April 15, 2011

In Search of the Meaning of Games in Life: A Journey to the Arctic of Norway

John R. Kilbourne, Grand Valley State University

Available at: http://works.bepress.com/john_kilbourne/4/
In Search of the Meaning of Games in Life:

A Journey to the Arctic of Norway

John Kilbourne, Ph.D.

Throughout history the games we have played have been a testament about who we were, and are. From early Inuit bone and hunting games, to the gladiator contests of Ancient Rome, to the modern American game of baseball, the games we play have served as a statement of and a rehearsal for the life-world of that period and place. By reconnecting with and understanding the games of our past, we can build meaningful bridges between our past and present, and hopefully gain a better understanding of the meaning and importance of the modern games we play. The aforesaid are timely and important, especially as they relate to indigenous people throughout the world who are trying to preserve their traditions in our modern world. Israel Ruong (1953) called the preservation of indigenous Sámi traditions, “active adaptation.” He said, “Active adaptation means that Sámi cannot alone and without criticism adopt modern culture, casting aside their culture’s irreplaceable values, but that they hold fast to their cultural traditions in the new conditions (Ruong cited in Lehtola, 2004: p. 60).

For much of my adult life I have had a passion for trying to understand the deeper meanings of the games we play. This passion emerged during my tenure as an assistant coach (Dance Conditioning) with the 1982-84 Philadelphia Seventy-Sixers Basketball Team (1983 World Champions), and has been strengthened with my research and practice of games in the circumpolar world, first with the Inuit of the Eastern Arctic of Canada, and most recently with my sabbatical study (2011) of the early games of the Sámi in the Arctic of Norway. My experiences have been documented in my book, Running With Zoe: A Conversation on the Meaning of Play, Games, and Sport, Including a Journey to the Canadian Arctic (2009). In this paper I hope to share my experiences with the Sámi of the Arctic of Norway. Like Running With Zoe, this paper will be a progress report on my passion for trying to understand the deeper meanings of the games we play, with specific emphasis on the Sámi of the Arctic of Norway.

The paper will be divided into five sections. The first section will provide a discussion of play and games. Section two will present an overview of the Sámi of Scandinavia. Section three will share my experiences in Scandinavia (Arctic of Norway and beyond) where I spoke with local Sámi on and about their traditional games, experienced Sámi Week (Reindeer Racing, Lassoing, Sámi Market, & Sámi National Day/February 6, 2011), visited museums in Tromso, Trysil, and Oslo, Norway, and also in Copenhagen, Denmark, visited Sámi schools, and met with faculty from the University of Tromso, Norway and Hedmark University College in Elverum, Norway who also have an interest in the games of the Sámi. Section four of the paper will offer, based on my research and experiences, a reflective comparison between the games of the Inuit of the Eastern Arctic of Canada, and the Sámi of Northern, Norway. And, section five will offer my reflections on the importance of Sámi games. Hopefully by acknowledging this importance we can pursue a path forward, together reconnecting with the traditional games of the Sámi with the
hope of building meaningful bridges between the Sámi’s past and present and moreover, helping us all to enhance our understanding of the important role games play in shaping a society.

**Section One: Discussion of Play and Games**

The meaning and importance of play and games has been well documented. In his book *Emile*, Jean Jacques Roussseu wrote in the 18th Century about the importance of play for children.

Roussesu began with the idea that children should be outdoors and active. In so doing, the child would develop his senses through his experiences. The senses would then provide the background against which ideas took shape. By moving and touching everything, seeing, and hearing, tasting and smelling, the child would begin to associate the objects of the external world with the five senses. “It is only by movement that we learn that there are things which are not us.” Emotions follow, along with the concepts of extension and motion (Mechikoff, 2010: p. 160).

Later the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky put forward that play was,

… a critical part of childhood, allowing a child, as he said in one oft-repeated quote, to stand ‘a head taller than himself.’ His (Vygotsky’s) biggest theoretical contribution may have been the Zone of Proximal Development: the idea that children are capable of a range of achievement during each stage of their lives. In the right environment, and with the right guidance (which he later dubbed “scaffolding”), children can perform at the top of that range (Bartlett, 2011: p. B6).

Following Vygotsky, Johan Huizinga (1950) described the characteristics of play in his noteworthy book, *Homo Ludens*.

Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious,” but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means (Huizinga: p. 13).

Adding to the work of the previously cited play theorists was Roger Caillois (1961) who, in *Man, Play and Games*, describes the following six characteristics of play:

1. Free: in which play is not obligatory; if it were, it would at once lose its attractive and joyous quality as diversion;

2. Separate: circumscribed within limits of space and time, defined and fixed in advance;
3. Uncertain: the course of which cannot be determined nor the result attained beforehand, and some latitude for innovations being left to the player’s initiative;

4. Unproductive: creating neither goods, nor wealth, nor new elements of any kind; and, except for the exchange of property among the players, ending in a situation identical to that prevailing at the beginning of the game.

5. Governed by rules: under conventions that suspend ordinary laws, and for the moment establish new legislation, which alone counts;

6. Make believe: accompanied by a special awareness of a second reality or of a free unreality, as against real life (Caillois: p. 128).

And, just a short time ago, Dr. Stuart Brown (2009) who has chronicled more than six thousand patient play histories affirmed the aforesaid in his book, *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul.* He put forth the following seven “Properties of Play:

1. Apparently purposeless (done for its own sake)

2. Voluntary

3. Inherent attraction

4. Freedom from time

5. Diminished consciousness of self

6. Improvisational potential

7. Continuation desire (Brown: p. 16).


The Wonders of Play

**One** - Play involves movement of the bodily being,

**Two** – Play is a voluntary, free activity,

**Three** - Play involves risk,

**Four** - Play involves imitation of other human beings and the environment,
Five - Play involves pretending (make believe),
Six - Play involves bonding between other human beings and the environment,
Seven - Play involves alternation and change,
Eight - The product of play is only play (play is not done for profit or material gain),
Nine - Play involves a solution or resolution.

Ten - Play is a very serious activity (Kilbourne: p. 36-37).

Games

Games are an extension of the wonders of play. As put forward by Ager (1987) games are, “a play activity which has explicit rules, specified or understood goals…, the element of opposition or contest, recognizable boundaries in time and sometimes in space, and a sequence of actions which is essentially “repeatable” every time the game is played (Ager: p. 47).”

Simply stated, to get from play to games you add two elements to the Ten Wonders. These elements are competition and rules. Games are any form of playful, rule bound, competition.

Roger Caillois extended his conversation on and about play to games. Caillois (1961) says that games are an extension of play and that games can be classified into four areas. The first area he describes is competition (agon – Greek for contest or conflict) where the point of the game is for each player to have his or her excellence in a given area recognized. In games there is a struggle for superiority or success. The second area is chance (alea – Latin for game of dice). In games there are elements of chance, such as the lottery, roulette, or dice. The third area is what Caillois calls simulation (mimicry – Greek for mime or imitate). In games, players often create an imaginary world (pretending), imitating others and the environment. And, the fourth area that Caillois puts forward is what he calls vertigo (ilinx – Greek for whirlpool), where our games create feelings of pleasure and intoxication (Caillois: p. 129-140). Taken together, the aforesaid four areas are what over time, draw us towards the games we play.

