

# The Need for Visibility and Voice of Sami People in Art Education

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## ABSTRACT

In 2013, I spent six months in Finland pursuing questions concerning the presence of Sami people (the Indigenous people of northern Europe) in Finnish art education. In this combination study of microethnography and narrative analysis that utilizes an Indigenous research paradigm, I asked Sami research participants about how they would like to be represented in art classes. Data description highlights the Sami research participants' voices, as the presence of Indigenous people is often lacking in education due to the effects of colonization. Analysis of the data shows that these research participants think that media, education, and tourism all contribute to negative stereotypes of Sami people. In conclusion, art educators are in a unique and important position to educate students about Sami people so that stereotypes are not perpetuated and so that Sami people gain visibility and voices in global discourse concerning decolonization efforts in education.

KEYWORDS: Sami, Indigenous, decolonization, art education, Finland, Indigenous research, microethnography, narrative analysis

I spent the first six months of 2013 in Finland, and during this time I focused my research on how the Sami people (the Indigenous people of northern Europe) are represented in Finnish public schools and how Sami people *want* to be represented in Finnish and global art classes. As a Native American woman who is an elementary art educator, I am interested in decolonizing efforts in art education. I am particularly interested in listening to the experiences of Indigenous people in education to learn how to better teach my art students about the need for social justice for Indigenous people. As an experienced art educator, I am familiar with seeing a Native American presence, albeit often a stereotypical one, in U.S. curricula. I was unprepared to find the almost complete lack of mention of Sami people in the Finnish art classrooms and general education classrooms that I visited.

When visiting classrooms in Helsinki, located in the southern tip of Finland, I asked Finnish educators about the Sami people's inclusion in learning. Repeatedly I heard that I needed to "go north" to see a Sami presence in education. I was able to make a short trip to two northern villages to visit schools that had classrooms dedicated to the teaching of Sami crafts and languages.

While in Finland, I was a participant observer of Sami National Day<sup>1</sup> in Helsinki, and in northern villages I talked with Sami teachers, artists, and advocates. During my visits, I employed an open-ended questionnaire. This study focuses on the voices of three Sami research participants as a way to break the silence that surrounds the Sami and include Sami voices in the decolonization efforts of Indigenous people globally.

## Decolonization and Indigenous Research

Colonization is a complex set of relationships that stem from one group of people having power over another people's cultures, languages, lands, economy, and education (Ballengee-Morris, Mirin, & Rizzi, 2000). Decolonization is not simply a transfer of power, but also a process where one re-becomes oneself (Fanon, 1967). In research, decolonization can be about the process of reclaiming, valuing, and foregrounding Indigenous voices (Swadener & Mutua, 2015). As a Native American woman who is an art educator, I am particularly interested in including Indigenous voices and positions in the field of art education. In this paper, I employ an Indigenous research paradigm by adapting research frameworks developed by Keskitalo, Määttä, and Uusiautti (2011, 2012b) and Kuokkanen (2008) that focus research on Sami representation in education. I selected works by Sami researchers who employ an Indigenous research paradigm that supports Sami communities to inform this study. Research conducted in an Indigenous framework is culturally relevant and appropriate for Indigenous peoples and satisfies the academy (Smith, 2000). Indigenous research methods should preserve Indigenous voices, build resistance to dominant discourses, create political integrity, and be meaningful to the communities studied. Researchers from Indigenous communities are expected to speak from experience and not just theory, with their methods, methodologies

1 Sami National Day on February 6<sup>th</sup> celebrates the first Sami congress held in 1917. Booths that displayed crafts for sale, and a stage for singers and speakers were in a central Helsinki location on the day that I attended events.

and findings grounded in Indigenous subjectivities and experiences of everyday life (Eldridge, 2008, 2014). I found that in sharing my culture, the history of my nation, and my personal stories of being Native, I was welcomed by several Sami people who wanted to share their experiences in the hopes of increasing education for Sami students that is free of negative stereotypes.

