/Kirkenes in the summer of 2017 during my research period and after a trip to Duluth, Minnesota where I visited Solveig Johnson in the Duluth. It was the culmination of the "year of Ellisif Wessel" in Girkonjárga/Kirkenes, marking the sesquicentennial of her birth. The town was hosting a small international market and festival, complete with vendors, concerts, and cultural events; it was brimming with activity and had a feeling of vitality. It was also an election year, thus, the multiple political parties represented in the municipality, National Parliament and Sámi Parliament were campaigning in the streets and holding debates and lectures. In the middle of the town square and festivities, stood one of the commemorative installations of Ellisif Wessel's

work; both local people and visitors bustled around the installation. Some people took photos, others pointed at the images and gestured as if they knew the subjects, while a few appeared to engage with the images in solitary contemplation. Clearly, visitors and local viewers with familial ties to the region and to the subjects of the photographs experienced the installation differently, yet all of the viewers were affected by the images in some way. This event shaped the context for a short, fairly impromptu, and informal research conversation with Mariann Wollmann Magga, a local politician, reindeer herder, and relative of the young man pictured on the right in the photograph below (Figure 2). The two subjects—Ole Johannes Must and Per John Savio—are both well-known in the Mátta-Várjjat/Sør-Varanger community, especially among the Sámi, and their stories hold an important place in local oral tradition. As family friends and long-time employees of the Wessels, Must and Savio were frequent subjects of Ellisif Wessel's photographic praxis.

Figure 2 (original caption written on the photograph): "South Pole Farers Ole Johannes Must and Per John Savio" Ellisif Wessel, 1898. [8]

The setting for the photograph above was ostensibly in the Wessel's garden and Ellisif probably took the photograph prior to Must and Savio's departure for the South Pole expedition. The young men had worked for the Wessel's from the time they were teenagers, and as frequent visitors to the Wessel home, there are multiple images of them from various periods in their lives in her collection. I chose this image as it corresponds with the narrative of their expedition but also with the story of Wessel gifting the young men photographs of their home at their send-off, which likely circulates in local oral tradition.

In my short research conversation with Mariann Wollmann Magga on the occasion of the end of the "year of Ellisif Wessel," Magga expressed the value of Ellisif's work for contemporary Sámi (re)vitalization in the Mátta-Várjjat/Sør-Varanger area, especially to her own family narrative. The following (abridged) photonarrative comes in the form of an extended quote from our research conversation that captures the ways that Wessel's photographs, alongside oral tradition, work toward challenging colonial erasure (my translation):

> I am related to Savio. Must and Savio were the first people from our area who traveled south of the equator. They are well-known for that expedition here in this community. Ellisif Wessel's photographs are important to us here, because they are the only visual documentation we have that there were actually Sámi in the Sørvaranger area. Her work has been important in the revitalization of Sami identity in Sørvaranger because the subjects of her photographs were named, so when people see the photos they see their own Sámi relatives and ancestors and they know their stories. Many people here are related to people in her photographs. You can hear people say "that's my relative" or "that's my ancestor" when they look at the photographs. Some of the photographs were taken in Sandnesdalen, my home area. They prove that Sandnes was a Sámi settlement before the area became quite industrialized and was "emptied" of the original Sámi inhabitants. Ellisif also had a very important role in the quality of life for the workers in the area. (Magga)

Local stories intersecting with local photographs is rather common, but what distinguishes this phenomenon in the case of Wessel's work is how such photonarratives engage in "mapping" the presence of Sámi people in Girkonjárga/Kirkenes. In the photonarrative above, Magga likely channels the voices of many Sámi people from the municipality; Wessel's photographs and their intersecting stories are useful for the local population and present an alternative to the narrative of erasure from heavy industrialization, WWII, and the Norwegianization policy. They also present an alternative to the false narrative of

Indigenous people's isolation and the stereotype that Indigenous peoples lacked agency in "global affairs." Attesting to the endurance of the webs of relations that are often rendered invisible in public discourse, one Sámi scholar with roots in Girkonjárga/Kirkenes, Torkel Rasmussen, said: "Everyone from around here is related to people in Ellisif's photographs." Crucially, it is not simply the existence of the photographs and spectatorship that sustain webs of relations, but the stories from oral tradition that intersect the photographs; thus, Wessel's collection could be said to reflect the Sámi people's enduring presence on their ancestral land, even in the industrial city.

Early commercial portraiture in Sápmi (1900–1920)

During the same period that the Sámi endured colonial photographic practices—roughly between 1870 and 1940—and were the subjects of allied, albeit economically privileged, ethnographic photographers, the Sámi also hired professional portrait photographers. In the early 1900s, populations throughout North America and Europe were beginning to hire photographers for popular life events, in the Norwegian and Sámi context, such events were often weddings, baptisms and confirmations (Y. Johansen). This period pre-dated the democratization of photography signaled by the mass production and distribution of the Kodak in the 1930s; thus, portraiture was a lucrative business in the early 1900s. Itinerant photographers and studios would travel around to remote or rural areas in search of customers (Phillipe 779–81). Portraits taken during this period are also an important part of Sámi American material culture, and like other photographs, commercial portraits arrived in North America in immigrant chests and continue to circulate across the Atlantic digitally and on social media. Most of the early portrait photography used a style of framing in the tradition of stilted posing, an apparent continuation of the long history of painted portraiture that had previously only been accessible to the upper classes; however, there were exceptions to this severe style. This was the case with the photograph I came upon serendipitously when visiting a cabin in East Finnmark (figure 3). For interpretive purposes, the scene of this photographic discovery and my particular reaction to it deserves explication.

Figure 3: The innermost room of a cabin at Reakčavuotna/Lille Leirpollen. Jostein Henriksen, March 2017. (Private)

In 1944, the occupying forces of the Nazi regime deported most of the population of Finnmark Province and the northernmost municipalities of Troms. Most of the coastal communities in West Finnmark, including my family's traditional area, were burned to the ground in what would come to be called the policy of Scorched Earth. One of the many, sometimes under-represented, consequences of Scorched Earth was the loss of coastal Sámi material culture, and especially familial photographic material. But there were also areas that were not burned, especially on the inland tundra-like plateau; even a number of coastal communities were, however, also spared. When the occupying forces gave the deportation order, many families in Finnmark dug holes in the ground where they hid precious belongings, including photographs. Settlements or villages that were not destroyed during Scorched Earth enjoy the contemporary status of designated sites of historic preservation. One of these settlements was Lávvonjárga and its accompanying grazing area at Reakčavuotna/Lille Leirpollen, a coastal area near the mouth of the Deatnu/Tana River on the Deanuvuotna/Tana Fjord. The small cabin photographed above (figure 3) is at Reakčavuotna/Lille Leirpollen. While the presence of a wedding photograph on the wall of a small cabin is not necessarily remarkable in itself, it was the prominent placement of the photograph and the narratives that accompanied it that were illuminating. The wedding couple built the cabin twenty years prior to the Second World War, and while the church where the couple had wed was burned by the Nazis in 1944, the settlements in Reakčavuotna/Lille Leirpollen and Lávvonjárga had been spared because, according to the local community, the "Germans never found it."

When I made the discovery of the photograph, which I have titled *Wedding Day at Guhkesnjárga/Langnes*, I found it striking for two reasons: the first was the obvious departure from the stilted, severe style of the usual commercial wedding portraiture of the time; and the other was the less obvious contradiction to stereotypes of the Sámi as constituting the "servant-class," that is, compared to more well-to-do Norwegian settlers. Contrary to such perceptions, the tall woman in western dress standing to the left of the wedding table—appearing almost ghostly—was a Norwegian from the south, serving the Sámi wedding party. The wedding photograph functions like "photo-counter-discourse" to the stream of touristy, colonial images and textual discourses positioning the Sámi as destitute and dirty and barely scraping by for a meager existence; in other words, this photograph turns the visual discourse of *the Lapp* on its head. Here, the people in the Sámi wedding party are eating and drinking from porcelain finery, exuding a natural warmth and enjoyment of the occasion.

Figure 4: "Wedding Day at Guhkesnjárga/Langnes." J. Larsen. 1909. Source: Arnhild Kratteng

Arnhild Kratteng, granddaughter of the wedding couple, had written some information on the back of photograph which reveals the names of some of the subjects, thus placing them within the local web of relations in Deatnu/Tana:

> *Ragnhild Kathrine Ravna and Henrik Andreas Henriksen [Lávvonjárg-Heandarat] got married at Langnes, September, 1909. They moved to Lavvonjarg [Lávvonjárga]. Behind the wedding couple: Magga Henriksen. The child is probably Agnes Øwre. (Her parents were Ragnhild and Samuel Ravna).*

The woman furthest to the right is probably Ragnhild Samuelsen from Store Molvik [Guolleveadji].

Kratteng shared that the photograph (figure 4) was taken in 1909 at the Langnesmarkedet (the Langnes Market), one of many historical markets in the region where people would travel to meet and mingle and to engage in trade of locally-crafted goods, as well as engage in other types of commerce (Kratteng); this historical market is still held annually (Jensen). The narrative of the wedding day took shape in informal exchanges with descendants of the couple as well as with local community members with knowledge of local history. After talking to several Deatnu community elders and having a research conversation with Olaf Hansen from Fanasgieddi/Båteng, I heard that the Henrik Andreas was called Lávvonjárg-Heandarat; he was highly regarded and especially known to be a smart and savvy small businessowner and intrapreneur (O. Hansen). Lávvonjárg-Heandarat and Ragnhild Kathrine Ravna likely met for the first time at the market the year before. Thus, the market was the setting for the beginning of their courtship, engagement, and eventual wedding. Courtship was a customary aspect of such markets; eligible singles seeking matrimony would often meet at the Langnes Market. The bride was from the settlement near the Church village and the place of worship for much of the municipality until it was burned by the Germans in 1944.

The Langnes Market would have been an advantageous time of year for a wedding. The guests might have already been traveling there on their yearly visit to the market, and many of them might not have lived in close physical proximity. At that time, the normal route of travel was by waterway on Deatnu/the Tana River and along the coast around the mouth of the river. The photography studio was located in Várggát/Vardø, at least 180 kilometers away on land. The local Sámi community had likely invited the photography studio to come to the annual market because people wanted portraits taken during the events and festivities, and they especially wanted photographs of their families.

The photograph *Wedding Day at Guhkesnjárga/Langnes* and intersecting Sámi-centered historical narratives destabilize sustained stereotypes of the Sámi people in national and international discourses. The conversations or short exchanges manifested in the "narrative spaces" (Hughes and Noble 1–16) of this photograph could be interpreted as a Sámi-specific sort of "photographic memory-work" (Kuhn and McCallister 1–18) and a reflection of Sámi agency against the visual discourses of *the Lapp*. In contrast to memory work that often invokes traumatic events associated with abusive colonial photographic practice, this memory work conjures up leisure, renewing social ties, and pleasure. Each historical photograph that emerged in the research conversations about this photograph

prompted new stories about the subjects and their descendants—placing them all in the context of wider familial networks, within Sámi temporalities, and within webs of relations in the greater Deatnu/Tana municipality.

Conclusion

Although photography has been used to advance colonial aspirations, both Sámi people and their allies have actively and creatively used photography for their own agendas. In this case study, I deliberated on the ways storying photographs manifest decolonizing aims by interpreting historical photographs and their intersecting narratives from three distinct corpora: colonialist, ethnographic allied, and early commercial portraiture. Self-generated portraiture, allied ethnographic, and even colonialist photographs—which maintain the visual discourse of *the Lapp*—continue to circulate on various media. Many descendants of subjects of colonial photographs have re-appropriated images for their own purposes through narrative, imaginative, and creative strategies that humanize the subjects of colonial photographs. Intersections of colonial photography with contemporary narratives have the potential to build alternative and contemporary visions of Sámi peoples' enduring presence on the land and sustain webs of relations. Allied ethnographic photographic material and early commercial portraiture are important sites of memory, prompting storytelling in communities; these images can often be interpreted as counter-photographic discourses to stereotypical images, like the visual discourse of *the Lapp* and corresponding texts.

Finally, historical images of the Sámi, regardless of the conditions of their original production, also shape diaspora Sámi subjectivities in North America. Thus, I propose devising methods of writing narratives, or constructing narrative spaces around colonial photographs in transmedial praxis through memory, dialogue, and collaborative cross-Atlantic exchanges. Collaboratively, we have the potential to construct empowering, poly-vocal narratives that intersect with historical photographs and facilitate moving them out of the static, symbolic, and silenced world into the living narrative of a people.

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Notes

1. See the comedians in Finland, called *Pulttibois*: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2t4de9; see the reindeer meatball canned soup product label for "Joika" (an obvious reference to Sámi yoik) https://digitaltmuseum.no/011024939927/hermetikkboks
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_Bonaparte#/media/File:Bonaparte-groupshot.jpg
3. http://cwfp.biz/cgi-bin/se/bonaparte_lapons/tm.pl?itm&fd08.65
4. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsc.06257
5. Translator's note: a Norwegian word for a Sámi-style cradleboard for infants; the North Sámi word is *gietkka*.
6. Two noteworthy examples are the ethnographer Emilie Hatt Damant and astrophysicist and photographer Sophus Tromholt.
7. To view a large collection of Ellisif Wessel's work, see Digital Museum: https://digitaltmuseum.no/search/?q=Ellisif+wessel
8. https://digitaltmuseum.no/011013414639/sydpolfarerne-ole-johannes-must-og-per-john-savio-ant-kirkenes-sor-varanger?i=0&aq=text%3A%22per%22%2C%22must%22

Article III

Photography in Life Narratives of Early Twentieth Century Sámi Immigrant Women: Memory, Agency, and Webs of Relations

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Photography in Life Narratives of Early Twentieth Century Sámi Immigrant Women: Memory, Agency, and Webs of Relations

Introduction

This article explores the intersection of storytelling with historical photographs using a case study of life narratives of early 20th century Sámi immigrant women. Inspired by Noble and Hughes' formulations, I refer to the stories that intersect with photographs in the case study as "photonarratives" (Hughes and Noble 4). In this interpretive analysis, I reflect on photography in an ongoing narrative project with community partners in Sápmi and North America. The community partners or collaborators are descendants, relatives, and associates of the five Sámi immigrant women in the study, as well as local community members from the women's home communities in Sápmi. The research for the project materialized within a Sámi-centered epistemological framework using a storytelling methodology (Kovach *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* 92–108; Wilson *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* 97–125). In the process of collaboratively producing life narratives of Sámi immigrant women, I had research conversations with local collaborators in Sápmi and grandchild-storytellers or descendant-narrators in North America. In the former, storytelling manifested local oral tradition; in the latter, storytelling manifested expressions of diasporic indigeneity in a developing oral tradition. I have also drawn on diaspora, memory, and critical studies approaches in the interpretation of the collaboratively produced photonarratives.

While cultural continuity finds expression in artistic production and material culture passed down in families, it is important to emphasize that oral tradition in the form of storytelling in families and local communities is foundational and constitutive of diasporic indigeneity in the Sámi American context. The grandchildren's stories intersecting with familial photographs, when interpreted on a *temporal-spatial-narrative framework*, reflect an insistence on their ancestors' belonging to Sámi places—some of which are

contemporaneously viewed as “colonized,” “totally assimilated,” or “Norwegianized.” Their stories also situate their ancestors' narratives within temporalities outside of standard or dominant nation-state historiographies, in particular, they address the long-term consequences of the Norwegianization policy and the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852 in their ancestors' lives both before and after migration.

Collaborative Transmedial Life Narrative Production in Diasporic Indigeneity

The case study comprises an examination of oral tradition in diasporic indigeneity in the collaborative production of life-narratives of Sámi immigrant women, and analysis of storytelling intersecting with three media: photography, written text, and film/video. I use the term “life narrative production” rather than “life narrative writing” to indicate the multiple media through which stories and oral storytelling become operative. It is almost impossible not to privilege the written text in the end-product of the ongoing project; however, we (the collaborators and I) hope to eventually establish a web-based platform for the stories of the Sámi immigrant women to come through in multiple media. The inspiration for such a project comes from the modern practice of the production of historical transmedial narrative (Ryan 1–40; Herman 47–75; Jan 1–14). The intention of framing the historical narratives of the immigrant women in a transmedial project is to assert that stories of Sámi grandmothers merit—or even demand—ways of telling that engage multiple audiences across a spectrum of ages, cultures, and locations, and across various media. We seek to eventually put the practice of transmedial storytelling to work in the production of life narratives of Sámi immigrant women on a web-based platform; this aspect of the project is intended to enact an Indigenous research paradigm where mutually produced knowledges are co-shared with communities in locally meaningful and accessible ways, much in the way that Linda Tuhiwai Smith refers to as “giving back” (Smith 145). Through the narrative paradigms co-created with the research partners, Sámi Americans can better understand their family stories in context, their own experiences, and the complexities of their grandparents’ silencing of Sámi identity.

In the process of co-producing narratives of Sámi immigrant women, the methodological framework aligned with an Indigenous-centered paradigm. As such, I developed the methodological and interpretive framework within Sámi epistemologies and ontologies and with inspiration from other Indigenous scholars, an approach which was inspired by Chadwick Allen’s conceptualization of trans-Indigenous methodologies (Allen). Other relevant methodological approaches in this case study were the following: Margaret Kovach's “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research” (Kovach “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research” 40–48) and “Storytelling as Indigenous Methodology” in

Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts (92–108); Linda Tuhiwai Smith's "Story Telling" (Smith 45–46); and Shawn Wilson's "Relational Accountability" in *(Wilson Research Is Ceremony : Indigenous Research Methods* 97–105*)*. I chose these works for their specific attention to storytelling, ethics, and accountability in collaborative research. Notably, many of the research conversations have a video recording, which could also be said to integrate an intersectional and transmedial approach to oral tradition and photography—that is, several of the stories prompted by photographs were also told "on film" which could form part of a future transmedial storytelling platform.

Theorizing Photography and Oral Tradition in Life Narratives of Sámi Immigrant Women

In theorizing the place of photography in narratives of Sámi immigrant women, several issues emerged that warranted interpretation—most prominently the importance of storytelling intersecting with historical and family photographs and their manifestations. A valuable approach to interpreting oral tradition and photography was Martha Langford's "oral photographic framework": the family album is a "mnemonic device for storytelling […] situating it in the realm of orality" (Langford 223–46). Most relevant for my approach to collaborative life-narrative production, grounded in oral storytelling and an Indigenous-centered conversational method, was Langford's additional attention to orality and the family photo album:

> The album's roots in oral tradition explain its resistance to literary models of criticism, though attention to Bakhtin's notion of the dialogical construction of community goes quite a long way. For I want to insist that *speaking the album* is not merely the supplement of photographic and textual reading, but the discovery of the album's ordering principle. Separation of the album from its community casts it into unnatural silence. The contents, structure, and presentation of a photographic album are the vestiges of its oral scaffolding. (Langford 232)

Another relevant interpretive approach in the context of the case study is the seminal work of Marianne Hirsch on "familial looking" or rather, how "*photography* functions as a mode of *familial representation* in a specific cultural and historical *context* (Hirsch xvii). Also, I engaged with Alex Hughes' and Andrea Noble's discussion of "photonarrativity," that is, the multiple ways that photography intersects with narrative, memory, location, history, and culture:

> The more affective response that photographs and photonarrative creations elicit is one that is arguably stimulated, at least in part, by the fact that photographs deal with location. By virtue of their indexical nature, photographs inevitably return us not just to scenes of memory, but, at the same time, to sites of memory […].(Hughes and Noble 8)

Langford writes that "photographs are repositories of memory" (Langford 227). In the Sámi American context, an imaginative return to "sites of memory" through historical photographs of ancestors "before migration" inevitably works on the consciousness of Sámi descendants living in diasporic condition. Photographs, alongside family stories, evoke a sense of belonging to ancestral places and webs of relations in Sápmi to which one may or may not physically "return." In their anthology, *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts,* Annette Kuhn and Kirsten Emiko McAllister seek to place images from various places globally in the social world and trace their movement across media and oceans and through family members and multiple audiences. Kuhn and McAllister also stress that images accrue meaning over time (1–2) and reflect on the ways that visual objects have been used as "mnemonic devices" among descendants of survivors of cultural trauma, and as such, they have the potential to release the silences of previous generations (Kuhn and McCallister 5–6). However, one could also argue that the meaning assigned to a photograph can diminish over time, or the meaning can change over time, depending on history and the viewer. In this analysis, photographs in Sámi American families and the memories and narratives that intersect with them are analyzed on a *temporal-spatial-narrative framework* with a view toward diasporic indigeneity.

For Sámi Americans, or Sámi living in diasporic indigeneity, the ancestral photograph speaks to identity and subjectivity and often releases descendants from familial and colonial silences. They seek meaning in the attire, physical attributes, and location of their ancestors constituting a particular Sámi American "familial looking practice" (Hirsch XI–XXV). However, this looking practice must also be contextualized and interpreted against the visually discursive image of *the Lapp*. The image of *the Lapp* is akin to Vizenor's conceptualization and critique of the popular image of *an Indian*—an image that has been cemented in the Euro-American imagination through racialist Hollywood Western movies and in the romantic images of a full-blooded plains Indian in a war bonnet (Vizenor *Aesthetics of Survivance* 1–23). As Hartmut Lutz reminds us: "The Austrian ethnologist Christian F. Feest once said *Indianer* or "Indians" are a European invention. And he is right" (Lutz 208). Thematically similar to Vizenor's *Indian*, the stereotypical, European invention and commercialized image of *the Lapp* comes complete with clown-like renditions of Sámi traditional garments, slightly dirty or weathered faces, oftentimes with

at least one reindeer and implements, knives, and a *lávvu* (Sámi tent) on the tundra. *The Lapp* also lacks agency and a name, thus reflecting a sort of fleeting colonial "seen one Lapp, you've seen them all" sentiment. The pervasive image of *the Lapp* has confounded or obstructed Sámi American "familial looking" for clues of unspoken Sámi belonging in historical photographs of the first-generation immigrants. The ancestral photograph, frozen in spaces of silence and the absence of narrative, can confuse more than it can reveal.

Four Photographic Corpora in Transatlantic Circulation

It is against this backdrop of historical photographic practice in Sápmi that Sámi Americans often seek meaning in images; some Sámi Americans have even uncovered their ancestors' Sámi identity through photographs. The "photographic legacy" (Nielssen and Lien 295) of the Sámi shares common themes with other Indigenous peoples, where the Sámi were subjected to a colonial photographic practice permeated by racialized stereotypes. A critical, interpretive view of Sámi American photonarratives in diasporic indigeneity demands an overview of the local, worldwide, and in particular, trans-Atlantic circulation of images of the Sámi and their corresponding production. In the sections to follow I will refer to three photographic corpora from the period of the lives of the Sámi immigrant women in this case study, roughly from 1880 to 1960: 1) colonial; 2) early 20th century commercial portraiture; 3) self-generated community and family photographs. In an earlier article on photography in Sápmi, I included another corpus called "allied ethnographic" with particular reference to the early 20th century photographic collections of Ellisif Wessel (Wikan). While allied ethnographic photographs are not part of the private family collections that constitute the case study in this article, photographs from this corpus circulate with their intersecting stories in Sámi American communities; thus, they bear mentioning as visual discourses forming part of diasporic meaning-making and subjectivities.

The three corpora are meaningful in relation to and have currency in the Sámi American community and this case study. An important interpretive view in the discussion involves life narrative production and in what ways familial orality and memory infuse photonarratives of Sámi immigrant women with—and therefore, manifest—particular forms of consciousness and knowledge that have been passed on to their descendants. The article ends by posing some critical questions about life narrative production in the absence of familial storytelling and memory—that is, when most of what remains of the life of a Sámi immigrant woman in the USA is a famous photograph.

Photonarratives of Five Sámi Immigrant Women

The following is an introduction to the Sámi immigrant women subjects of the photonarratives and the community partners or descendant narrators. The five women were all from the Norwegian side of Sápmi and born between the years 1866 and 1886. All of them immigrated to North America between 1902–1917: Albertine Josefine Svendsen (Johnson) (Árdni/Arnøy), Karen Marie Nilsdatter (Aarborte/Hattfjelldal), and Berith[1] (Bertha) Kristina Susanna Larsdatter (Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen), all of whom settled in Minnesota; and Kirsten (Risten) Nilsdatter Bals and Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima (both from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino) settled in Alaska. Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima came from different constellations of families and geographically disparate settlements in the Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino area, Albertine Josefine Svendsen and Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter were from coastal Sámi settlements in North Troms, and Karen Marie Nilsdatter came from a South Sámi area in Nordland Province. The youngest immigrant woman was Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter, she was twenty-one when she emigrated from Norway, and the oldest, Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, was forty when she moved to Alaska. Two of the women, Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, have no known living descendants, and they both come from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino; however, Risten had twin boys, one of whom died shortly after birth, and the other, Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals, also known as Nils Boyne, immigrated to Alaska along with Risten. Nils lived in the village of Unalakleet where he was a reindeer herder until around 1937. Contrary to stories that circulated in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, where it was believed that he had died as a teenager or young adult, he actually lived to be forty-eight and passed away after having served in the army as a naturalized US citizen in the Second World War. Nils (Nilsen Logje Bals) Boyne has no known living descendants. I will refer to the immigrant women by their full names and first names and I refer to the grandchildren-narrators by their full names and first names and the local storytellers from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino by pseudonyms. I refer to the "empirical material" as stories and to the method of deriving meaning and co-producing knowledge from stories as "research conversations."

I present the first three photonarratives with two image pairs, and at least one of the images is a self-generated portrait or a family photograph; both of the images prompted particular, poignant, family memories in the lives of the descendants. These were the photographs that "animated" (Martin 1–24) the descendants, evoking memories which led to stories that deeply intersected with the images and which served as important threads or themes in the lives of the women and in the lives of their descendants; in other words, the manifestation of the photonarratives reflected Langford's "oral-photographic framework" (224). The

titles of photographs reflect an especially meaningful memory that was prompted by a photograph.

Albertine Josefine Svendsen (1886–1984)

Figure 1: You can see the anger and bitterness in her eyes. Pictured: Albertine Josefine Svendsen. Source: Johnson family archives. Photographer unknown. Circa 1905–1907.

The woman in the photograph (figure 1) is Albertine Josefine (Svendsen) Johnson, born in 1886 on Árdni/Arnøy, an island in the Skiervvá suohkan/Skjervøy Municipality in North Troms (figure 1). The stories of her childhood experiences are important precursors to the stories her grandsons Arden and Kai Johnson and daughter-in-law Solveig Arneng Johnson

told, stories that were prompted by this photograph. I also draw on statements and stories that Albertine herself told about her life in a three-hour oral history interview which her son, the late Rudolph Johnson (1916–2007), recorded in 1978.

At the age of two, Albertine's father died, and at the age of eight, her mother had to move to the mainland to find work. Albertine was then sent to live with her half-brother where she stayed until she was nineteen, at which time, like her mother, she moved to the mainland to work as a maid. She often told richly detailed stories about her life as a child in the custody of her half-brother; she referred to her childhood experiences as "slavery" (K. Johnson). From a young age, she had some responsibilities that modern people would consider the responsibilities reserved for adults and likely would have been considered a violation of child labor laws in international legal frameworks. From the age of eight, some of her responsibilities were the following: she was the caretaker of infants and small children; she did the work of a farmhand, getting up at four or five in the morning to feed seaweed to the milking cows; she was also part of the team who would hang the cod on the drying racks during the season. A foreshadowing to the story promoted by the photograph was Albertine's statement: "During the cod season, I got to keep the money from each fish I hung up" (A. J. Johnson).

When Albertine moved to the mainland at the age of nineteen she worked as a maid for several well-to-do Norwegian families. The story of how this photograph came to be sheds light on Albertine's life-long perspective on the socio-economic disparities in the class hierarchy in Norway and her novel resistance to passive forms of authoritarian domination. This is a rendition of two stories in composite form that her grandson, Arden, told me in filmed research conversations as he spoke the photograph:

> There was this beautiful, warm, sunny summer day when the waters were calm on the fjord. It was her day off, so Albertine had made plans with a group of other young people to row out to an island where they would make a fire and boil coffee and have a picnic. But at the last minute, the mistress of the house, in an evil way, made her stay behind to do some meaningless task that could have waited until the next day. This really pissed her off. It happened that the photographer was in town that day, so after she completed this insignificant chore, she took some of her savings and put on her nicest clothes and went into town and had her picture taken. You can see some of the anger and bitterness in her eyes. She never quite got over it. (A. Johnson)

Albertine's experiences of being what she described as "an indentured servant" or "slave" from a young age and her experiences later in the rigid class system of Norway at the time

colored her interpretations of life in America. Her grandson, Arden, remembers her talking about her experiences with upper-class Norwegian women in North Norway, for example, when the minister's wife would come walking down the road:

> When the wife of the minister would come walking down the road, the locals would have to step aside to one side of the road to make room for her! Her reaction to this was not about how you [Ellen Marie] define the term "dignity." Her reaction was much more authentic than that, it was more like, "what the fuck, we're all human!" Back then, class was as important as ethnicity. Nobody talked that much about their ethnicity, but they talked about their work. They were all kind of the same if they were working class. Most of the people on the top of the social hierarchy were rich Norwegians from the south, and everybody else, regardless of ethnicity, were below them. (A. Johnson)

When she arrived in America in 1917, she and her infant son, like three of the other women in the case study, came through Ellis Island. They took the train to Minnesota and Albertine was at once struck by the contrast to class disparities in the Norwegian socio-economic landscape. In Norway, there were three classes on the trains, and she was inevitably assigned to the third, but the seating on the American trains, she said, "was all the same" (A. J. Johnson). The impression that people across the socio-economic spectrum were "more equal" (A. J. Johnson) in America seemed to be a running theme in Albertine's life, which comes through in the stories she passed on to her descendants.