As Caillois suggests, competition is our struggle for supremacy. Human beings struggle to be supreme over obstacles seen and unseen, small and large. This struggle begins with our first breath and ends when we can struggle no longer.

Competition is a construct that can often be looked upon with disdain. In America this scorn is too often fueled by the supremacy at all costs, or King of the hill mentality that seems to dominate much of our modern games. This brand of relentless and distasteful competition can be driven by greed, selfishness, and a lack of any meaningful understanding of games.
The very act of women and men struggling for intimacy with another human being is a struggle for supremacy; as Caillois suggests to have our excellence recognized. The challenge that women and men have in providing food and shelter for themselves and their offspring is also a struggle for supremacy. And, newborn babies striving to keep their mother's nipple in their mouth is a struggle to be supreme. Games, or our playful struggle to be supreme, are exercises in what it means to be alive, to be pushing forward. Competition is, and always will be, an integral part of our existence.

Games are also bound by a prescribed guide for conduct or action, i.e., rules. Competing individuals or teams agree to the guidelines that will govern their conduct or action. The established guidelines govern space, time, and energy. Examples of rules governing space would be the agreed upon dimensions of a game board, size of ball, or weight of bat. Examples of rules governing time would be the length of game periods, the length of a program (figure skating and gymnastics), or the time allotted for a move in a game of chess or a serve in tennis match. And, examples of rules governing energy would be the amount of force a player can exert when they check a player in ice hockey, or bump a player in soccer. In games, individuals or groups enter the struggle for playful supremacy voluntarily and by doing so, they agree to play according to the prescribed rules.

Games can take many forms. They can be played between individuals, between teams of individuals, between individuals or teams and animate objects (animals), between individuals or teams and inanimate objects (not alive, i.e., sticks, balls, gloves, etc.), and between individuals or teams trying to set ideal standards or records. These five forms can occur separately or in a combination of two or more.

An example of a game between individuals would be chess where you have one human being struggling to be supreme over another human being. A game between teams of individuals would be women's field hockey where you have one team of human beings struggling against another team of human beings. An example of a game between individuals or teams and an animate object would be dressage in which you have an individual or a team struggling to be supreme over a horse or horses. A game between an individual or teams and an inanimate object would be golf. In golf an individual or team struggles to be supreme over the inanimate clubs and the inanimate balls. Finally, an example of a game where individuals or teams are trying to set ideal standards or records would be track and field. In track and field individuals and teams struggle for faster times, longer distances, and increased heights.

As was mentioned earlier, the five game forms can occur individually or in a combination of two or more. One example of a game that satisfies all five forms is Sámi reindeer racing. In reindeer racing you have a playful struggle for supremacy between:

1. **Individuals** - The individual racers struggle against one another,

2. **Teams** – Town and club organizations, etc. of racers struggle against each other,

3. **Individuals or Teams and Animate Objects** - Individuals and teams struggle against the reindeer/s,

4. **Individuals or Teams and Inanimate Objects** - Individuals or teams struggle against the inanimate harnesses, ropes, and skis, and
5. Individuals or Teams Trying to Set Ideal Standards or Records - Individuals or teams try to set personal or race records.

Section Two: The Sámi – One People in Four Countries

According to Robinson (2002), “Sámi is the name the people of Sápmi (Sami territory) call themselves. For a long time, non-Sámi people called the Sámi Lapps or Laplanders. This name comes from Norwegian word lapp, which means “a patch of cloth.” (Robinson: p. 5).” Robinson goes onto say that,

The Sámi are split into several groups, according to where they live. The Sea Sámi live by the sea and make their living by fishing. The Eastern or Skolt, Sámi live along Finland’s border with Russia. The Kola Sámi live on the Kola Peninsula in Russia. Other groups are the Mountain Sámi, Forest Sámi, Lake Sámi, River Sámi, and South Sámi (Robinson: p. 5).

The following three sections are from John Solbakk’s, The Sámi People – a Handbook (2006). The eighteen page handbook provides an excellent introduction to the Sámi and Sápmi.

The Sámi are the indigenous people of Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. The Sámi are one people residing across the national borders of these four countries. They have their own traditional areas, with a distinct language, culture, livelihood and history.

“Sápmi” is the name of the traditional homeland of the Sámi. The term is found in all Sámi dialects. It derives from the Sámis’ own name for themselves, Sámít or sapmelaccat. In the past, they were identified by various derogative terms: “lapper” (Lapps) or “finner” (Finns) in Norway, in Sweden “lappar” (Lapps), and “lappalaiset” (Lapps) in Finland. Today, the name Sámi, or Saami, has been incorporated into the English language, including in reference books, and within the global indigenous people’s movement in which Sámis are active participants.

There are source materials documenting that Sámis have lived in those regions in Scandinavia and on the Kola Peninsula where permanent Sámi settlements exist even today. In the interior of Finnmark County in Norway and Utsjoki Municipality in Finland, the Sámis are in the majority. It is estimated that the number of Sámis is between 60,000 and 70,000: approximately 40,000 in Norway; 20,000 in Sweden, 7,500 in Finland and 2,000 in Russia. (From about the sixteenth century, Sámi have inhabited nearly all the areas of the Nordic countries where they now have permanent settlements, Helander, 1989: p. 1).

The definition of the term “Sámi” in the Norwegian Sámi Act of 1987 is based on a combination of linguistic and subjective criteria. Section 2-6 of the Sámi Act stipulates the following criteria for the right to be included in the Sámi census: “Everyone who declares that they consider themselves to be Sámi, and who either has Sámi as his or her home language, or has or has had a parent, grandparent or great-grandparent with Sámi as his or her home language, or who is a child of someone who is or has been registered in
the Sámi census, has the right to be enrolled in the Sámi census in the municipality of residence.” The main application of this definition is limited to the identification of individuals who are eligible to vote or to be elected to the Sámi Parliament. Sámi individuals from Finland, Russia and Sweden who have resided in Norway for a minimum of three years are entitled to be registered in the Sámi census in Norway, subject to their fulfillment of the criteria as stipulated in section 2-6 of the Sámi Act (Solbakk).

The Sámi Language

The Sámi language belongs to the Finno-Ugrian branch of the Uralic languages, and is linguistically related to the Baltic-Finnic languages (Finnish, Estonian and Hungarian). The Sámi language and traditional homeland stretches across the northern parts of Finland, Norway and Sweden, as well as the Kola Peninsula in Russia. In Scandinavia, it stretches as far south as Fermunden on the Norwegian side and to Dalarnen in Sweden.

Northern Sámi is the largest Sámi dialect and is spoken by Sámis in Finland, Norway and Sweden. In 1979, a common written language for the Northern Sámi branch of the Sámi language was adopted. The orthography is close to the spoken language.

The Sámi language is rich in words and expressions describing nature, fauna, formations in nature and snow; terms that are important in hunting, fishing and reindeer herding societies. The changes in the Sámi lifestyle have resulted in loss of many particular terms and expressions which are no longer relevant or in use today (Solbakk, 2006).