My Indigenous research framework is based on the overarching idea stated by Keskitalo, Määttä, and Uusiautti (2011, 2012b) that research involving Sami people should benefit Sami society or disseminate information about "Saminess." Indigenous research methodologies must respect local traditions, values, cultures, histories, and families. Additionally, the research must be just, valuable to Sami people, "good-producing," and not cause harm (Keskitalo, et al., 2011, 2012b). An important aspect of decolonizing research is that the research material is constructed through dialogue and social communication with Sami people (Keskitalo, et al., 2011, 2012b). Given the history of the types of research done *on* Sami people and not *with* them, I felt it necessary to employ this Indigenous framework in an effort to not repeat past wrongs.

Important to Indigenous philosophies is that of "giving back" (Eldridge, 2008, 2014). This can include a strong commitment to not using academic practices, knowledge, and research as tools of colonization and exploitation of Indigenous people by taking their knowledge without giving something in return. For example, research should have relevance for the Indigenous people being studied (Kuokkanen, 2008). I gave back to the teachers and students by wearing my traditional regalia of a Cherokee tear dress and talking about Cherokee arts, handicrafts, traditions, history, and culture to students, teachers, and administrators. Students and faculty, particularly of the vocational school I visited, were very interested in my attire and my presentation of culture and history. Also, I developed a unit of instruction on examining stereotypes, which included learning about Sami artists and art forms and issues surrounding both non-Sami and Sami students' identities. I sent this unit to all research participants. The teachers with whom I shared the unit of instruction were grateful, but in one case a little doubtful of her ability to teach about art.

## A Combination of Microethnography and Narrative Inquiry

Ethnography usually requires substantial time in the field, and

microethnographic research is usually conducted in a small site/ community and in a short time period by use of ethnographic methods such as interviews, participation, observation, and documentation (Lai, 2012). Narrative inquiry is the study of the ways in which humans experience the world through their storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As Indigenous research is often about reclaiming native voice and presence, I wanted to incorporate Sami voices in this micro-study, which led me to a combination of narrative inquiry informed by ethnographic methods.

My Sami and Finnish language skills are non-existent, so I had to rely upon the various abilities of my Sami research participants to communicate in English. One individual was almost completely fluent, another was understandable but uncertain of her ability to communicate in English, and I primarily communicated in written English with the third participant. This meant that I had to “read” the “text” of the surroundings in some cases where I was a participant observer.

This microethnographic/narrative inquiry study began with the collection of data through participant observation that lasted a little over a week. Data collection included informal interviewing, note-taking, photographing while visiting schools and classrooms, and later use of a questionnaire. The three research participants who are the focus of this study answered the questionnaire via email after my visit to the northern region of Finland. I contacted each research participant through email for member checks. I used the constant comparative method to determine the overarching ideas presented in the data of the questionnaires, and rich, thick description to describe my time as a participant observer. The voices of the research participants are the focus of the data description. What they have to say is not only important to me as an Indigenous person, but also as a way for others to both “see” the Sami people as present in education and listen to what Sami people feel is important to say.

### **Foundational Information and History of Colonization of Sami Peoples**

The Sami people live in the circumpolar regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. *Sapmi*, the area that is the homeland of the Sami, is called Lapland in Finland (Koslin, 2010). A rough estimate of the Sami population in *Sapmi* is 75,000 to 100,000, the majority of whom live in Norway, with approximately 8,000 to 10,000 living in Finland

(Henriksen, 2008; Jonsson, Sari, & Alerby, 2012; Kuokkanen, 2003). Various formal censuses in these countries do not ask for ethnic origin, so it is difficult to state exactly how many people identify themselves as Sami (Jonsson et al., 2012). The Finnish Sami home region consists of the northern municipalities of Inari, Enontekiö, Utsjoki, and the northern part of Sodankylä (Stevenson, 2001).

The Sami define themselves as an Indigenous people, as stated in the International Labor Organization Convention 169, and are recognized as an Indigenous people in the Constitution of Finland (Keskitalo et al., 2012a). The various Sami groups have attempted to unify by instituting a Sami Parliament Council that encompasses each of the Nordic countries, creating a pan-Sami flag, and celebrating Sami People’s Day (Keskitalo et al., 2012a).