Figure 2: Ivar drowned on a hot summer day in mid-July. Ivar, Albertine and Rudy Johnson. Source: Johnson family archives. Photographer unknown. Circa 1917.

This commercial portrait of Albertine with her husband, Ivar Johnson, and son, Rudolph Johnson, intersect with several stories her descendants have told me over many years (figure 2). Albertine moved to Girkonjárga/Kirkenes where she married Ivar Johnsen (1887–1921) in 1916. He had moved there from Porsáŋgu/Porsanger to work as a laborer.

In 1917, Ivar moved to America, making his way to Cloquet, south of Duluth, Minnesota, where he found work as a skilled laborer. Albertine and her infant son, Rudolph, arrived nine months later. This photograph was likely taken in Duluth shortly after the family was reunited.

Stories about the lives of ancestors circulate in the Sámi American community. I have heard the story of the untimely death of Ivar Johnson on several occasions, but it was also prompted by this photograph in research conversations. The portrait of Albertine, Ivar, and Rudy is hanging on the wall of the guestroom in the Johnson family home in Duluth. The photonarrative is reminiscent of Gerald Vizenor's autobiographical story and poem called *The Last Photograph (Vizenor Interior Landscapes : Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors).* Vizenor narrates the last image of his father, Clement, a self-generated photograph taken by his grandmother just weeks before Clement was murdered in Minneapolis under dubious circumstances; it is an unsolved homicide which was reported in the Minneapolis Star Tribune as "the murder of a half-breed Indian" (Vizenor *Interior Landscapes : Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors* 27–29):

> The picture of my father published in the newspaper was severed from a photograph that shows him holding me in his arms. This is the last photograph, taken a few weeks before his death, that shows us together. Clement wore a fedora and a suit coat; he has a wide smile. We are outside, there is a tenement in the background; closer, a heap of bricks. I must remember that moment, my grandmother with the camera, our last pose together. (28)

Four years after Albertine and Rudy arrived in Minnesota to join Ivar, he drowned in Lake Superior "on a hot summer day in mid-July in 1921" (A. J. Johnson). This is quite possibly the last and only professional portrait of mother, father, and son, taken four years before that fateful day in 1921. After Ivar drowned, Albertine had to take full responsibility for their mortgage of a recently purchased home "with no insurance" (A. J. Johnson). She found work in a factory and did other work from home, especially sewing and other handicrafts.

Perhaps because she had to work as a young child, it was not unthinkable for her to leave her six-year-old son alone early in the morning to get himself up and off to school when she went to work in a factory after her husband passed away. According to Kai: "Everyone was in the same situation in West Duluth. They were all immigrants who worked. I'm sure my father was not the only kid who had to get himself up and off to school early in the morning" (K. Johnson). Rudy's wife and Albertine's daughter-in-law, Solveig Arneng

Johnson, a much loved and respected elder in the Sámi American community, also told an animated story when we were looking at photographs together:

> Rudy would get himself up at five or six in the morning and cook his coffee. His mother had to go to work so he had to get himself up and get dressed and walk to school by himself. But one day when he got to school, the teacher told him, "Rudy, Rudy! Your pants are on backwards! You need to go and turn your pants around." He put his pants on backwards, but he cooked his own coffee on the stove! (S. A. Johnson)

In the family portrait, Ivar, Albertine and Rudy are posed in the traditional style of portraits of the time—where the male head of household is seated and centered and his wife is standing as if an appendage to him. Yet Albertine's striking expression captures my gaze. In her sly, half smile, and eyes cast in the direction of an unknown subject, she takes command of the content of the photograph, insisting on sovereignty over her own subjectivity. Unlike some of the stilted, severe poses of portraiture from this historical period, this family picture reflects a sense of curiosity and gratification. Albertine likely sewed the dress she is wearing, as well as her son, Rudy's, outfit. The multiple crafting skills she learned as a child would go far in her life in America, like many other Sámi immigrant women. To a trained eye, there might even be a Sámi dress aesthetic in their clothes, which is often reflected in dresses that bear elements of traditional garments sewn by Sámi women during the period of the Norwegianization policy.

Karen Marie Nilsdatter (1874–1956)

Figure 3: A Sister's Promise. Anessa (Jorgensen) Andersland (left) and Jenny Nelfrida Mohn/Jeanne Mohn Borgeson (right). Source: Anessa Andersland. 1974.

This self-generated family photograph (figure 3) was taken in 1974 in California. The little girl is Anessa Andersland, the great-granddaughter of Karen Marie Nilsdatter, and the grandchild narrator for the project. The woman on the right—Jenny Nelfrida Mohn/Jeanne

Mohn Borgeson (1905–1999)—is the oldest daughter of Karen Marie Nilsdatter, a Sámi immigrant woman who moved to Duluth, Minnesota, in 1906 together with her husband, Knut Albert (Kristiansen) Mohn, Jenny and their other surviving daughter, Signy Alida Mohn (1902–1918). Karen Marie and Knut had had another daughter, Konstanse Marie Mohn (1901–1901) who died in infancy at just five weeks old. They would have two more daughters, Clara Katherine Mohn (1908–1990) and Anne Rebecca Mohn (1912–1959) after they settled in Duluth. Anessa Andersland is the granddaughter of the youngest daughter, Anne Rebecca. Jenny would come to be affectionately referred to as "Jeda" by her family in America. I have chosen to begin with this photonarrative as it represents a running theme in Karen Marie Nilsdatter and her descendants' immigrant family narrative in America—a narrative imbued with loss, hope, and a sense of collective familial responsibility.

Karen Marie Nilsdatter was born in Aarborte/Hattfjelldal, Nordland Province to a South Sámi fishing and farming family with ten children. Anessa is one of two great-grandchildren of Karen Marie; she has heard stories about her great-grandmother from her adoptive grandmother, Jeda, and her father, Richard. (Notably, in Sámi kinship terms, Jeda, as the sister of Anessa's grandmother, would actually be a grandmother to Anessa.) When Richard was only fourteen years old, Anne Rebecca passed away at the age of forty-seven after suffering from a long-term, chronic illness. In a few short years, Anne Rebecca's husband, Elmer, also passed away. Karen Marie's oldest daughter, Signy, passed away as a teenager and she had also lost her infant daughter, Konstanse Marie, in Norway before the family emigrated. The tragedy of Karen Marie and Knut losing their two oldest daughters, Konstanse Marie and Signy years earlier, followed by the elder, Karen Marie, having the burdensome knowledge that her youngest daughter, Anne Rebecca, was terminally ill at the time of her own passing, was a prominent theme in her life narrative. Anessa told the story about Karen Marie losing three of her daughters several times, and each time with a sense of poignancy.

Early on in the project, one of the first stories Anessa shared with me about her family, and a story that she repeated several times, was that her grandmother, Jeda, had made a promise to her dying sister, Anne Rebecca: Jeda promised Anne Rebecca that she would take care of Richard after she was gone. Richard, Anne Rebecca, and Elmer were living in California at the time, and Jeda went so far as to relocate to California from Minnesota to fulfill her promise. After Richard became an adult, Jeda moved back to Minnesota, but the promise she had made to her little sister extended to her sister's only grandchild, Anessa. She lovingly and consistently fulfilled the role of a grandmother: "She never missed a birthday or holiday. She would send me *typed* letters and cards from Minnesota. She visited us

several times in California when I was growing up and I also visited her in Duluth" (Andersland). The photograph was taken on one of Jeda's visits to California and brings forth the warmth of a sister's promise in visual form.

As an adult, Anessa visited Minnesota and later moved there to study. In Minnesota she "got to spend more time with Jeda" (Andersland). Anessa learned the family oral tradition through Jeda, especially the stories about Karen Marie and the family's time together in Duluth. The collective lives of the family of women in Duluth—that is, Karen Marie and her daughters—form an enduring facet of her narrative. An expression of Karen Marie's agency is that she assumed the role of head of household after Knut had passed away in 1937. At the time, her adult daughters, together with their husbands and children, all lived together in Karen Marie's home in Duluth. The family narrative also reveals class consciousness, while at the same time obscuring their Sámi background. They were aware that Karen Marie had been mistreated in Norway due to what they perceived as "class inequality":

> My great-grandfather told his daughters that they had decided to move to America to get away from the class system and inequality in Norway. Karen Marie had worked at a dairy in Kolvereid where she had managed to move up in the ranks to the role of a manager; but still, she was treated poorly by the locals despite her hard work. My father told me that Karen Marie rarely spoke of her life in Norway, but Jeda was connected to her family in Norway and kept in contact. She had also visited our relatives there.

Anessa was encouraged to travel to Norway as a young adult, and Jeda put her in contact with their extended family. Later, when Jeda was an elder she became ill and lived in a nursing home; Anessa was committed to visiting her adoptive grandmother often and advocated for her medical care and well-being, thus, faithfully completing a circle of familial responsibility.

Figure 4: Wedding at Namsos. Knut Albert Kristiansen (Mohn) and Karen Marie Nilsdatter.

The wedding portrait was taken in 1900, at a professional studio in Namsos, Nord-Trøndelag (figure 4). The stories intersecting with the wedding portrait are especially pertinent to unspoken Sámi identity in the family narrative. Unspoken Sámi identity is a running theme or trope in the collective narrative of Sámi immigration and also permeates the stories of several of the women in the case study. The children of Karen Marie had always maintained that they were 100% Norwegian. At times, they would add the

additional qualifier "pure." But when Anessa visited her relatives in Aarborte/Hattfjelldal and Oslo in the early 1990's, some of the first clues to her family's obscured Sámi origins came to light. Later, she began to look more deeply at her family genealogy and learned about the local history of the Aarborte/Hattfjelldal community. When she started to "connect the dots" she would often draw on memories of her first visit, and then the wedding portrait came to reveal as much as it concealed in her ongoing search for their Sámi heritage. An important methodological aspect of deriving a photonarrative of the wedding portrait was that Anessa and I traveled together to some of her ancestral places in Sápmi during my research period, and the stories that emerged in conversations with South Sámi people, relatives, and community experts shed light on visual aspects of the photograph.

At the time that Karen Marie and Knut were married, they were living in Kolvereid, the coastal community in Nord-Trøndelag Province to which Karen Marie had been "sent out in service" to find work on a farm. Later, she worked at a dairy where she moved up through the ranks and became the manager; it was there that she met her would-be husband, Knut. The photograph has been in the family for as long as Anessa could remember. She has shared it with Sámi Americans in the Sámi American community also seeking visual clues in photographs of their ancestors with a shared history. For a long time, it was the gloves that had fixed her gaze; the gloves were the *punctum* (Barthes). She said: "I was always fascinated by those gloves. I would just stare at those gloves and think: Why the gloves?"

In our journey together, she had a three-ring-binder with photographs and an impressive array of genealogical data and historical accounts of her ancestral area. Several people, some in the Sámi American community (myself included), as well as South Sámi people in Sápmi, remarked on the shape and aesthetic of Karen Marie's wedding dress. To a viewer familiar with South Sámi dress culture, it would not be inconceivable to see continuity with the aesthetic of a South Sámi traditional garment and her wedding dress. This is especially evident in the shape and belt, as well as the neckline. In an area that was experiencing profound cultural duress from the Norwegianization policy, like many other Sámi areas in Norway at the time, it seems to follow that elements of Sámi traditional dress style would carry over into the sewing and design practices of women, producing a Sámi aesthetic that is obscured by the visual discourse of *the Lapp*.

When we asked people their impressions of the photograph, one South Sámi woman told us that it was not uncommon for ministers to refuse to marry South Sámi people who came to church in their traditional garments; they could even be made to change into Western attire at the church. That leads to another question about the photograph that Anessa

reflected on: Why did they get married in Namsos—seventy-five kilometers from home—when they lived within close physical proximity of the church in Kolvereid? Karen Marie's and Knut's daughters would later be baptized at the Church in Kolvereid and traveling to Namsos would have been a bit of a journey at that time. She asked: "Is it possible that the minister had refused to marry them because of Karen Marie's Sámi background?" In other photographs of Karen Marie from a collection that Anessa was recently gifted by her cousin, Karen Marie is wearing elements of South Sámi dress culture that local people could name and describe with some detail. But there was one striking moment in our initial research conversation about the photograph that reveals the visual power of the gloves or the *punctum:* the discovery that the wedding couple is standing on a reindeer pelt! This discovery was reminiscent of Louis Owens's autobiographical article on mixed-blood identity, family stories, and the discourses on *the Indian* in which Owens "discovers" the clear presence of his great-grandmother in a family photograph. According to Owens's family narrative, his great-grandmother had "disappeared" shortly after the birth of Owens's grandmother. In the image, his great-grandmother is seen resting her hand on the shoulder of the man whom Owens knows to be his great-grandfather, and the great-grandfather, in turn, has his hands on the shoulders of Owens' child grandmother. Owens narrates these revealing details of the photograph that had been obscured in his own "familial looking practice" (Hirsch XVII):

> […] These hands, forming a signifying chain from child through man to woman are not Indian but human. I think she is my great-grandmother. She does not look like the other, heavily Irished family members in the photograph. She is an other "other" in this grouping. Though no one is alive who can verify the possibility, I believe I have discovered my great-grandmother, who has stood invisibly in this photograph for all the months I have perused it, the invisible Native in the tableau vivant of Indianness I have sought to construct, rendered invisible by the narrative I brought to this photograph. Told that my grandmother's mother did not exist, I could not therefore see her image before me […] (Owens 94)

Questions that came through in research conversations with Anessa were the following: Was the reindeer pelt in Karen Marie and Knut's wedding portrait a prop that the studio regularly used in their photographic practice for everyone? Was it something that was meaningful to the wedding couple that they brought along? What was the purpose? Is it possible that the photographers in the studio, discerning or knowing outright that Karen Marie was a Sámi, chose this particular prop for "ethnic effect"? The location of the wedding in Namsos, the wedding dress aesthetic, and the reindeer pelt in the photograph

reveal as well as obscure the Sámi identity in the family narrative; but the stories intersecting with the photograph in Sápmi and North America speak beyond the silences of a Sámi family identity, an identity that was undoubtedly suppressed due to the long process of Norwegianization.

Berith (Bertha) Kristina Susanna Larsdatter (1881–1954)

Figure 5: "I miss the sum of them." Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter's children (front left) Eleanor Magdalena Nielson-Larson, Oliver Pedersen, Elphie Sarone Nielson-Kettner. (back left) Jenver Nelson (Nielson), Gordon Nelson (Nielsen), Byron Nielson. Source: Rosalie Sundin.

This grainy family photograph of the children of Berith (Bertha) Kristina Susanna Larsdatter is suggestive of the stories her great-granddaughter, Rosalie, told of joyous family visits in Lake Lillian (Minnesota) that she remembers with fondness (figure 5). Rosalie is the grandchild-narrator for the project and the title for the photograph comes from a poignant story she told that intersects with the photograph. The man in the middle of the photograph is Oliver, Bertha's son; for reasons not fully understood, he was raised

by Bertha's aunt and uncle. There are several interwoven family stories about the fate of Oliver, namely, unanswered questions about why he was given over to his great-aunt Kristina, who raised him along with several other adopted children in British Columbia. There were also questions about Oliver's biological father and the circumstances of Bertha's pregnancy.

Berith (Bertha) Kristina Susanna Larsdatter was born in Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen to a coastal Sámi family in 1881. She was the youngest of eight surviving children, and one of two children from her mother. Her mother, Ragnhild, was her father's third wife. After the death of her mother, Bertha was in the care of older siblings and women in the tight-knit, coastal Sámi fishing and farming community—a community where the men would be out at sea for long periods of time while the women tended the farm, household, and children. According to the Norwegian digital archives, both of her parents were Sámi speaking, and all of her siblings were listed as Sámi and Norwegian speakers. Bertha is the only child of Lars listed as a Norwegian speaker. Rosalie attributes language shift to the cruel, assimilationist boarding school that Bertha and her siblings had to attend on Gálsa/Karlsøy. Multiple family stories reveal Bertha's traumatic boarding school experiences, including treacherous boat trips to the island, and living under the thumb of abusive boarding school staff. Bertha, like Karen Marie and Albertine, was sent out to work on other farms as a teenager:

> The family story was that Bertha worked on various farms on Vannøya [Várdná] and at the age of nineteen, she became pregnant with the boy Oliver. He is the one laughing in the middle of the picture. In 1902, Bertha immigrated to Minnesota, together with her aunt Kristina, presumably bringing Oliver with her. However, there is a mystery about Oliver's arrival in America because he is not listed on the immigration ship manifest. Some people said he must have been born on the boat; others said he was born in Norway. We are not sure about who his father is, but someone told us that the man's last name might have been Henriksen. (Sundin)

It was unusual that an infant would not be listed with his or her mother on the ship manifest, but at the time, the processing authorities often stopped unwed mothers at Ellis Island under processing; some women were sent back to their countries of origin or charged with "Victorian Era crimes of moral turpitude" (Moreno). Is it possible Oliver was listed as the child of another passenger to avoid problems with the authorities? According to Rosalie, there are a number of theories in family oral tradition about why Oliver was sent to live with Bertha's aunt Kristina. One theory was that the man who Bertha married shortly after

she arrived in North America was abusive, and perhaps Kristina was trying to shield Oliver from an abusive step-father. Rosalie is the grandchild of Elphie, the fair-haired woman to the right of Oliver in the photograph. Elphie lived to be 103 years old, and was one of Bertha's seven children, two of whom died in infancy. Although Rosalie has vague childhood memories of her great-grandmother, it was her grandmother Elphie and other elders who she said "passed on the oral tradition in my family" (Sundin).

Oliver would come to visit his family in Lake Lillian Township where his siblings and extended kin would gather from various places to spend time together. It was a special event when he would come to town. Rosalie was living in the city about two hours' drive from Lake Lillian, but she would spend summers with her grandmother and great-aunts and great-uncles and an extended network of kin in Lake Lillian. The photograph evoked Rosalie's stories of warm summer days when the large, extended family would sit together, young and old, drinking coffee, playing cards, telling stories and laughing: "I miss the sum of them. I miss the stories and the laughter when we were all together." She remembers her great-uncle Oliver from some of these summer visits. These gatherings were also crucial in Rosalie's life because her parental caregivers subjected her to extreme forms of abuse in her childhood home in Minneapolis; visits to Lake Lillian and being in the care of her grandmothers and great-aunts and uncles offered life-saving refuge, warmth, and safety.

Figure 6: Bertha Circled Back to Sápmi. Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter (Nielsen) (center), presumably with her niece, Sigga, and family.

As a young adult, like many other Americans with unspoken Sámi heritage, Rosalie began to look more deeply into her family genealogy. The photograph of Bertha and her niece, Sigga, with Sigga's husband and son, was taken when Bertha traveled back to Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen a few years before she passed away (figure 6). In our research conversations and in a short biographical text that Rosalie wrote upon my request, the photograph prompted stories about Bertha's visit to Sápmi and reflections on uncovering family Sámi belonging (figure 6). The following is a composite story derived from our research conversation and the biographical text:

> My great-grandmother was fortunate in that her oldest daughter, my grandma Elphie, brought her back to Eidstrand to visit her family and birthplace in 1954. It was the same year of Bertha's death. In letters that were sent back and forth, clearly memories of their visit were precious to both Bertha and the families of her brothers and sisters in the north. But according to her oldest daughter, my grandma Elphie, Bertha had long since either abandoned or set aside the truth about her Sámi heritage. Her children grew up believing they were of Northern Norwegian ancestry—a secret kept until I gave the family genealogy to Bertha's oldest daughter, grandma Elphie, on her 100th birthday. (Sundin)

In the photograph, Bertha and her relatives are sitting outside of her childhood home in Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen. Rosalie has shared this photograph with others in the Sámi American community, seeking meaning or visual clues of Sámi identity in the look and attire of the subjects. She wondered if the pin Bertha is wearing is a Sámi-style broach, called a *risku*. When she was talking about the photograph, she reflected on the deep ties the local coastal community on Moskavuotna/Ullsfjord shared with the inland Sámi reindeer herders. "I wonder if Bertha bought the *risku* at the summer market when the inland Sámi and coastal Sámi would meet? I have been looking closely at that *risku* for the longest time, comparing it to others." Here, the *risku* is the *punctum* (Barthes).

In our research conversations, Rosalie has often reflected on her great-grandmother's reticence to share her Sámi heritage with a bit of grief, and she wondered about difficult experiences Bertha may have had that would lead her to keep hidden her family's Sámi heritage. "Was it boarding school life? The Norwegianization mandate? Was it from the discrimination the East Lake Lillian side of town experienced from the Swedes?" The Swedes had registered that the East side of town were of impure stock, certainly not pure Germanic Norwegians, and they refused to mingle with them (see Nelson-Balcer). Her longing to find meaning and her storytelling bring to mind the work of Nancy K. Miller in "Beguiled by Loss: The Burden of the Third-Generation Narrative." In the article, Miller narrates her search for meaning in photographs, records, and fragments of family material culture as the third-generation descendant of Jewish immigrants, a family who were likely refugees from the Russian pogroms. Their collective family trauma was never spoken of outright to Miller as a child. "By taking these photographs out of the family and into public space, I can stake out a place for myself in the chain, a return to a lost history beyond individual memory but not beyond narrative. At the end of the line of silent witnesses, I've become the storyteller" (Miller 29–42). In Bertha's story, Rosalie has become the storyteller in the chain.

It goes without saying that Rosalie on some level relates to Bertha's story as a survivor, that is, Rosalie and her great-grandmother have the shared experiences of surviving trauma. But a key feature of their combined narrative of survival is their continuity and commitment to maintaining social ties in their webs of relations. Bertha circled back to her home in 1954 after sixty years of continued contact with her Sámi family in Sápmi; while Rosalie has never had the opportunity to visit Sápmi, she follows in the footsteps of her grandmothers in her commitment to continuity of the family oral tradition.

Risten Nilsdatter Bals (1879–?) and Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima (1866–1949)

Figure 7: (original caption) "Lapp Immigrant" August F. Sherman. Date Unknown[2]

The question mark for the year of Risten Nilsdatter Bals' death signals "fate unknown." I have included the two photonarratives of the women, Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, as a set for several reasons, the most important being that for several years I had reason to believe that the identity of the woman in the photograph (figure 7) *could have been* one of the two women: Risten Nilsdatter Bals or Anna Mortensdatter Nilima. After many years of searching for the identity of the woman in the photograph, I have concluded that the subject of the photograph is *most likely* Risten; however, to date, I have not found a living person, nor a corresponding photograph with a subject identified by name, which could positively verify her identity. I have written about the photograph in previous research and publications and have conducted intensive and detailed research in multiple oral, text-based, and photographic sources over several years (Jensen). It goes without saying that to attach an identity to a famous photograph under a guise of certainty, without verifiable proof, represents a slip in ethics; thus, I present her identity tentatively, or rather, with over ninety percent certainty.

The narrative of Anna Mortensdatter Nilima—known in oral tradition as Luhkkár-Ánne—has deeply affected my research process into finding the fate of Risten Nilsdatter Bals. In other words, Risten and Anna's developing narratives have both intersected with the photograph, thus, their narratives are entangled. However, their life narratives diverge onto different trajectories with their ancestral ties to opposing sides of the Kautokeino Rebellion (see Zorgdrager), and with the abrupt disappearance of Risten from the archives and lived memory. Anna lived in Alaska for twenty-three years until around the time of the violent death of her husband, Johan Edvard Nilima, in a robbery. The plan was that he was going to join her after he had finished some important business in Buckland, Alaska where they had been living. After a short time in Poulsbo, she moved back to Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino. It is likely that Johan Edvard Nilima was murdered after Anna Mortensdatter Nilima had moved to Poulsbo, Washington, to join a community of Sámi emigrants from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino and Kárášjohka/Karasjok. It is also possible the murder took place after she had already left Poulsbo to return to her home in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino where she lived out her final days, passing away in 1949 at the age of eighty-three.

Augustus F. Sherman took the photograph (figure 7), almost certainly, in 1907. This was the year that both Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, on separate occasions and under quite different circumstances, traveled to Alaska to join other Sámi emigrants from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino and Kárášjohka/Karasjok. Most of the Sámi had moved there in 1898 as part of a government project that commissioned Norwegian Sámi reindeer herders to come to Alaska to teach the Inuit Sámi reindeer herding practices.

By 1907, many of the original Sámi immigrants were no longer working in reindeer husbandry; rather, by this time, some of the Sámi were working as gold miners or in other professions. Also, many of the original families had left Alaska, either to return to Sápmi or had moved to the lower forty-eight states, mostly to the Puget Sound in Washington State (Solbakk; Vorren).

When seeking to ascertain the identity of the woman, I tried several times to find an immigration record for Anna at Ellis Island and in multiple online genealogical sources. Finally, the director of the immigration research center directed me to the Federal Archives Administration in lower Manhattan where I discovered that Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and her husband, Johan Edvard Nilima (referred to in some literature as "Ede"), had entered through the immigrant processing station in Boston, one of several smaller receiving stations on the East Coast; they arrived in Boston on April 22nd, 1907. Risten Nilsdatter Bals and her four-year-old son, Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals, arrived on Ellis Island on May 15th, 1907, less than one month later. Risten's son, was listed on the ship manifest as "Nils Nilsen" but he is not in the photograph. Presuming that the woman in the photograph is Risten Nilsdatter Bals, her little boy might have been in the play area for children of new arrivals (Moreno).

Let us briefly return to the broader cultural, social, and historical context of the Augustus F. Sherman collection at Ellis Island. The photograph is prominently placed in the collection at the Museum of Immigration at Ellis Island with the only identifying information: "Lapp Immigrant." It forms part of a corpus of colonial photographs of the Sámi people and has been made meaningful in the Sámi American community; many Sámi descendants have perused the photograph, wondering if it could be possible that the woman is one of their relatives. Ellis Island was a nexus between the immigrant arrivals' old world and their new world. It is estimated that at least 40% of the US population can trace at least one ancestor to Ellis Island, and many thousands of these descendants visit the museum each year to research their families of origin and to walk in the footsteps of their immigrant ancestors. Four of the women have the shared experience of entering the USA through Ellis Island. Two of them came "unaccompanied" by men, Risten and Albertine; the critical difference between Risten and Albertine is that Albertine was married and on her way to Minnesota to reunite with her gainfully employed husband. All immigrants who passed through the island were required to undergo various forms of inspection during processing, including a battery of medical, language, and psychological tests.

The story that has driven my research into the narratives of Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima perhaps deserves illumination. The way that my own Sámi American

narrative intersects with the Ellis Island photograph is itself a photonarrative. This story has been told many times, both in my own voice of my own volition and through my own authorship, as well as retold in the media and in stories that circulate in the Sámi American and Sápmi communities. In 2002, while still living in Minneapolis, I went on a journey to Finnmark to find out more about my own Sámi ancestry. I was going to visit my grandmother and other older relatives in Norway, and more specifically, Finnmark. On my way to Norway, my friend and I stopped in New York City and we took a day tour to Ellis Island. I note that I have no ancestors that came through the island; the American side of my family had been on the continent since before the Civil War and my father is the only person in my large extended family from Finnmark that traveled to America. I was there as a tourist with a fascination for early twentieth-century immigration history, but not as a personal "seeker." The moment I entered, I came face-to-face with the photograph, clearly a Sámi woman, in a traditional Sámi garment; she bore a likeness to some of my own relatives. Her expression and the purpose of her journey intersecting with the purpose of my journey gripped me. I admit that I was almost obsessed with finding out what had happened to the anonymous woman, whose only designation was "Lapp immigrant" on the museum placard. I had a sense of urgency about finding out what happened to her, I felt an obligation to her, the unnamed woman on the photograph whose immigrant life and trans-Atlantic journey to America from Sápmi seemed to fatefully cross my own trans-Atlantic journey from America to Sápmi. This unnamed woman's narrative intersected with my own.