Reindeer Husbandry – An Exclusive Sámi Livelihood in Norway

Reindeer husbandry is a traditional Sámi livelihood. In Norway, it is legally protected as an exclusive Sámi livelihood. This means that within the reindeer grazing areas, the right to herd reindeer is a statutory, exclusive right for persons of Sámi descent with the required linkage to a reindeer herding family. Approximately 2,800 people are engaged in reindeer husbandry in Norway.

The reindeer grazing districts in Norway stretch from the border with Russia in the northeast to Femunden in the southeast. The country is divided into six reindeer herding regions, which in turn are divided into 82 districts.

The Sámi reindeer herding communities move their semi-domesticated herds between coast and inland, and in some cases, across the national borders between Norway and Sweden. The reindeer communities are organized in “sidas,” which are working partnerships where several families move together between seasonal grazing lands. Today, the nomadic lifestyle has been replaced by a modernized, semi-nomadic lifestyle. However, the reindeer herds are still moved between different seasonal grazing lands.

Today, reindeer husbandry is a modernized livelihood with a large degree of mechanization and use of technological innovations. However, in their daily operations,
reindeer herders still depend on the traditional knowledge transmitted from earlier generations, such as the interaction between nature and the use of grazing areas under changing climate conditions.

Reindeer meat makes up only a small part of the total meat market in Norway. Reindeer meat is an ecologically sound product, and valued as such. However, Sámi reindeer husbandry is not only about providing meat for family consumption and sale, but also a manifestation of an important part of Sámi culture. It is a very specific way of life which goes far beyond being just an occupation or income-providing activity, and is an important material foundation for the Sámi culture (Solbakk, 2006).

See also, *The Sami of Norway* (1989) by E. Helander.

**Sámi and Religion**

It is difficult to trace the history of the Sámi religious culture as it underwent significant changes with the Christian missionizing that took place in the 1600s and 1700s. Prior to the influence of Christianity the world-view of the Sámi reflected,

…their adaptation to the northern environment and the way of living there. The mythology of that society closely bound to nature depicts ideas linked to wild reindeer, bears, and other animals. The cosmos of this people, who practiced a lifestyle of migration, followed cycles symbolizing the cycle of the year and cycle of life (Lehtola, 2004: p. 28).

Lehtola (2004) goes on to say that,

Sámi religious belief reflected this close link with nature. According to the traditional Sámi beliefs, the world was inhabited by spirits. Human beings could only successfully make their living by cooperating with the natural forces. It was essential not to damage nature, as that would interfere with the higher spirits. The religious practices were cyclical, respecting the pattern of seasonal migration and the cycle of nature.

Many Sámi believe that the balance between people and Nature can be restored only by respecting the knowledge gleaned by Sámi living close to nature through the ages (Lehtola: p. 88).

Moreover, Lehtola (2004) adds,

In the old culture, human relationships with the two realms of reality, the physical world (“this side”) and the spiritual world (“the other side”), were bridged by the activities of special men and women – noaidi. Just as the world was divided into the seen and the unseen, the tangible and the intangible, so human beings were composed of two parts: the body soul and the free soul.
In a non-active state – in dream, trance or coma – a free soul may leave the body and take on another form outside of the person. The *noaidi* had the skill to reach this state at will. It is described in different ways. The *noaidi* in a trance leaves the body and moves as a spirit or breath of wind. They have the ability to change into a wild reindeer or hide under the reindeer’s neck or hoof; they can fly over the treetops or travel under the ground; they may swim in the shape of a fish; and the Sea Sámi recount that they may even move mountains (Lehtola: p. 28).

Shamanism was an integral and essential part of the traditional Sámi culture. The *noaidi* attempted to find remedies to crisis; including illness, weather, controlling the reindeer, and providing food. Under the strict Christian missionizing of the 1600s and 1700s, the great shamans (*noaidi*) disappeared. Some shamans were even killed as part of the Christian missionizing movement (Robinson, 2002: p. 17). The *noaidi*’s most important instrument, the *noaidi* drum, which was used to enter states of ecstasy as well as provide a map to the “other” realms were confiscated or destroyed. According to Roald Kristiansen (2011), professor of Religious Studies at the University of Tromso, there are only seventy-two original *noaidi* drums that have survived (R. Kristiansen, personal communication, February 3, 2011). Four of the original drums are part of the Sámi exhibition at the National Museum in Copenhagen, Denmark. One is on display at the Sámi exhibition at the Folk Museum in Oslo, Norway (both museums were visited as part of the sabbatical study). (The Christian missionizing movement will be discussed again in the next section of the essay).
Noaidi Drum – National Museum – Copenhagen, Denmark – Photograph J. Kilbourne
Section Three: A Journey to the Arctic of Norway – Games of the Sámi

Unlike my earlier and ongoing research of Inuit games, uncovering information about Sámi games was more challenging. When one attempts to review the literature of Sámi games you find few resources. During my extensive literature review including closely reading many principal books on and about the Sámi, for example Johan Turi’s (1910), *Turi’s Book of Lapland*, I found no mention of Sámi play or game activities. Also, in reviewing articles from *Baiki: The International Sami Journal*, I found only one article that spoke to Sámi games, i.e. “The Olympics Sámi Pictograph Sport Logos (Winter 1992-93)” (see p. 21). On the other hand, if you simply Google Inuit games, you will come to numerous resources including books, web sites, and videos, that describe, teach/instruct, and discuss the traditional games of the Inuit (see appendix). Moreover, both the National Museum in Copenhagen, Denmark (visited during sabbatical study), and the Northern House Museum in Vancouver (visited while attending the 2010 Vancouver Olympics), have/had extensive collections on and about Inuit games; including early cup and ball games made from bone, children’s dolls, small bows and arrows, and miniature dog teams and qamutiks (sleds). During my research and travels I have not yet discovered similar exhibitions on or about Sámi games.

Toys – After a successful hunt the adults would celebrate the event with fun and games, contests, singing, and dancing. The children pretended to be grown-ups: The boys played with miniature hunting tackle, the girls with dolls and household items.

Inuit Children’s Toys - National Museum – Copenhagen, Denmark

Photograph – J. Kilbourne
My journey to the Arctic of Norway was very important in terms of trying to uncover information about Sámi games. Through conversations with many Sámi, visiting Sámi and Ski museum exhibitions, visiting Sámi schools, witnessing the Sámi Week Festival in Tromso, Norway, and meeting with college and university faculty who share similar interests, I was able to begin to learn more about, and understand the games of the Sámi. As I shared earlier, this discovery can be important especially as it relates to modern day Sámi who are trying to preserve their traditions in our modern world.

During my journey and review of literature, I uncovered two possible reasons for the aforesaid lack of information about Sámi games. First, was the previously mentioned Christian missionizing that took place in the 1600s and 1700s that attempted to squeeze out of the Sámi any of their past beliefs or practices. According to Lehtola (2004),

The intent of the Christian priests seems to have been the complete destruction of the old world-view, not just the shamanic practices. Besides the traditions firmly linked to shamanism, the church judged many other unfamiliar customs to be heathen, such as the secular yoik (song) tradition (Lehtola: p. 28).

