

UiT

THE ARCTIC
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"How Can Spirituality Make Meaning and Give Health Benefits for Sámi Elders?"

An open and inclusive form

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Indigenous people

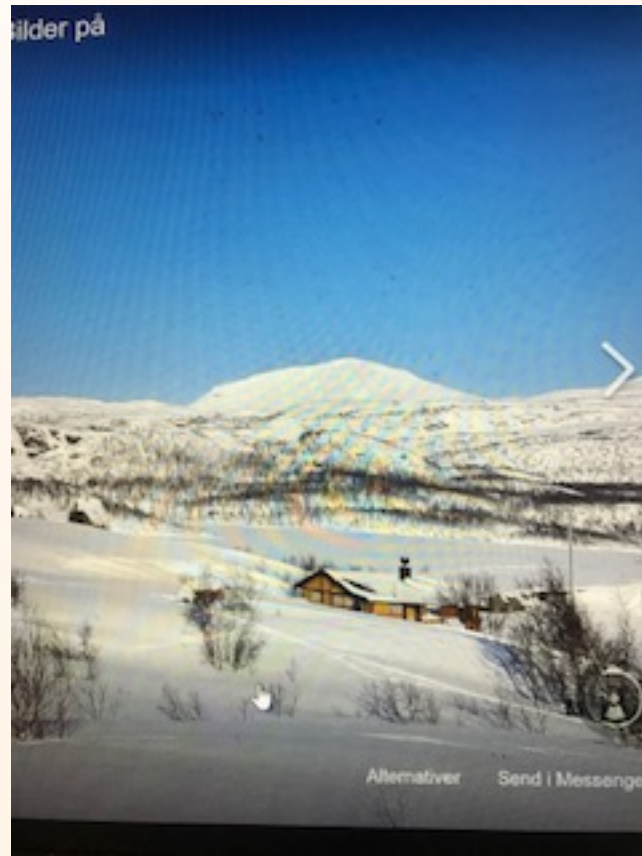
- The Sámi are the Indigenous people in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia
- Norway is the only of our four home countries which both has:
 - ratified the *ILO Convention 169 (1990)*, and
 - signed the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)*



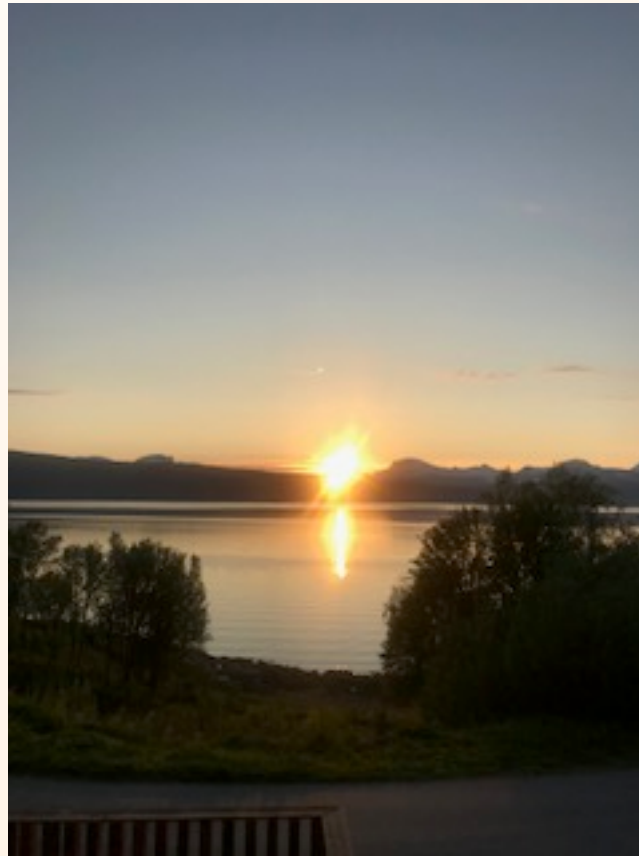
Nature and landscape form living

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- Norway; mountain peaks and plateaus, woodlands, fields and meadows, and a long coast
- Living forms social life – how we act with each other
- Centurylong norwegianization and modernization programmes have influenced our living
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Winter



Summer



Nature and landscape form ways of thinking

Material culture is faded out easier than non-material

Deep - structural elements are hidden (Myrvoll 2008).

Bodily knowledge (Ponty 1994)

Decorative lines in the bottom right corner consisting of a white line and an orange line.

Backstage and frontstage phenomena (Goffmann)

- **We Sámi have found ways to meet challenges**
- **Frontstage:**
 - **Behaving as «Good Norwegians»**
 - **Speaking Norwegian**
- **Backstage (home):**
 - **Use of Sámi language**

Materials and methods

- My own experiences as a Sami and as a Sami nurse
- As a Sámi nurse I have combined insider and outsider roles
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 - It is an entry to interaction
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As Sámi nurse I have experienced

- Nurses are close to the patients and their next to kin in various situations
- Suffering and uncertain situations awakes cultural bodily knowledge
- Broader worldviews than reflected by scientific medicine
- To find meaning in the situation is brought up in various situations (Travelbee 1971)

Research projects

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

My experiences as nurse

- **Behind the screening curtain in hospitals and other health institutions:**
- **Use of Sami language**
- **Healing**
- **Speaking about relatives and neighbours**
- **Interested in how the year is – life cycle events and how they are influenced by seasonal and interannual climate variations**

Experiences from daily life in a city

I have an aunt

She points out that I so seldom visit her.

I say; “Aunty ...you have a lot of contacts”

She answers: “Yes I know, but with those I cannot speak about familiar phenomena”.

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An example of health Promotion

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

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

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

Results from research 1

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

Results 2

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

Upcoming questions

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- «Something can be brought to happen, is it the fate?»
- But: **What is the fate?**
- *Dat lea oainnihuvvon*
- That means:
- **Phenomena and happenings are foreseen**

Dat lea oainnihuvvon

- Philosophy of life
- When you come to this world by birth you have a duty
- You have to do the best out of life
- «*You should not give up and you should take your time*» (Nymo 2011)

Conclusions 1

- To live in one's homeland means:
- Care relationships to people, nature and landscape
- Mother tongue are used and calls on reminiscence
- Health gatherings represent an arena for meeting and healing Sámi identity

Conclusions 2

- The Elders wear a stigma of inferiority
- The Norwegianization has influenced on their ethnical identity and self- image
- Sámi Elders have valuable experiences to share

End of this presentation

- *Rights have been won by the Sámi in Norway, Sweden and Finland the Sámi have their Parliaments*
- Health and language rights:
- Interpretation services
- In Norway:
 - Center for Sámi Health Research
 - Sámi National Competence Center for mental health and intoxication (abusers)
- In Norwegian hospitals: Some acceptance of Sami's ways to understand and explain outbreak of illness

However.....

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

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

Ethical considerations

- The project:
- *Nymo, R. (2011). Health care systems in Sámi woodland parishes of Northern Nordland and Southern Troms. Everyday life practices. One should not succumb and one should take time as an aid. PhD dissertation. University of Tromsø*

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

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

References

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- Myrvoll, M (2008). *Forestillinger og praksiser knyttet til døden*. I. *Evjen, B og Hansen L.I* (red.) Oslo: Pax Forlag A/S. Nordlands kulturelle mangfold. Etniske relasjoner i historisk perspektiv s.273-303.
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- Travelbee, J. (1971). *Interpersonal Aspects of Nursing*. Philadelphia:, F. A. Davis Company;