Reindeer herding, hunting, gathering and fishing system of the *Sámi* people in the Arctic

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Sápmi and the Sámi People

- The Sámi are the only recognized Indigenous people of the European Union
- The status of the Sámi was written into the constitution of Finland in 1995: The Sámi have, as an indigenous people, the right to maintain and develop their own language, culture and traditional livelihoods
- Since 1996, the Sámi have had constitutional self-government in the Sámi Homeland in the spheres of language and culture. This self-government is managed by the Sámi Parliament
- There are about 10 000 Sámi in Finland
- The total Sámi population is estimated to be over 75,000, with the majority living in Norway
- The traditional Sámi livelihoods are fishing, gathering, handicrafts, hunting and reindeer herding and the modern ways of practising them
Nellim and Nellim Siida (Reindeer herding Unit)

- Population: approx. 160 inhabitants
- Languages spoken: Inari Sámi, Skolt Sámi and Finnish
- Nellim is one of the oldest Inari Sámi communities
- The traditional livelihoods of the village have been fishing, hunting and later reindeer herding
- Today it is a village of three cultures since the Finns settled in Nellim in the 20th century and the Skolt Sámi were relocated to Nellim after the Second World War

Picture: www.inari.fi
Community history

• The Sámi are descendants of the people who first inhabited the northern regions of Fennoscandia shortly after the end of the last ice age, approximately 10,000 years ago

• From the 16th century onwards, the Sámi society was increasingly caught up in drastic changes caused by outsiders

• The Nordic countries started to take control of the land of the Sámi by religious converting, supporting settlement and replacing the Sámi way of administration with a Nordic administrative system

• When settlement increased in the 19th century, the Nordic states launched a conscious assimilation policy. The Sámi started to lose their own language and culture.

• The large-scale reindeer herding was introduced to the Inari Sámi by the North- Sámi population in the 19th century. When the state started to regulate reindeer herding were five co-operatives formed in the region of Inari: Muddusjärvi, Paatsjoki, Paadar, Ivalo and Inarin Kyrö

• Major events and transitions over history in Nellim: electricity, legislation, urbanization, grocery store, competitive usage of land

• All the main livelihood activities have changed over time
Nellim Siida

- Sámi reindeer herders of Nellim belong to the Ivalo Reindeer herding co-operative
- Reindeer are herd in a traditional Siida way → the Nellim Siida / Unit
- Out of the traditional Sámi livelihoods, reindeer herding still functions as one of the important cornerstones of the Sámi culture by offering both language arena as well as material for, among others, clothing, other Sámi handicrafts and food culture
LOCAL CALENDAR AND GENDER ROLES

• Due to the close tie between Sámi culture and reindeer herding, many of the Sámi calendars are based on the life cycles of the reindeer. The eight seasons of this cycle are directly related to the annual behavioral patterns of the reindeer: spring-winter, spring, spring-summer, summer, autumn-summer, autumn, early winter, winter

• Month names reveal the close tie between Sámi culture and nature. The influence of reindeer herding is evident → the Sámi name for May, vyesimáánu, is derived from the Sámi word for a reindeer calf

• Both men and women practise Sámi livelihoods

• Traditional knowledge of the Sámi manifests itself in the traditional use of nature by the Sámi and in the Sámi livelihoods based on nature — as well as the Sami people’s relationship with nature

• Traditional knowledge is transmitted by means of conscious teaching, the example presented by the older generations, yoik singing and oral traditions as well as through the practices of traditional livelihoods
Food system

- Main sources of food: reindeer, fish, berries, game → NATURE
- Changes in reindeer herding and land use have changed sources of food
- Changing seasons impact: in the winter more reindeer, during the summer more fish and berries
- Differences between Inari Sámis and Skolt Sámis
- Approx. 70% of households still eats traditional way