Especially dominant on the influence of Christianity with the Sámi in the 1800s was the Laestadian faith, usually thought to be the result of one man, Lars Levi Laestadius, a third generation Lutheran minister in Sápmi. In his doctoral thesis, Nilla Outakoski explains one reason that the Laestadian movement spread like “wild fire” amongst the Sámi. He says,
It was because of the existence of the *cuorvvut* movement, originated in the 1700s in Guovdageaidnu, which had become central among Reindeer Sámi. The *cuorvvut* movement was similar to the later Laestadian movement; it had the characteristics of severe fundamental preaching and states of ecstasy. Its name “shouters” or “callers” came from traveling preachers, who loudly preached hellfire and damnation and admonished people to repent (Outakoski cited in Lehtola, 2004: p. 38).

The Christian missionizing of the Sámi was also closely linked to political interests. Again Lehtola (2004) says, “The sovereignty over the northern regions was unclear; Sweden from the beginning saw missionizing as a mark of her claim to rights of possession and taxation (Lehtola: p. 30).

The second possible reason for there being only limited information about Sámi games was the policy and process of Norweginization of the Sámi. Bjorklund, Brantenberg, Eidheim, Kalstad, and Storm (2000) in, *Sápmi: Becoming a Nation* write about this policy of assimilation.

For more than 100 years, Norwegian authorities had worked to make the Sámi and Kvens (people of Finnish extraction) as Norwegian as possible. Schools in Sámi and Kven areas would thus conduct all their teaching in Norwegian only. Such regulations were part of what is called the policy of Norwegianization (Bjorklund, et al: p. 9).

They go on to say that,

The children went through school learning nothing whatsoever about their own culture and heritage. Many teachers, for their part, could spend years in coastal Sámi areas without learning anything about their children’s ethnic background. The result was that the school reaffirmed and reinforced the process of Norwegianization which had already been under way for a century. In post-war Norway, there were no longer to be any differences between people. The old class society belonged to a bygone age, and Sámi culture was a thing of the past (Bjorklund, et al: p. 11).

Gaski (1996) adds,

It was not enough that the Sámi had to relinquish rights to their own land, they were supposed to renounce their own language and culture as well. Assimilation meant that the Sámi should be remolded into Norwegians, Swedes, or Finns. Use of the Sámi language was not to be encouraged in any way, its use was forbidden in all but a few isolated situations. Hence, to be a Sámi entailed no advantages, only problems. For example, there existed for some time a legal provision which stated that no one could purchase land in Finnmark, the country with the largest Sámi population, unless he could speak Norwegian. Furthermore, teachers in the Sámi regions of the country were granted wage increases in proportion to the number of Sámi school children they had managed to get to stop speaking the Sámi language (Gaski: p. 10-11).
Bjorklund, et al. say that as a result of the policy and process of Norwegianization, Sámi were embarrassed to claim their Sáminess. He says, “many Sámi thus learned to despise their own background – their ethnic identity simply became no more than a social stigma. Sáminess seemed inferior, poor, and almost morally reprehensible (Bjorklund, et al: p. 16).”

When I shared my concerns about the limited documentation or research on Sámi games with the Sámi I met during my journey to the Arctic of Norway, the two aforementioned reasons were often mentioned. The modern Sámi I spoke with were keenly aware of the impact and influence Christianity and the policy of Norwegianization had on their culture.

As I proceeded on my journey in the Arctic of Norway, I did however begin to discover several resources that helped me know more about, and understand the games of the Sámi. My intuition told me that there were resources, as it is nearly impossible to deny folks, especially young children, opportunities for play and games.

One extremely important resource I discovered was the book, *The History of Lapland*, written by Johannes Scheffer, Professor of Law and Rhetorick at Upfal, Sweden, published in 1674. Professor Scheffer actually included a chapter in *The History of Lapland* titled, “Of the Sports and Peftimes of Laplanders (Chapter XXIV).” In this chapter Professor Scheffer shares several games that were popular with early Sámi. He says,

> Besides the Vifits they have alfo fome Sports, efpecially in the VVinter time, when they don’t live far a funder as in the Summer, but have severall occasions to meet at their Fairs and Affizes. Some of the sports are peculiar to the Men and others intended to the Division of both Sexes. One of the Sports belonging only to the Men and young Fellowis is this. They make Line in the Snow, behind which at fome Pa es dsjl a they fet up a mark, from whence they run to the Line so leap as far poffibly they can, he who leaps fartheft in one leap is the Conqueror. In this firft Sport they both run and leap. Another Sport they have where they try their skill in Leaping only, and that not in length but in height. Two young Men hold a Rope or Stick being at fome distance from one another, fometimes higher, fometimes lower, fometimes to a Man’s built according as the matter is agreed betwixt them. The Combatnats endeavour to leap over this Rope or Stick and he who does it best carries the Ball. Ladius obferves that the Laplanders are very active, well developed for Leaping (Scheffer: 280).

He goes on to say that the early *Laplanders* (Sámi) also played with leather balls stuffed with hay. He describes one ball game that was popular with men and women, boys and girls.

> They (the players) make two lines in the frozen snow at fome distance from one another. The company of Men and Women then prefent fort themselves into two Dvifions, one of which undertake the defence of this, the other of that Line. Then they meet in the middle betwixt the two Lines, each Party endeavoring to ftrike the Ball with Sticks (for they muft not touch it with their Hands) over one another’s Line. That side which ftrikes the Ball over the other’s Line is accounted the conquering side (Scheffer: 281).
Scheffer added that the *Laplanders* (Sámi) also, “fometimes take proof of the Strength by taking hold of one another’s Hands, and strive who can bend back the other’s arm (Scheffer: 281).” He also describes card games and dice games that provided a “Diverfion” for the Sámi. With regards to prizes for these early games he adds, “The Prizes are feldom Money, but commonly Skins, especially Squirrel Skins (Scheffer: p. 280).”

I was overjoyed when I discovered this important, early source of information regarding Sámi games. Of particular interest, is to note that it was written before the nationalization of the Sámi. The information from the book provides primary source affirmation on and about the presence and practice of games for early Sámi; men and women, boys and girls. Again Scheffer says, “The Sport is used both by Men and Women, Boys and Girls, the Women being commonly as nimble at it as the Men (Scheffer: p. 281).”

I also uncovered information about early Sámi board games in relation to hunting and warfare. Michaelsen (2010) writes,

> The earliest short notes about Sámi hunt games derive likewise from the 18th century. These games were still played in the early 20th century, but it seems that nobody recorded their rules. In the 18th century the Sámit in Finnmark, northern Norway, used a cross-shaped board, one fox and 13 geese for their game (Leem), while the Lule Sámit in Sweden in the early 20th century used game boards with 5x5 or 9x5 points for their ‘ravablo’ or ‘vargtablo’ (game board), played with one fox or two wolves against people or reindeer (Michaelsen: p. 218).

Michaelsen goes onto describe an early Sámi board game about warfare that was mentioned by Lindholm (1884) in his book on Sámi legends, folklore, and traditions. This game included jump and capture. He says,

> It is mentioned, “it may happen that a few men sit down and play a sort of chess, where the pieces are called Russians and Swedes, and try to defeat each other. Here intense battles are fought, which easily can be observed on the players, who sometimes are so absorbed that they cannot see or hear anything else (Lindholm cited in Michaelsen: p. 218).”