That was fifteen years ago, and while I have concluded that the woman is *most likely* Risten, her life narrative has come in the form of a series of fragments, records, missing records, anecdotes, and one research conversation with an elder from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino—a relative of Risten Nilsdatter Bals—who shared stories about Risten passed down to her by her mother in oral tradition.

Risten and her four-year-old son Nils at Ellis Island

There are a number of unknowns in Risten's story that intersect with the photograph, the first question is: How is it that she was granted entrance to the country as an unwed mother, traveling unaccompanied with a son, at a time when immigration authorities could charge unwed mothers with Victorian Era crimes of moral turpitude and send them back to Europe? Immigrants from each ship would be processed together, and the ship manifest would follow the immigrants from the time they boarded the ship in Norway until they were granted permission to leave Ellis Island. There was a list of individual passenger/immigrants on the last pages of the manifest, these were people who were detained for further processing—many of the passengers detained were women traveling

"unaccompanied" by men. Most of them would be detained until a man, usually a husband or father, came to retrieve them (Moreno). Remarkably, Risten was not on the list of detainees. Nonetheless, Augustus F. Sherman took her portrait, the man who famously sought to photograph immigrants who stood out, who were "Others" measured against the stream of Northern European and Germanic immigrants (Mesenholler 4–21). The Museum's placard accompanying the photograph says: "Lapp immigrant," the quotations indicating that it was Sherman himself who had designated the subject of the photograph "Lapp." The "Lappish race" was included in the *Dictionary of Races and Peoples* (Dillingham 88–89) used on the island from 1910 to "register" and "assess" exotic peoples and to determine the admissibility of immigrants who may have been considered "unfit" to survive in America in the racial hierarchy of the time. In order words, Sherman likely registered her difference and cast her into a racial category described disparagingly in the *Dictionary of Races and Peoples* with terms such as "dark" "dwarf-like" "roundheaded (sic)" and "uncivilized" (88–89).

Risten is listed as "Finnish" for ethnicity on the ship manifest; interestingly, Anna and her husband were also listed as "Finnish." The manifest also tells us the following: Risten Nilsdatter Bals' father, Nils P. Bals, bought her train ticket; her final destination was not legible but most likely a rendition of "Unalakleet"; she had enough cash (forty USD) on hand to be admitted. Risten and her four-year-old son, Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals, then made their way across the continent by train, like thousands of others, including the four other women in the case study. The last written trace of Risten came in the form of a letter written to the Sámi language Christian newspaper *Nuorttanaste*, signed by "K.K" (presumably Klemet Klemetsen). The letter reveals the entangled narratives of Risten and Anna:

> Ede Nilima from Guovdageaidnu arrived in Alaska on the 10th of July this year, and Risten Bals, too, reached her father's place in good health on the 5th of July and is already getting married to an American man who has gotten rich from gold mining. (Solbakk, Solbakk and Anttonen 55)

"Ede" (Johan Edvard) is the nick-name of Anna's husband; Anna is glaringly absent from this letter. The letter is dated July 20th, and Risten arrived on July 5th. If it was indeed the case that she was already getting married, a mere fifteen days after her arrival, one cannot help but wonder if the marriage was arranged. Notably, upon entering America, all women would be immediately and permanently listed with their husband's last name, regardless of their legal names in Norway, reflecting the immediacy with which they lost their legal agency and ties to family and community in the archives. In other words, presuming that

Risten did get married, without knowing her groom's last name, she would be “lost in the archives” like so many immigrant women at the time (Sundin).

The last photograph of Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima

Figure 8: (original title, exactly as written by photographer) Áddjá ja áhkku čuožžuba dimbbarviesu guoras. Mann og kvinne står ved et tømmerhus. Luhkkár-Ánne [my translation: Grandfather/elder-man and grandmother/elder woman standing by a log house). Photographer: Anders Johansen Bongo. 1930–1940.[3]

In contrast to Risten Nilsdatter Bals, Anna Mortensdatter Nilima did not disappear and she even wrote letters to the Christian Sámi language newspaper, *Nuorttanaste*, manifesting

her own subjectivity and exercising her agency. Her first letter in September, 1913—six years after she arrived—is religious in nature; she thanks the paper for their Christmas issue with the picture of Laestadius and gives a short review of a book called *Alcohol and Health* and its relevance to the Sámi people (Solbakk, Solbakk and Anttonen 75). The second letter was published in November of 1930, where she writes that she has left Nome, Alaska, and moved to Poulsbo, Washington State to live with some Sámi friends. The boat trip made her quite ill, "But God our Father brought me safe and sound to where my dear Sámi friends live" (Solbakk, Solbakk and Anttonen 134). She gives news of a man known to the Sámi community in America and Sápmi and told that she is planning to return to Norway. I register some melancholy in this letter as well: "I'm grateful to God, who is always with me, even when I don't notice it myself" (Solbakk, Solbakk and Anttonen). Her final letter published in June, 1931:

> Dear Editor: I'm leaving Poulsbo for my home in Norway, so please don't send the paper to me in America anymore.
>
> I will leave here from Seattle on the 30th of May. And I ask my Christian brothers and sisters to pray for me so that, in his mercy, God our Father will give me a good and peaceful journey across the wide ocean and help me put my trust firmly and only in Jesus.
>
> I don't have time to write more now. Many greetings to all the editors of "Nuorttanaste"! Farewell! (Solbakk, Solbakk and Anttonen 144)

None of the letters to *Nuorttanaste* from any of the Sámi in Alaska contained the news that Anna's husband, Ede, had been murdered in a robbery when he was "working as a sales clerk in a store owned by the Loman family in Buckland." We learn this from an addendum appended to her second letter included in the volume edited by Aage and John Trygve Solbakk. The story of the murder of Ede also circulates in the Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino community. Varying renditions of this story came to me from three elders with whom I had research conversations; as soon as I would mention Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, they would tell a story about the murder of her husband, Ede (Johan Edvard Nilima). Clearly, this story evoked compassion for her in the community; one can certainly attribute the melancholy in her letters to the events surrounding the murder of her husband.

The final photograph presented in this article is the only photograph I have of Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima (figure 8). Knowing the story about her husband's murder, and her own melancholic self-representation in her narration, it would be difficult not to interpret the anguished expression on her face without attributing it to the murder of

her husband and the loneliness of returning to Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino without him. After searching multiple photographic collections in archives in North America, I had almost given up on finding an identifying photograph of either Risten Nilsdatter Bals or Anna Mortensdatter Nilima. I know now that the photograph of the Sámi woman at Ellis Island is not Anna, but at the time that a helpful local RiddoDuottarMuseat (Sámi Museums of Western Finnmark) staff member, Ellen J. Bals, sent this photograph to me, I scrutinized the two photographs side-by-side, seeking some visual clue that would confirm that the Ellis Island photograph and the photograph of Luhkkár-Ánne were the same woman. However, it was almost impossible to come to a firm conclusion. In another research conversation with an elder (*Sámi áhkku)* in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, I showed her the photograph from Ellis Island, presumably Risten Nilsdatter Bals. I explained that for some years, I was not sure if the woman was Anna Mortensdatter Nilima or Risten Nilsdatter Bals. The elder had never personally met Risten, as Risten was a contemporary of her parent's generation. However, she remembered Luhkkár-Ánne, and had visited with her several times after she had returned to Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino from Alaska. She too echoed the sentiments of others—that Luhkkár-Ánne was incredibly distraught over her husband's murder. With regard to the Ellis Island photograph, she said: "I could have told you years ago that it isn't Luhkkár-Ánne. She didn't look like that at all!" (Anonymous)

The photograph of Anna is on a digital archive; it is a self-generated image taken sometime between 1930 and 1940 with the text: "Grandfather-elder man and Grandmother elder-woman stand next to a log house Luhkkár-Ánne" (my translation). But in this (perhaps final) photograph of Luhkkár-Ánne, the photographer designated her by her Sámi family name, Luhkkár-Ánne—in doing so, restoring and affirming her place in the community and web of relations in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino.

Conclusion

Sámi consciousness is prompted or comes through in the act of recovery and statement of the Sámi immigrant women's belonging to Sápmi before immigration; thereby, the descendants are claiming a space for the stories of their grandmothers in the collective narrative of the Sámi people. In the research conversations with descendants of Albertine, Karen Marie, and Bertha, it was not my intention to seek out "essential" or verifiable proof of their Sámi belonging, but rather, to hear stories about their grandmothers from lived remembrance. Their belonging to Sápmi, despite colonial silences, came through in the stories shared. Also, the stories intersecting with photographs came from both personal experiences with the grandmothers, and from memories and stories passed on to them in oral tradition.

There is a productive tension between the photonarratives of Risten and Anna who have no living descendants and the other three narratives—that is—the three narratives of immigrant women whose descendants lovingly *speak the grandmother in the photograph.* In the Sámi American context, the narratives of Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima are perhaps more of an expression of history or biographical life writing, than part of family oral history in diasporic indigeneity. However, their stories and photographs intersect with other Sámi American stories, and their histories are part of the collective history of Sámi immigration to North America. The story of the tragic loss of Luhkkár-Ánne's husband and her eventual return to her home in Sápmi also circulate in the Sámi community in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino.

Finally, diasporic indigeneity in the descendants of Sámi immigrant women finds significant expression in oral tradition in a *temporal-spatial-narrative framework*: photography has played an important role in prompting family stories. One temporal dimension of the stories is expressed in lived familial remembrances that have continued relevance in the present, whether the descendants themselves were agents in the stories, or whether the stories have been passed on to descendants from the grandmothers in oral tradition. The placement or location of the stories has spatial and temporal dimensions; that is, the life narratives of Sámi immigrant women are shaped by the family stories of their grandmothers' lives before emigration or while the women lived in Sámi communities during the period of intense Norwegianization. Stories are also shaped by their experiences after immigration and their adjustment to life in American communities. Likewise, stories are contextualized to places, both in Sápmi and in North America. Bringing the stories and an expression of their grandmothers' and their own agency into a shared community of others, they bind the past with the present and bind Sápmi with the Sámi American community—in so doing, they provide a space for obscured Sámi belonging to become both visible and audible. Sharing the stories with the wider community, both in Sápmi and America, reflects the grandchildren-narrators' cultural continuity and an expression of diasporic Sámi consciousness.

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Notes

1. Her given name was Berith, however, she was only ever known as “Bertha” to her descendants in Minnesota.
2. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library. “Laplander.” *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-dc9d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99
3. https://digitaltmuseum.org/011015071622/adja-ja-ahku-cuoccuba-dimbbarviesso-guoras-mann-og-kvinne-starved-en-tommerhus?i=0&aq=text%3A%22Luhkar%22%2C%22%C3%81nne%22+owner%3F%3A%22RDM%22

Narrative of
Albertine Josephine Svendsen [Johnson] (1886-1984)

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September 2018

Narrative of Albertine Josephine Svendsen (1886-1984)

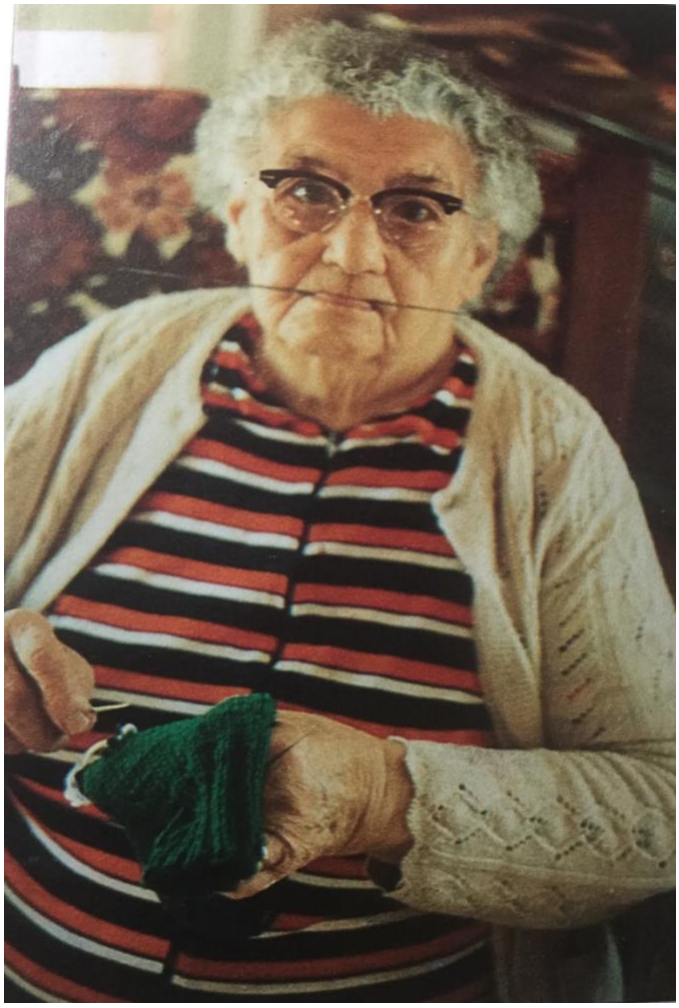

Figure 1: "Albertine always knew she was going to live a long life so needed to have money" (Johnson, A. 2016). Albertine Josephine Svendsen Johnson, circa 1980. Source: Johnson family archives.

The subject of the photograph (figure 1), Albertine Josephine Svendsen (Johnson), told her grandson, Arden Johnson, that she always knew she was going to live a long life so she needed to have money. Indeed, she lived to be ninety-eight years old and spent three

quarters of her life in Duluth, Minnesota with her son, Rudolph Johnson, and his family, Albertine's daughter-in-law, Solveig (Sally) Arneng Johnson, and Rudy and Solveig's three children, Arden Johnson, Kai Johnson, and Iva Arneng. Albertine also lived long enough to spend time with her great-grandson, Ivvar-Áilu, Kai Johnson's son who was born in Girkonjárga/Kirkenes in the early 1970s. When she was well into her nineties, she got to meet two of her other four great-grandchildren, Lila and Robin; Hannah, her youngest great-grandchild was not born yet. Born on the island of Árdni/Arnøya in North Troms province to coastal Sámi and Norwegian fishers and subsistence farmers, Albertine Josephine Svendsen's life narrative calls to mind Gerald Vizenor's cultural concept of *survivance*, especially as defined in an *Utne Reader* article: "a quality and condition of remaining imaginative under domination and getting on with things."[1]

The Johnsons: A Family of Sámi Americans

The Johnson family holds a special place in my heart: they were some of the first people who reached out to me twenty-five years ago when I first started looking into my obscured and extensive Sámi heritage. Our family histories are remarkably similar, yet the stories themselves are unremarkable in their likeness to countless other family stories marked by colonial policies of assimilation in Fenno-Scandinavia and Kola Russia. Also unsurprising in the collective history of North Troms and Finnmark, is that our families are related through Solveig Arneng Johnson and my father, Harald H. Jensen's shared genealogical lines from the village of Guhttás/Kuttainen in the Gárasavvon/Karesuando area. With shared roots in extensive areas throughout Sápmi, our lines undoubtedly intersect from other places as well. But long before we made the connection that we were distantly related, Solveig Arneng Johnson, after a brief meeting in 1995, had sent me some materials in the mail after learning where my father came from in Sápmi. She and her son, Arden, implored me to look deeper into my family history, saying something to the effect of: "There is no way that you are only a little bit Sámi!" They were right. Over many years of enjoying kinship with the Johnson family, we have shared stories about ancestors in our families and shared stories about our experiences of "connecting the dots" while traveling in Sápmi. I have also been encouraged by members of the Johnson family to continue writing the collective narrative of Sámi America because, as Kai Johnson said, "in a few generations these stories will be forgotten, they'll be lost if nobody writes them down."[2]

Before I began the research specifically for the dissertation, I heard many stories about Albertine Josephine Svendsen (Johnson), especially from Arden and Solveig. During the three years of my research, I visited Arden and Solveig in Duluth on several occasions. On one occasion, I traveled together to Duluth with Rosalie Sundin, the great-granddaughter

of Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter, and filmed the conversation between Arden, Solveig, and Rosalie about their grandmothers while they looked at maps and family photographs. The conversation illustrated oral tradition from two families, and also revealed other stories that circulate within and between Sámi American diaspora communities. Arden also gave me an Mp3 file of Albertine's three-hour oral history recorded by her son, Rudy, in 1977.[3] At the time of the cassette recording, Albertine was almost ninety-one years old and had been living in America for over two-thirds of her life; she recounted some of her earliest childhood memories with rich detail. The oral history recording is a seminal source for her life narrative. Albertine's grandson, Kai, is also a storyteller and collaborator for the ongoing project. Kai lives in Florida and due to multiple extenuating circumstances, an in-person research conversation was impossible. However, I have met Kai on a number of occasions previously and have had long conversations with him; I have always regarded Kai as a captivating storyteller. In our long Skype conversation, he shared memories of Albertine and told engaging stories about his own journey to Sápmi in the 1970s—a journey that ended up as a quest to uncover and make sense of his family's suppressed Sámi heritage. Finally, while I was unable to reach the childhood home of Albertine Josephine Svendsen on Árdni/Arnøy, the first time I listened to the oral history recording was during a drive along the coast of North Troms within physical proximity of her home community. While not specifically the island of her childhood, the likeness of the cultural and physical landscapes to her home provided imaginative and interpretive resources in the beginning of my writing process.

Rudolph Johnson, Albertine Josephine Svendsen and Ivar Johnson's son, was born in Girkonjárga/Kirkenes, in the same home where his future wife would be born ten years later, although they were not to meet until twenty-five years later. Both Albertine and Ivar's Sámi families had endured the effects of the Norwegianization policy. Like so many other first-generation Sámi immigrants from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Albertine referred to herself (unconvincingly) as 100% Norwegian. The Svendsen-Johnson family migrated to America when Rudy was an infant, eventually settling in Duluth. Later, Solveig Arneng Johnson moved to America as a young adult when she and Rudy married. Solveig is an artist and painting has been her most prolific medium. Right after graduating from high school, Kai moved to Norway "to avoid the Vietnam War," and while there he visited many of his relatives and ancestral places from both sides of his family. During these visits, he realized that they were Sámi people and alongside other early Sámi activists, Kai experienced his own Indigenous cultural awakening. He participated in Sámi activism and was among one of the first students to study the Sámi language in Romsa/Tromsø under Professor Emeritus Ole Henrik Magga. When he returned to Duluth after living in Norway

for four years, he came off the plane wearing a *gákti*—the traditional Sámi garment. Arden also traveled to Norway and worked in Oslo and Uppsala for two years and traveled in the North (mostly hitchhiking) several times after that. On his travels in the North, he also met relatives from both sides of his family from multiple places in Sápmi.

But even before Kai and Arden traveled to Sápmi, their father and Albertine's son, Rudy, had always had an interest in their Sámi roots. In 1957, he had even joined the Oslo Sámiid Searvi (Oslo Sámi Association), and in the 1970s, he started writing letters of inquiry to the Norwegian American magazine *The Viking;* he wanted to know why there was never any coverage on the Sámi and he referred to himself as a "Sámi American." After one of the letters was published, people across the continent started to contact Rudy, and over time, the Johnson family built a network of Sámi descendants. Later, Rudy, Solveig, and Arden were part of the initial movement to reclaim and remember Sámi heritage among immigrant communities in North America; along with Faith Fjeld as the editor, a group founded the Sámi American journal *Báiki* which became a clearinghouse for early Sámi American community-building and activism.[4] Early on in this initial movement, Solveig had insisted that the group refer to themselves as "Sámi Americans" to honor both their Sámi heritage and the freedom some of them have enjoyed "to be Sámi here in America, because in Norway we weren't allowed to be Sámi."

In the three hour oral history that Rudy recorded with his ninety-one year old mother, whom he referred to as "Albertine Johnson" in 1977, one gets the sense that he is trying to elicit particular stories from her life, yet her responses are often rather matter-of-fact. A few times she gets a bit irritated and says "I have told you that so many times! Why do I need to tell you again!" One also gets the sense that he is, gently, trying to coax her into saying outright that her father's side of the family—and the side of the family with which she spent most of her formative years—were coastal Sámi. Throughout the interview, they used the terms "Lapp" and "Lappish," and several times, Albertine would say things like: "We were just like the Lappish people. We were all the same then." Other times, she would refer to "the Norwegians" with some distance, as if to say, she was not Norwegian like they were Norwegian. While she never said she was Sámi outright, she certainly alluded to it; in the oral history—augmented by the stories that Arden, Kai, and Solveig shared—Albertine's deep, familial connections to the Sámi culture come through. The narrative to follow represents a small compositie of the themes that were repeated by multiple members of the family. In addition, the website "Lapland Ancestry" featuring stories and genealogy on Rudolph Johnson and Solveig Arneng Johnson has been invaluable in this work.[5]

Church, *Et cetera*

One of Albertine's earliest childhood memories was playing church "up on the mountain" with some of her friends. Her father died when she was an infant, so she moved from Stokkenes to Haugnesodden with her mother to live with her maternal grandparents. One summer afternoon, she and and her friends were picking blueberries and playing church up on the mountain when a thunderstorm started brewing. They had never seen lighting or heard thunder before:

> We were brought up sort of religious and we had been told about the end of the world so we thought it was the end of the world! We ran down to our folks, down the mountian. And we came outside there, they were all standing outside, talking and laughing. I just didn't understand how they could talk and laugh when this was the end of the world. And then it started raining so we all had to go in![6]

The Norwegians and coastal Sámi attended the local Laestadian meetings in people's homes and it was at these meetings that Albertine was exposed to the hellfire and brimstone teachings of the itinerant Laestadian lay preachers. All her life she insisted that she was a Norwegian Lutheran, even though she attended, but never joined, the Norwegain Methodist Church in Duluth. Arden said that she went to the Norwegian Methodist Church because it was closer to her home, and the last forty years of her life she spent on crutches. The minsiter gave the sermons in Norwegian. Kai said: "The minister at the Norwegian Methodist Chruch, he was from Nordland, so he spoke a North Norwegian dialect. And he was good-looking."[7]

As a child growing up on Árdni/Arnøy, Albertine and her family only went to church in the summer because they had to travel some distance and stay for the weekend. Arctic weather conditions did not allow for the journey in the winter months. When she was eight years old, her mother had to move to the mainland to find work so Albertine was sent back to Stokkenes to live with her older half-brother, Mekal, and his family. Mekal was her half-brother from her father's first marriage. Albertine's other half-brother and his family lived in the neighboring farm and several other relatives on her father's side also lived in the area. In the summer months, the whole family would travel to church on the island of Skiervá/Skjervøy by rowboat, a three-or four-hour trip, and then they would "walk over the island from where the boat landing was, it was about an hour walk" to get to the church village.[8] They would leave Saturday morning and return on Sunday evening and make the trip three or four times every summer. Some families had built cabins in the church village, but they usually stayed with another family. "When it was sunshine we would stay in a

tent"[9] (a lávvu?). Other times of the year, they would have religious meetings in their homes.

But there was always "something else" that ran parallel to Christian belief: this "something else" encompassed local, traditional knowledge and the continuation of the old Sámi pre-Christian ways of life. When Kai visited the place where Albertine grew up, one of their relatives pointed to a large boulder that jutted up on a mountain across the fjord and said: "See that up there? That's *fjellkirka* (Norwegian for mountain church)!"[10] In this exchange, *fjellkirka* was code for a sacred Sámi offering stone called a *sieidi.* Arden had also been told about the *sieidi* by the family, and while their relatives in the area did not openly acknowledge their Sámi background, they revealed the rich oral tradition in the area. Arden said:

> When I went there, we traveled by boat to Laukøya where two women, married to brothers, lived at the end of the only road. They knew who *everyone* was in the family and the whole area going *way back*. Everything was oral and they talked for hours about all these people. They knew who married who, who moved away, who was born, who died, all kinds of stories all from memory…I was kind of a hippy at the time and I thought, whoa, this is trippy.[11]

Most places in North Norway have similar folk beliefs and folkways, and Albertine brought her oral tradition and folkways with her to Duluth: "We grew up hearing all kinds of stories from the older people, and we were really scared, we did not dare leave the house after dark!" She shared many stories about these local ways with her descendants, especially stories about the underground people—*gufihttarat.* She teased Solveig and Rudy when Kai was born, warning them that the underground people coveted cute babies with black curly hair and would steal them and replace them with one of their own. Solveig knew that Sámi children never wanted to be suspected of being a "switchling"— called a *gufihttara lonuhus* in Sámi. Albertine's story must have been convincing, Solveig said, (giggling): "I was actually a little afraid. I would go check on Kai when he was sleeping. He was so cute." Albertine knew local folk medicine and healing. Arden recalled a time when he was a little kid and had gotten something in his eye. He rubbed and rubbed and could not get it out. "She just grabbed my head and held me still and stuck her tongue in my eye, and got it out right away!" At one point in the oral history, Rudy asked Albertine about the little beings on the land and local superstitions and if "only the Lappish people believed in these things." She said:

> Oh no, we all believed in the same things. We were all the same then. We had the same beliefs. But we believed that the mountain people could do things, so you did not want to make them mad. We were afraid of them. But they were our friends, of course. We were friends. But we had to be careful.[12]

"Albertine always had money"

At one point in Albertine's oral history, she said to Rudy, in what I gathered was a slightly defensive tone: "I always had my own money." The defensiveness was not necessarily directed at Rudy, but perhaps at the systemic inequalities she faced in both Norway and the US. She may have experienced the early 20th century presumption that women could not possibly be able to take care of themselves. Not only had she made her own money for most of her life, she was able to buy a house during the Depression and even helped her grandchildren get through college. Kai told about her buying the house:

> She really had it together. I mean, she bought a house during the Depression! She had fifty dollars and bought a house. She knew what she had to do to survive, everything was about survival. The way she looked at life was that you were given a deck of cards and you had to deal with what you got. She rented out the downstairs of that house and lived upstairs. She was an entrepreneur at a time when a whole lot of men could never have gotten it together to do what she did.[13]

Arden has told me a few times, matter-of-factly: "Albertine *always had money*. She knew she was going to live a long life so she needed to have money." From the time she was nineteen, Albertine worked for pay, but she had labored without pay for many years of her childhood. After her mother had to move to the mainland to find work, and Albertine moved to her half-brother's farm, she had to do the work that many contemporary people, especially in the West would regard as a violation of international child labor laws. While she did not use the term "slave" and "indentured servant" in the oral history interview, she had used these terms when she talked about her childhood to her descendants in Duluth. Both Arden and Kai said: "Albertine said she was a slave." In contrast to the traumatic boarding school stories one finds among many people of her time, Albertine lamented that she did not get to go to the boarding school for more of her childhood. Kai said: "She was always sort of ashamed that she couldn't read or write better. She taught herself to read and write Norwegian. And she learned to read English, but she never really learned to write." Arden told a poignant story about his two Sámi grandmothers, Albertine and Anna Sofie Johnsen (Solveig's mother), and their sorrow over not being given the opportunity to go to school:

> I sat here, right here in this house, listening to both of my grandmothers when they lived with us. They cried together as they talked about how neither of them got to go to school. They both wished they could have gotten an education. My one grandmother was an indentured servant from the time she was eight, and the other from the age of five. They were so hurt that they were forced to work and did not get to go to school.[14]

From the time she was seven until her confirmation at age fifteen, Albertine went to school just nine weeks a year, and sometimes she was kept home when they needed more laborers. During the rest of the year when she was not at school, she labored on the farm where she had a number of duties, including: caring for infants and young children; getting up early in the morning to clean the barn and feed the cows leftover fish heads, entrails, and seaweed; raking and stacking the hay; and other tasks, like cooking and cleaning. "The cows had to be milked, we made butter and cheese. The hay was cut by our house, but sometimes we would have to go up in the mountain and gather it there and carry it down on our backs, then take it to the boat and row the boat back home."[15] Arden said: "She would crawl behind the wood burning stove in the late afternoon because she needed to catch up on her sleep."[16] It was only during the cod season when she would get paid for her work. She got to keep her own net, and for each fish she caught and hung to dry, she got to keep the money. In the oral history, she told about all of the work she had to do, and then said, with resignation: "But we always had enough food. We had beautiful dishes, as beautiful as what we have here in America. And we always had warm clothes."[17]

Albertine often talked about her *verdde,* a mountain Sámi girl whose family had their summer grazing area near her brother's farm. It was through her friendship with her reindeer herder Sámi friend that she learned Sámi, or "Lappish" as she called it.