There are over one thousand years of history of trading and levying taxes on items used in trade by the Sami. Trading was one of several ways that kings and statesmen attempted to increase control over the northern territory and its people as the kingdoms surrounding the Sami competed for supremacy (Kuokkanen, 2003). Competing forces also claimed ownership of the northern land by encouraging Finnish, non-Sami settlers to move there and establish farms. Additionally, Christianization was another form of Sami colonization (Kuokkanen, 2003). In the 1400s, the earliest churches were built on coastal areas, and the Danish-Norwegian crown declared reduced fines for criminal charges against Christianized Sami. Later in the century, anyone recognized as a *noaidi* (Sami shaman, healer, and visionary) was put to death, and Sami sacred sites were destroyed (Kuokkanen, 2003).

A governmental focus on assimilating the Sami into the majority populations of Norway, Sweden, and Finland took place during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both Norway and Sweden passed laws early in the nineteenth century that prohibited the use of Sami languages in school and at home. Finland’s assimilation policies were not as explicitly stated as in Norway and Sweden. Compulsory education became nationalized, which, due to the long distances in northern Finland, led to the establishment of boarding schools (Kuokkanen, 2003). Children were sent to centralized schools, staying in boarding houses. Young students went home on weekends, and at the upper levels, only on long holidays and during the summers (Lehtola, 2010).

Boarding schools were not specifically for Sami students; they were for anyone, including Finnish students who were too far from a school

to attend regularly. The schools were run directly by the government, and the majority of teachers and supervisors were Finns from other parts of Finland (Kuokkanen, 2003). There was not a separate jurisdiction and bureaucracy used to control the Sami as there was used to control Native Americans and First Nations peoples in the United States and Canada (Kuokkanen, 2003). Also, there was no acknowledgement of the different linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the Sami students. Finnish culture and language dominated schools, and children were only taught in the Finnish language and exclusively learned Finnish cultural traditions (Keskitalo et al., 2012a).

The understanding of the Sami as distinct, Indigenous peoples was not and still is not commonly shared in the eyes of the majority public of Finland (Kuokkanen, 2003). The Sami are not considered a sovereign nation or wards of the state, as was the case with Native peoples in America and Canada. However, in spite of differences in official policies between Finland, the U.S., and Canada, the mentality in Finland was similar to other colonial settler states. It was the denigration of Indigenous cultures with a clear message of cultural inferiority. Differences in educational policies between the U.S., Canada, and Finland resulted in similar effects including low self-esteem of students, alienation from one's cultural background, and difficulty in integrating and adapting in society (Kuokkanen, 2003). Traditional knowledge that had been transmitted through centuries, such as handicrafts, was forgotten or never learned. Boarding schools affected everything from dress and behavior to spiritual values (Lehtola, 2010).

Thanks to extensive activism during the 1960s and later, a pan-Sami identity was reawakened and fostered. This was done through education in the Sami language (only in the northern municipalities of Finland), native-language public media, and a few higher education programs that taught *duodji* (traditional Sami handicrafts) and Sami languages (Koslin, 2010). Today, language use by the Sami individual or by his/her immediate ancestors is the major criteria for participation in Sami political institutions, and self-identification as Sami is relevant for participating in other community organizations (Levy, 2006). The Sami do not use blood quantum or the equivalent of tribal registration cards. Sami people are citizens of the countries in which they reside, and they participate politically and socially (Conrad, 2000).

## Damaging Stereotypes of Sami People

The Sami are stereotypically defined as reindeer herders. This stereotype continues today, despite the fact that less than 10% of all Sami throughout *Sapmi* are involved in any way with reindeer husbandry (Conrad, 2000; Lehtola, 2011). The majority of Sami people pursue a wide variety of livelihoods, from hospitality to computer sciences. However, the image of the reindeer-herding Sami living in nature is emphasized and promoted by institutions of education (Conrad, 2000), the media, and tourism, if mentioned at all.