Another very important resource came my way simply by chance (alea), one of Caillos’ characteristics of games. On the bus ride from the airport in Tromso, Norway to where I was staying I met a woman (Elder) who had a suspicion I was not from the Tromso area. She asked where I was going. I replied that I was looking for the home of my host family. She knew my host family, directed me towards their home, and told me to send her greetings. Later that night my host family shared with me that this woman was the wife of one of the leading Sámi elders in all of Sápmi. As teachers and professors of Sámi language and teacher training, this couple had dedicated their lives to educating others about the Sámi. Just three days later I was invited to their home to engage in conversation about my interest in Sámi games. Joining us in the conversation was their daughter, and one of my hosts.
There is something very magical about chance and intuition in the Arctic world. I experienced the same magic and chance when I lived in the Arctic of Canada in 2001. As the daughter shared,

It's funny how things work out when you snooze around, going by hunches and apply intuition on academic stuff, I have found it both highly fruitful and totally bewildering (or what to say) - guess the problem really is TIME, since academic life comes with deadlines and intuitive knowledge doesn't, they aren't necessarily compatible on a productive scale. Anyhow I'm happy for you as you seem to be on a good search - enjoy it (K. Jernsletten, personal communication, March 1, 2011).

My meeting with this family served as a terrific, jumping off/into my exploration. They were so helpful in ways that are hard to explain. Three important resources they shared were the books Suga Suga Su (1989) by Elisabeth Utsi Gaup, My Picture Dictionary (1997) by the Sámi Education Council, illustrated by Liisa Helander, and Vulgot stoahkat! (Let’s Play!) (1998) by Haldis Balto. All three books share pictures and descriptions of Sámi play and games. The resources, combined with their personal stories and suggestions for visits to local Sámi classrooms, were significant in my journey to uncover information about Sámi games.

Like my ongoing research of traditional Inuit games, I discovered that Sámi games are intimately connected to nature and the environment in which the Sámi live. Sámi games often serve as a rehearsal (practice) for the knowledge, and social and physical skills one needs to survive on the land, whether it be in the forest or near the sea. I uncovered information about many Sámi games including, miniature (play) farm communities for the management of reindeer and other animals, assorted rope games, throwing games, batting games, team building games, skiing, reindeer racing, and lassoing.

I learned about games where Sámi children would create pretend, miniature farm communities consisting of reindeer and other animals. One Sámi woman I spoke with shared that the Sea Sámi would actually use sea shells to create the different farm animals, whereas the Reindeer Sámi would use small twigs and sticks to create similar animals (Personal communication, February 8, 2011).

Learning to lasso for the Sámi was especially important as mastery of this skill was critical in the herding and management of reindeer. In 1910 Johan Turi wrote in his influential book, Turi’s Book of Lapland, “The lasso is the Lapps’ best implement, but the implement is no good unless you know how to use it (Turi: p. 74). In his book Turi also shares illustrations of Sámi using the lasso. For example, picture IV shows,

In the left hand top corner a dog is holding the herd together. Round the herd runs a Lapp gathering up his lasso for a new cast, and in front of him another Lapp has thrown his lasso round the horns of a reindeer cow, which is going to be milked; at this season the Lapps milk continually (Turi: p. 261).
Evidence shows that children at very young ages played lassoing games. Today, lassoing is highlighted in many Sámi festivals, including Sámi Week in Tromso, Norway. Young and old, men and women, all compete using plastic ropes to lasso (capture) mounted reindeer antlers. One Sámi I spoke with shared that many of the throwing games he played when he was a young boy were actually a rehearsal for lassoing as the actual upper body and arm action used, were the same as those used in lassoing (N. Labba, personal communication February 9, 2011).
Miniature Reindeer Farm and Lassoing from Vulgot stoahkat!

Photograph – J. Kilbourne
Traditional Sámi games also included snow skiing. The earliest people to ski may have actually been the distant ancestors of the modern day Sámi. An early primitive rock carving from Rodoy, Norway (2500 BC) shows an early skier on a hunt (Google Images, 2011).
Early Sámi used skiing as a practical means of transportation, and to hunt. Like other traditional games of the Sámi, learning to ski was an important skill that was necessary for survival on the land. Early evidence of the Sámi skiing for sport comes from Olaus Magnus (1555) in his book *Historia*. He writes,

> Two sorts of men are found in these places that run Races for Wagers most swiftly. The first is the *Wild* or *Laplander* because upon crooked Stilts of long Stakes fastened to the soles of his feet, he transports himself upon the snow in Dales and Mountains, in a dangerous way, by a winding and arbitrary motion, and he doth it with a most perfect Art, whether he be to encounter with adverse accidents, or he doth if for sport in Hunting…or whether he undertakes this for a prize or a glory (Magnus cited in Allen, 2007: p. 28).

Later Turi (1910) wrote, “…all that concerns skiing and running comes natural to them (Sámi) He adds, “Lapps are famed for their ski-running (Turi: p. 66 and p. 265).” Today skiing, according to one Sea Sámi I met, is not as important as it was long ago as snow machines, four-wheelers, and motorcycles have replaced the need to travel on snow skis (R. Kvernmo, personal communication, February 3, 2011).
According to Robinson (2002), “They (Sámi) found that skiing was the best way to travel across snow. When Sámi started to herd reindeer, they discovered an even faster way to travel on snow. Wearing their skis, they used reindeer or dogs to pull them across the snow. This method is called Skijoring (Skikjoring in Norwegian). In modern times, skijoring races are popular throughout Sápmi (Robinson: p. 44).”
Reindeer racing is another important game of the Sámi. When I asked one reindeer racer who was participating in the Sami Week Festival in Tromso, Norway how he learned to race he replied, that young Sámi wanted to race reindeer. He said that from very early times it was important to show skills with reindeer, especially to have the fastest reindeer (Reindeer racer, personal communication, February 5, 2011).

One very informative resource on play and games of the Sámi is the children’s book, *My Picture Dictionary* (1997), by the Sámi Education Council, illustrated by Liisa Helander. The many illustrations in the book clearly identify many children’s play and game activities, including skiing, reindeer racing, soft and hard handicrafts (Sámi Duodji), summer play, play by the sea, and fishing.

![Image of children playing in the snow](image)

Photograph – J. Kilbourne

Fishing was another important skill for Sámi to learn. “For a very long time, the Sámis fished and had fishing rights in the rivers in Finnmark, and the Sámi settlements (”siida”) organized the fishing in the large rivers. There was collective fishing with the use of several types of fishing tackle (Solbakk, J., 2006).” A Sea Sámi I met during my travels told me that one of his earliest memories was of fishing. He said that when he was young, fishing was their way of life (R. Kvernmo, Personal communication, February 3, 2011).