> I was thirteen and she was a little older. She came in the spring to take care of the reindeer so they wouldn't come down to the farms. She had a couple of dogs. She did not stay in the house, we could not make her to come in the house. She lived outside and she slept in the hay. She couldn't talk Norwegian and I couldn't talk Lappish and we got [to be] good friends, we still got [to be] good friends, she talked to me in Lappish and I talked to her in Norwegian and we both learned to talk. She got so good to talk Norwegian and I got so good to talk Lappish. I talked perfect Lappish and we laughed![18]

She stayed with her brother until she was nineteen and in all those years, according to Kai, she had only worn "hand-me-downs." Kai shared a story about her first dress, a story that was later augmented by Arden with more disturbing details:

> When I asked my grandmother about what kind of clothes they had, she said that they just had hand-me-downs. She never had clothes of her own until she made her own dress. Well, she said she snuck and sheared the sheep, carded the wool, spun the yarn, died the yarn. She saw a picture of a dress in a catalogue and knit the dress from the picture. She was eighteen and that was the first time she had ever owned anything of her own. And it was the first thing that she ever owned that was pretty. And she had to hide it from them. [19]

Albertine's brother had "caught her" with the hidden dress and demanded to know where she got it. When she told him that she had made it, he accused her of "stealing" and forced her to take apart the dress, Arden said: "She had to unravel this beautiful dress she knit, he even made her comb out the yarn."[20] She left her brother's place to find work on the mainland not long after that incident. "That changed her relationship with her brother. I don't know if she even talked to him for a long time after that."

Filename: "AlbertineDefiant"

When Arden sent me the photograph below (figure 2), the filename was "AlbertineDefiant." The story behind the photograph illustrates the deep class disparities in early 20th century North Norway, and Albertine's insistence on "living creatively under domination and getting on with things." She was working as a maid or servant for the *nessekonge*—a (North) Norwegian term which literally translates to "King of the Ness (headland)." Many local communities had a *nessekonge*, a rich merchant family, or shopowner, from the gentrified South. In the class hierachy at the time, these monied merchants "lorded it over" local communities, usually with the blessing of the minister and sheriff. Albertine worked for such families on the mainland:

> The pay was not very much. I got 100 NOK per year [under 300 USD in today's currency, adjusted for inflation]. I usually worked seven days, but we could get free [free time] but the work was much easier than at my brother's place, I did not have to work half as hard there as I did with my brother. I was the only servant. Then I went to another place where I worked for a big store owner. They had everything there. I did housework and took care of the barn, and there were two other girls and hired men. The salary was not much better but we got a lot of clothes and cloth. We were treated like servants, there was no such thing as being equal with those big guys, they step on some people, just like here [in America].[21]

Figure 2: "You can see the anger and bitterness in her eyes." Pictured: Albertine Josefine Svendsen (Johnson). Source: Johnson family archives. Photographer unknown. Circa 1905-1907.

It was probably when Albertine was working for the shopowner where she got clothes and cloth that the incident happened which led to this photograph. Arden (through tears) shared the story, and clearly the story had been repeated many times in the family:

> Albertine worked as a servant or a maid for a rich Norwegian family. It was her day off. And all of the young people had made plans. They were going to row out to an island where they would make a fire and boil coffee and have a picnic. But at the last minute, the mistress of the house, in an evil way, made her stay behind to do some meaningless task that could have waited until the next day. This really pissed her off. It happened that the photographer was in town that day, so after she completed this insignificant chore, she took some of her savings and put on her

> nicest clothes and went into town and had her picture taken. You can see some of the anger and bitterness in her eyes. She never quite got over it.[22]

Albertine had friends with connections in Kirkenes, which was developing rapidly into a taconite mining town, so she moved there and worked for another shopowner. She told stories about life in town and how she enjoyed going to shows and cafes with her friends; Kai emphasized several times that she had a life-long love of social connection. The only time she had been to a bigger place was on a trip to Romsa/Tromsø as a teenager with her brother on the 17th of May (Norway's Constitution Day); they played loud music with instruments she had never seen or heard before and it was so loud that it almost scared her. While in Romsa/Tromsø, they bought magazines and papers, and back home, one of her uncles read the papers while the others gathered around and listened. "I liked living in a bigger place, in Kirkenes. There were more people around and more things to do."[23] She gradually started earning "a better salary," at one point earning 25 NOK per month. It was while working in Kirkenes that she met Ivar Johnson. "We met at a party or something. We both went home for a year, and then I came back and worked for a carpenter for a year until we got married. Then we rented a house, I did not work so much then, I worked at a cafe (Swedish: *kaffestuga*). I made lefse and things like that."

Ivar and Albertine had similar backgrounds, both of their families had been a part of the Laestadian movement, and they were from working class and fishing and subsistence farming families, although ancestors from both of their families were reindeer owners at one time or another. Albertine rarely, if ever, referred to herself as "Lappish"—but she knew that her husband's family had deep Sámi roots, a fact she said "didn't matter, because we were all the same." People knew that Ivar could speak Finnish, and undoubtedly also spoke Sámi. Ivar worked as a machinest and foreman the first year after they were married in Kirkenes. After some other people they knew had been in America and "bragged about making money, like 3 or 4 times more than in Norway" in the iron mines, Ivar started talking about moving to America where he could get a better job. At first, Albertine did not want to go to a place where she did not know anyone, so she told him to go ahead of her and Rudy, and they would come later. Rudy was born in Girgonjárga/Kirkenes and when he was around nine months old, Ivar had secured employment in Thompson Township in Northern Minnesota where he quickly became a foreman since he spoke several langauges; many of the other workers could only speak Finnish. Albertine and Rudy then traveled to America to reunite with Ivar, traveling through Ellis Island and by train to Minnesota.

They lived in Thompson Township for a few years before relocating to Duluth. While in Thompson Township, they survived the Spanish Flu epidemic and the Cloquet fire. During both of these crises, Albertine helped out in the community, attending to sick people and "carrying up as much water as we could, carying tubs and bottles" when the fire came there, she said, it looked like "a wall of red in the sky." Albertine and Ivar also helped fire refugess who had lost their homes and belongings.

Ivar Drowned on a Hot Summer Day in Mid-July

When they moved to Duluth, Ivar purchased a house, but did not have an insurance policy. The fact that he did not have insurance was repeated several times by the various storytellers in th Svendsen-Johnson family. Rudy asked Albertine: "Tell us about your husband and my father, Ivar. He drowned one hot summer day in mid-July, right?" Albertine did not recount many details, but Solveig told more of what happened that summer: "He had gone swimming on the bay side and was pulled underwater by an undercurrent and drowned. Several people drowned that summer. They closed the beach after that summer and moved it to the other side."[24] Rudy also repeated the story on the oral history interview about Albertine finding work to keep up with the house payments and support her son "because they didn't have insurance." Albertine found work in the Klearflax linen rug factory in West Duluth. "She was a bloomer girl, she loved that job because they would have parties and she had lots of friends there," Arden said. In connection to Ivar's untimely death and her necessity to have to work to support her family, Kai repeated again:

> She always worked. Her whole life had been about survival, but she also liked her work. When she took a job at the factory after Ivar died, the workers would get together and have parties, or they would do other social things. She would take sewing jobs on the side, or she would clean for people, she worked in a restaurant once. She always had some kind of work.[25]

Arden repeated again: "Albertine knew that she was going to live a long life and she had been an indentured servant as a child. She always had some kind of work, she would sew, or clean for people, she also took in renters." Most of the people living in West Duluth were working class immigrants who worked in factories or other industries and they "sort of stuck together," Kai said. Most of the children of factory workers had to get up and get themselves up for school, a practice that would be frowned upon in contemporary society. Rudy would get himself up and off to school, after cooking his own coffee. The story about him getting himself off to school at the age of five was repeated by several people in the family. The following is the story as Solveig told it:

> Rudy would get himself up at five or six in the morning and cook his coffee. His mother had to go to work so he had to get himself up and get dressed and walk to school by himself. But one day when he got to school, the teacher told him, "Rudy, Rudy! Your pants are on backwards! You need to go and turn your pants around." He put his pants on backwards, but he cooked his own coffee on the stove![26]

It goes without saying that Albertine wanted her son, Rudy, to get an education. She knew that he would have a better life if he had an education which would give him the opportunity to get a good job. He studied at Duluth State Teacher's College, the University of Minnesota, and Hamline University, and earned a Master's in History from Columbia. Eventually he got a position as the library director at the University of Minnesota Duluth. When he and Solveig married, she devoted her life to her children and to her art. That Solveig was a stay-at-home mother and artist was a point of tension between Solveig and Albertine: "She thought it was frivolous to be an artist. She had always worked, and it just seemed impractical to her. She was very hard on me at times." After Rudy passed away in 2007, a collection of materials on the Sámi was named in his honor,[27] and in 2012, Kirsten Dunbar-Chace made a documentary film featuring Solveig's life as an artist; Albertine is a part of the film narrative as well.[28] Also, Arden and another Sámi American, Mel Olsen, started the newsletter of the Sámi Siida of North America, published from 1996-2012[29], and Arden and his life-partner, Casey Meshbesher, started the *Árran* blog.[30]

Traveling

Albertine worked a number of jobs and as a senior citizen, she traveled to Norway to visit her home, family, and friends. She talked about this trip in the oral history interview, and it was one of few times I registered some sadness; she knew she would never see her people again, she would never go back because she wanted to see more of America. But she never regretted moving to America, because after she came, she really liked it. "I liked America right away after I came here. In Norway, there were three classes on the train. In America, we are more equal." Arden also relayed what she had told him about the class disparities in Norway: "She also liked America because in Norway when an upper-class lady walked by, you had to stand in the *grøfta* (Northern dialect for "ditch") and regular women were not to wear hats. Since Ivar was foreman in Girkonjárga/Kirkenes, she could wear a hat, but she never did." This theme was repeated several times by Albertine and others in the family; clearly, Albertine had more opportunities for both work and for social involvement in America, especially in her particular community in West Duluth. She earned a reputation for her practical skills and for being a hard worker and she had many friends and acquaintances. According to Arden: "She was a member of the organization

Nordlandslaget since arrival and often sang the loudest when they sang Norwegian songs. She loved going out so much that she once crawled on her hands and knees to get on a city bus when it was too high for her crutches!" Despite the injustice of all the hard work she had to do as a child, the skills and knowledge she gained in Sápmi helped her to persevere in North America.

After her trip to Norway, she indeed traveled to many places in America. On one trip to Hollywood she and her friends went to the home of Sonja Henning: "I saw Sonja Henning's place on the top of a hill. But we could not get in, she was in Norway at the time and she had a big fence that was locked up, the place, the gate said 'The Viking' on it." With the Golden Age Club she also traveled to Arizona, New Mexico, Florida, Washington DC and some New England States. She said she "loved California because there was no snow there." Toward the end of our conversation, Kai talked about Albertine's trip to Norway, among other things:

> She knew she was never going to see anyone again, and she cried. You know, she might have come off as a bear at times, but she was actually really emotional. She would start talking about people back home and she could cry about things that happened to her. It was sad for her, you know. And she had some regrets. She felt some regret about how she treated my dad when he was growing up, but he never held it against her. She had to raise kids when she was kid, so when he came along, she wasn't into it at all. But she was a very sweet grandmother. She played with us and baked cookies. And she always kind of looked out for others, like the neighbors, the Hansens. They were really poor and they were not especially happy, they were pretty severe people. She was eighty years old then, and they were older than her, so if she baked bread or made jam or something, she would always make extra and give some to the Hansens.[31]

After Kai returned from Sápmi in the 1970s, he recognized that she was less secretive about her Sámi background, or perhaps she was just resigned to the reality that the next generation was claiming the Sámi identity that the older generation, out of necessity, were forced to hide. But she would still make comments like: "We are in America now, we have to eat with a knife and fork!" A joke in the family is that the happiest day of Albertine's life was when Arden, her first grandchild, was born with blond hair and blue eyes, and later she delighted in her great-grandchildren who had blond hair and blue eyes. "He looks so Norwegian!" she said about baby Arden. But with Kai, she was worried:

> I looked like her. She worried about me. She didn't want me to go through what she had been through. She had black hair, she was short and dark. But let's face it, my

> life has been different from hers. I have grown up as a white man in America. My life has been totally different. She had a hard time and she did what she did in order to survive and just kind of move on with her life.[32]

When Arden traveled to Sápmi and met relatives after Kai had been there, he joked that people would answer the door and say, suspiciously: "So *you're* [read: tall, fair-haired, blue-eyed] Kai's brother, huh?" After returning from Sápmi, and recognizing that all of his grandparents were Sámi, Arden brought a red coat for Albertine:

> I brought the red wool coat she had requested, it had to be red, it had to have buttons, and it had to be wool! She *loved* that coat and all brightly colored clothes. It was technically a Norwegian coat, but it had a Sámi aesthetic. Everything about her in that coat was Sámi and she wore it all the time. It's like when I met my relatives from Albertine's side of the family, they did not say they were Sámi. But, you know, if it walks like a duck, and it talks like a duck, then it's a duck![33]

"The Tighter the Curls, the Better!"

Albertine lived with Rudy, Solveig, Arden, Kai, and Iva for fourteen years when she got older, and for a while, Solveig's mother, Anna Sofie Johnsen (called Sofie by friends and family), also came from Norway and lived with them until she passed away in 1973. At one point in the oral history, Rudy said: "You know, you have a great-grandchild, and you might have great-great grandchildren who might listen to this someday. What do you want them to know? What do you want to tell them?" Albertine replied in a cheerful tone of voice:

> My relationship with my grandchildren was always good, they are all grown up now. I remember that I was in North Dakota, and they called and told me that I had a great-grandchild and I was quite happy about it. I just love my grandchildren, and my great-grandson, and so I will love the great-great-grandchildren too. When I saw my first great-grandchild, he was a cute good-looking kid.[34]

When Albertine was ninety-three years old, she moved to the nursing home after having lived with Rudy and Solveig for fourteen years. Kai said that she regretted not going to live in the nursing home sooner. "At the nursing home, there she had people around her and activities all the time. She just wanted to be with people. She knew who everyone was in West Duluth, she knew the families, she knew who their children and grandchildren were. She loved the excitement of a party too."[35] Over all the years she lived in Duluth and through her community involvement, she had made many friends of all ages and

backgrounds. She even made friends with some "ruffian bikers who wore black leather and did cocaine"—as Arden described them—and when they were arrested for dealing, she defended them by saying, "young people can't get good jobs these days!" They used to visit her in the nursing home. She also had hippy friends who would bring her fresh fish, and one time they even "scored a hot wheelchair" for her which still had the name of the California hospital they scored it from on the back.

Albertine died in 1984 at the age of ninety-eight, after living over sixty years of her life in America. The funeral was packed. In the back row sat a group of early punk rockers—mohawks and all—friends of Albertine. She left her entire estate, something around 300 USD, to two of Arden's ex-girlfriends who used to give her permanents. "The tighter the curls, the better!"

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Notes

[1] I keep coming back to this definition as it is accessible to a wider audience and captures the sense of survivance in the specific case of Albertine Josephine Svendsen (Utne-Reader).
[2] (K. Johnson)
[3] (A. J. Johnson)
[4] (Báiki)
[5] (R. Johnson)
[6] (A. J. Johnson)
[7] (K. Johnson)
[8] (A. J. Johnson)
[9] (A. J. Johnson)
[10] (K. Johnson)
[11] (A. Johnson)
[12] (A. J. Johnson)
[13] (K. Johnson)
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[19] (A. J. Johnson)
[20] (A. Johnson)
[21] (A. J. Johnson)
[22] (A. Johnson)
[23] (A. J. Johnson)
[24] (S. A. Johnson)
[25] (K. Johnson)
[26] (S. A. Johnson)
[27] See: https://www.d.umn.edu/~jvileta/documents/saami-books-3rd-edition.pdf; http://www.d.umn.edu/~jvileta/sami/index.html
[28] (Dunbar-Chace)
[29] (Árran)
[30] See: http://arran2.blogspot.com/
[31] (K. Johnson)
[32] (K. Johnson)
[33] (A. Johnson)
[34] (A. J. Johnson)
[35] (K. Johnson)

Narrative of

Berith/Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter (1881-1954)

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Narrative of Bertha (Berith) Kristina Susanna Larsdatter (1881-1954)

Figure 1: Bertha (Berith) Kristina Susanna Larsdatter. Tromsø, circa 1897. Source: Rosalie Sundin.

The subject of the photograph was baptized with the name Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter, but she was always known as "Bertha" by her descendants in East Lake Lillian, a small town on the prairies of western Minnesota. It was not until Rosalie Sundin started

looking into her family's heritage that she discovered that "Bertha" had been baptized with the first name "Berith." Rosalie is one of Bertha's great-granddaughters and a storyteller and collaborator for the transmedial project. The above photograph is the only photograph (figure 1) the family has of Bertha/Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter before she emigrated from Troms Province to Minnesota. The portrait was probably taken around the time of her confirmation in Romsa/Tromsø around 1897. She was born at a farmstead called Eidstrand (in Norwegian) in Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen to Lars Peder Larsen from the same place and Ragnhild Andrea Nilsdatter from Moskavuotna/Sørfjord, both in Troms Province. Rosalie's determined investigation into her hidden and extensive Sámi and Kven heritage was reflected in the words "confirmed Sea Sámi" and "confirmed Sámi" next to Lars Peder Larsen's and Ragnhild Andrea Nilsdatter's names on her family tree. Rosalie grew up in the Minneapolis area but spent summers in East Lake Lillian where her great-grandmother, Bertha, settled and where her parents and grandparents were born and raised.

Like many others in the Sámi American community, Rosalie grew up hearing odd remarks and practicing traditions that seemed to set her family apart from the majority of Norwegian Americans. She has only vague memories of her great-grandmother Bertha from when she was a small child, but she had always heard stories from her maternal grandmother, Elphie Sarone Nielson, who lived to be (almost) 102-years-old. Rosalie also heard stories from a network of extended kin in East Lake Lillian who had a rich oral tradition; spending time with extended kin shaped Rosalie's gift for storytelling. It was through years of genealogical research, investigating suggestive remarks about her family's "difference," and in studying the history of East Lake Lillian, that Rosalie discovered that her maternal grandmother—as well as more than half the town—were of Sámi or Kven origins. In the Norwegian census records, Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter's parents were listed as "LF" (Lapp/Finn) for ethnicity. On Ragnhild Andrea Nilsdatter's record, it says "Taler Lappisk," which in this context likely means that she was a monolingual Sámi speaker: she "talks Lappish." After these discoveries, Rosalie spent many years researching the Sámi culture and often discovered expressions and lifeways that resonated with what she grew up with in East Lake Lillian.

Rosalie: Our Sámi American Foster Mom

From the first time I had a conversation with Rosalie nine years ago, I sensed that she was a survivor of inherited inter-generational trauma. Aside from the loving environment her grandmothers provided when she visited them, Rosalie's raw intelligence, natural creativity, and quick wit must have also been factors in her ability to persevere in spite of suffering extreme child abuse by her mother and a series of stepfathers. Rosalie was

especially targeted for abuse by her mother. Many years later, Rosalie learned that her maternal grandmother had sought to protect her:

> This was before there was even a term for "child abuse" and there was no child protection service. There was always this family honor where you were not to share the "family secrets." When I was a little kid, my grandmother even asked me if I wanted to come and live with her, "to be her girl and stay with her forever." When she was well into her eighties she handed me a handwritten memoir that she kept asking me to read. It said that she was trying to protect me when I was a kid, but that she also had to protect her daughter. She also told about an incident when she was molested at the age of thirteen. I wish she had been more explicit about all of this when I was younger. I might have decided to stay with her and Grandpa Al at the lake and not go back to my mother. Like most severely abused kids, I got trapped in that cycle of seeking my mother's approval at last, in hopes she would finally love me.[1]

As a child, Rosalie would visit her extended family in East Lake Lillian quite often, and spent every summer there in the care of her maternal and paternal grandmothers. Her maternal grandmother—Elphie Sarone Nielson and her second husband, "Grandpa Al"—owned a small fishing resort in Northern Minnesota and Rosalie has warm memories of going to the resort in the summer. "If there was one thing I knew about my family, it was that we fished! I would go fishing with them, and they taught me how to filet the fish. I got really good at it. I used to charge the tourists a quarter for each fish I filleted. I saved up enough to buy a bike!" These visits to her two grandmothers and her relatives provided life-saving refuge. Nonetheless, running parallel to the warmth of family life was inter-generational sexual, psychological, and physical abuse and requisite trauma and "family secrets":

> It took generations to instill a warped value system about male sexual abuse of minors, their [women's] expectation that "boys will be boys" and "men get like that when they reach a certain age," so it was on the girls to protect themselves, to maintain purity [eyes rolling]. I have chosen to speak openly about these family dynamics and sexual abuse to break the silence and to help protect the babies of future generations in the family.[2]

As a result of extreme child abuse, Rosalie has rheumatic heart disease; developing the serious, life-threatening, and chronic condition is directly attributable to her mother refusing to take her to the doctor when she had rheumatic fever as a child. Rosalie almost died, and when her mother finally took her to the doctor, the damage was done. She has

survived two open-heart surgeries and recently had a pacemaker implanted; some of our research conversations for this project took place while Rosalie was hospitalized for her heart. Yet despite all her troubles, she always seems to find a way to laugh at the absurdity of it all!

While hospitalized in 2015, Rosalie had listed our other dear friend, Jennifer Harkonen, and me as next-of-kin on the hospital intake form, after her son, Michael Sundin. When one doctor came in, she introduced us, "this is my son, and these are my two step-daughters" and then she proceeded to diagnose herself with "complete left bundle branch block." The doctor nodded and heartily agreed with her self-diagnosis and said she would consult another doctor about a treatment plan. Then Rosalie proceeded to nonchalantly hand the doctor the user manual for the heart valve that was put in her heart back in the 1980s, describing in detail the specific high-tech material that was used in that model, which has since gone out of production. She went to have blood drawn and then another doctor came in to explain to her "family" what the next course of action would be for "our mother." He scanned the three of us and sat down closest to me and directed his speech and serious tone squarely at me, assuming my likeness to Rosalie must have meant that I was her "real offspring," and not her African American son! When we all regrouped and recounted these three incidents—Rosalie twice schooling the first doctor and the assumption of the second doctor that I was her daughter—we broke out into side-splitting laughter. We must have startled the staff and other patients. Rosalie's protectiveness and her natural tendency to find joy in others' good fortune, along with the hospital events, has earned her the loving moniker "Sámi American Foster Mom."

However, before her most recent heart incident and my Ph.D. fellowship commenced, Rosalie and I had gotten to know each other through our involvement in the Twin Cities Sámi Siida. After my first book came out in 2012, Rosalie volunteered to be a marketing agent and arranged lectures and signings for me in several places in the Midwest. She also accompanied me to several of these events. While we were in the area, we visited Lake Lillian Township and stayed with one of her relatives. Visiting Lake Lillian with Rosalie significantly enriched my understanding of the context for the family stories she shared. While these visits preceded the beginning of my research period, I still consider them an essential part of our collaboration and a part of my research. Rosalie had a great deal of knowledge about the history of the area and intersecting family genealogies; it seemed like for every person we met in Lake Lillian, she could calculate off-the-top of her head how she was related to them.

During the research period of my fellowship, I met Rosalie several times in her home in Eagan, Minnesota. We had three long conversations, and twice I filmed them. We also traveled to Duluth where we met Arden Johnson and Solveig Arneng Johnson, the grandson and daughter-in-law of Albertine Josephine Svendsen. Albertine and Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter both came from the same general region of North Troms, and they both settled in Minnesota. I filmed the conversation between the three of them while they looked at family photographs and maps; the scene that unfolded brought forth oral tradition in two families, as well as stories that circulate between families and communities in Sámi American diaspora communities. Rosalie and I also spent many hours going through giant boxes of genealogical data, photographs, newspaper articles, and letters she has collected over many years. Stories generated by the photographs and other material cultural items augmented the stories she shared from family oral tradition. The photographs were especially important; looking at family photographs prompted poignant stories of the warmth of family life, as well as trauma, resilience, and forgiveness. In addition to our research conversations, I also draw on two unpublished biographical texts that Rosalie shared with me; it appears that writing such texts seems to have been a tradition among the women in her family.

Finally, I also visited Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter's mother's home place in Moskavuotna/Ullsfjord. While there, I met with a local elder, Marit Ravna Elvevoll, who has been active in cultural revitalization efforts in the area and was part of a group of women who re-constructed and promoted the use of the area's *gákti*—the Sámi traditional garment. Notably, the Moskavuotna/Ullsfjord *gákti* is now in widespread use after a century of repression. It was the style of *gákti* that Bertha and her family would have worn, which is of great interest to Rosalie as an artist and crafter herself. I also met a local genealogist and local historian, Knut Johan Georgsen, and local hunter, fisher, carpenter, and reindeer herder Brede L.S. Várráš. All three of these local people helped me to contextualize the local culture and history in the area, and especially the history of Norwegianization.

Bundling

There are few stories about Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter's early childhood in local or family oral tradition. Her father, Lars Peder Larsen, was a fisher and small-scale farmer from Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen, and her mother, Ragnhild Andrea Nilsdatter, was from Moskavuotna/Sørfjord. Lars Peder had been married three times, and three times widowed, before marrying Bertha's mother, Ragnhild Andrea who was twenty years his junior. Sadly, Ragnhild Andrea, along with her second child, also died during childbirth when Bertha was two years old. Bertha and her siblings all lost their mothers as children. As the only

surviving child of Ragnhild Andrea Nilsdatter, the sister of Ragnhild Andrea, Kristina Nilsdatter, likely took special responsibility for her deceased sister's only surviving child, Berith Kristina Susanna. Rosalie understands that Bertha spent her earliest childhood under the supervision of older siblings, and presumably other women in their small settlement.

In a fishing community, the men would be away for long periods of time; thus, the women and children had the collective experience of losing most of the men in the community seasonally, and sometimes it was uncertain if they would return. Peoples' lives were shaped by the oftentimes unforgiving natural environment, the weather, sailing conditions, and annual fisheries stocks. The role of women in the community was to harvest the root vegetables and pick berries, tend to their livestock, and otherwise conduct all the tasks necessary to sustain life in their homes and settlement. The women and children in these communities lived and survived collectively, and like in most, if not all, Sámi communities, women were traditionally in charge of the family economy. One often hears people say that "it was the job of the men to earn the money which he was to promptly deliver to his wife" and it was then her job to keep track of the family finances. Also, women earned money selling crafts, such as rugs or mats they wove on the weighted-warped loom (*rátnogođđin*) or footwear they sewed from reindeer fur. Sometimes women brought more money into the household economy than the men, especially if they sold items at the annual regional markets. Finally, in addition to learning crafting, animal husbandry, and other skills in her childhood, Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter also learned local folkways and folk medicines in Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen.

Stories had always circulated about Bertha's life before migration, stories that Rosalie described as "traumatic"; these experiences included events at the boarding school and during her time working "in service" to well-to-do farmers in the region as a teenager. Rosalie shared stories she heard about her great-grandmother's experiences while attending a missionary-run boarding school on Gálsa/Karlsøy during the time of the Norwegianization policy. She told these stories multiple times in our long conversations. Records revealed that Bertha was the only child in the family of eight that was listed as a Norwegian speaker in the census; all of her other siblings were listed as Sámi speakers, or as bilingual. Rosalie attributes blame for Bertha's loss of the Sámi language to the cruelty she suffered at the missionary boarding school and for the "Norwegianization mandate." There were also stories about Bertha's treacherous journeys across the sound when her brothers "had to row her to the boarding school." Rosalie has the impression that Bertha attended the boarding school for longer than any of the other members of the family and appears to have been there for several months at a time due to the distance from her home. Also, unlike many women from her particular place and time, Bertha could read and write

Norwegian and kept in touch with her extended kin in Sápmi. However, the most disturbing story that Rosalie heard about Bertha's experiences before emigration concerned an old Protestant courtship practice which seems to have been in use at the boarding school called "bundling":

> I had always heard that Bertha had attended a boarding school on Karsløy [Gálsa]. When I was a young woman in my late twenties, a group of us were helping my grandmother, Elphie, who was Bertha's oldest daughter, clean her house in preparation for a move. Grandma was telling about a special kind of local lefsa-making and other food traditions from Bertha's youth. She told the story again about Bertha being rowed across the fjord to a boarding school by her brothers. Then she described a local practice used at the boarding school called "bundling." She described it as one boy [3]and one girl fully clothed wrapped up together like a cocoon in a blanket. She said specifically that it was a catch-22 for the girls. If a girl was not asked to bundle, she was considered to be sexually unattractive, or unpopular. If a girl bundled with a boy, it was expected that the boy would try to touch the girl, and if he succeeded then she was "marked as slutty" or "tainted." Then she went on to say that it made sense that Bertha, who had become pregnant out of wedlock as a nineteen-year-old, moved to Lake Lillian to join the Troms community because she already had an aunt and uncle living there who had ties to the community and the founder [colloquially referred to as] "Reverend Bomsta."

