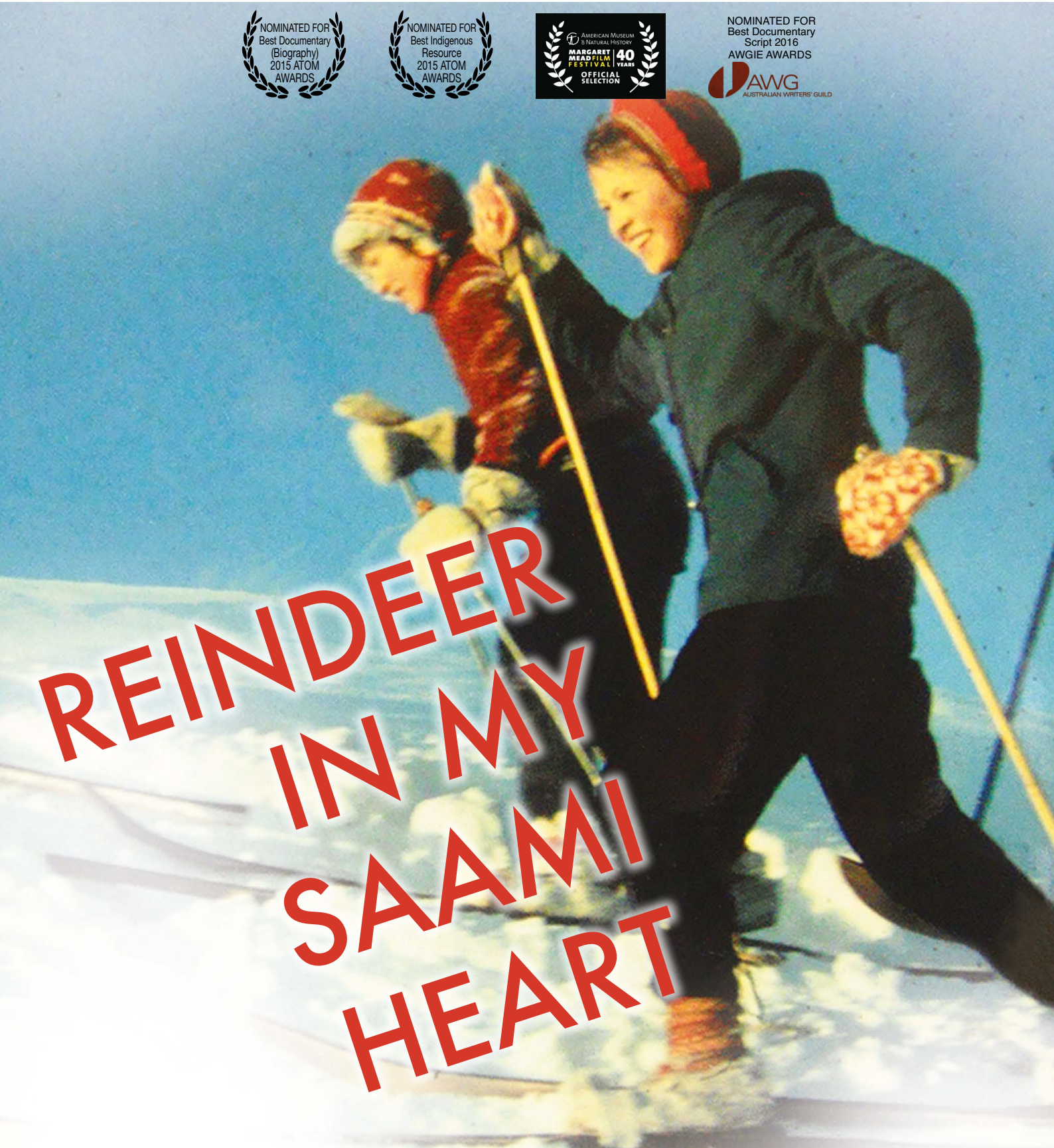




NOMINATED FOR Best Documentary Script 2016 AWGIE AWARDS



# REINDEER IN MY SAAMI HEART

A Documentary By Janet Merewether Featuring Indigenous Saami Poet Inghilda Tapio

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A **STUDY GUIDE** BY FIONA VILLELLA



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## Introduction

*Reindeer in My Saami Heart* is a tender and poignant exploration of one of Europe's oldest Indigenous cultures, the Saami people, who have lived in Saapmi, the expanse of land covering the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia's Kola Peninsula for thousands of years. We are introduced to this culture through the eyes of Inghilda Tapio, a poet and advocate for the preservation of the Saami people's cultural heritage.

Inghilda is deeply connected to her culture and it forms a central part of her identity and her spiritual and emotional well-being. The written word - especially poetry - has played a crucial role in Inghilda's life-long desire to express the powerful connection she feels for her culture. As an artist, she makes sense of her world through words and images. Because her life experience has been mixed, including suffering and trauma as well as beauty and richness, Inghilda's poetry is multi-faceted. It includes overt and subtle references to the attempted destruction of her cultural heritage at the hands of Western European countries and the trauma she endured as a result of being forcibly separated from her parents by the Swedish state as a child. On the other hand, it celebrates the joy and wonder of Saami life, land and cultural traditions.