Figure 1. A restroom sign in a mall in Rovaniemi, Finland using generic, stereotypical Sami figures. Photo: Laurie Eldridge

In previous decades, research was done *on* the Sami people, not with them or by them, and not for their benefit. The 19<sup>th</sup> century European romantic nationalists considered the “Lapps<sup>2</sup>,” as the Sami were called, to be exotic and primitive; they were a curiosity that provided the more “civilized” Europeans a glimpse of their nature-based past. World’s fairs and exhibitions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century featured “live Lapp” displays, complete with reindeer and tents (Conrad, 2000; Koslin, 2010). During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Sami were categorized as a separate and inferior race based on cranial form and measurements by pseudo-scientists who practiced scientific

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2 In the beginning, “Lapp” meant people who lived on the periphery that were not farmers and were therefore uncivilized. Despite the disparaging essence of the term “Lapp,” and the explicit wishes of the Sami people, the term “Lapp” is still widely used (Pietikäinen, 2001), however the term became derogatory and should no longer be used (Lehtola, 2010).



racism (Levy, 2006). Social Darwinists described pan-Sami as “lower” and “more primitive” than agricultural societies because of their historical focus on hunting, reindeer herding, and fishing. Researchers who studied Sami languages, history, and ethnography were called “Lappologists,” and their work displayed social Darwinist leanings (Lehtola, 2010).

## Media Representations of the Sami

Stereotypical representation of the Sami in popular media and historical documents reviewed by Pietikäinen (2003) have described them as child-like, greedy, and dirty people prone to excessive drinking. In several historical documents reviewed by Minde (2005), Sami people were also regarded as impoverished, beggarly, old fashioned, reactionary, and in many instances, heathen. In typical historical and contemporary tourist brochures, representatives of Sami culture are dressed in traditional clothing, sometimes not accurately, standing in front of huts or tents, surrounded by reindeer and the vast outdoors of the Nordic north. This portrayal conveys an image of the Sami people as historical, monolithic, and dominated by nature, similar to how other Indigenous people have been stereotyped around the world (Pietikäinen, 2003). The idea that Sami culture, attire, and language are singular, uniform, and unchanging is a strong stereotype (Lehtola, 2010).

Mainstream television and radio programs about the Sami, with the exception of nature documentaries and movies about “mythical Lapland,” are rare for Finland (Pietikäinen, 2001). A recent study of news representations of the Sami in the leading national daily newspaper showed that the issues, cultures, and ways of life of the Indigenous people of Finland were to a great extent ignored (Pietikäinen, 2001). The Sami appear so rarely in the news (Pietikäinen, 2003) and in general educational discourse that public discussion hardly exists in those areas.

## Data Description

For this study, I have focused on the experiences of three research participants. Two of the three research participants are from Inari, a very small, rural village above the Arctic Circle in the Finland Sami domicile area. It is located off the shore of Lake Inari and its

roughly 750 inhabitants make their livelihoods through a flexible combination of forestry, fishing, reindeer husbandry, and the service and tourism industry. Tourism is a significant part of the economy (Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes, 2011). Inari is central for the Finnish pan-Sami community as many Sami institutions and services are located there, including the Finnish Sami parliament, Siida (a nationally and internationally recognized Sami culture and nature museum), schools, and media. A third research participant, located in Utsjoki, the Finnish Sami domicile area near the Norwegian border, was only able to communicate with me via email.

## Decolonization: Listening to Sami Voices

**Helbme.** I initially met Helbme<sup>3</sup> in Helsinki during a lunch break at the Ministry of Education where she and a small number of other Sami teachers were working to revise the Sami component of the Finnish national curriculum. Sami language and culture is taught to Sami students in the northern regions of Finland as part of the Finnish national curriculum. Although her English was very understandable, she was reluctant to speak because she felt her English was inadequate. She did share her email address, and with a big smile invited me to visit her primary Sami language classroom in Inari. A few weeks later I stepped into the hallway outside Helbme’s classroom in what seemed to be a typical Finnish primary school in Inari. A large sign posted on her classroom door had “anarâš-luokka” (Inari language school) printed with small sticks glued onto tan paper and surrounded with zigzag designs in the colors of the Sami national flag (see Figure 2). Helbme greeted me at her door dressed in street clothes with a welcoming smile. I was dressed in my Cherokee tear dress; I would later give back to Helbme, her students, and the school for having me as their guest by giving a short presentation on Cherokee history and customs. I wanted to share my own culture as a way to build rapport and connect cultures, and this was one way of building a learning experience for all.