The story was striking for several reasons. For one thing, I had never heard about missionary boarding schools using the practice of "bundling" in North Norway; I had, however, heard on multiple occasions that coastal Sámi people, and especially women, had been regarded as "loose" or "sexually deviant" by the missionaries (and even by some of our own people from other communities). I was also struck by the gender ideology reflected in Elphie's description of the practice which seems to embody the psychology of the "Madonna/whore" complex of the Victorian Era. Also, the idea that a nineteen-year-old Sámi woman would have to move to America for having a child "out-of-wedlock" was unthinkable in most communities in North Norway in the early twentieth century. It was not unusual for young women in northern communities, especially in Sámi communities, to have children when they were not married, even in fairly religious communities; it would neither give cause for stigmatization nor rejection. It seemed like this story had taken shape over two generations in America, and might have been colored by nineteenth century Victorian gender ideology. Alternatively, in the period before the Norwegian state assumed all responsibility for education, practices at the missionary boarding

schools were determined by the particular mission, and as one local from the area in Sápmi described it, some of them were just "really creepy" [my translation].

Johannes Bomstad and State Church Dissenters in East Lake Lillian: Settlers from Sápmi on Dakota Land[4]

Under the leadership of "Reverend" Johannes Bomstad, a group of mostly Kven (and some Sámi) dissenters from the Norwegian State Church in Báhccavuotna/Balsfjord migrated to America, seeking religious freedom, like multiple other dissenter congregations from the Nordic countries in the mid-19th century. The Bomstad group entered the continent through Thunder Bay and disembarked in Chicago in 1862 and made their way to Nicollet County, Minnesota. Shortly after they arrived, two of the young men in their group were recruited (or drafted) to join the Union Army to fight in the American Civil War. Just as they were to be deployed to fight against the Confederates, their regiment was called to fight in the "Indian Wars" against the "Sioux Indians." It was on one of their tours through western Minnesota, where they were commanded to "drive the Dakota westward," that they passed through the area that would later be called East Lake Lillian; they took note of the suitability of the area for farming and fishing. They sent a letter to Reverend Bomstad and told him about the place with a lake to fish and land to farm. In 1864, Bomstad then traveled by donkey to the area of East Lake Lillian—now emptied by force of its original inhabitants—the Dakota—to stake a claim. Rumors were floating around that the Bomstad soldiers might have been in the regiment responsible for the Sand Creek Massacre; Rosalie spent many hours looking for any record of it and was relieved when she found no physical record of their involvement.

"Reverend" Bomstad's followers joined him shortly after that, and with winter weather upon them and limited time and resources to acquire building materials, they built turf huts (Sámi*: goahti/goađit*) to get through their first winter. The site is on land still in ownership of Rosalie's family. Some Swedish settlers, also a dissenter community, had staked a claim in West Lake Lillian just days after Bomstad had claimed East Lake Lillian. The Swedish settlers had ample resources and laborers and were able to build rudimentary houses in time for the winter. From the very beginning, the Swedish settlers looked down upon the northerners from the other group:

> I heard from people in my family that the Swedes had refused to associate with the Bomstad people and referred to them as "sub-humans" who lived in "dugouts." Later, I met a cousin, Mona Nelson-Balcer, who I had not known growing up, we met for the first time as adults. Mona had always known she was Sámi, and she had recently written a master thesis on the history of the area and was the director of the

> local historical society. She too had heard about the "dugouts" and the Swedes refusing to mingle with the "sub-humans." I had also heard that the Swedes and the Bomstad group did not share a common language, or that their dialects were so different that they would not be able to understand each other.[5]

Undoubtedly, the discriminatory behavior on the part of the Swedes was rooted in popularly held views of the Kven and Sámi at the time. The Bomstad group originated from the "peasant classes" of the Tornio River Valley who migrated to North Norway for the rich fisheries because of famines and poverty in Finland. The Nordic states and the scientific community, as part of the developing discourses of eugenics and race anthropology, racialized the Sámi and the ethnically mixed people from the Tornio River Valley. The well-to-do Swedes likely had both racialized and class-based discriminatory views of the Bomstad settlers. Transgressions against the unwritten rule against co-mingling led to in-group social sanction from both sides of the divide; there was even a county road that divided the two communities colloquially known as the "Mason-Dixon Line." It would be several generations before the two groups co-mingled or intermarried. Rosalie grew up occupying a challenging space within this local dynamic: she is a direct descendant of the Kven "Reverend" Bomstad, the descendant of later Sámi immigrants through Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter; her biological father, Gordin Edwin Sundin, was from the Swedish side of town. Bertha, or Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter, married one of Johannes Bomstad's many grandsons, Joseph Bjørnstarn Nielson.

Sámi settlers from Troms Province joined the original Bomstad settlers later. Most of the coastal Sámi families who migrated to East Lake Lillian, facing colonial processes in Sápmi, joined the community one or two generations after the original settlement. Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter was among the second generation to migrate to East Lake Lillian. Some of the later settlers were adherents of the same dissenter movement that Bomstad founded, or they had heard favorable things about life in America from the earlier migrants. Included in the later migrations from Moskavuotna/Ullsfjord were some of Berith Kristina Susanna Nilsdatter's relatives; thus, when she arrived, she already had kin in the area.

Another important aspect of the East Lake Lillian history, which is of seminal importance to Rosalie's family narrative, was the fact that the Bomstad family had fallen into social disfavor by the time that Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter arrived in 1906. People said that several descendants of the Bomstad line were "crazy" or "drunks" after they developed a shuffling gait, bouts of psychosis, and delusions. In local oral tradition, the story was that an ancestor of Bomstad had been afflicted by a "seven-generation Sámi curse" after he had

impregnated a young Sámi woman and abandoned her before the child was born. Going back to the early Middle Ages, Europeans believed, and in some places still believe, that the Sámi possessed powerful magic and could cast spells far-and-wide. This belief (or knowledge) traveled to America as well. The story of the seven-generation curse continued to circulate (perhaps tongue-in-cheek) in the community until someone discovered that the Bomstad's had Huntington's Disease, which had been passed down over several generations. Rosalie's great-grandfather and Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter's husband, Joseph Bjørnstarn Nielson, probably had Huntington's Disease, which goes far in explaining some of the behavior that Bertha and her children had to endure.[6]

Oliver was Adopted and Taken to Live in Canada

There was a great deal of speculation about the paternity of Oliver, the boy born to Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter at some point before she emigrated from Sápmi to America. Some versions of the story were that Oliver was born on the ship, others that he was born after she arrived, while still others that he was born before Bertha left for America. Later, Rosalie determined in her research that Oliver was most likely born at Vannøya/Várdná when she was working as a "milkmaid" or "in-service" to a well-to-do farmer. Through connecting with people from the local area with knowledge of that particular farm, Rosalie found out that the last name of Oliver's father was probably Henriksen, and like Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter, he was a low-paid, hired hand. As noted above, according to Rosalie's grandmother Elphie's story, Bertha's pregnancy had some connection to "bundling" at the boarding school. While another version was that the master of the household where she was "in-service" sexually exploited her. In all likelihood, Berith Kristina Susanna Larsen conceived Oliver through a consensual relationship, outside of marriage, which as noted above, was not uncommon at the time. On our visit to Duluth, Rosalie said: (chuckling) "People in the family had sanctified Grandma Bertha, she was like, almost virginal. Nobody could believe that Bertha might have actually *enjoyed sex*!"

In 1906, Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter traveled to America with her maternal aunt Kristina Nilsdatter and her husband Ole Peder Pedersen when she was twenty years old. There are few stories about their journey over the Atlantic or about the family's arrival at Ellis Island, but Rosalie did determine that Oliver was not listed on the ship manifest. During the historical period of their arrival at Ellis Island, unmarried mothers could risk deportation if they did not have a fiancé or other male family member waiting to "fetch them" on the island. In some cases, immigrant women could be charged with Victorian Era crimes of moral turpitude, including "fornication" if they attempted to enter the United States as unwed mothers.[7] It is likely that since Berith Kristina Nilsdatter, Kristina Nilsdatter, and Ole Peder Pedersen were traveling together, Bertha likely did not meet

scrutiny because she was traveling with a male relative; it is also possible that Kristina Nilsdatter and Ole Peder Pedersen could have claimed Oliver as their own when they went through processing.

Figure 2: Joseph Bjørnstarn Nielson and Bertha (Berith) Kristina Susanna Larsdatter, presumably Mankato, Minnesota, 1907. Photographer unknown. Source: Rosalie Sundin.

One year after Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter arrived in East Lake Lillian, she married Joseph Bjørnstarn Nielson, a grandson of the founder of East Lake Lillian, Johannes Bomstad (figure 2). By the time Berith Kristina Susanna was pregnant with her second

child, she was known as Bertha, and in officialdom, they listed her as "Mrs. Joseph Nielson." At some point, either before or after Bertha had her second child, Kristina and Nils took Oliver to live in British Columbia where they eventually adopted him and several more children. Rosalie was under the impression that Oliver had resented that Bertha had "given him up" or "given him away." There was speculation in the family concerning Oliver and the reasons he went to live in Canada with Bertha's aunt Kristina. One story was that he had felt like an indentured servant in Bertha and Joseph's home, so he wanted to be with his great-aunt. However, that was hardly plausible when he was too young to know about indentured servitude. Bertha and Joseph had six more children in East Lake Lillian, including Jenver, Elphie, Eleanor, Byron, and Gordon, another child named Lillian, died as an infant. Throughout his life, Oliver was in contact with his siblings and mother in East Lake Lillian; Kristina, Ole, and Oliver visited East Lake Lillian every summer. But there had always been an understanding that Oliver resented his mother for "abandoning him."

Prairie and Farm Life

Bertha' days were filled with the typical work of women on western Minnesota farms, and it appears that the women's work was as valued as the work of men. The men in East Lake Lillian would labor on each other's farms and shared large equipment like plows and threshing machines, and they also fished together. Girls milked the cows and women churned butter and made cheese, and they cooked elaborate meals for the hungry farm laborers. Milk that the family did not use was taken to town to sell, and this was the boys' responsibility. The women also spun wool into yarn and fabric and knit or sewed most or all of their clothes. Everyone contributed to the collective effort and shared in the harvest. Much like settlements in coastal communities in Sápmi, the farms in East Lake Lillian were self-sustaining and labor intensive.

Stories about Bertha's life on the prairie were passed down to Rosalie in family oral tradition. When she got older, people said that Bertha was four-foot-eight tall and four-foot-eight wide and tough as nails. One time she chased a grown man—an itinerant laborer—off her property with a broom when he molested her thirteen-year-old daughter, Elphie. She also knew folk medicine and healing techniques. One of the stories about her knowledge of healing came with a revelation about the fate of her son, Oliver:

> The second oldest child of Bertha with her husband Joseph, Jenver, committed suicide in 1991. That was when we found out that Joseph had been physically abusive to the boys. This information came from a great-aunt by marriage, who was Jenver's wife. She told us that Jenver hated his father because he was terribly abusive. Joseph had been so physically violent that he partially severed Jenver's

> earlobe from his head. Bertha used some sort of poultice to attach his earlobe back onto his head, you know, like to heal it back on again. My great-aunt referred to Joseph as "crazy." She was essentially saying that Joseph had been painted as a saint, but he was anything but a saint. Then she went on to say that the reason that Oliver left was not that Bertha wanted to give him away, but because Bertha's aunt Kristina knew that Joseph was abusing Oliver and she wanted to protect him. Since this was after Joseph had a "son of his own [Jenver]" it would be easier to take Oliver.[8]

For every story in the family that presented Bertha in a positive light, Rosalie began hearing stories about Joseph being "crazy as a bedbug" from other Lake Lillian people. She heard that Joseph was "paranoid," he believed some had poisoned his cows, so he would demand that his sons sell the milk to the neighbors and then go into town to buy some other milk.

> The boys didn't want to get beaten if they came back too soon. They would go down to the end of the road and smoke cigarettes made of hay and would come back with the same milk. It was like, everybody knew Joseph had to be nuts because the cows would have died themselves if they had been poisoned![9]

Joseph also started to have the shuffling gait, and together with psychosis, are common features of Huntington's Disease. Since he was from the Bomstad line, there was surely speculation that he—like others in his extended kin—was afflicted with the seven-generation Sámi curse. Alternatively, humorous stories about Bertha cast her as a "a saint" because she was "extremely religious":

> She always attended Church services, while many had started to stay home, including her husband and children. The church belonging to the Lutheran sect of the denomination that she and her family had belonged to had burned down, so she attended the Norwegian Methodist Church, which was close to her home. The closest route to the Church was through a neighbor's field. She was 4'8" and in her later years was regarded as being 4'8" wide. My cousin, Mona, whose family was from Joseph and Bertha's neighboring farm, used to tell a funny story about her that people shared in their family. They said that every Sunday, Bertha would walk through their field and because she was so short, her shawl would hang close to the ground. And every Sunday, the neighbor's dog would nip at her low-hanging shawl, and every Sunday she would shoo the dog away fearlessly, but would never hurt or harm the dog. The neighbors would watch this same interaction, week after week, the interaction between Bertha and the dog. But no dog could stop her because Bertha always went to church on Sundays![10]

Bertha was also regarded as generous and helpful, someone who would take in anyone, regardless of their background. When the Dakota people gradually began to make their way back to their homelands in Minnesota, Bertha and other women in the town had a "gifting and exchange" relationship with some Dakota men:

> On the whole, the relationship between the settlers of East Lake Lillian and the Dakota was peaceful, and over the years the trading and gifting continued even through the Great Depression. People regarded Bertha as a "true Christian" who took care of people in need. During the Depression, itinerant laborers, especially Dakota laborers, came through the area looking for work and food and she housed and fed them along with everyone else. Our parent's generation of the Lake Lillian settlers, those who were farther removed from their Sámi and Kven roots, wanted to fully assimilate into white America. They began to develop more typical racist views of Native Americans. I can't help but wonder if the shifts in perception were that they were trying to hide their own connection to an Indigenous or minority people, like a process of deflecting to fit in. The Civil Rights Movement influenced my generation and we have learned about our heritage and want to connect with our Indigenous roots. We have a responsibility to Native Americans as we have to our own relatives back in Sápmi.[11]

This story is somewhat striking in its divergence from other narratives in Southern Minnesota. Not unlike in Sápmi, it seems that the responsibility of managing the household finances and goods in some of the East Lake Lillian families was the responsibility of women. The gendered aspects of this relationship appear to starkly contrast with narratives in other settler communities where the common perception was that the "white man" must protect his "white woman" from "savages." The fact that it was the Lake Lillian *Sámi women* who traded with *Dakota men*, during a period when other communities would have most likely vilified (and sometimes even murdered) Dakota men for coming in contact with "their [white] women," reveals rather different views in the East Lake Lillian communities regarding gender and the local Indigenous people. It is also unsurprising, even predictable, that the third-generation Sámi and Kven settlers adopted typical stereotypical views of Indigenous people and people of color. Rosalie has also commented that her grandmother's generation of women was far more accepting of her biracial son than her mother's generation. She wonders if the first and second generation of East Lake Lillian settlers, especially the Sámi women, held more favorable views of Indigenous people and people of color because on some level they could identify with them.

“I miss the sum of them. I miss the stories and the laughter.”

Just a year before she passed away and after almost sixty years after she emigrated from Sápmi, Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter, in the company of her oldest daughter, Elphie, returned to her home in Ittarvuotna/Nord-Lenangen. She had kept in touch with her family all those years, especially her nieces and nephews:

> She was fortunate that her oldest daughter brought her back to Eidstrand to visit her family and birthplace in 1954, about a year before her death. Bertha had regular contact with her friends and family from Troms through letters and photographs, many of which I have in my possession. Clearly, memories of their visit were precious to both Bertha and the families of her siblings in Troms. Elphie remained in contact with them years after her mother, Bertha, had passed away. However, according to her oldest daughter, Bertha had (long since) either abandoned or set aside the truth about her Sámi heritage. Thus, her children grew up believing they were of northern Norwegian (ethnic) ancestry, a secret kept in the family until the receipt of a family genealogy that I had researched and written up in commemoration of my grandmother Elphie’s 100th birthday.[12]

Rosalie has wondered if there is a connection between the silencing of Sámi belonging and “family secrets” about abuse. “I just wonder what her life must have been like at that time. What happened to her (Grandma Bertha)?” She also reflected on gaining the knowledge that her great-grandfather, Joseph Bjørnstarn Nielson, most likely had Huntington’s Disease, which could explain some of his paranoia and tendency toward violence:

> I think Grandma Bertha just believed that it was her cross to bear. People said that Joseph never hit her, but he was abusive to his sons. I am sure she did what she could to protect her kids. That might be why everyone put her on a pedestal. I mean, what were her options at that time? I have to wonder if Bertha's boarding school experiences and possible abuse while working on other farms had warped her ideas about men and women. But at least Oliver got out of it, and later in life, they were able to make peace. Maybe she even told him then why he was sent to Canada. My grandmother, Elphie, Bertha's oldest daughter, was also abused by her husband, my biological grandfather. They didn't have battered women's shelters back then, but she divorced him and eventually married Grandpa Al. When my grandmother left her abusive husband, people in the community, and especially my mother, shamed her. I suspect that my mother was abused by her father and uncles, which might be why she was the way she was, and maybe she also had Huntington’s Disease?[13]

We can only presume that the women experiencing inter-generational violence and sexual abuse did what they had to do to survive during a time when they had very limited options. The gendered norms they met in America were vastly different than in Sápmi. When Rosalie also experienced domestic violence, she decided—with the aid of a domestic abuse shelter (one of the first of its kind)—to put an end to it, once-and-for-all:

> I had to do whatever it took to protect my son. My sister, Carol, told me something that was pivotal. I had been living and thinking in a constant state of victimization, a lot like the women of previous generations in my family. But Carol said "I think of you like the heroic figure in the family. You ended it. You cut the chain of abuse in our family." When I later learned about our Sámi and Kven heritage and about the Norwegianization mandate and discrimination, it made me question if that had anything to do with the violence in my family. I want them over there [in Norway and Sápmi] to know, that what happened over there even affected us in America.[14]

Figure 3: Figure 5: "I miss the sum of them." Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter's children (front left) Eleanor Magdalena Nielson-Larson, Oliver Pedersen, Elphie Sarone Nielson-Kettner. (back left) Jenver Nelson (Nielson), Gordon Nelson (Nielson), Byron Nielson. Source: Rosalie Sundin

Despite the inter-generational silencing of identity and inter-related abuse and trauma, Rosalie fondly remembers the family gatherings from her childhood in East Lake Lillian, especially when Uncle Oliver would come to visit. “The kids would all sleep on the living room floor with their sleeping bags, and everyone would drink coffee, even the kids sometimes! And young and old would sit around the kitchen table and all play cards and Yahoo for hours.” Oliver’s visits were events that formed cohesion in the family; there would be elaborate preparations, cooking and baking. The memories of these family gatherings came through most poignantly while Rosalie and I looked at the photograph above (figure 3). Pictured is all six of Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter’s surviving children, reunited again. Oliver is laughing in the middle, surrounded by his loving siblings: “You know, when I look at this picture, I miss the sum of them. I miss the stories and the laughter.”[15]

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Notes

[1] (Sundin "Interview")
[2] (Sundin "Interview")
[3] (Sundin "Biography of Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter")
[4] (Sundin "Interview"; Sundin "Biography of Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter"; Sundin "The Story of Lake Lillian and Tromso Cemetery")
[5] (Sundin "Interview") See (Nelson-Balcer)
[6] For a description of the major symptoms of Huntington's Disease (HD) see: https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/huntingtons-disease/symptoms-causes/syc-20356117
[7] (Moreno)
[8] (Sundin "Interview")
[9] (Sundin "Interview")
[10] (Sundin "Interview")
[11] (Sundin "Personal Communication")
[12] (Sundin "Biography of Bertha Kristina Susanna Larsdatter")
[13] (Sundin "Interview")
[14] (Sundin "Interview")
[15] (Sundin "Interview")

Narrative of

Karen Marie Nilsdatter (1874-1956)

Narrative of Karen Marie Nilsdatter (1874–1956)

Figure 1 (L) Karen Marie Nilsdatter and Petrine Kristine Nilsdatter. Source: Anessa Andersland.

The subjects of the portrait are Karen Marie Nilsdatter (1874-1956) and her older sister Petrine Kristine Nilsdatter (1871-?). The photograph was taken in a studio in Hemnes/Hemnæs which lies 90 km (55 miles) north of the village Aarborte/Hattfjelldal in the vicinity of their home on Sååle/Røssvassholmen. Both Karen Marie and Petrine Kristine were "sent out in-service" to work on other farms as teenagers, which was a fairly common practice for young women at the time. Karen Marie left home at the age seventeen, that is, after her confirmation. Later, she worked in a dairy in Kolvereid where she would meet her husband Knut (Kristiansen/Christiansen) Mohn. Having been "sent out in-service," her work in the dairy, and the mistreatment Karen Marie was subjected to by some Kolvereid locals were topics in research conversations with Anessa Andersland and with people in Karen Marie Nilsdatter's home community in Aarborte/Hattfjelldal. Anessa Andersland is Karen Marie Nilsdatter's great-granddaughter and one of the storytellers and collaborators in this project. An important methodological aspect of "weaving" Karen Marie's life narrative with stories Anessa shared from oral tradition together with other

sources was that she and I had the opportunity to visit Aarborte/Hattfjelldal and Kolvereid together in late January and early February 2017. Our visit to these areas and meeting local people was also timed around the occasion of the centennial celebration *Tråante 2017*, the commemoration of the first international congress of the Sámi people organized by a South Sámi activist woman, Else Laula Renberg[1] in 1917. Participating in these events was especially meaningful for Anessa because Karen Marie Nilsdatter was a contemporary of Else Laula Renberg—they were both South Sámi women—and the celebration was held in the South Sámi homelands.

Journeying with Anessa Andersland: 98% Drama-Free

Anessa's Sámi heritage comes from her father, Richard Jorgensen's maternal side of the family. Like many others in the Sámi-American community she says that the Sámi part of her heritage is part of her pan-Scandinavian immigrant narrative. Her paternal grandfather was of mixed descent from Fenno-Scandinavia, her paternal grandmother was Sámi and Norwegian, and her mother is mostly of British Isles and Prussian descent. "Journeying" in the title of this section is both literal and imaginative. During my research fellowship, Anessa and I had the opportunity to travel together multiple times, both in North America and in Sápmi. Anessa was working as a marketing agent for the Sámi publishing house Čálliidlágádus/Authors' Publisher, and in her capacity as a marketing agent and in my capacity as an author and editor, we went to various Nordic festivals in Iowa, Michigan, and North Dakota to market books. Talking about Sámi ancestry and obscured connections to Sápmi was a natural part of these journeys. In addition to the memory work we did during our travels, we also met several times in her home in Apple Valley, Minnesota, where we had long research conversations, sometimes while looking at and interpreting family photographs and family material culture. In that sense, we imaginatively journeyed to the sites or scenes where her Aarborte/Hattfjelldal ancestor-craftspeople created these material culture items. A natural part of these visits was *gáfestallan* (a coffee break), where we took a break from the work of remembering and purposeful storytelling and enjoyed connecting as friends over coffee. Later, as mentioned above, we would have the opportunity to journey to Aarborte/Hattfjelldal in a literal sense; while there, the material cultural items Anessa had been gifted in her family took on new and illuminating meanings. The following are important themes in Karen Marie Nilsdatter's life narrative: material culture, travel, and "loss and hope," in the sense of James Clifford's formulation: "Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension" (Clifford 312)**.**

[1] See: http://www.authorspublisherbooks.com/celebrating-elsa-laula-renberg/ and http://www.norwaypost.no/index.php/culture/28077-sami-national-day-celebrated

Anessa has also been an engaged member of the Twin Cities Sámi Siida, a local, informal group of Sámi Americans in the Minneapolis and Saint Paul area who meet now and then and "do Sámi stuff," as John Xavier—vice-chair of the North American Sámi Searvi—likes to say. "Doing Sámi stuff" can involve any number of community-oriented activities, and should not be confused with the stereotypical "Sámi stuff" of reindeer herding, yoiking, and creating specific Sámi handicrafts. Rather, "doing Sámi stuff" can simply be having coffee together and talking about ancestors who were reindeer herders, fisher-farmers, hunter-gatherers, ministers and immigrants in perilous times. In the Twin Cities Sámi Siida, Anessa has earned the title "98% drama-free" for her professionalism and shrewd avoidance of drama as an employee of the publishing house and volunteer in the North American Sámi Searvi. But just because she has the tendency toward avoidance of drama, she is by no means boring; on the contrary, we have had our share of revelry on our trips! She expressed great enthusiasm when sharing dramatic and serendipitous events with seminal importance in our collaborative research process.

During the summer of 2015, just days after we had a long research conversation in her home, Anessa called me and said something to this effect: "You are going to flip! The doorbell rang and when I answered there was a package from Fed Ex. My dad's cousin [the only other grandchild of Karen Marie Nilsdatter] just sent me a chest and it is full of stuff! You gotta see this!" Naturally, I drove over to her house the next day to look at the chest and the contents. One of the most striking observations Anessa made about the chest was that it had been painted in a "stylized *rosemaling*" ornamentation and appeared as if it had been painted over twice. In the chest were the following: an old saw; an antique pocket watch; a wooden rolling pin; textiles; and Karen Marie and Knut's wedding bands. Anessa had already been given Karen Marie's original immigrant chest when Jenny—Karen Marie's oldest surviving daughter—went into long-term care (Jenny was affectionately referred to as "Jeda" in the family). Karen Marie's chest contained textiles, a fortune-telling birthday book, and some coins from Norway. There was a story behind all of these material culture items, but what captured our attention, and which seemed the most important to interpret was the chest itself. "Why did they paint it that way [glaringly Norwegian]?" Anessa pondered.

There are several antecedents to Anessa's literal "return" to Sápmi in 2017. She had traveled to Norway and Sápmi in her early twenties and while there, she gleaned some clues to their Sámi heritage when she met relatives for the first time. One relative in Oslo made it a point to listen to Sámi language radio and appeared to be moved by it; they made a statement about the importance of this event, that the Sámi language was being broadcasted all over Norway. When Anessa visited Aarborte/Hattfjelldal, she saw reindeer

fur boots in people's homes; relatives told her that her people used to sew them in the old days. "Nobody would come out and say they were Sámi. It took me many years to figure out that the handicrafts that I saw were Sámi handicrafts." One of her relatives in Oslo had a perplexing attitude toward "the north." He discouraged Anessa from traveling "up there," stating incredulously: "Why do you want to go up there? There is nothing to see there!" But Anessa had been encouraged to visit "the north" by her great Aunt Jenny or "Jeda"; in an adoptive sense and in Sámi kinship terms, Jeda was a grandmother to Anessa. Jenny (Jeda) was born in Kolvereid and had kept in touch with the extended family in her mother's home community in Aarborte/Hattfjelldal. Lingering questions remained for Anessa; she knew that something did not quite add up in the narrative in her family that they were "100% pure Norwegian." In the Sámi American community, it has come to be understood that when previous generations made such weighty statements about ethnicity ("100%" *and pure*), it usually meant that they had something significant to hide. In fact, the weightier the statement, the more there was to hide—a direct correlation.

After her first journey to Norway and Sápmi, she had limited time to devote to genealogy as a young mother, but when her children were a bit older she began to research her obscured heritage in earnest. She found records several generations back indicating that Karen Marie's ancestors were Sámi, but almost certainly because of Norwegianization, more recent records obscured their Sámi belonging. Records from Karen Marie Nilsdatter's grandparent's generation list them as "Lapp" or "Finn" and one ancestor is listed as a "hunter and fisher" under "occupation." Karen Marie Nilsdatter's grandfather became a farmer on Sååle (Norwegian: Røssvassholmen), a large island in a lake called Reevhtse (Norwegian: Røssvatnet) in the Aarborte/Hattfjelldal municipality. As one of the largest islands in freshwater in Norway, the island sustained many farmers at one time. Today most of the island is a nature reserve with some untouched forests. Anessa's extended family no longer live on the island, but the farm that Karen Marie grew up on is still in ownership of the family (Elsvatn and Vefsn; Thorsnæs). The combination of a confusing paper trail in Norwegian (colonial) recorded history and confounding statements from the older generations about identity and belonging present Sámi Americans with challenging terrain when seeking understanding of their place in the world.