While discussing Sámi games, it is also important to briefly mention Sámi arts. This is significant because at the root of both games and art are the wonders of play. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Sámi expressed an awakening of sorts. This renaissance was especially evident in the arts (visual, media, literature, theater and music), and handicrafts (duodji) of the Sámi. Bjorklund, et al. (2000) speak about this awakening. They say,
A new awareness was expressed in art especially. Young Sámi wanted to reclaim what they had lost. Old cultural expressions such as place names and the “gakti” (Sámi National Costume) were rediscovered, and new cultural traits invented. This was a political and cultural renaissance without precedent in Sámi history (Bjorklund, et al: p. 28).

From this period emerged a resurgence in Sámi crafts (duodji). Again Bjorklund, et al. say, “Courses were started by the Sámi Duodji foundation and “duodji” became an important means of spreading Sámi esthetics and design. Sales outlets and product development units were set up, and “duodji” came to be a source of income for many people (Bjorklund, er al: p. 30).

**Section Four: Reflections on the Games of the Sámi and the Inuit**

As I reflect on the games of the Sámi of Northern Norway and the Inuit of the Eastern Arctic of Canada, several thoughts emerge. First, as was previously mentioned, there seems to be only limited information on or about Sámi games compared to the many resources that are available on and about Inuit games. Like the Sámi, the Inuit also endured strict Christian missionizing, and a program of Canadaization by the Canadian government, i.e., residential schools.

Other thoughts that emerge are how Sámi games and Inuit games are so closely linked to the life-world of the environment in which they lived. For example snowshoes were popular with the Inuit, while snow skis were popular with the Sámi. According to Allen (2007), “The Caribou Eskimos, in northern Canada, for example, use a narrow snowshoe like board (Allen: p.10).” One possible reason for the difference is that the climate of the Arctic of Canada and that of the Arctic of Norway are quite different. The Canadian Arctic is above the tree line and therefore the Inuit did not have access to wood to build snow skis. The gulfstream, which passes through the Arctic of Norway, creates a more mild climate where trees are abundant and wood for skis would be easy to find.

Other environmental differences include the Inuit and caribou, and the Sámi and reindeer.

Reindeer and Caribou look different, but they probably are the same species. Caribou are large, wild, elk-like animals which can be found above the tree-line in arctic North America and Greenland. Because they can live on lichens in the winter they are well adapted for the harsh arctic tundra where they migrate great distances each year.

Reindeer are slightly smaller and were domesticated in northern Eurasia about 2000 years ago. Today, they are herded by many Arctic peoples in Europe and Asia including the Sámi in Scandinavia and the Nenets, Chukchi and others in Russia. These people depend on the reindeer for almost everything in their economy including food, clothing and shelter. Reindeer were introduced into Alaska and Canada last century, but most attempts failed (Arctic Studies Home Center, 2004).

The differences between caribou and reindeer in terms of hunting, domestication, and herding required skills unique to each animal. The need for these specialized skills is affirmed when you examine the games that both the Sámi and Inuit played that helped to develop important and
unique skill sets, i.e., lassoing, skiing, and reindeer racing for the Sámi; and the caribou jump and bone games (eye and hand coordination) for the Inuit.

Still another interesting observation is the matter of the playing areas (space) required for Inuit and Sámi games. Because the Inuit spent much of their winter months in igloos or larger ceremonial snow houses (qaggiq), many of their games are performed in small areas, i.e., the mouth-pull game, the kneel-jump game, the leg-wrestle game, and the musk-ox push game (Kilbourne, 2009: p. 153). Because the Sámi spent significant time out of doors tending to and herding reindeer, many of their games take place in larger areas, i.e., skiing, reindeer racing, and lassoing.

Of additional significance is Inuit throat singing, and Sámi yoiking (singing).

Primarily women in pairs or threes do throat singing (Inuit), often when the men were away hunting. Many of the sounds imitate animal sounds such as the gull and the goose. In addition to entertainment the singing can be a game, a polite competition where two women sing facing one another and the first to lose their concentration or laugh must sit down. Another woman then stands up and challenges the winner. This singing can go on for long periods of time. It creates wholesome entertainment that helps to pass the time during the long winter months (Kilbourne, 2009: p. 91-92).

Of Sámi yoiking, Lehtola (2004) says,

The yoik represents the clearest of all the age-old Sámi cultural traditions. Yoik music is said to be “the world’s most aboriginal song form,” something of the most ancient cultural layers of humankind or, at least of northern peoples. The object of a yoik may be nature, animals, often a person; it paints a picture using words, melody, rhythm, expressions and gestures of it performances. The characterization is often suggestive, condensing the object to some essential feature; the text is complemented by alliterative repetition, using small but meaningful words. Yoik is said to remove distance: the friend who is gone is brought back through a yoik. In the comprehensive and personal nature of its feelings the yoik brings people together, creating solidarity. And that is precisely one reason for its preservation (Lehtola: p. 106).

Although similar in many ways, one significant difference between traditional Inuit throat singing and traditional Sámi yoiking is that Inuit throat singing is often practiced in pairs or threes as a game, a friendly competition. I have found no reference of traditional Sámi yoiking being practiced as a game. There are however, modern Sámi yoiking performances where the Sámi compete with one another.

Another interesting observation is how both the Inuit and the Sámi experienced an awakening, especially through their art/s, between 1960 and 1980. According to Bjorklund (2000), “this was a political and cultural renaissance without precedent in Sámi history (Bjorklund: p. 28).” With regards to the Inuit, “It was the early 1960s and Inuit art, carving in particular, had captured the imagination of collectors across Canada and around the world. The enthusiasm for the form seemed boundlessy (Up Here, 1998: p. 1).”
Most important to me is the observation of how closely linked Sámi and Inuit games are to their environmental playground. Both Inuit and Sámi games affirm that for most of their history their participation in games has been a rehearsal for survival in the world in which they both lived. The story of their games demonstrates how game participation furnished the necessary skills, both bodily and psychologically for success, and forward progress. Such a record of success deserves our steadfast commitment to preserve, and pass onto future generations these important lessons.

**Section Five: A Path Forward**

The first thought that emerges as I attempt to bring this paper to a conclusion, is how much more I need to know, experience, and understand about the games of the Sámi. My review of literature and field research in the Arctic of Norway have provided me with only a beginning to what will hopefully be an ongoing journey of exploration and discovery on and about Sámi games.

Throughout history humans have trusted reciprocal relationships to guide and serve as their moral compass. This certainty is demonstrated by the fact that in nearly every religion known to mankind there is some version of a Golden Rule, “Do unto others as you would want others to do unto you.” Early Sámi game participants learned that by playing fair, with both the environment and other humans, their chances for survival were greatly enhanced. An example of this is put forward by Lehtola (2004). He says, “Because their (Sámi) way of life is based on respect for Nature, Sámi have been frugal in their use of natural resources. They seldom changed their environment radically, for example, as neighboring cultures have done through logging, mining, or damming rivers (Lehtola: p. 88).” A Sámi woman I met during my journey shared that it was very important when Sámi moved camp sites not to leave anything behind (L. Jernsletten, personal communication, February 4, 2011).

In Sámi games, participants established prescribed guides for conduct or actions, i.e., rules and regulations. An important facet of this governance is that it was done in an open and public forum. Throughout history our games have been public. They are witnessed by folks through participation and watching.