Helbme did not speak much to me during the time I spent observing in her classroom; she primarily spoke to her students in the Inari

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3 All names used in this study are pseudonyms. The names were selected by me and are a combination of Finnish and Sami names. Some of the research participants only shared with me their Finnish names, others shared that they had both Finnish and Sami names.

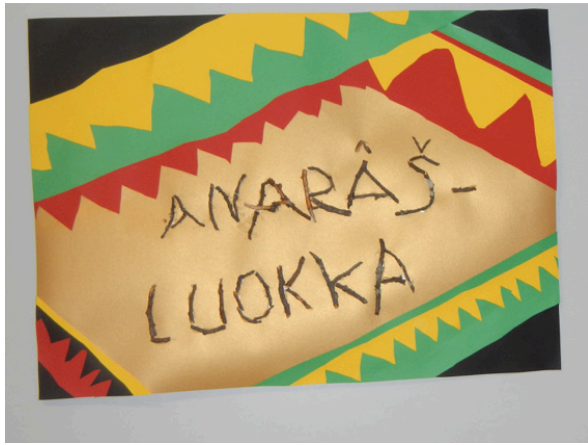


Figure 2. Sign on the door of Helbme's classroom. Photo: Laurie Eldridge

Sami language. She conversed minimally with me in English and indicated where she wanted my attention. Her classroom was filled with items such as posters, alphabets, number lines, and illustrations of the human body that either she or her students had made. I saw only a few books published in Inari Sami. Most of the supporting educational materials, such as worksheets, she had made herself.

The seven students, who ranged from kindergarteners to second graders, were working on illustrating stories they had written in the Inari language. Some were coloring and some were painting. Art materials were freely available to them on the work table. Many were in the early stages of their illustrations, but two children were far enough along that I could discern their specific ideas. One girl was creating drawings of a bear in different habitats. Another girl had drawn a traditional Sami tent with a fire. She was with her mother in traditional Sami dress, and there were dogs with them. A completed drawing on display showed foxes or wolves in their snowy habitat with stars above them.

Helbme particularly wanted me to see a poster that had been made by one of the students. Grains of rice represented the number of speakers of each of the three Sami languages spoken in the Inari village. I was impressed and also saddened that the student easily counted out the rice grains to an exact number, as this displayed the low number of fluent Inari Sami speakers. In the section of the poster for Inari speakers, one grain of rice was colored red to indicate the student who made the poster.



Figure 3. Student creating a drawing of her Sami life ways. Photo: Laurie Eldridge

Helbme then asked a second grade boy to demonstrate his ability with a back strap loom. He continued weaving a boot tie, which is a traditional Sami item used to wrap around the pant legs where they are tucked into boots to prevent the accumulation of snow. The designs woven into the bootstrap can indicate the wearer's gender, family, village and/or region. Nearby was a finished drawing in which he had estimated the length and width of the boot tie and charted out the design. He had also created a poster that illustrated the process and had pictures of completed boot ties, all labeled in Inari Sami.

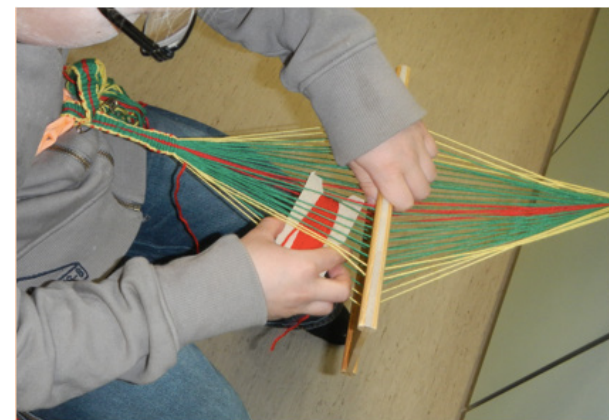


Figure 4. Student weaving on a boot tie on a back strap loom in Helbme's class. Photo: Laurie Eldridge

Helbme then pointed out a large tree branch that dangled from the ceiling of her classroom. The tree branch held boot ties made by her students as well as examples made by adults. Helbme told me that she was trying to integrate nature and art into her classes, but without making each a separate subject, as that was not the Sami way. In the Sami languages there is no actual word for art but *duodji*, a North Sami word mostly used to refer to Sami handicrafts made of traditional materials by traditional Sami methods (Pietkäinen & Kelly-Holmes, 2011; Stevenson, 2001).