Aarborte, Kolvereid, and Tråante: Reconnecting

From the outset, before we embarked on our journey to Kolvereid and Aarborte/Hattfjelldal, I felt some unease about representing a story from a South Sámi area. My own heritage is squarely in the North Sámi homelands and I had never spent much time in a South Sámi community. However, within a very short time after our arrival, I recognized at once that the people and places seemed familiar, in fact, they were as familiar

to me as people and places in Finnmark. The local history or histories and the resulting dynamics in the community were reminiscent of communities in North Sámi contexts. In retrospect, my unease was unwarranted.

Anessa first came to Romsa/Tromsø where we met with friends and colleagues. She presented her family story along with other portraits of Americans with South Sámi heritage, highlighting their interest in learning the South Sámi language. She had taken along a notebook with an extensive collection of genealogical records, photographs, and historical texts from her studied engagement with her heritage. Even in Romsa/Tromsø, that is, before we visited Karen Marie Nilsdatter's home, Anessa heard affirming (and confirming) assertions about her belonging based on her own storytelling, as well as from the materials she had taken along. One woman looked at her with some amazement and said "You look like them! I look at you and I can see that you are related to the people there!"

In the Aarborte/Hattfjelldal municipality, we met a constellation of (anonymized) elders with various ties to Karen Marie Nilsdatter. On a separate occasion, while Anessa was visiting a relative, I met with local historian and author Leif Elsvatn and recorded our conversation. I also met with staff and visitors of the South Sámi Cultural Center *Sitji Jarnge* where I told them about the nature of our visit and about the project. People generally showed interest in the story of a local woman who had moved to America in 1906. One of the days during our visit, Anessa gave a presentation at the South Sámi school about South Sámi descendants in America and their engagement with genealogy, history, and language. We were warmly received with lunch and people gifted us with handicrafts, memorabilia, and books. Yet, despite the warmth and hospitality, we sensed that there were some tensions between individuals and groups in the community. My own reading of it was that they were analogous to what I have seen play out in Finnmark; tensions between groups who experienced colonization differently in Sámi areas can almost always be attributable to the Norwegianization policy and the rise of 19th and 20th century nationalism in the Nordic countries. My suspicion of this dynamic was confirmed in my conversation with Leif Elsvatn. He referred to the policy of Norwegianization and the treatment of the reindeer herding Sámi after the tightening of the border with Sweden as "brutal." He also told about the waves of settlers who came to Sååvsoe/Susendalen from Gudbrandsdalen in the vicinity of Lillehammer. Reindeer herders have customarily used the rich pastures for grazing in Sååvsoe/Susendalen since time-immemorial and had freely crossed the border between Norway and Sweden with their herds. The combination of these events, Norwegianization, the dissolution of the union between Norway and Sweden and the resultant tightening of the borders, and the wave of settlers that came to the community

from southern Norway had affected the overall character of the Sámi community (Elsvatn). One can assume that there were also families from ethnically mixed unions, that is, Sámi people who had married Norwegians and Swedes, which was likely more common in the Sámi population that became settled farmers. Local people also made vague references to these events in our conversations; thus, we have chosen to tread lightly when it comes to representing the local history (for the time-being).

We also visited several other historical sites with relevance for the local history and for Karen Marie Nilsdatter and Anessa's family narrative. In the community of Kolvereid, where Karen Marie and her husband Knut Mohn lived before they moved to Duluth, we visited the dairy and the church where three of their daughters, Konstanse Marie, Signy Alida, and Jenny Nelfrida were baptized. Their oldest daughter, Konstanse Marie, passed away only five weeks after birth and her resting place is also in the Kolvereid church cemetery. While in Aaborte, we also learned a great deal from stories elders shared with us. These stories were both confirmed and augmented by material from the formal interview I recorded with the Aarborte/Hattfjelldal local historian Leif Elsvatn.

Sent-out in service

Karen Marie Nilsdatter did not tell her descendants in America much about her life in Norway. Her husband, Knut Mohn did, however, tell his daughters that he wanted to get away from the class system in Norway where Karen Marie had worked so hard but was still treated badly by the locals. Anessa knew that Karen Marie was born to a fishing and farming family on the island Sååle (Røssvassholmen) to Nils Andreas Tomassen (spelled in various ways in historical records) and Jabobina Christine Ingebrigstdatter from Vefsn. Karen Marie was born in 1874, and was the second oldest daughter in the family of ten children. She had learned to read and write, and would speak Norwegian mixed with English to her daughters in Duluth, Minnesota.

> My dad [Richard, Karen Marie's grandson] was basically bilingual growing up. He remembered that Karen Marie would order the groceries in Norwegian and they would be delivered to their home in West Duluth. There was a story about my dad when he was really little stealing butter out of the ice-box. When they found him eating the butter he said "godt smør mamma har!" [Mamma has good butter!] (Andersland)

Importantly, West Duluth was the working-class side of town where many immigrant communities who worked in factories mixed and mingled. We do not know if Karen Marie spoke Sámi in her childhood, but it is safe to assume that she would have had, at the very

least, passive skills in the language. Elders with close ties to the same general area where she grew up told us that Sámi was spoken by people in her family. When I asked Leif Elsvatn if he could provide any interpretation of what Karen Marie's childhood might have been like, he said: "it's hard to say." But he did say that there was a well-respected teacher, Lars Olofsson, himself a Sámi, who had been recruited by the locals to teach on Sååle (Røssvassholmen), the island where Karen Marie grew up. Lars Olofsson worked on Sååle for many years, including during the timeframe that Karen Marie would have gone to school. Anessa had heard that Karen Marie had to travel by boat or skis to get to the school which was on the other end of the island. Knowing the history of the local situation—that the head teacher was himself a Sámi and popular in the community—it makes sense to assume that Karen Marie and her siblings were likely spared the trauma that many other Sámi of the time experienced in the Norwegianization period, both in boarding schools and in the local mission schools. Leif Elsvatn also explained that the relationships between the Sámi farmers and the Norwegians on Sååle were mostly amicable. This was also reinforced in the local history book *Gardshistorie for Hattfjelldal (Historical Survey of Hattfjelldal Farms)* by Kjell Jacobsen and Leif Elsvatn who noted that: "When the nuances are examined, we find that the conflicts between ethnic groups have been exaggerated. More often we find cooperation to the benefit of everyone" [my translation] (Elsvatn and Vefsn 8).

Karen Marie's mother died when she was ten years old, and when she was thirteen, her father married a woman named Johanna Mattisdatter who had two daughters. In local history sources derived from oral tradition, Johanna performed a ritual of putting seven flowers under her pillow before going to sleep; the man she was to marry would then appear in her dream. She dreamt of Nils Andreas Tomassen, but at the time he was married. Some years later, she did, indeed, marry Nils Andreas Tomassen, who had recently been widowed. Johanna Mattisdatter was known to be a "strong woman," she was a healer and had traditional knowledge of plant medicines from nature (Elsvatn and Vefsn 126). Karen Marie also harvested plants and herbs in Duluth. She likely learned about medicinal plants and their healing properties, as well as other healing techniques, from women around her in her childhood, especially from her stepmother Johanna Mattisdatter.

Several elder women in the Aarborte/Hattfjelldal community told us that it was likely Karen Marie Nilsdatter would have had negative experiences when she was "sent out in service" as a teenager. One woman commented:

> It had to be hard for them. They had to leave their families. They were just girls, you know. They had to move away from their families and work for strangers. They

> were vulnerable in those situations. There just were not enough resources for everyone at that time, so some of them had to be sent out to work. (Anonymous elder)

After Anessa and I had been visiting people and places in the community, we noticed that there were other homes, as well as institutions, with wooden chests like the one that Karen Marie had taken to America. We also saw similar material culture items from the chest that Anessa had received from Jeda and from her father's cousin. Karen Marie was likely given the chest—the immigration chest—as a confirmation gift along with some silver from her father. A local woman told us that when girls were "sent out in service" they would take all their belongings with them in the chests that their fathers or other men in the family had made for them. "They would have taken their silver with them, some clothes, and textiles" (Anonymous elder). Karen Marie and her older sister, Petrine Kristine both worked in Kolvereid, but they worked on different farms. Anessa heard about Karen Marie's hard work in the dairy in Kolvereid where she managed to move up through the ranks to a leadership position. She met her husband, Knut Mohn, at the dairy; he was almost twenty years her senior. Karen Marie had a position of some status, especially for a woman at that time, however, according to family oral tradition, she was still looked down upon by people in the Kolvereid community. The family attributed this to the "inequality in Norway, the class system." Karen Marie was given an engraved plated coffee server thanking her for her service when she left her position at the dairy to move to America. Anessa has inherited the coffee server along with other cherished heirlooms.

Fifty years in Duluth, Minnesota: Loss and Hope

Karen Marie Nilsdatter and Knut Mohn were married in Namsos in 1900. They had their first daughter, Konstanse in June of 1901; she passed away just five weeks after her birth. Their daughters Signy Alida and Jenny Nelfrida were born in 1902 and 1905 respectively, and were both baptized in Kolvereid. In 1906, the family migrated to North America and settled in Duluth Minnesota on the shores of Lake Superior. Knut was familiar with the area after having lived and worked there before, then he returned to Norway, only to return to Duluth again where he remained until his death in 1937. In Duluth, Karen Marie was a homemaker and she and Knut had two more daughters, Clara Katherine in 1908 and Anne Rebecca in 1912; Anne Rebecca is Anessa's grandmother. Knut passed away in 1937 and by 1938, two of their daughters, Jenny, Anne Rebecca and their husbands were living in the home of Karen Marie Nilsdatter. She was listed as the head-of-household in the census.

Anessa describes the collective lives of the women in the family warmly, Jenny ("Jeda") and Anne Rebecca were especially close. She had heard stories about Karen Marie's hard

work and dedication to family from Jeda. In a short biography on Karen Marie, Anessa wrote:

> Even though I never met my grandmother, I heard stories from my Aunt Jeda. One story told of Karen skiing down a hill in Duluth (on a bet) with a pail of water in each hand—when she was seven months pregnant! My father told a story of my grandmother [Karen Marie] storing the liquor under the sink with all the other dangerous chemicals. (Andersland)

She repeated several times how their small family had a strong sense of devotion to one another. While Karen Marie had two siblings that moved to USA, the descendants of the three siblings did not keep in close contact, but Jeda was always there for her nephew and her devotion extended to his daughter when she took on the role of a grandmother to Anessa. The Christmas photograph below (figure 2) captures the warmth in the family of women together in Duluth. The photograph was taken around 1940.

Figure 2: Christmas circa 1940. From left: Jenny ("Jeda"), Clara, Anne Rebecca, and Karen Marie Nilsdatter (Mohn). Source: Anessa Andersland

One of the first stories Anessa ever shared with me when we started the project was that Karen Marie had tragically lost three of her daughters. She repeated this story on multiple occasions and each time with poignancy. Jeda made a promise to her dying sister, Anne Rebecca, that she would look after Anne's son, Richard, after she was gone:

> It could not have been easy for her, my great-grandmother. There was always some sadness about her daughters who died. My grandparents both died when my dad was young and he was an only child. Karen Marie and Knut's first baby, Konstanse, died, then another daughter, Signy, died as a teenager. My grandmother, Anne, was terminally ill the year that Karen Marie died. She had lost two daughters and then knowing that her youngest daughter, my grandmother, was going to die soon had to have been hard. My grandmother died only half a year after Karen Marie. But Jeda kept her promise to her sister. She moved to California to help take of my dad after my grandmother died. My dad was very close to his grandmother [Karen Marie]. She helped take care of him too, when my grandma got sick. Then when my father was twenty, he also lost his father, just two months after marrying my mom. (Andersland)

Jeda moved back to Minnesota when Richard was twenty-four, around the time that Richard and his wife, Judy, were expecting Anessa. She remembers visiting Jeda in Duluth as a child and Jeda would also visit Anessa, Richard, and Judy in California. When Anessa decided to move to Minnesota to study she "got to spend more time with Jeda." Later, when Jeda started to need long-term care, Anessa advocated for her well-being and visited her often.

> She was always there for us. She never forgot to send a card on a holiday or birthday. She was a hard worker, like Karen Marie and the other women in the family. I was always influenced by her commitment to us, her sister, nephew and to me. Jeda really kept our little family together. (Andersland)

Continuance

After our time in Aarborte and the Tråante celebrations, Anessa and I perused the photographs in a book published by the Aarborte/Hattfjelldal municipality *Hattfjelldal-i bilder* and filmed our final research conversation (Hattfjelldal-Kommune). The conversation was a way to synthesize all of her experiences and lingering impressions. Sámi Americans who are seeking meaning or greater understanding of their cultural heritage are often frustrated in their efforts when they are met with mixed messages in their ancestral communities and confusing—even contradictory—official records and history. Anessa reflected: "You know, just hearing people *say it*, [that Karen Marie was Sámi] and hearing it from people from her own community, it makes it more real in a way." While Anessa had known for some time through archives and reading local history that Karen

Marie was, indeed, of Sámi origin, the mere act of "people saying it"—the breaking of the colonial silences of the past—had profound meaning for her. It was in the breaking of silences in a family narrative where hope alongside loss comes through resoundingly.

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Narratives of

Risten Nilsdatter Bals (1879-?)

and

Luhkkár-Ánne/Anne Mortensdatter Nilima (1866-1949)

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Narratives of Risten Nilsdatter Bals (1879-?) and Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima (1866-1949)

Figure 1: Risten Nilsdatter Bals?[1]

Figure 2: Luhkkár-Ánne and Áddja[2]

The subject of the photograph on the left (figure 1) is presumably Kirsten/Risten Nilsdatter Bals (1879-date of death unknown); the photographer, Augustus F. Sherman, photographed her while she was undergoing immigrant processing at Ellis Island, New York City, in May, 1907. The original caption at the museum says: "Lapp Immigrant." The subjects on the right, are Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima (1866-1949) and an unknown man. The original caption provided by Anders Johansen Bongo was

(exactly as written in the record): "Áddja ja áhkku čuožžuba dimbbarviesso (sic) guoras. Mann og kvinne står ved et tømmerhus. Luhkkár-Ánne" (Grandfather/elder man and grandmother/elder woman stand by a log house). In this narrative, I have included Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima together for several reasons, the most important being that for several years I had reason to believe that the identity of the Sámi woman in the photograph from the Museum of Immigration at Ellis Island (figure 1) *could have been* one of the two women: Risten Nilsdatter Bals or Anna Mortensdatter Nilima. The woman pictured on the right (figure 2) has been identified by the photographer as Luhkkár-Ánne (Anna Mortensdatter Nilima). After many years of searching for the identity of the woman in the photograph at Ellis Island, I have concluded that the subject of the photograph is almost certainly Risten Nilsdatter Bals. However, over several years, their narratives intersected and mingled while I searched for the potential identity and story of the Sámi woman whose image is displayed in multiple places at the Museum of Immigration at Ellis Island. The most important oral source of information for both of the women's narratives was a ninety-four-year-old *Sámi áhkku* (elder) in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino who is introduced in the next section—a woman who had living memories of Risten passed down to her by her mother; she herself also remembered Luhkkár-Ánne visiting their family when she was a young woman.

On the surface, the narratives of these two women from the relatively small community of Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, both of whom moved to Alaska in the spring of 1907, might seem comparable. This was during the period when Augustus F. Sherman took the famous Ellis Island immigrant portraits, between 1905-1917; also, the woman in the Ellis Island photograph on the left, and the woman in the photograph with the female subject identified as Luhkkár-Ánne on the right, could have been the same person. However, Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima's individual narratives diverge significantly in a number of ways. They have very different backgrounds with regard to their ancestral ties to opposing sides of the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852; one was the child of a sexton and teacher, and permanently settled farmers, the other was the child of less well-to-do reindeer herders from families negatively associated with the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852. One of them traveled to America, unmarried, with a small child, while the other did not have children and traveled to America with her husband. They both had close family and extended kin in Alaska. Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and Risten Nilsdatter Bals arrived in Alaska six weeks apart, but only Anna would continue to have a visible presence in written records, while Risten abruptly disappears from the archives and living memory—yet her (likely) image remains on the walls of the Museum of Immigration at Ellis Island for millions of people to see and with the only identifying information: "Lapp Immigrant."

I was also fortunate to find several knowledgeable people in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino late in my research process who shared stories with rich insights into the narratives of Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima. They were relatives and/or associates of the two women. Unlike the other three narratives, there are no known living descendants of Risten or Anna. In the absence of living, direct descendants with memories of the women as main sources for shaping the narratives, I have been largely dependent on interpreting official records and historical texts to glean meaning, together with contextualizing meaning from my visits to Alaska and Guovdageaidnu. Notably, the text regarded by many scholars as the most comprehensive study of the Alaskan Sámi experience, *Saami, Reindeer, and Gold in Alaska: The Emigration of Saami from Norway to Alaska* (1994) by Ørnulv Vorren, makes no explicit mention of either Risten Nilsdatter Bals nor Anna Mortensdatter Nilima. However, their family members are included, especially the lives and experiences of Risten's father, Nils Persen Bals and his wife Ellen Marie Rist, as well as Risten's three siblings Per Nilsdatter Bals, Marit Nilsdatter Bals, and Inga Nilsdatter Bals. Anna Mortensdatter Nilima's husband, Johan Edvard Nilima (referred to as "Ede"), her brother-in-law, Alfred Nilima, and her sister, Inger Marie Mortensdatter and brother-in-law Nils Persen Sara, are also represented. Alternatively, the text *Sámi Reindeer Herders in Alaska: Letters from America 1901-1937* (2014), edited by Aage Solbakk and John Trygve Solbakk, contains one reference to Risten Nilsdatter Bals (55), a text that has been of seminal importance in my research process. The book also contains several editorial references to Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and her husband, Johan Edvard Nilima, as well as three letters Anna herself wrote to the newspaper over a span of twenty years. The letters have also been of critical importance in shaping Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and Risten Nilsdatter Bals' narratives, as well as the narrative of Risten's son, Nils Nilsen Logje (Bals).

A constellation of women in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino: storytellers in Sámi oral tradition

As stated above, one of the most important oral sources in shaping or "weaving" the narrative of Risten Nilsdatter Bals was a ninety-four-year-old elder whose mother was Risten's close relative. As an elder with a close familial relationship to Risten Nilsdatter Bals, and the only person with living memory of her as a person, the ninety-four-year-old elder is the seminal oral source in Risten's unfolding narrative. The information that came through in the story she shared with me provides the most conclusive accounting of Risten Nilsdatter Bals in living memory. The other elders from the Guovdageaidnu community augmented the ninety-four-year-old elder's stories and provided interpretive reflections and helped me gain a deeper understanding of the context.

The antecedent for meeting the elders was coming into contact with a local female relative of Risten Nilsdatter Bals through my *verdde.* In our first conversation on the

phone, she said: "I don't know if I have anything of value to add, but you are welcome to come for a visit." I interpreted this after-the-fact to be reflective of *vuollegašvuohta*—humility—because she actually had a great deal to contribute and many important insights to share. When I arrived, she had stacks of books, archival records, and photographs waiting for me to peruse on the table, and as our conversation unfolded, she recommended that I contact some of her other relatives. Like the other conversations pertaining to Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, this conversation and visit had a sense of purpose. As we commenced looking at the materials, I realized how delighted I was to find someone who had some linkage to the story, after years of dead-ends. A while into the "work" of looking at the materials, she offered coffee and cakes—*gáfestallan.* Since that first visit, I have visited her again and she has encouraged me, followed up with me, and provided new insights and information.

The next day, I called the relative she had recommended I contact; she was the grandniece of the ninety-four-year-old elder who likely had knowledge about Risten Nilsdatter Bals. We met within an hour of the phone call. I told her about the nature of the project and showed her photographs and materials I had collected over several years. I assured her that I was interested in talking to women elders—the grandmothers or *áhkut*—in the community because they are knowledgeable in the oral tradition, even if they did not have anything conclusive to say about the life of Risten Nilsdatter Bals or Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, they would have interpretative insight into the lives of early twentieth century Sámi women from their community. The grandniece generously arranged and facilitated a meeting with her two aunts, one of whom was the ninety-four-year-old elder. The other aunt and elder was around eighty-years-old and her family had been in frequent contact with Risten Nilsdatter Bals' brother, Per Nilsen Bals, when he came to visit Guovdageaidnu. On our way to the home of the ninety-four-year-old elder, she told stories about Per Nilsen Bals coming to visit her family when she was a teenager. She remembered him with fondness and spoke about him in a cheerful way. He had visited her family at least once. Per Nilsen Bals had been a teenager when he left for America, and when he came back to visit, he had "forgotten" the Sámi language, but within a short time the language came back to him and "he spoke like local." Per Nilsen Bals had also invited his young hostess, the now eighty-year-old elder, to move to Alaska, an invitation that she had taken under serious consideration. Alas, she chose not to move to Alaska, yet she seemed to enjoy imagining what it might have been like to live "over there."

When we arrived at the ninety-four-year-old elder's home, the conversation at once took on a sense of purpose. I relayed all of the knowledge I had of their associates and relatives from Alaska. The three women seemed intrigued to hear that Nils Nilsen Logje (Bals), the son of Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Nils Nilsen Logje, had lived to be forty-eight years old and had served in the military during WWII. Like many others in

Guovdageaidnu, they had been under the impression that he had died as a teenager. While in Alaska, I had also found out that he had been raised by Clemet Boine/Boyne from Karasjok, who had married Ellen Marie Rist after Nils Persen Bals died. The three of them, Clemet Boine, Ellen Marie Rist (Bals), and Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals had applied for US naturalization at the same time and upon being granted citizenship, Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals legally changed his name to Nils Boyne, making his whereabouts hard to trace in the digital archives for anyone who was not aware of the name-change. I had a photograph with me that I had been given by the biological son of Clemet Boyne, who had always believed that the boy named "Nils" was his biological brother. In fact, he had recently gone to Alaska to learn more about his long-lost (adoptive) brother, Nils, and had hoped to find some living descendants. He had met many people locally who had remembered "Nels (Logje-Bals) Boyne" and he had many engaging stories to share about his trip to Unalakleet and Nome.[3]

On a side-note, in our research conversation while at the ninety-four-year-old elder's home, the grandniece was generous enough to interpret for me. In that situation, when I am speaking to an elder from a majority Sámi-speaking community, I was the person who lacked a language, thus in need of an interpreter as I am not skilled enough in the Sámi language to hold a detailed conversation. I am skilled enough to introduce myself and relay my connections, thus I used the language to "give an accounting of myself." With their permission, I also filmed the conversation from my laptop, again, without much regard for the quality of the pictures. I also tried to explain about my approach to Indigenous-centered ethics and methodologies, but despite my best efforts, they did not seem interested. Their attention was squarely on the photographs and materials I had and on sharing stories about their relatives who moved to Alaska. We looked at photographs, books, and records. I told the three women about what I had learned in Alaska about their relatives, especially about Risten Nilsdatter Bals' son, Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals. The ninety-four-year-old shared stories about Risten Nilsdatter Bals that had been passed down to her in oral tradition and form a critical part of the narrative, and she confirmed, once and for all, that the Ellis Island photograph could not have possibly been Anna Mortensdatter Nilima. To everyone's enjoyment (and guarded anticipation) after sharing stories and doing "memory work," came *gáfestallan*: our host boiled coffee and served cakes and cookies. Before we left, I promised to keep them abreast of the project through the grandniece and to make a file with the archives that I had in my possession, especially the records that I had physically retrieved in Alaska that cannot be accessed on the internet.

After this crucially important research conversation, the eighty-year-old aunt offered to accompany me to stop by and inquire about a visit at the home of another woman elder, a close relative of Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals, the son of Risten Nilsdatter Bals. This elder was related to Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals from his biological father's side; they shared

ancestors from the paternal side of the family. We were welcomed in and served coffee and cakes. The third elder and relative shared family photographs with me and told me about what she had heard about Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals. She said something to this effect: "I was told that he did not live very long over there. I guess he died young" [my translation]. She was not aware that he had lived to be forty-eight years old and had served in the US military during WWII. I explained that he had changed his name when he became a US citizen and was therefore probably "lost in the archives." I shared what I had learned about him and his life while I was in Alaska. Like the others, I made a promise to return with genealogical data from my files, a promise I fulfilled some months later when I returned to the area.

Three Indigenous Elders in Alaska: Daniel Q. Karmun, Sr., Frances Ann Degnan, and Irwin Klemet Bahr[4]

Within an hour of landing in Nome, Alaska, I was directed by the first local I met to "talk to the elder Dan Karmun"—a well-known Inupiaq/Yupik reindeer herder. The taxi driver from the airport said: "If anyone around here knows about them Laplander reindeer herders, it would be Dan." The driver pointed out the house and said: "Just go knock on the door. But if he is not there, here is his number!" (Everywhere I went in Alaska, as soon as I would tell local people what I was working on, people would recite phone numbers from memory of local people who might be able to help.) After checking into my room, I did as the helpful driver suggested and knocked on the door and decided to meet the next day.

When I arrived the next day, his daughter said something to this effect: "He has been gathering things to show you. He put on his best beaded *mukluks* and has been excited that you are coming. He likes to talk about reindeer herding." I was offered coffee, and much like the conversations with the Sámi women elders in Guovdageaidnu, the meeting or research conversation took on a sense of purpose. When the recording began, he said with authority: "I am going to tell you about the reindeer. Reindeer herding has been an important part of the life of the Eskimo people here in Alaska." The stories he shared gave the impression of a profound calling on his part. A few times, he had tears in his eyes as he recalled his grandmother—a powerful Yupik woman from the Russian side of the Bering Strait—and her decorated life as a reindeer herder.[5] He told stories about survival, about when the goldminers came, and about his transition out of reindeer herding. At one point, his daughter said: "Grandpa, tell about when you met the Norway people in Deering!" (Two of his daughters and their husbands, and a granddaughter were there, all of them called him Grandpa.)

Dan remembered meeting some of the Nilima family and he showed some photographs of them. Based on the timeline, I concluded that the subjects of the photograph were the descendants of Anna Mortensdatter Nilima's brother-in-law, Alfred. I grew excited to

learn that he may have remembered Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, but he did not recall meeting her. He recounted in some detail about how he had worked in reindeer herding with the Nilimas. “After we were done with all of our hard work, we would be happy and would play music and celebrate. Those Nilimas, they taught me how to play the accordion, and they taught my brother to play the fiddle.” He showed me an old retail accounting book that the Nilima family had used in their store (I could not help but wonder if it was Anna’s writing in it). It was not clear how he had ended up with this accounting book in his possession, but the contents were fascinating, for example: in the 1920s, reindeer pelts sold for seventy-five cents each ($10.47 or roughly 82NOK in today’s currency).

He was almost ninety-years-old and like many elders his age, he was getting tired after a while and needed to rest. But before he retired to his bedroom, he treated me to a song on the accordion. It was a song he had played every night to his dearly departed wife, Ethel, whose photos adorned the walls; he said: “I played this every night to my sweetheart. See, that is her picture up there (pointing). She will always be my sweetheart” and he played: *You are my Sunshine, my only Sunshine*.

Not unlike my experiences in Nome, within a short time after I landed in Unalakleet, I came into contact with welcoming and helpful people. When I turned the corner into the village, which was only about one city-block from the airport, a local Indigenous woman smiled and greeting me warmly: "Hello! Welcome to Unalakleet. Welcome to our village." I introduced myself and told her about the nature of my visit. When I said that the village felt like a village in Finnmark, and that we had many of the same plants, she proceeded to tell me about all the medicines in the nearest patch of plants and welcomed me to come visit if I had time. She directed me to the cafes where I might find locals who knew about the Sámi reindeer herders who had lived there; it was not long before I came into contact with Frances Ann Degnan, a Yupik elder whose parents had been politicians and teachers in the village. She invited me to her house to look at some materials she had and to have a conversation about my research.

From the outset, Frances spoke highly of the Sámi people, and hoped that their stories would not be forgotten in Unalakleet. I told her about the nature of my visit to the area, and showed her the photograph from Ellis Island, presumably Risten Nilsdatter Bals. She did not recall ever having heard anything about Risten or “Kirsten” and did not recognize her from the photograph. She remembered that others, including the late Faith Fjeld and Hans-Petter Boyne, had visited the village some years before and had also been looking for descendants in the area. Frances was a local historian and had published a biography about her parents called *Under the Arctic Sun: The Life and Times of Frank and Ada Degnan* (1999), a book she had on the table. She also had a collection of photographs passed down to her from her parents, and some of the subjects were of the

local Sámi who had lived in the village. There was a short, sympathetic chapter in her book about the Sámi who had settled in the village and their descendants called "The Unalit Meet New Arrivals." The photograph in the chapter features the Bahls (Bals) and Bahr (Bær) families, which was of great interest to my research. Ada and Frank Degnan, her parents, had always spoken highly of the "Laplanders" and she reflected this view in the chapter.

