

[Translation into English from North Sámi]

VIRTUAL NORDIC EXPERT SEMINAR: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY & PROTECTION OF SÁMI TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE 22 OCTOBER 2020

1. Current issues concerning the protection of traditional knowledge

Per-Olof Nutti, President, Sámi Parliament in Finland on Cooperation on the issue within the framework of the Sámi Parliamentary Council (SPC)

Thank you. First of all, thank you for inviting me to this seminar, I will enjoy taking part in this. And thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk here. My name is Ella Nilssa Biete Per Olof. I mention this as an example on how traditional knowledge is passed on from one generation to another. My name traces back four generations back in time. This is an issue that we debate when managing the electoral registers in Scandinavia. This example tells who I am and refers back three or four generations. Self-determination is a central topic in the work within the Sami parliaments.

In an international perspective this means that the Sami people have the right to this. The right to represent its rights and issues that are connected to this right in regional, national and international level. If denied to use traditional land and water the Sami will not be able to live according to its culture nor traditional livelihood like reindeer herding, fishing, hunting and duodji.

Self-determination in these matters, that concerns the Sami people, is to represent Sami internationally, and be a partner when indigenous people and governments meet or other institutions meet.

In the culture political action program for the Swedish Sami parliaments cultural section, the importance of cooperation is pointed out. The importance of finding ways and means to keep Sami cultural heritage strong.

As an example the traditional way of embroidery patterns in Sami handicraft. And as we heard before; the big value of "luohiti", a form of yoik. Sami design must be strengthened and developed further.

I will say something about Sami knowledge. How to define traditional Sami knowledge? The definition of cultural heritage includes material and spiritual cultural heritage, relics in the landscape, it also contains storytelling traditional luohiti and knowledge. Also religion and a philosophic system are included, and traditions and imaginations.

In order to understand what the Sami parliaments are dealing with, and in order to be able to connect questions to certain subjects, it might be good to explain the Sami way of comprehending nature when discussing environmental issues. Because the environment is crucial in all respects. In our lives and in our world, it is the environment that shows us how human beings, animals and nature are connected. In the Sami perspective they are interlinked and all is tied to this connection.

A living environment is the cornerstone and starting point for all the work in the Sami parliaments. A living environment tells that we should manage the biological diversity very cautiously, we should take the long-term perspective and sustainability into account. This reflects the Sami understanding of nature from a holistic perspective. A world where man, nature and the surrounding is understood and managed in holistically. Here it is not possible to separate nature and culture. Also Sami traditional knowledge is in the center here. You can also call it inherited knowledge.

The ultimate goal for living environment is a solid and sustainable Sami nature. We want to remain living in a vivid Samiland that has roots, sustainability and a living Sami culture. Sustainability means a rich biological diversity and a good, healthy and preserved landscape.

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The Sami understanding of nature makes it possible for us to show how to utilize land, water, biological diversity and other resources in nature can be managed. In a sustainable and strong way. With these words I thank you.