Figure 5. Boot ties made by an adult and those made by students; also braided boot hay hanging from the ceiling of Helbme's classroom. Photo: Laurie Eldridge

When it was time for me to give my presentation, Helbme had the children change into their Sami clothes. I felt so honored that the parents had sent these precious items of Sami identity to school with their children. Helbme brought her Sami dress, but she did not have time to change. I felt it was an important occasion, perhaps more than I had anticipated, beyond a cultural exchange. We all made our way to the auditorium. There I gave a short presentation to the school of 110 students with the help of the English teacher interpreting into Finnish. Helbme then had her students stand up in front of the school, and she introduced them and explained their clothing in Finnish. After we made our way back to the classroom for some photos, she told me that the Finnish students, who are taught separately from the younger Sami students, were not aware of what her students were learning or why it was important. She wanted me to know that this

was definitely different from the normal school day and was perhaps an eye opening experience for the Finnish students.

*Helbme's voice.* Although Helbme was reluctant to speak in English, she did agree to complete a short open-ended questionnaire and email me her answers. It is from this exchange that I have drawn Helbme's voice, with her permission, and with only very slight changes in spelling and punctuation to make her writing more clearly readable.

Helbme was born in Inari, but her family moved to southern Finland when she was four. She attended primary school and high school there. She returned to *Sapmi* when she was twenty. Her experience in learning about Sami people in public school was "poor, hardly nothing." She thinks that "stereotypical information is born because of unconsciousness about Sami people." Helbme believes that "more and better information in school books" at all grade levels is needed, and "web-pages that offer material for every grade in school" are important. Also, having Sami people visit schools in person and including information about Sami people in teacher education are necessary to bring about change in educating the general population about Sami people; "...our history, heritage and traditions are important to know by pupils all over Finland." Additionally, Helbme believes the Sami Parliament of Finland, the representative body for people of Sami heritage in Finland, should be responsible for teaching about the Sami people in Finland through the development of webpages and educational materials; "if we don't do it ourselves, I think stereotypical thinking does not disappear" (personal communication, April, 18, 2013).

*Kata.* I met Kata on the same day at the same time that I met Helbme, which was during their lunch break at the Ministry of Education. Kata was part of the small group of Sami educators who were working on revising the Sami language component of the Finnish national curriculum. Kata was enthusiastic about my research questions, and she invited me to her Sami language classroom as well. Unfortunately, due to time, distance (her school is located in Utsjoki, near the Norwegian border), and finances, I was not able to observe her classroom. However, we did exchange emails and it was through this exchange that I interviewed her.

*Kata's voice.* Kata belongs to the generation of students who were sent to boarding school. She spent grades one through three in her village school where her teacher was from southern Finland and spoke only Finnish. During her fourth grade year, her father was



her teacher. He used Sami language to aid in instruction, which was quietly allowed by the school authorities. From the age of eleven until the end of high school, she attended a boarding school in Ivalo, which is located near Inari and is several hundred miles from her home village in Utsjoki. After receiving her bachelor's degree at the teacher's college in Oulu, she returned to Oulu University to study Sami languages.

Kata believes that in her experience, "Finns know far too little about Sami people and their history." Unlike Helbme, who attended school in the south, Kata was able to study with her Sami father in grade four. He seamlessly wove Sami experiences and values into lessons. Kata remembered an instance when her father asked his students to write stories, and he talked with the older students about living on the tundra, reindeer herding, fishing, hunting – issues that could occur in their stories. Later, several of the pupils from her father's classes became Sami writers in the 1960s to 1980s, which Kata believes shows "how important it is to have an Indigenous teacher who can show the kids the value of their own culture and language."