The next day before I boarded my plane to return to Nome, Frances caught up with me and gave me a file of photocopies of photographs and an autographed copy of her book (I had purchased two copies as gifts for others). Since our visit she sent me some Inupiaq handicrafts and greeting cards. In my last card to her, I told her that I looked forward to returning to Unalakleet and meeting her again in the future.

Irwin Klemet Bahr was the last remaining Sámi elder in Unalakleet and is well-known to people in Sápmi. Throughout his lifetime, he has appeared in films on the Alaskan Sámi and shared his story for various visiting researchers and writers from Sápmi. He passed away in the summer of 2017, one year after my visit to the village. His mother, Olga Riley, was an Inupiaq woman and his father, Klemet Bær, was one of the original reindeer herders who came from Guovdageaidnu, he was an infant when he arrived in Alaska. Before I visited Unalakleet, I had been in contact with Irwin's daughter, Aurora Mosely, on social media. When I arrived at their home, Aurora, like many others in the village, was hanging salmon to dry. It was the salmon season on the Unalakleet river and clearly the river was teaming with fish. I told Irwin that I was looking for what might have happened to Risten Nilsdatter Bals and showed him the photograph. He said: "I think my aunt Mary (Marit Bær) had that picture in her house." I am quite sure my eyes widened in disbelief at this moment and I explained: "You have seen this picture? This one?" Unfortunately, he did not know what had happened to the photograph after Mary had passed in 1986. Mary was well-known in the area, as well as in Sápmi, as she was one of the very few remaining Sámi born in Alaska who was fluent in the Sámi language. Irwin spoke about the Sámi in the village, and shared memories of them from his childhood. He said: "They were just as much a part of the village as the locals. They lived over there on the east side of the village," and he pointed in the direction where most of the Sámi families had lived. An exciting discovery came through in our conversation—Irwin remembered Nils Boyne, Risten's son who had remained in the village until he died in 1948. People in the village knew him as "Nels Boyne" and Irwin remembered playing cards with him as a child. He characterized him in a positive light and said: "We used to play cards with him. He never got married or had any kids. Well, not that we know of. I don't think he ever had a girlfriend, or not that I remember. Well, he never said he did, at least (with a twinkle in his eye)." Before I left, I reminded him about my background, that I was both Sámi and American. He said: "That's what I am too, Sámi and American. I am proud of being both." Notably, Irwin Bahr and his

daughter, Aurora, have served in the United States Military, clearly considered an honor in the village. As I went on my way to the next destination, a boat trip to the Eaton Reindeer Station, Aurora gifted me with *muktuk,* an Inupiaq delicacy of whale skin and blubber.

Narrative Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima: she circled back to her Sámi home

Anna's father was a sexton and teacher and grandfather a King's hero

The story of Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, like Risten Nilsdatter Bals, must begin within the context of her familial ties to the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852. She descended from a long line of sextons and teachers with ties to the Norwegian State Church[6]. Their local clan name "Luhkkár" is a Sámi version of the Norwegian word "klokker" which means "the church-bell ringer."[7] They had been educated by the clergy and served as local teachers at a time when the Norwegian State Church had responsibility for teaching in local communities in Finnmark Province. The content was predominantly from the Bible, used as materials for teaching the catechism and preparation for confirmation. [8]

Anna Mortensdatter Nilima's grandfather, Clemet Gundersen (1802-1888), was the leader of the settled Sámi villagers from Ávži who physically intervened when the reindeer herding *siiddat* attacked the sheriff, minister and merchant in the Rebellion.[9] With regard to Clemet Gundersen's historical involvement in the events leading up to the Rebellion and the events of that day, Steen wrote in *Kautokeinoslekter* [Kautokeino Relations] (1986)*:*

> /…/Clemet Gundersen was a prominent man who, among his contemporaries had an impeccable reputation. He gained fame and praise all over the country for his heroic conduct during the unrest in 1852. Initially, he was dismissive of the Laestadian revival, and it was not until Christmas, 1851, that he joined in protest against the Reverend Stockfleth with "the Awakened" (Laestadian followers). He even declared Stockfleth "a false teacher," and Clemet was also the first person Stockfleth named in the report to the bailiff about unrest in Kautokeino in January of 1852. However, Clemet soon realized that they had gone too far in their condemnation of the reverend and he began to distance himself from them. When the bishop was in Kautokeino in February, 1852, Clemet acknowledged that he had "lost his way" and asked for forgiveness. Tromholdt writes that the first night the bishop was in Kautokeino, Clemet attended the evening prayers, and came forward and said: "Hear people! I acknowledge that I have lost my way, I strayed from the Sanctity of God. I have asked God and the people for forgiveness and have abandoned that misguided faith."

> Clemet Gundersen lived in Ávži, and on November 8, he led the group of people from that settlement, who came to the rescue. For this effort he received 100 NOK (8000NOK in today's currency) from the Norwegian state and King Oscar gave him the Civilian Medallion of Honor in Silver. This is still in the possession of his family, but on the women's side. (201-203) [My translation]

Anna Mortensdatter Nilima's life before she left for Alaska

Anna Mortensdatter was born in 1866, the seventh child of ten born to Morten Clemetsen and Ellen Isaksdatter Hætta in the settlement of Ávži. At the time, the settlement consisted of a number of dairy farms and extended kin. Her father, Morten Clemetsen, like his father and grandfather, was a sexton until 1905, and was the last person in the family line to hold the position. He also had a formal education after having passed the teachers' exam at the teachers' training school in Alta in 1871.[10] As the child of a teacher and sexton, Anna Mortensdatter obviously had learned to read and write, an important foreshadowing of her self-representation revealed later in her life.

It appears that Anna spent most of her young adult life in the settlement of Ávži with her family, that is, in the years before she got married to Johan Edvard Nilima and moved to Alaska in 1907. In the 1900 Norwegian state census when she was around thirty-four years old, Anna and her sister, Elen Mortensdatter, are both listed as "working in the house and barn." Their father Morten Clemetsen is listed as a teacher and sexton and their mother, Elen Isaksdatter, is listed as "teacher's wife."[11] We can assume that the women were responsible for milking the cows, in fact, dairy production was most often the work of women, both in the settled Sámi areas in the inland and along the coast.

It is not clear when Anna Mortensdatter and Johan Edvard Nilima got married, but we do know that he was nine years her junior. Johan Edvard's brother, Alfred Nilima, and Anna's sister and brother-in-law, Inger Marie Mortensdatter and Nils Persen Sara as well as several of their children, had emigrated from Kautokeino to Alaska in 1898 and they were all still living in Alaska in 1907. Anna Mortensdatter (Nilima) and her sister Inger Marie Mortensdatter also had a cousin, Inga Clemetsdatter Bær, who had traveled to Alaska in 1898, together with her husband, Ole Olsen Bær. When Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima traveled to Alaska, just weeks apart, both of them would have had a network of relatives and associates who were fairly established in 1907. Anna's brother-in-law, Alfred Nilima, had become quite wealthy by this time, in a letter written to *Nuorttanaste* in 1906, it says:

> /.../Alfred Nilima, who came to Alaska from Guovdageaidnu, has got reindeer on loan from the American government. He already has 1,000 reindeer. Every year he sells 5,000 dollars' worth of reindeer meat. The price is 50 cents, and sometimes even a dollar, for half a kilo. He has a lot of money. He has sold fifty-

> thousand dollars' worth of gold claims in Cape Nome, a very rich area. He pursued a case concerning his rich mining district in court for four years, and finally won. He is, of course, a Sámi, but he's so smart that he beat all those Americans. He had a shop here in Alaska. He got the supplies from San Francisco, a shipload of things every year.

Johan Edvard Nilima, or "Ede" as he is referred to in Sámi, was likely encouraged to move to Alaska by his brother, Alfred Nilima, to help him with his various projects, including reindeer herding.[12] Perhaps Anna Mortensdatter Nilima was also encouraged to move to Alaska by her older sister and cousin who may have given glowing reports about life in Alaska. It is also likely that Anna would have also read the Alaskan letters that had been published in *Nuorttanaste* beginning in 1901.

Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima traveled to Alaska in 1907 with her husband Johan Edvard Nilima (Ede)

Luhkkár-Ánne was forty-years-old when she immigrated to America together with her husband. It seems to follow that they did not enter the Unites States through the most common entry point at Ellis Island for logistical reasons. According to historical sources, 1907 was a particularly busy year at Ellis Island; in fact, it was the year with the highest number of immigrants processed on the island: "On April 17, 1907, an all-time daily high of 11,747 immigrants received is reached; that year, Ellis Island experiences its highest number of immigrants received in a single year, with 1,004,756 arrivals."[13] After several baffling attempts to physically "find Anna Mortensdatter Nilima" in the databases at Ellis Island, I finally found her record of immigration listed as entering through Boston when I visited the National Archives in lower Manhattan in New York City.

Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and Johan Edvard Nilima traveled on the ship Cymric on the route from Liverpool to Boston, arriving on April 7th, 1907, just five weeks before Risten Nilsdatter Bals arrived at Ellis Island, in New York, New York. The ship had a capacity for 150 first class passengers, and 1,160 third class; on Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and Johan Edvard Nilima's journey, there were 704 passengers; the couple traveled in third class, or in steerage, like Risten Nilsdatter Bals and her son, they traveled together with the other "common folk." Anna Mortensdatter Nilima is listed on the ship's manifest as the "wife of Johan Edvard Nilima," but her last name is written "Martina"—a strange Anglicized version of "Mortensdatter," almost certainly written down on the manifest in Liverpool. On the ship's manifest it says she is 5'1 ½ feet (155 cm), with brown eyes and blond hair. It is challenging to read the description of her complexion on the manifest, but it is clearly not "light" or "fair." Both Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and her husband, Johan Edvard Nilima, are listed as "Finnish" for ethnicity. Notably, there is a "list of races" on the back page of the manifest; included

on the list is "Finnish." The couple is listed as going to meet a friend, "Johan Tornensi" (most likely Johan S. Tornensis) in Poulsbo, Washington.[14]They had pre-purchased train tickets to Seattle, WA.

Many members of the Tornensis family had immigrated to America, including Nils Paul Tornensis, who emigrated from Guovdageaidnu with his wife, Amanda Magdalena Norum in 1873. By 1907, there was a small village of Sámi from Guovdageaidnu and Kárášjohka living in Poulsbo, Washington, on the Puget Sound. Some of them had immigrated prior to the Alaskan project, while others moved to Poulsbo from Alaska after their contracts expired with the Alaskan government. It is likely that their friend, Johan S. Tornensis, was the first person to write a letter to *Nuorttanaste* in 1901 and also likely that Anna Mortensdatter Nilima had read the letter. Their stop in Poulsbo and the letter are a foreshadowing of Luhkkár-Ánne's departure from Alaska after twenty-three years.

The first mention of the couple's arrival in Alaska was in the letter sent to *Nuorttanaste* in 1907 by Klemet Klemetsen. Johan Edvard Nilima was referred to as "Ede" in Sámi circles. The letter, again, reveals the entangled narratives of Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima; while Anna is noticeably absent we can assume that she was in the company of her husband, Ede Nilima, unless she had decided to remain in Poulsbo with her friends or relatives who were already living there. This same letter is also the only data we have on Risten's arrival and time in Alaska which is included in Risten's narrative above:

> Ede Nilima from Guovdageaidnu arrived in Alaska on the 10th of July this year, and Risten Bals, too, reached her father's place in good health on the 5th of July and is already getting married to an American man who had gotten rich from gold mining.[15]

It is not clear where Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and Ede Nilima lived in Alaska when they first arrived in 1907, but if Ede's plan was to help his brother, Alfred Nilima, with reindeer herding, they would have gone to Cape Blossom, in the region of Kotzebue. At the time, Alfred Nilima was likely married to an Inupiaq woman, Alice Maqiiguaraq Freulin-Foster; they had one son, James, in 1902. In 1908, it seems that Alfred was going to travel to Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino to visit family and friends. Perhaps it was in 1908 that he and his first wife, Alice, divorced; by 1910, Alfred married Marit Pentha in King County Washington.[16] In a letter to *Nuorttanaste* in 1910 it says: "The well-known Alfred Nilima has now returned from his home to Alaska. He spent a year in Guovdageaidnu in his old home region. He likes it there a lot."[17] Also by 1910, less than three years after Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and Ede Nilima's arrival in Alaska, Ede had acquired a herd of his own. The same letter tells us about Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and her husband Ede's first years in Alaska:

> His brother John Edvard Nilima and John's wife, Anna, are going to go home to old Guovdageaidnu; they've bought a place there from Nils Klemetsen's father, Klemet Klemetsen. The couple has a lot of money now and a few hundred reindeer as well. They could afford to buy the whole parish of Guovdageaidnu. They paid 1,000 crowns for Klemet Klemetsen's place in Guovdageaidnu.[18]

The letter is signed by Petter Syriasen, who was not known to be one of the Sámi who traveled to Alaska in 1894 or 1898, but nonetheless, he wrote to the paper in the Sámi language, so he must have been a Sámi himself.

In the 1910 census, Alfred is listed as the head-of-household with "John" (Americanized version of Johan) and Anna listed as "brother" and "sister-in-law" with Alfred and John (Ede's) occupations listed as reindeer herders and Anna as "at home." Their last name is spelled Nelemi. They lived in the village of Noatak Kobuk, which was in the area of Kotzebue. They have three lodgers listed, including Mathias J. Nilluk, Andrew A. Bahr, and "Anoluktuke" who was listed under tribe and clan as: "Eskimo. Peturmint."[19]

It was three years later when Anna Mortensdatter Nilima wrote her first letter to *Nuorttanaste,* dated September 25th, 1913. Anna does not give any indication where she was living when writing the following:

> Dear Editor, Mr. Ovla-Andras:
>
> I would like to tell you that we've received a beautiful Christmas present: that is, the Christmas issue with its picture of Laestadius. It's nice to see pictures of Christian people and read how they're doing in this world. I'm grateful for them. It was also nice to see the picture of the late Lunja.
> Greetings
>
> Mrs. Anne J. Nilima
>
> P.S. I also got a Sámi translation of the book "Alcohol and Health," and I would like to thank the people who decided to publish such a book. Everything it says is true. That's exactly what drinking spirits causes. It would be good if Sámi people took what this book says to heart.

In 1914, Alfred Nilima sold his herd of 1,200 reindeer to the Loman company and quit the reindeer herding industry, while his brother and Anna Mortensdatter Nilima's husband, Ede Nilima, remained in the industry and continued to herd together with Anders Bær, Per Hætta, Isak Hætta, and Mikkel Nakkala.[20] We can assume that Anna and Ede remained in the Kotzebue area where they were living when the 1910 census was taken. Anna likely shared in the company of other women in the small Sámi community while the men were working with the reindeer. However, it was not uncommon for women to also work with the reindeer, especially in times of great

demand for labor. Both Sámi and Inuit women in the village likely had responsibility for sewing and repairing clothes, maintaining the households, and preparing meals. An interesting commentary on an outsider's view of Sámi women's contribution and roles in the reindeer herding livelihood is reflected in the original 1898 contract, with the title: "Contract with the Laplanders." Anna Mortensdatter Nilima's brother-in-law, Nils Sara, is the first signatory:

> All the undersigned admit and make known by these presents that they have hired themselves reindeer herders, drivers, tamers, and to teach the Eskimo in Alaska in reindeer raising in all its details, and furthermore, to carry out such work as our superiors put over us by the United States Government may require; also, to look out for the reindeer during transportation to Alaska. Furthermore, we bind ourselves to behave ourselves orderly and decently, and to show discipline, and also to depart from our houses the 29th of January next, from which this contract goes into effect/…/
>
> /…/ The hides and furs of all the wild deer which are caught or shot shall belong to the man who has got hold of the deer and can be sold by him to whomever he likes and the money shall be his private property. To those of the undersigned who are married and have their wives with them, the provisions shall be given out once a month and be prepared and cooked by the wife. The others who are not married shall, according to their own wish, have their provisions dealt out every month and have their food prepared by a cook appointed for such service.[21]

Also, most of the men on the contract received a six-month salary of $22.33, while the four Sámi women who were signatories of the contract only received $4.46. It is not clear why only four of the sixteen women who traveled to Alaska in 1898 were signatories to the contract, nor why some of the signers, including Risten Nilsdatter Bals's father, Nils Persen Bals, earned more than the standard $22.33.

The next historical reference to Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and Johan Edvard Nilima is in a population census taken in December, 1929. The data listed is rather perplexing; Anna Mortensdatter Nilima and Johan Edvard Nilima were now listed with Americanized names: "John and Annie Niilima"; John is listed as the head of household with "trader" as his profession while Annie is listed as "housekeeper" in her "own home"; they are both listed as originating in "Lapland" and both are listed as "Native American" for race; they are now living in the Fairhaven district in the village of Buckland. Even more perplexing is census data listed for Anna just ten months later, in October of 1930: Anna is listed as "Anna Nilima"; she is listed as white for race, married, and from Norway, and is now living in St. Michael, Second Judicial District; unable to read and write; and her relationship to the head of household, Ole Bær, is "cousin." Also, Anna Mortensdatter Nilima's second of three letters to *Nuorttanaste*

was published on November 15th, 1930, that is, one month after the census, which notably, states that she is "unable to read and write":

> Dear Friend:
>
> I'd like to have a space for a few lines and some news from here.
> I've been in Alaska for twenty-three years, but now I've left the area. It was quite a terrible voyage, as the sea got rough several times. I spent seventeen days on a ship after leaving the town of Nome. I even got seasick a few times. But God our Father brought me safe and sound to where my dear Sámi friends live. I'm now in Poulsbo in the state of Washington, living with some friends. I'm grateful to God, who is always with me, even when I don't notice it myself.
> I'd also like to say that when I was in Nome, I saw Attorney Lomen. He's already an old man but still very cheerful, and he goes for a walk every day, even though he's well over seventy-years old. He's still as active as a young man.
>
> I ask you to print this letter in "Nuorttanaste," if you think it's good enough.
> I'm planning to return home to Norway next spring, if God allows and my health is still good enough, though I don't know yet for sure what will happen. If I don't leave for some reason, I'll let people know through this paper.
>
> Please send my greetings to Guovdageaidnu to my brother and sister and other relatives. Many Greetings to the editor and to the readers of the paper, too!
>
> Mrs. Anna Nilima
> Rt.D.I, Box 323
> Poulsbo
> Washington, U.S.A.[22]

The letter, like the two census records, is perplexing and even a bit cryptic. One cannot help but wonder why Anna Mortensdatter Nilima wrote in the first person singular, rather than, in the plural form, that is, referring to her husband, Johan Edvard Nilima, and herself—a rather confusing omission. She continues in the first person in her final letter published under the heading "Letter on Leaving America" on June 30th, 1931.

> Dear Editor:
>
> I'm leaving now for my home in Norway, so please don't send the paper to me in America anymore.
> I will leave here from Seattle on the 30th of May. And I ask my Christian brothers and sisters to pray for me so that, in his mercy, God our Father will give me a good and peaceful journey across the wide ocean and help me put my trust firmly and only in Jesus.
>
> I don't have time to write more now. Many greetings to the editors of *Nuorttanaste.*

Farewell!

Anna J. Nilima [Here, the omission of "Mrs." leaps out at me!]

Finally, the remaining Alaskan Sámi took notice of Luhkkár-Ánne's departure. In a letter dated June 21st, 1931 and signed by Ellen M. Boyne (formerly Ellen Marie [Rist] Bals), now married Boyne and the adoptive mother of Risten Nilsdatter Bals's son, Nils), she writes:

> /…/ Anna J. Nilima left Alaska last summer, and I've heard that she has left continental America, too, this summer and returned to her old home, the place where she was born in Guovdageaidnu. I hope her decision is a good one. It makes us feel bad to think about going home to our native country because there are so many reindeer in Alaska now that it's hard for us to sell our herds. The price for reindeer is really low. But if we manage to sell our herds, we, too, will go home to Norway to see our relatives in both Guovdageaidnu and Gárášjohka again/.../[23]

Luhkkár-Ánne returned to her Sámi home and Johan Edward was murdered in Alaska

Not unlike the unfolding narrative of Risten Nilsdatter Bals, I had come to this point in the perplexing moving parts of Anna Mortensdatter Nilima's narrative when I met the elder who was critically important in Risten Nilsdatter Bals's narrative. It turned out that she had met Luhkkár-Ánne after she returned to Guovdageaidnu. But before meeting the elder, I had conversations with several people who also had stories they wanted to share with me, but none of them wanted their names used or the details of the stories shared in print. They seemed eager to share the stories that had been passed down to them in oral tradition, and especially to share them with an eager listener. All of the stories dealt with the murder of Anna Mortensdatter Nilima's husband, Johan Edvard Nilima, in Alaska. They were rich in detail and contained dramatic themes like jealousy, revenge, greed, deception and mistaken identity. Some of them made explicit reference to Johan Edvard Nilima's brother, Alfred, who enjoyed a rather multifarious reputation in town. At times the stories would be shared in the company of several others who would dispute the version of the first story and then offer an alternative version with alternative motives, actors, timelines, and outcomes of the murder of Anna Mortensdatter Nilima's husband, "Ede" Nilima.

One thing is certain, the murder of Johan Edvard Nilima, the husband of Luhkkár-Ánne, is remembered in the community and the stories continue to circulate and have currency. It was often the case that as soon as I would ask people that I wanted to learn about the life of Anna Mortensdatter Nilima for a project, it was not uncommon to hear: "Luhkkár-Ánne! Poor woman, her husband was murdered in Alaska!"

Luhkkár-Ánne returned to her home in Guovdageaidnu sometime after 1931. If her letter is dated June 21st, 1931, she likely arrived in late July of that year. She lived in her home place until she passed away in 1949.

Toward the end of our research conversation and *gáfestallan*, I told the ninety-four-year-old elder about how I believed for a long time that the photograph could have been either Risten Nilsdatter Bals or Anna Mortensdatter Nilima; she took one look at the Ellis Island photo and said, "I could have told you years ago that that photo was not Luhkkár-Ánne. She didn't look like that at all."

Narrative of Kirsten/Risten Nilsdatter Bals (1879 –?): Fate Unknown

Risten Nilsdatter Bals' familial connection to the events of the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852

The story of Kirsten Nilsdatter Bals, herein Risten Nilsdatter Bals, must necessarily begin from within the context that forms an important backdrop to her narrative and eventual fate. The question mark for the date of her death is to signal "fate unknown." Risten Nilsdatter Bals was born into a family that was deeply entangled in the events of the Kautokeino Rebellion of November 8th of 1852—considered one of the only acts of violent resistance against colonial authorities by Sámi people. Many of her relatives belonged to the *siiddat*[24] that had attacked the sheriff, merchant, and minister. Risten was the oldest surviving child of Nils Persen Bals and Marit Rasmusdatter Spein; two older siblings, Peder Bals and Inger Marie Bals died in infancy.[25]

Marit Rasmusdatter Spein was the only child of Rasmus Rasmussen Spein and Inger Andersdatter Spein, both of whom are famously implicated in the events leading up to the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852, as well as in the rebellion itself.[26] Marit Rasmusdatter Spein would have been only nine months old when her mother, Inger Andersdatter Spein, participated in the rebellion, and her father, Rasmus Rasmussen Spein, would have already been serving a prison sentence in Christiana for a "mini" rebellion at the church in Skiervá/Skjervøy in 1851; Rasmus Rasmussen Spein died in prison in 1853 and her mother, Inger Andersdatter Spein, served eight months in prison with "hard labor" in 1854. In addition, other members of the extended Spein family were directly involved in the rebellion, including Rasmus Rasmussen Spein's sister, Marit Spein, who was killed when she was struck in the head with a log during the violent fray that ensued between the reindeer herders and villagers. Risten's father, Nils Persen Bals, also had relatives found guilty of involvement in the rebellion. In all, forty-eight men, women, and youth were charged and handed down sentences which included: heavy fines, short-term prison sentences, long-term prison sentences, life in prison, and two men, Mons Somby and Aslak Hætta, were executed by beheading.

The extended families of those found guilty in participating in the rebellion paid heavy fines to the state and church authorities, leaving many families or *siiddat* destitute. The families were predominantly reindeer herders, many of whom were forced to auction off their animals to pay the fines, thus significantly reducing many families' capacity for survival as herders. The authorities had also rounded up and auctioned off around 3,000 reindeer that belonged to various herders who were incarcerated. While it is not customary or considered culturally appropriate to state the number of reindeer owned by a particular family, it is clear from the records in the Norwegian state archives for 1875 that Risten's parents had a small number of reindeer, which *may have been* a consequence of their ancestors' involvement in the rebellion.[27] Many individuals and small families from the *siiddat* involved in the rebellion, including Risten's mother's relatives, dispersed or "fled" to coastal areas, especially to their summer grazing areas where they knew the lands and waters and had local connections, like *verddet*. Other destitute families and individuals had no choice but to work "in-service" or as—*reaŋggat*[28] and *biiggát*[29]—to wealthier reindeer herding families.

Most, if not all, of the families involved in the rebellion endured a stigma that carried over for several generations.[30] Many descendants from the families involved in the rebellion residing in various communities in Sápmi, as well descendants and relatives of families who eventually moved to America, have anonymously provided insight into the complexities of a stigma that has endured for several generations. Most of them have suggested that Risten Nilsdatter Bals and her family likely experienced their ancestral ties to the events of the rebellion as a burden, especially as the direct descendants of Rasmus Rasmussen Spein and Inger Andersdatter Spein. Descendants of those involved not only suffered economically from the fines exacted by the authorities, but some of them have also reported that they have been "punished" by members of the Sámi community through taunts and bullying, as well as by other silent forms of social sanctioning.

Risten was a biigá in Májáš-Biera siida/Maiasperbyen 1898-1907

It is clear from the records and well-known in oral tradition in Sámi communities that after the untimely deaths of Risten Nilsdatter Bals' mother, Marit Rasmusdatter Spein (1852-1892)[31] and her first step-mother, Gunhild Olsdatter Spein (1849-1897),[32] her father married a young woman named Ellen Marie Rist (1874-1935).[33] Ellen Marie Rist and Nils Persen Bals wed shortly before the two of them, together with three of Nils Persen Bals' six surviving children—Inger Nilsdatter Bals, Per Nilsen Bals, and Marit Nilsdatter Bals— immigrated to Alaska in 1898. They were part of the group of reindeer herders who were recruited and contracted to teach the Inuit reindeer herding in Alaska, mostly on the Seward Peninsula and North Slope.

Risten Nilsdatter Bals remained in-service to the Rist family—that is, to the family of her father's third wife. An academic expert on the *siida* system, Mikkel Nils Sara, speculated that it would not have been unusual for a sort of informal "exchange" to have taken place between heads of households or families.[34] That is, the Rist family had several young children and they may have needed the assistance of a young woman, or *biigá,* to care for their children after Ellen Marie Rist, their own oldest daughter, married Nils Persen Bals and moved to Alaska. Risten Nilsdatter Bals is also listed in the records as a shepherd for the Rist family in the 1900 census—that is, as someone who also watches over the reindeer.[35] The Rist family was in the constellation of families that made up the *siida* together with the Logje and Bær families, called Májáš-Biera *siida*/Maiasperbyen. A foreshadowing of the unfolding events in Risten's life is the fact that the Logje family was regarded as "one of the richest reindeer herding families in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino."