At the core of the Sámi life-world was physical activity. This physicality is reflected in the Sámi language. “Sámi is exceedingly rich in words describing nature, animal life, land formations, snow, and other things that have been important in connection with fishing and hunting (Gaski, 1996: p. 11).” Eythorsson and Mathisen (1998) talk about the importance of Sámi physical interplay especially as it relates to fishing. They say, “Local knowledge related to the fisheries appears primarily as knowledge based on experience, developed through the interplay between livelihood and natural conditions (Eythorsson and Mathisen: P. 2).” Sámi games satisfied a need to be physically active. Humans are physical beings. Throughout history humans have gravitated towards happenings that challenge our bodily beings. As Caillois suggests, games create states of bodily vertigo (ilinx). Games are a means whereby humans experience physical pleasure.
The rewards the Sámi received from participation in games included close personal relationships. Again, the Sámi language speaks to the importance of kinship to the Sámi. “It (Sámi language) also has an extensive vocabulary for designating kinship, which of course explains something about the close personal relationships that have existed within Sámi society (Gaski, 1996: p. 11-12).” Games can be one of the great equalizing forces of any civilization. Disparate folks can become one as they unite their individual capabilities in a common struggle for supremacy.

Like all games, Sámi games included struggles that end in defeat or unfulfilled triumph. Much like a good story, it is the uncertainty of the outcome of the games we play, sometimes determined by chance (alea), that holds our attention. If we knew in advance the outcomes from our struggles we would have little incentive to participate.

Learning to take risks is another reward the Sámi received from participating in games. From early snow skiing, to lassoing, to modern reindeer racing (ski joring), the Sámi’s success in and through their games has inspired them to risk again. Slowly the process of fear and mastery in games helped push the Sámi forward.

Through their participation in games the Sámi also learned that success is not always guaranteed. Although difficult, defeat taught the Sámi that their unfulfilled triumphs are not the end of the game or death. They learned to rejuvenate themselves and continue to struggle for success. Their survival over hundreds of years in a very cold place affirms this success.

Sápmi lies in the Arctic, the northernmost part of the earth. Arctic lands have very cold weather. Winters are long and snowy. In Sápmi, the average winter temperature is only 10 degrees Fahrenheit (-12 degrees Celsius). But temperatures sometimes drop as low as -60 degrees Fahrenheit (-51 degrees Celsius). The Sámi have adapted to life in this tough environment (Robinson, 2002: p. 6).

Struggling for success in a game often has nothing to do with the outcome (winning). The struggle may simply be to enhance one's personal performance. It is interesting to note that when children are asked to list the rewards they receive from their participation in games they, more often than not, place personal performance rewards at the top. The outcome (winning) is usually at, or near, the bottom of their list. Children's most meaningful rewards come from personal triumphs. They list things such as interacting with their friends, interacting with coaches, feeling physically fit, learning new skills and, sharing with their families, as the most important rewards (Lebo, 1992: 13).

Learning about free and voluntary activity (play) is another reward the Sámi received from participating in games. When you combine this reward with the previously mentioned reward of kinship, you have the essential ingredients for a functional and organized society. The functional Sámi siida (Sámi village) affirms this organization.

It (Sámi siida) was a village unit that provided for community activities, and it was the area wherein the members of the society had usage rights. The siida owned a certain area that usually had well defined borders. The siida system was a permanent socio-economic and political institution and had been functional for centuries (Lehtola, 2004: p. 23).
Still another notable reward the Sámi received from game participation is learning through imitation. It was through imitation that young Sámi learned the skills necessary to survive on the land. They observed other humans and their environment and copied the movement, language, personality, and energy. Caillois (1961) puts forward that with play and games, the aim of children is often to imitate adults. He says,

This explains the success of the toy weapons and miniatures which copy the tools, engines, arms, and machines used by adults. The little girl plays her mother’s role as cook, laundress, ironer. The boy makes believe he is a soldier, musketeer, policeman, pirate, cowboy, Martian, etc. (Caillois: p. 136).

In other words, we learn what to be from copying. We have become someone or something else (Pretending). Social psychologists call this phenomenon, The Social Learning Theory (Bandura’s Social Learning Theory posits that people learn from one another, via observation, imitation, and modeling. The theory has often been called a bridge between behaviorist and cognitive learning theories because it encompasses attention, memory, and motivation, Bandura, 2008).

Only recently (2011) new data on early human social structure affirms the importance of social learning. “Because humans are unusually adept at social learning, including copying useful activities from others, a large social network is particularly effective at spreading and accumulating knowledge (Wade, 2011: A3).” At the root of social learning are the wonders of play and games, i.e, imitation, pretending, and bonding with others and the environment.

Bonding with the environment is yet another reward the Sámi received from their participation in games. Play and games, especially for children, are the means whereby the relationships between human beings and the environment are established. The environmental playground is their classroom. This is especially evident in the previously mentioned Sámi children’s book about play and games, My Picture Dictionary (1997). It is obvious from the illustrations of the children playing in this book that they are learning about fresh air, sparkling water, beautiful skies, and other living things. The importance of creating bonds with the environment is also evident in early Sámi board games that were related to animals and hunting. Although often overlooked, this is an extremely important reward. It provides human beings with opportunities to respect, appreciate, and therefore preserve the grandeur of our environmental playground. At this time, as we face the challenges of global climate change, this is especially important.

To create and maintain positive relationships in our environmental playground it is necessary to learn about alternation and change, an important characteristic of Sámi games. Alternation can teach us important lessons about sharing and help us to expand our feelings towards other human beings and the environment. Of this Lehtola (2004) says,

On the other hand, it is said that the Reindeer Sámi had the most secure social system of all the Sámi and of the colonizing settlers. Their food supply exceeded their own needs, and poorer members were provided with reindeer meat to feed themselves. Nomadism encouraged specialization because herders did not make all of their equipment: the gieres (reindeer sled), for instance, was made by Sámi craftsmen or by the Finns (Lehtola: p. 27).
As it relates to Sámi fishing Eythorsson and Mathisen (1998) add, “Access given to friends and relatives from other communities can be seen as a part of reciprocal relationship, leaving open an option to fish in the sea territory of their community in case of a bad season at home in later years (Eythorsson and Mathisen: p. 4).”

Alternation is facilitated by our openness to accept change. To alternate we must be willing to add to, or delete from, our thoughts, ideas, principles, habits, and customs. Sámi games provided an infinite array of opportunities to learn about and practice both alternation and change.

Another reward the Sámi received from their participation in games is that eventually the games will play-out. In other words there will always be a solution or resolution. The resolution could be one of sorrow after an agonizing defeat or one of glory after an exhilarating victory. One of the great rewards from games is that they teach us that sooner or later, regardless of the complexity, sorrow or glory, our efforts will yield a resolution. It is our awareness of and our anticipation for, the resolution, that inspires us to play again, and again, and again.

Throughout history Sámi games have provided a myriad of lessons and rewards. These lessons and rewards furnished the sustenance that secured the Sámi’s continued progress and evolution. By learning about and practicing the games of the Sámi, we can affirm many important lessons about living in our modern world. In addition, as was highlighted in the introduction to this paper, an enlightened understanding of Sámi games can help build meaningful bridges between the past and present. This is especially important for Sámi who are trying to preserve their past while living in the present. Towards this goal my hope is that this introductory work on and about Sámi games will inspire others, most especially Sámi, to contribute; working together to create resources, i.e., curriculum materials, web sites, videos, journal articles, and live exhibitions on and about the games of Sámi. Important in this discovery and creation is the wisdom, knowledge and experience of Sámi elders and their practice and participation of games.