When she was at secondary school in Ivalo, there was little mention of Sami languages or life until policies changed and it became possible to have lessons in Sami. The lessons were only one hour a week, and all ability levels met at the same time after all the other compulsory lessons were finished. Kata explained:

But it was fun. Then we could speak Sami with the teacher. He was Inari Sami, and from Inari village. We were reading, writing stories and listening to his stories and speaking our language.... He taught us also Sami music—he had made a Sami music book—I still remember the songs we used to sing. My father had taught them, too, in primary school. (personal communication, May 24, 2013)

Kata remembers quite clearly the first time she was given political advice on how to be a Sami person and not lose her Sami identity. When it was time to leave the village school, her father discussed preserving Sami identity with her and the other students who were leaving at the same time. He explained what to say when asked about their native language:

[When] the headmaster asked us about our native tongue, we should answer her that our native tongue was Sami. If the headmaster would say that on her

form there isn't any native tongue called Sami, only Finnish and Swedish, we should say that she has to write [down] the third language and make it known, that it is our native tongue. I remember we just answered, after one another, that our native tongue was Sami. She didn't demand any explanations after that. She just wrote down our announcements. I think she and my father surely had some conversations about the situations of our language in advance. (personal communication, May 24, 2013)

When asked if she thought stereotypical information was taught about Sami people, Kata replied, "I think it may be," with the stereotype that all Sami families have reindeer. "It is not only the stereotype in school books, but it occurs most stereotypically in the tourist business." Kata believes that all students need to learn basic facts about the Sami people and understand that each Sami language is an endangered language. "If a language disappears, it is a loss for the human culture—the less languages we have, the less opportunities we have to understand ourselves, as human beings, how we think, who we are." Kata went on to explain,

I think the most important thing is to teach every pupil to see the value of human diversity. After, or besides they learn that, they can be interested in understanding the history, art and livelihoods of the Sami people. Sami languages or history should be ...subjects at school for everyone. (personal communication, May 24, 2013)

**Ante.** I met Ante while observing for two days at the Sami Education Institute in Inari, a vocational high school and college that focuses on Sami *doudji* (handiwork), language, culture, reindeer husbandry, and other vocational programs. Additionally, the Sami Education Institute offers short courses for adults in specific Sami crafts. Again, to share my culture with the students, teachers, and administrators, I gave a short presentation on Cherokee crafts and ways of life while wearing my traditional Cherokee regalia. After the presentation, the students gathered around me and asked me questions about the creation, use, and care of the various parts of my regalia. A short course in boot making was in session, so some students were particularly interested in my traditional pucker-toe moccasins. I took them off and passed them around so they could see the work more clearly.



Ante was part of this group of students, and in addition to asking questions about my moccasins, he asked how my finger woven belt was created and if the design had any meaning. After a brief discussion on the whys and hows of Cherokee finger weaving, he offered to guide us to the studio that he shares with his father where they both create *duodji*. The studio was a short drive from the Sami Education Institute, and we met him there later in the afternoon.

The workshop was small and dim, and in the front was a small showroom with a working studio behind it. Ante's father was present, but he returned to the studio section to focus on his work after a quick greeting in North Sami. Ante gracefully and fluently answered my questions in English and agreed to an email exchange to answer the questionnaire. Astounded by the quality of the craftsmanship of the various *duodji* items, I purchased a wooden cup that both Ante and his father had worked on, as well as a traditional leather pouch with silver thread embroidery.