The Rist family, Per Aslaksen Rist and Berit Andersdatter Spein, and two of their daughters, had traveled to Alaska in 1894 with the first group of reindeer herders who were contracted by the Alaskan government. They returned to Guovdageaidnu in 1897.[36] It was one short year after they returned that Per Aslaksen Rist's oldest daughter, Ellen Marie Rist, married Risten Nilsdatter Bals' father, Nils Persen Bals, and they left for Alaska. Risten Nilsdatter Bals remained in Guovdageaidnu. We can assume that it must have been already in 1898 that she began working in-service for the Rist family, as she was listed in that role in the 1900 census.[37]

Incidentally, there were two other sons of Nils Persen Bals who did not travel to Alaska with their father and step-mother. One son was Ole Nilsdatter Bals, born the same year as Risten, in 1879. His mother was Gunhild Spein. Upon Marit Rasmusdatter Spein's untimely death, Nils Persen Bals married Gunhild Spein, who also met an untimely death, likely only a year after they married. Ole Nilsdatter Bals ended up in Spittá/Spildra, in Návuotna/Kvænangen, most likely with his mother's extended family who were among the Spein relatives who "fled" to the coast after the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852, described in some detail above.[38] Ole Nilsdatter Bals was confirmed in Spittá/Spildra, and it appears that his descendants remained on the coast. Nils Persen Bals and Marit Rasmusdatter Spein also had a son named Finn Nilsen Bals, that is, the youngest child from Nils Persen Bals' first marriage. Finn, like his sister Risten and brother Ole, did not go to Alaska with the rest of his immediate family. He would have been only six years old when the family moved to Alaska, so one can only assume that he was left in the care of relatives or another family. Finn Nilsen Bals is the subject of stories in oral tradition among both the Alaskan Sámi side of the family and in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino; the fate of Finn, like his older sister, Risten, remains unknown. Finn Nilsen Bals' older brother Per Nilsen Bals—known in America as "Peter Bahls"— returned to Guovdageaidnu from Alaska several times to visit extended family

and also to try to locate his little brother, Finn; despite Per Nilsen Bals' best efforts, he never found Finn. In the record of baptism for Finn Nilsen Bals, the date given was April 23rd, 1892, also the date of death listed for his mother, Marit Rasmusdatter Spein.[39]

Risten Nilsdatter Bals likely remained in-service to the Rist family for four years until they moved to Alaska again in 1902, yet she did not join them when they emigrated from Sápmi. At this point in the story, one might be wondering why Risten did not move with her own family to Alaska in 1898, nor join the Rist family in 1902, the family for whom she was in-service for four years after her own family left. It would seem that the majority of the people she was closest to in her life were no longer in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino: her mother Marit Rasmusdatter Spein had passed away over ten years prior to that and Marit had no siblings; thus, Risten Nilsdatter Bals did not have maternal cousins nor aunts or uncles. Her mother was the only child of Rasmus Rasmussen Spein and Inger Andersdatter Spein, as mentioned above, and many of the Spein family had moved to coastal areas after the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852. However, she did have relatives on her father's side of the family in the area. But the most likely reason Risten did not leave for Alaska in 1898 or 1902 was the fact that she also had a boyfriend; his name was Nils Nilsen Logje and he was part of the same constellation of families that made up the *siida* where Risten was in-service, listed in the 1900 digital archives as Májáš-Biera siida—Maiasperbyen.[40]

It is not clear where Risten Nilsdatter Bals lived or for whom she was in-service after the Rist family left for Alaska, but by 1903, Risten had given birth to twins, Per Nilsen Logje and Nils Nilsen Logje. It is possible that she was already pregnant when the Rist family moved to Alaska. According to both the archival records, as well local oral history, their infant son, Per Nilsen Logje, only lived for a few hours after his birth.[41] The father of Risten Nilsdatter Bals' twin boys, her boyfriend, Nils Nilsen Logje, was the son of the head of the household regarded by several people as the "richest reindeer herding family in Guovdageaidnu" (mentioned above). The surviving child, Nils Nilsen (Logje), was baptized with the last name Logje; over time he would appear in official records with the family names, Bals and Boyne, and would be known as the anglicized "Nels" by descendants of the original reindeer herders who moved to Unalakleet.[42]

By 1907, the child who had been baptized as Nils Nilsen Logje was together with his mother, Risten Nilsdatter Bals, on a ship destined for New York City Harbor, and from there he would travel to Unalakleet where his mother's immediate family had been living for nine years. Three years later, when he was seven years old, the little boy Nils Nilsen Logje, would be listed in the census as the adopted son of his grandfather and reindeer herder, Nils Persen Bals, in Unalakleet—his name on the record was listed as Nils Bals. Any trace of his mother, Risten Nilsdatter Bals, had disappeared from public record, and by 1909, two years after his arrival, the little boy Nils' father back in

Guovdageaidnu married a young woman from the *siida*. Several people from the community said that Nils Nilsen Logje, Risten Nilsdatter Bals' former boyfriend and father of her surviving son Nils Nilsen Logje, was likely under some pressure from his family to secure his future "bread and butter" by marrying a reindeer-wealthy young woman from the *siida.* Several people said things to this effect: "He was never going to marry a *biigá.*"

One could also interpret that Risten Nilsdatter Bals' fate had also seemingly disappeared from family memory. In a conversation with Mimi Bahl DeLeon, the Alaskan Sámi descendant of Risten Nilsdatter Bals' brother, Per Nilsen Bals, she stated that she had never heard anyone in the family talk about the sister, Risten/Kirsten Nilsdatter Bals. However, she had heard about his other siblings, Inga Nilsdatter Bals and Marit Nilsdatter Bals, who remained in Alaska, and she had heard about the "missing brother" Finn Nilsen Bals whom her great-grandfather, "Petter Bahls" had gone looking for in Guovdageaidnu. It seems as if nobody remembered ever hearing that Per Nilsen Bals had a sister, Risten (or "Kirsten") Nilsdatter Bals, who had moved to Alaska in 1907, although her name does appear in some historical texts. The response to the unfolding story of Risten Nilsdatter Bals was often that the woman in the Ellis Island photograph bore a striking resemblance to her Alaskan Sámi relatives, but nobody was able to positively identify her through living memory or with a corresponding or "matching" family photograph. Also, after many years, I still have not been able to locate anyone in North America or in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino who knows anything about what happened to Risten Nilsdatter Bals after she arrived in Unalakleet, apparently in July of 1907.

Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Nils Nilsen Logje (Bals) from May to July 1907

At the age of twenty-eight, nine years after her father, three siblings and step-mother moved to Alaska, Risten Nilsdatter Bals and her son, Nils Nilsen Logje (Bals) traveled to Alaska from Guovdageaidnu. There are no oral or written records of their journey from Finnmark to Christiania, but we can roughly estimate it would have taken at least one or two weeks to get to Christiania from Finnmark. They departed from Christiana on the 3rd of May, 1907 and arrived twelve days later at Ellis Island on the 15th of May, 1907. She traveled on the ship *Hellig Olav;* like many other ships, it stopped in Liverpool where other passengers destined for America would come onboard. *Hellig Olav* was a passenger ship built for Scandinavian Lines with 900 spaces for third-class passengers; Risten Nilsdatter Bals and Nils Nilsen Logje (Bals) traveled in third-class, or in steerage. They were also the only passengers listed on the manifest from inner-Finnmark.[43]

The ship's manifest tells us the following specific details about Risten Nilsdatter Bals (listed as "Kirstin Bals"): she was unmarried and traveling alone with her four-year-old

son, who was listed on the manifest as Nils Nilsen Bals; they were destined for Alaska – the town name is illegible but is most likely Unalakleet; her father, Nils Persen Bals, had paid her ship passage and she had a pre-paid train ticket to Seattle; she was listed as "Finnish" for ethnicity, while the vast majority of the other passengers on the ship manifest were listed as Norwegian; she was 124 cm (4'10) tall, had brown hair, blue eyes, and light complexion; she was able to read, but not able to write. Her four-year-old son is listed on the manifest as Nils Nilsen Bals, but he was baptized and recorded in Guovdageaidnu as Nils Nilsen Logje, that is, with his biological father's last name. It is perhaps worth pointing out that Kirsten was spelled "Kirstin" on the manifest, thus all digitized immigration records reflect that spelling. It is not clear whether the person writing the names on the manifest was in Liverpool or in Christiania, but the spelling of names and cities reflect haste and English phonetic spelling of Norwegian place-names, for example, "Trendlham" for "Trøndheim."

Risten Nilsdatter Bals and her son Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals arrived at Ellis Island

There is yet another mystery about Risten Nilsdatter Bal's story that deserves attention here. In Victorian Era America, women who arrived at Ellis Island unaccompanied by men would generally be held "in detainment" on the island until a man—a husband, fiancé, father, or brother—came to sign for their release and retrieve them. Unwed mothers who arrived unaccompanied by men risked being charged with laws forbidding "fornication" under Victorian Era crimes of moral turpitude; the worst outcome was that the women could be sent back to their countries of origin. It is clearly stated on the ship manifest that Risten was unmarried and traveling with a four-year-old son with her last name. Other women were on the list of detainees, but Risten was not on the detainment list for the *Hellig Olav* arrival on the 15th of May, 1907. Presuming that Risten Nilsdatter Bals is the Sámi woman in the photograph taken at Ellis Island by Augustus F. Sherman, why was the four-year-old Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals not pictured with her? Immigration laws were constantly under revision, and with every newly-elected Congress, it seemed, came new acts of Congress pertaining to immigration. In 1906, one year before Risten Nilsdatter Bals and her son arrived, immigrants had to prove some competence in English to be considered eligible for US citizenship. It was also an era of increasing suspicion of new arrivals from groups of people who could be considered "racially inferior" or "exotic"; the Sámi were indeed considered suspicious in the racial hierarchy of the time.[44]

Thus, presuming that the woman in the photograph is Risten Nilsdatter Bals, she had the following strikes against her at Ellis Island: she was a woman wearing an ethnic garment that would have made her stand out, especially in contrast to the other passengers, the vast majority of whom were from further south in Norway and likely appeared "Germanic"; she was unaccompanied by a man and traveling with a four-year-old son, born out of wedlock, who bore her last name on the ship manifest; she was

likely considered to be from a "suspicious race" and was traveling in steerage with all the other "common folk." How did she make it through processing with so many strikes against her? It is, frankly, astonishing that Risten Nilsdatter Bals made it off Ellis Island, then made her way across the continent by train to Seattle alone with a four-year-old child, only to board another ship bound for Alaska along the Pacific Coast, arriving in Unalakleet by the 10th of July, 1907.

The only written source that gives us any indication of her life upon arrival to Alaska—that is, the last archival trace of Risten Nilsdatter Bals—comes from a letter written to the Sámi language newspaper, *Nuorttanaste*, in 1907, which appears in the Solbakk and Solbakk book *Sámi Reindeer Herders in Alaska: Letters from America 1901-1937* (2014). The letter reported that Risten Nilsdatter Bals had "arrived in good health at her father's place in Unalakleet on July 10th and was already getting married to an American who had gotten rich mining gold."[45] It was written only two short weeks after her arrival which could indicate that there might have been some sort of arranged marriage. It was signed by K.K., which the editors of the volume have identified as Klemet Klemetsen.

The story that I have presented so far comes primarily from archival records and historical texts, with some sporadic interpretive commentary from several knowledgeable people in the community. At this point in the story, Risten has arrived in Alaska and might have gotten married; she has gone from being a *biigá* with burdensome ties to the Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852 and likely rejected by her boyfriend's reindeer-rich family to marrying a gold-rich American in Alaska. All of this has happened in the span of less than three months. But who did she marry? What is Risten's story after July 10th, 1907? If this was an arranged marriage, did she consent to this arrangement? Klemet Klemetsen did not report the name of this mysterious, rich American fiancé in the letter to *Nuorttanaste* in 1907. Risten's closest relative descendants in America had never heard of her, and I have been unable to locate a marriage record for her in Alaska, nor anywhere in any digital archive, for that matter. As soon as women got married in Victorian America, they would at once assume their husband's name, meaning that one will not be able to find any trace of her in any archive without knowledge of her married name. Without knowing the name of this supposed gold-rich American, Risten (Kristen) Nilsdatter Bals is simply lost in the archives.

Stories about Risten Nilsdatter Bals in Oral Tradition from an Elder

I had come to this point in Risten Nilsdatter Bals' unfolding life narrative three years and several months into my four-year research fellowship and ten years into a personal quest to find out what had happened to the striking Sámi woman in the anonymous photograph at Ellis Island. I had visited Guovdageaidnu three times during my fellowship, and finally in late 2016, I was brought into contact with one of Risten Nilsdatter Bals' relatives—the only person I have ever met who has living memory of

Risten as a person. Introduced earlier, the ninety-four-year-old elder has a familial relationship to Risten Nilsdatter Bals through both her parents. As an elder who is rich in knowledge from Sámi oral tradition, as well as being the only oral historical source with direct knowledge of Risten Nilsdatter Bals as a person, I view her as the seminal oral source in this narrative. The following is an account of the stories she shared in the research conversation (translated from Sámi through Norwegian to English):

> Risten Nilsdatter Bals was my mother's cousin, but also my father's cousin. She was the girlfriend of Rugáš-Niillas (Nils Nilsen Logje) who came from a rich reindeer herding family. In 1903 she had twins, but one of them died. Rugáš-Niillas was not married to her when Risten had the twins. She moved to America in 1907. Nobody knows why she moved. The plan might have been that they were going to travel together, but in the end, she traveled first with a promise from him. She believed that he was going to come later. My mother said many times that it was never going to happen that way. She was convinced that a rich reindeer Sámi never would have had the time to travel to America. We don't know for sure if she traveled alone or if she traveled with others.
>
> The boy (Nils Nilsen [Logje] Bals) was quite big, around four years old, when she traveled to America. My mother said that he used to complain that he had such a mean and stubborn mother, and he was very unhappy about it. Risten was known to be short-tempered and easily angered.
>
> Rugáš-Niillas was married to a different woman and in 1909 they had their first child. His wife died in 1912. A half a year later, around the time of Midsummer, Rugáš-Niillas was on his way to America in 1913. He had a lot of money in his inside pocket when two men robbed and stabbed him in Reisa. They took the money and split it between them. One of the men confessed to the murder on his deathbed.

The record confirming the death and burial of Nils Nilsen Logje contains the following: date of death, July 13th, 1913; date of burial July 15th, 1913; cause of death "delirium"; occupation Lapp; death reported to probate court.

By 1912, the boy, Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals, would have been nine-years-old and had been living in Unalakleet for five years. He was listed in the Alaskan census records in 1910 as Nils Persen Bals's adopted son, that is, as his grandfather's adopted son. Is it possible that Rugáš-Niillas/Nils Nilsen Logje was on his way to reunite with Risten? Was he going to Alaska in fulfillment of a promise he made to her in May, 1907? Or is it possible that he had gotten word that she had passed away and was on his way to retrieve his son, Nils Nilsen Logje (Bals), so he could be reunited with his two half-sisters in Guovdageaidnu? Why did the record state "delirium" for the cause of death?

Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals (became) Nils Boyne (1903-1947)

The four-year-old boy who traveled from Guovdageaidnu to Unalakleet with his mother, Risten Nilsdatter Bals, arriving on July 10th, 1907 lived to be forty-four years old and spent most of his life in Unalakleet. His story provides yet another layer of meaning to the mystery of Risten Nilsdatter Bals' fate. In previous informal conversation with relatives of Nils Nilsen Logje (that is, the father of the boy), I had heard several times that the son that Risten Nilsdatter Bals had traveled with to Alaska died as a teenager. This story had been repeated on various genealogical social media pages based in Norway, but none of the sites had links to sources.[46]

Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals grew up in Unalakleet in the care of his grandfather Nils Persen Bals and his third wife, Ellen Marie Rist.[47] Ellen Marie Rist never had biological children of her own, but it appears that she raised Nils Nilsen Bals (Logje) as her own son; she was also a caretaker of several other Sámi children in Unalakleet, including Nils Persen Bals' daughter Inga Nilsdatter Bals and Anders Bongo's son, who is referred to as "Petter Bangs." Both Anders Bongo and Inga Nilsdatter Bals suffered from health problems in their youth, and Inga died in 1920 at the age of forty.[48]

It is certain that Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals learned the skills for reindeer herding from his grandfather and other Sámi in Unalakleet. His grandfather and first adoptive father, Nils Persen Bals, passed away in March of 1919; Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals would have been sixteen years old. Ellen Marie Rist, Nils Nilsen Bals' step-grandmother and adoptive mother, married Klemet P. Boyne nine months later. Klemet P. Boyne would have been known to Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals as part of the Sámi community in Alaska, and in 1920; Klemet was also working in reindeer herding, ostensibly with Nils Persen Bals' son, Per Nilsen Bals ("Petter Bahls").

Archival records from Nils Nilsen (Logje) Bals's adulthood confirm that he worked as a reindeer herder (petition for naturalization). Nils Nilsen Bals (Logje) most likely had remained in Unalakleet until he served in the army in WWII as a private in the infantry. He was among a group of Sámi who became naturalized United States citizens in 1931, at which time he took the name of his adoptive grandmother/mother's second husband's name, Boyne; the couple had referred to Nils Boyne as their son[49]. After his adoptive mother, Ellen Marie Rist, who also changed her name to Ellen Marie Boyne, had passed away, Klemet P. Boyne returned to Kárášjohks/Karasjok where he married a young woman named Berit Hansdatter and had two sons. The sons, one of whom is Hans-Petter Boyne, grew up hearing about a long-lost-brother in Alaska. When Klemet Boyne, their father, passed away, any contact with Nils Boyne (formerly Logje and Bals) in Alaska was lost. Some years ago, Hans-Petter Boyne journeyed to Nome and Unalakleet to walk in his father's footsteps and to find out more about his brother Nils Boyne (Logje/Bals) and any possible descendants. He heard many stories in oral tradition about the Sámi

who lived in Unalakleet, including about his adoptive brother, Nils Boyne. But he did not hear anything about the fate of Risten Nilsdatter Bals, the mother of Nils Boyne (Logje/Bals).

Nils Boyne (Logje/Bals) is buried in the United States Veterans Cemetery in Sitka; he has no descendants. A possible reason why people in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino believed that he had passed away as a teenager, might have been the fact that official records have three different names: Nils Nilsen Logje, Nils Nilsen Bals, Nils Bahls, and finally, Nils Boyne. The Inupiaq/Sámi elder, Irwin Bahr, from Unalakleet remembered Nils, who was known as "Nels Boyne" (pronounced BOY-IN) in the village. Irwin told stories about playing cards with Nels Boyne as a child and that "Nels never had a girlfriend, at least not that anybody knew about Nels was a part of the village like everybody else. The Sámi were part of the village, just like the rest of us."

When I visited Unalakleet in the summer of 2015, nobody I met remembered hearing about Risten Nilsdatter Bals, the daughter of Nils Persen Bals, and mother of Nels Boyne. I would show people her photograph everywhere I went in Alaska, and some of them remarked that her photograph "looked familiar." Risten Nilsdatter Bals, the oldest daughter of the well-known Nils Persen Bals to the locals, had seemingly never been a part of living memory in the Unalakleet community. Local people, even young people, remembered hearing stories about the other Sámi who had lived in the village, but nothing about a young mother who came in 1907 and "got married to an American who got rich in gold mining." Another elder in the community, Frances Ann Degnan, had photographs of the Sámi villagers in her private collection, and had included a favorable chapter about the Sámi in the biography she had written about her parents.[50] But like everyone I have ever spoken to in Sápmi and North America, Frances Ann Degnan did not have any clues to the fate of Risten Nilsdatter Bals.

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Notes

1. Figure 1 (original published caption) “Lapp Immigrant.” Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library. "Laplander." *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-dc9d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99
2. Figure 2 (original published caption) “Áddja ja áhkku čuožžuba dimbbarviesso guoras. Mann og kvinne står ved et tømmerhus. Luhkkár-Ánne.” Photographer: Anders Johansen Bongo. 1930-1940. https://digitaltmuseum.org/011015071622/adja-ja-ahku-cuoccuba-dimbbarviesso-guoras-mann-og-kvinne-star-ved-tommerhus
3. The son of Nils Nilsen Logje and Risten Nilsdatter Bals, the boy named Nils, had multiple name-changes in the records. He is listed in the record of baptism as Nils Nilsen Logje, in the ship manifest as Nils Nilsen Bals, in the Alaskan census record as Nils Bals, in his application for United States Citizenship as Nils Bals, in his record of United States naturalization as Nils Boyne (he legally changed his name when he obtained citizenship) and in his military record as Nils Boyne. The locals in Unalakleet referred to him as Nels Boyne, which is also reflected in Vorren’s text. In writing him, I use the name that temporally corresponds with the name that was in use at the time in the narrative. I also use the other names in parenthesis to acknowledge his kinship ties to the multiple families that claim him: Logje, Bals, and Boine/Boyne.
4. The Sámi communities and their history in Nome, Unalakleet, and Poulsbo are prominently featured in the films *Sámis Alaskai* and *Samene...over there;* subjects of the films include the late Irwin Bahr and the late Aurora Bahr Mosely, Marit/Mary Bahr in Unalakleet, and Norma Hansen in Poulsbo, all of whom were important in this project. To view the films, see https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/fra-finnmark-til-alaska---en-dokumentar-1.12180741
5. It goes without saying, that I simply cannot do justice to the weight of this research conversation in the lives of Dan Karmun Sr. and his descendants in this narrative. I intend to elaborate the stories he shared in another format that extend them the full honor they deserve.
6. Vorren, *Saami Reindeer and Gold,* 93; Steen, *Kautokeinoslekter,* 200-203
7. Steen, *Kautokeinoslekter,* 200-203
8. http://skuvla.info/index-e.htm
9. Nelleje Zorgdrager, *De Rettferdigets Strid*: *Kautokeino 1852: Samisk Motstand Mot Norsk Kolonialisme* (Nesbru: Samiske Samlinger, 1997) 326-328
10. Steen, *Kautokeinoslekter,* 203
11. https://www.digitalarkivet.no/census/person/pf01037572000319
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17. Solbakk and Solbakk, *Sámi Reindeer Herders in Alaska,* 58
18. Solbakk and Solbakk, *Sámi Reindeer Herders in Alaska,* 58
19. United States Census Bureau. Year: *1910*; Census Place: *Noatak Kobuk, Division 4, Alaska Territory*; Roll: *T624_1749*; Page: *21A*; Enumeration District: *0006*; FHL microfilm: *1375762*
20. Vorren, *Saami, Reindeer, and Gold,* 74
21. Vorren, *Saami, Reindeer, and Gold,* 42-43
22. Solbakk and Solbakk, *Sámi Reindeer Herders in Alaska,*14
23. Also spelled Kárásjohka, the spelling reflected in the citation comes from the source.
24. *Siiddat* is the plural form of *siida*: in this context, a constellation of families who herd reindeer together.
25. Adolf Steen, *Kautokeinoslekter* (Karasjok: Norsk Folkemuseum, 1986) 27
26. Steen, *Kautokeinoslekter,* 339-340
27. https://www.digitalarkivet.no/census/rural-residence/bf01052460000769
28. Plural form of *reaŋga:* denotative translation is a male servant. In the reindeer herding context, he was at times indispensable as a member of a family-laboring unit who watches over the herds and performs other duties. In a sense, they became a part of the family. It is not congruent with the western connotations of a servant with low-status in a more well-to-do household. The reindeer herding *reaŋga* earned reindeer in payment, thus they could build up their own herds over time. *Reaŋga* is also used as a term of endearment for male children.
29. Plural form of *biigá:* denotative translation is a female servant. In the reindeer herding context, she was indispensable as a member of a family-laboring unit. She cared for children, sewed and cooked, and also watched over the animals in times of need. Like her male counterpart, she became part of the family for whom she was in-service and was highly valued for her skills. *Biigá* is used as a term of endearment for female children.

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45. Solbakk and Solbakk, *Sámi Reindeer Herders in Alaska*, 20
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47. Solbakk and Solbakk, *Sami Reindeer Herders in Alaska*, 21
48. Ørnulv Vorren, *The Saami, Reindeer and Gold in Alaska: the Emigration of Saami from Norway to Alaska* (Illinois: Waveland Press, 1994) 169
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Epilogue

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In the autumn of this year, a young Sámi American woman came into our lives rather serendipitously; she came to Sápmi as a student and alongside her studies was seeking greater understanding of her family's obscured Sámi heritage. Features of her family narrative are common in other Sámi diaspora families: she had always heard from the older generation that one side of her family from Norway was "different" and sometimes they would say that one of her first-generation maternal immigrant ancestors was a "Lapp." She also heard that the "proper Norwegian (American)" side had been disapproving of the "Lapp" side of the family, and that her immigrant ancestor was regarded as "dark and quiet." Adding to the complexities of finding her sense of belonging were scarce and confusing archival records and genealogical data. The more questions she asked her grandparent from the Sámi line of the family, the more confusing the story became:

> I never expected how personally challenging this would be for me. I find myself reacting in ways that I never anticipated. I have never been the sentimental type, I don't usually care what others think or say about me, so it's been surprising how painful it has been for me. Like, when two young Sámi men scrutinized and made fun of me, it really hurt, I actually cried. More than ever before I feel a need to find some sort of home or belonging, especially for my mom, who has always been treated differently.

An important motivation for her journey is seeking to understand her mother's racialized difference; like others represented in this work, her mother stands out because her "look" does not fit the norm of the stereotypical Norwegian American. She is (light) brown, with black hair, and is often told she "looks Asian." She has endured racialized slights by family members, strangers, authorities and Scandinavian organizations. "There was even a time when my mom came to pick me up at school, and the classroom assistant wouldn't let me go home with her because she could not believe that she was my biological mother!" Her mother is not alone in this experience, other Sámi immigrants and their descendants had or have features that are often characteristic of other Arctic Indigenous peoples. Still others, like their counterparts in Sápmi, could be said to "pass" or blend in with the majority populations from the Nordic countries. The young woman relayed how important it had been for her mother to finally find an understanding—a word or category—for her marked difference. Like so many others in North America, the young woman and her mother seek to connect the dots in their obscured history, a history that has *real effects* in their lives in

America. When they tell their own family stories to others with a shared history, their stories become part of the polyvocal oral tradition of the Sámi American diaspora community.

I have often asked myself why I continue research and writing on the phenomenon of Sámi immigration to North America, especially since I am the child of a Norwegian-Sámi emigrant, I have Norwegian citizenship, and I have been living in Sápmi for many years; all of the pieces in the puzzle have seemingly fallen into place for me and my children. Writing about Sámi American history has been richly rewarding, but also taxing for a number of personal and professional reasons. But then people like the young woman and her mother make their way into my life, and I am reminded that the history of Sámi immigration—a history "set-apart" from the grand narratives of the Nordic countries and the grand narratives of Nordic immigration—deserves a place in our collective consciousness of global Indigenous, Sámi, American, and Nordic histories. Therefore, I continue to conduct research and write on Sámi immigration and contemporary expressions of diasporic indigeneity in Sámi America for people like the young woman and her mother.

As descendants of Indigenous people from "elsewhere," many from the first-generation grapple with the complexities of understanding their family histories in context, a context which includes the silencing of Sámi belonging. The Sámi immigrant women in the study—Albertine Josephine Svendsen, Berith Kristina Susanna Larsdatter, Karen Marie Nilsdatter, Luhkkár-Ánne/Anna Mortensdatter Nilima, and Risten Nilsdatter Bals—would have brought the knowledge of their marked difference with them. Through studied engagement and connecting with others, the descendants and relatives of the five women compassionately uncover and interpret the reasons for their Sámi ancestors' silencing of identity. Despite the fact that their ancestors were not forthcoming about their Sámi belonging, cultural continuity was, nonetheless, manifested in stories from family oral tradition, stories that often intersected with photographs and other material culture. Sámi Americans, seeking to understand their obscured histories, also find meaning online, in various social and other media platforms. Photography and visual culture in the global flow of diaspora meaning-making can shape subjectivity in Sámi Americans living in diasporic indigeneity.

Early twentieth century migration from Europe to North America included some of Europe's internally colonized and marginalized "others." The Sámi—the only recognized Indigenous people in the European Union and European economic community—also made their way to North America alongside their Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, and Russian cohorts. At the time of their emigration, they were themselves under cultural and social

duress due to various colonial processes; in Norwegian Sápmi, colonial processes included the harsh assimilation policy of Norwegianization, development of extractive industries, and increasing settlement of Norwegians from the south in Sámi areas due to primogeniture and industrial recruitment efforts. The Norwegianization policy and migration had particular gendered effects, such as the loss of legal agency, the obscuring of family names, and having to grapple with Victorian era gender hierarchies and expectations. Thus, due to colonial processes and the rise of nationalism in the Nordic countries and gendered migration processes, the narratives—like those of the five women in this study—were at once obscured upon arrival to North America. Their experiences prior to immigration provided ample reasons to forget, to move on, to create new meaning for themselves and their families.

The women in this study did what they had to do to survive and their descendants lovingly seek to understand their Sámi grandmothers' place and belonging with and through alternative temporal and spatial visions; they view their family histories outside of the narratives of Norwegian nation-state building. Rather than the imaginative process of connecting to "Norwegian places" they connect their family histories to "Sámi places." Thus, they also envision place and belonging through Sámi places with Sámi place-names with an understanding that the Sámi language was central to their families' identities. Further, they seek to understand the effects of the Norwegianization policy in their grandmothers' lives. By processing all of these phenomena through family stories, they better understand their place in the world.

Not long before I was finalizing this manuscript, my partner and I received a Sámi American guest, Gary Anderson and his wife, Roberta. Like many others in the North American community, Sámi heritage forms part of Gary's pan-Nordic cultural mosaic. He had visited multiple places in Finland, Norway, and Sápmi over several weeks before he visited us in Deatnu/Tana. A few weeks after he returned to the Pacific Northwest, he sent us a card with a timely message. I end this work with the final statement in Gary's letter:

I returned from our journey with a new sense of self.

Never again will I question my heritage or my place in the world.

What a wonderful gift I have been given.

(Ellen Marie Jensen, Sápmi, 2018)