Learning about and understanding the games of the Sámi may also help us in our understanding of the modern games we play. At present, especially in America, there seems to be a lack of understanding or awareness about the meaning and significance of our games. This lack of awareness is evident in every arena where games are played, from youth to professional. It is reaffirmed almost daily as we witness the personalities, behaviors and deportments of team owners, team administrators, athletic directors, coaches, athletes, parents, agents, television announcers, and marketers. We are all too familiar with the pandemonium that surrounds our modern games, from National Football League owners and players fighting over how to divide-up nine billion dollars in annual revenue, to 250 million dollar, guaranteed, ten-year player contracts (one player’s annual salary equals the salaries of 700 entry level school teachers), to the violations of college and university coaches and players, to the illegal use of performance enhancing drugs, to the legions of parents who loudly and sometimes violently protest coaching and referee decisions. On too many levels the games we play are simply not aligned with the natural and intrinsic characteristics that have been integral to their practice and evolution. By searching for and uncovering the natural and intrinsic characteristics that are at the root of our games, we may be able to enlighten others to help bring better balance to the games we play. The important lessons we can learn from the games of the Sámi can be an important starting place to begin this enlightenment.
Strengths and Limitations of Study

In the original sabbatical proposal the site selected for the field research was Kautokeino, Norway (Sámi University). As the planning and correspondence progressed for the field research it became apparent that Tromso, Norway was a better location for this preliminary investigation. The reasons for the change to Tromso, Norway are as follows: 1. University of Tromso Center for Sámi Studies, 2. Connection/s with faculty from the University of Tromso, 3. University of Tromso Museum Sámi Exhibition, 4. Sámi Week and Sámi National Day (The largest annual gathering of Sámi in Norway. Includes reindeer racing championships, lassoing championships, Sámi Market, and presentations/exhibitions on/about Sámi culture), 5. Tromso Public Library, and 6. Sámi Parliament. A change in research protocol was submitted and approved by GVSU’s IRB/HRRRC. For this project, Tromso proved to be an important site in terms of gathering information. As I continue to move forward with my research on and about circumpolar games, I will most certainly travel to the Arctic of Scandinavia again to extend my studies further into Sápmi.

Other changes in the planned protocol were visits to the Ski Museum in Trysil, Norway and the National Museum in Copenhagen, Denmark (both suggested by contacts in Tromso, Norway).

The limitations experienced during my field research in the Arctic of Norway were minimal, including mastery of one of the dialects of Sámi. Most Norwegians study English as part of their education. When any issues regarding language did surface, i.e., translating book text, etc., the Sámi with whom I engaged were excited to help with translation.

One difficulty of the sabbatical study was financial, i.e., Norway, especially travel to and residing in the Arctic, is very expensive. Most of the funds for the sabbatical field research came from personal finances.

Notes of Appreciation

There are many folks I need to thank for helping to make my research and journey possible. First and foremost is my family, who continue to provide an unconditional and important voice of support. Second, is my home institution of Grand Valley State University (Department of Movement Science) in Allendale, Michigan who provided me with an opportunity for this sabbatical study. Despite some early obstacles and stumbles, my research and journey to the Arctic of Norway exceeded all of my expectations. Next, I would be remiss in not extending a huge thank you to my host families in Tromso and Oslo, Norway; Dr. Gabi and Dr. Rick Engh and children in Tromso, and Knut Ellingsen in Oslo. Their generosity and hospitality made my field research in the Arctic of Norway possible. Having worked for two years planning and organizing my research and journey, including contacts for interviews, etc. I would like to thank important new friends, Sámi and non-Sámi, for making my journey so successful. These include Dr. Roald Kristiansen, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Tromso; Dr. Eivind Skille, Professor of Sport Science at Hedmark University College in Elverum, Norway; and Mr. John Isak Sara and Ms. Maia Haetta from Kautokeino, Norway. And, much like my life with the Inuit in the Arctic of Canada, I would like to thank all of those people who came my way by chance. Please know that you were critical in my research and discovery. These folks include
the following Sámi, the Jernsletten Family (Laila, Nils and Kikki), Niklas Labba, Ina Beate Somby, Dr. Bente Ovedie Skogvang, Piera Jovnna Somby, Ronald Kvernmo, and Per Stian Sara.

Per Stian Sara was a very important person I met during my journey to the Arctic of Norway. As part of Sámi Week in Tromso, Norway Per Stian had set-up a traditional Sámi camp at the University of Tromso Museum. Because of his efforts, I was able to witness an authentic Sámi camp, watch him teach young children how to lasso, and actually help him take down two Sámi lavvu tents.

I would also like to thank and commend the curators of the Sámi, Inuit and Skiing museum exhibitions I visited as part of the sabbatical study. These include the University of Tromso Museum in Tromso, Norway, the National Museum in Copenhagen, Denmark, the Folk Museum in Oslo, Norway, and the Skiing Museum in Trysil, Norway. In addition, I need to thank the organizers of Sámi Week in Tromso, Norway. The Sámi Athletic Organizations’ Norwegian Reindeer Championship, the Lassoing Competition, the Sámi Market (Sámi food, products and duodji/Sámi handicrafts), and the celebration of Sámi National Day (February 6, 2011) added significantly to my research and discovery.
References


References


Video/DVD Sámi Resources


Sámi Web Sites

https://www.gwise.gvsu.edu/gw/webacc?action=Item.Read&User.context=ls3vt0Tkbrhpvm5Pqb &Item.drn=110707z6z0&merge=msgitem&Url.Folder.type=Folder.UNIVERSAL

http://www.samitour.no/english/cavzo/tilbud.html

http://www.lavvu.com

http://www.itv.se/boreale.samieng.html

http://www.wennberg.com/cwhome/cwsaami.html

http://www.travelnotes.de/scandi/misc/saami.html

http://www.allfiberarts.com/library/aa01/aa092401.html


http://www.home.att.net/kauder/saamidrum.html

http://wwwnome.nosd.schoolsccess.net/acsa/nuuk/eskimogames.html

http://www.samitinget.sc/english/sapmi/ereligi.html

http://www.norwegian-scenery.com/facts/culture_science/sami.html

http://www.allthingsarctic.com/people/saami.html

Video/DVD Resources Inuit


*Nuliajuk.*  Triad Film Productions Ltd.  National Film Board of Canada.

*Netsilik Eskimos: People of the Seal.*  National Film Board of Canada, 1967.

*Northern Games.*  Indian and Northern Affairs Council of Canada, 1980.
Web Sites/YouTube Inuit Games

http://www.ih.k12.oh.us/Inuitgames.htm


http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Traditions/English/inuit_games.html

http://www.ih.k12.oh.us/ps/inuit/inuitgames.htm


http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vT8kY_YsOCA

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QVdyhpsOaY

http://www.metacafe.com/watch/1386713/throat_singing/