**Ante's voice.** Ante described himself as a craftsman who lives and works in his birth village, Inari. He works alongside his North Sami father in their silver and Sami crafts workshop. His mother lives in Helsinki where Ante also lived from 1995 to 2007. Ante explained:

I was raised in a closely-knit Sami family in Inari before moving to Helsinki after finishing lower elementary school at the age of 13. In Helsinki, I was submerged in a totally different environment and my Sami roots faded into the background. In Helsinki I studied through upper elementary, gymnasium, and took computer science from Helsinki University....Now I'm working on reclaiming my father's North Sami language and cultural heritage. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

When asked what he learned in school about the Sami people, Ante replied:

As I recall from my years in upper elementary school in Helsinki, there was one 10 centimeter long paragraph in one textbook, which covered some basic things and a picture of Sami people in their traditional dress. It wasn't even one page long. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Ante believes that most stereotypical information about Sami people comes from the Finnish media and tourism industry. In his

experience, nothing was taught about the Sami in public schools. To remedy this,

Education should include at least a day about the various Sami [people] in Finland and also other countries to make sure that children understand that it [*Sapmi*] is a nation different from the Finns and their issues. It is also very important the Sami parliament be given the resources to produce the teaching material since only the Sami themselves are proficient enough in their own culture to be able to teach others about it. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Ante further believes that it is important to teach about the current issues of Sami people and how the Sami parliament is working to improve conditions for Sami people.

It is also good to teach about the [Sami] cultures in general and their history and especially the assimilation policies during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sami people need allies, and without understanding the whys and wherefores about their struggles it is difficult to side with them. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Ante also communicated poignantly about his views on what else is needed in general Finnish education:

I've witnessed a lot of racism and discrimination against not just Sami people but also against other minorities as well. So, one hugely important thing which also isn't covered in public education is discrimination and racism. I can't recall any discussion about minorities and their issues in Finland. It's like they were deliberately silenced in schools. The only mention of racism at school was at gymnasium and it was about 20<sup>th</sup> century racism in the U.S. Not that it wasn't important as well, but to completely disregard the conditions of Finland and its minorities...Finland is still lingering in the outdated ideas of nationalism and has forgotten its minorities and its own rich culture...I think it is because of this hole in public education that I have to say I feel I'm living in one of the most racist countries in Europe. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

All three research participants wanted to participate in this study as a way of increasing visibility of Sami problems within the Finnish

education system.

## Discussion

All three research participants voice the idea that there is a deep chasm in Finnish education in which Sami voices and presence have long been ignored in curricula for the general population. In addition to the lack of presence in most general education and art courses, these research participants expressed to me that the media and tourist industry promotes stereotypes of Sami people. The lack of acknowledgement of the role Sami people play in Finnish history and contemporary Finnish life is an effect of colonization in a settler-state nation. The voices of these Sami educators and artisans reveal the deep need for education that focuses on awareness-raising about Sami history, colonization, and cultures. There is a need for teaching anti-racism at all levels for all students in art education as well as other subjects.

Finland is well known for its excellent education system, however, there seems to be less focus on social justice for Sami people and other minorities. Though I did not focus on the topic of social justice in this study, it raises questions about the role of social justice in art education curricula in Finland. I encourage other researchers to study this phenomenon.

## Conclusion and Suggestions for Social Action

Other researchers have found a need for education to focus on awareness-raising and critical understanding of the legacy and effects of Sami colonization (Kuokkanen, 2005). This study supports these findings and adds additional voices of Sami people to the field. Education about the Sami people is important because of their liminal and endangered position in global society (Keskitalo et al., 2011). Proper education is important both in *Sampi* as well as globally; roughly 50% to 75% of the Sami people in Finland live outside of the Sami area, with a tenth of them in Helsinki areas (Lehtola, 2011; Mäenpää, 2013). Since the majority (75%) of under-10-year-old Sami speaking students in Finland live outside the Sami domicile area, it is imperative that Finnish university teacher education programs explicitly instruct pre-service teachers in cultural knowledge needed to teach Sami students (Keskitalo et al., 2012a).

All students across the globe need to be taught a respect and appreciation of their own and others' cultures (including the Sami) as an essential and cross-sectional feature of the curriculum with the most important goal being an increased understanding and solidarity between various groups (Keskitalo et al., 2012a). Art educators around the world need to create intercultural curricula that resist the naïve and inadvertent support of colonialism that continues to reinforce unequal power relationships (Lai, 2012). Art educators are in a unique and important position to assist with global decolonization efforts, as our curricula often focus on the arts and crafts of many cultures. By creating art lessons that include the issues that Sami people face in their lives, we as art educators can help raise awareness and help advance decolonization efforts.

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