The documentary's music and sound design is multi-layered, utilising electronic 'glitch' music as well as other styles of conventional score and sound montage to highlight feelings of wonder and awe of the natural landscape and the Saami 'ways' as well as the power of emotions and feelings. The rich sound design also incorporates Inghilda's own lyrical voice-over as well as evocative 'on-location' synchronous sounds such as galloping reindeers, crackling fire and gushing rapids. The filmmaker's use of sound and imagery conjures a dream-like quality that encompasses the entire film. It highlights an overall sense of fragility and tenderness about the people and the culture,



drawing out its timeless spirituality.

*Reindeer in My Saami Heart* provides a wealth of topics for students to explore. From an English and Media Arts point of view, it enables students to reflect on how texts construct meaning and position viewers, as well as considering the power of the written word as a means of political protest, self-expression and healing. From a History and Geography point of view it introduces students to terms and concepts such as Indigenous culture, international agreements, traditional land ownership, human rights and freedom, conflicting environmental world views, as well as protest and activism. From a Civics and Citizenship perspective, it enables students to reflect on the importance of working together to resolve differences and build common ground in order to create a long-lasting, cohesive society.



### CONTENT HYPERLINKS

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# Curriculum Links

Teachers are encouraged to focus on the Learning Area most relevant to them.

## English

### Language

- *Language for Interaction*  
Understand how language use can have inclusive and exclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people (ACELA1564)
- *Text Structure And Organisation*  
Understand how paragraphs and images can be arranged for different purposes, audiences, perspectives and stylistic effects (ACELA1567)

### Literature

- *Examining literature*  
Compare and evaluate how 'voice' as a literary device can be used in a range of different types of texts such as poetry to evoke particular emotional responses (ACELT1643)
- *Creating literature*  
Create imaginative texts that make relevant thematic and intertextual connections with other texts (ACELT1644)

### Literacy

- *Texts in context*  
Analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts, through language, structural and/or visual choices (ACELY1749)
- *Interacting with others*  
Use organisation patterns, voice and language conventions to present a point of view on a subject, speaking clearly, coherently and with effect, using logic, imagery and rhetorical devices to engage audiences (ACELY1813)

## History

### Historical Knowledge and Understanding

- *Overview of the modern world and Australia*  
The major movements for rights and freedom in the world and the achievement of independence by former colonies (ACOKFH022)
- *Rights and Freedoms (1945 - the present)*  
The continuing nature of efforts to secure civil rights and freedoms in Australia and throughout the world, such as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) (ACDSEH143)

### Historical skills

- *Chronology, terms and concepts*

- Use historical terms and concepts (ACHHS183)
- *Historical questions and research*  
Identify and select different kinds of questions about the past to inform historical inquiry (ACHHS184)
- *Analysis and use of sources*  
Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use as evidence in an historical argument (ACHHS188)
- Evaluate the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources (ACHHS189)

## Geography

### Geographical Knowledge and Understanding

- Unit 1: Environmental Change and Management  
Human-induced environmental changes that challenge sustainability (ACHGK070)  
Environmental world views of people and their implications for environmental management (ACHGK071)  
The application of geographical concepts and methods to the management of the environmental change being investigated (ACHGK074)

## Civics and Citizenship

### Civics and Citizenship Knowledge and Understanding

- *Law and citizens*  
How Australia's international legal obligations shape Australian law and government policies, including in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHCK093)
- *Citizenship, diversity and identity*  
The challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and cohesive society (ACHCK094)

### Civics and Citizenship skills

- *Questioning and Research*  
Identify, gather and sort information and ideas from a range of sources and reference as appropriate (ACHCS096)
- *Analysis, Synthesis and Interpretation*  
Critically evaluate information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues (ACHCS097)  
Account for different interpretations and points of view (ACHCS098)
- *Problem-solving and decision-making*  
Recognise and consider multiple perspectives and ambiguities, and use strategies to negotiate and resolve contentious issues (ACHCS099)
- *Communication & Reflection*  
Present evidence-based civics and citizenship arguments using subject-specific language (ACHCS101)  
Reflect on their role as a citizen in Australian, regional and global contexts (ACHCS102)



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## Pre-viewing Activities

### A. Vocabulary Sorting Activity

- Get students to determine how well they know the key vocabulary for this text by placing the words and phrases **below** into one of the table columns.
- Then get students to look up the definition for all the words or phrases in the first column (Don't know the word or phrase at all) and write the

Indigenous culture  
 cultural heritage  
 cultural assimilation  
 world view  
 conflict  
 cultural differences  
 spiritual

the state  
 political resistance  
 protest  
 identity  
 nomadic  
 human rights  
 self-determination

traditional land owner  
 sound design  
 editing  
 voice-over  
 indoctrination  
 ideology  
 oppression

inculcation  
 freedom  
 discrimination  
 cultural preservation



definitions in their workbooks.

### B. Human Rights Charter

- Create a hypothetical scenario in which the students of the class are the new leaders of an international peace-keeping organisation and their first task is to create a Human Rights Charter protecting the rights of all people and ensuring world peace. In pairs, students come up with at least 5 non-negotiable rules or laws of the Charter and how each would operate.

### C. Brainstorm of Key Concepts

- In small groups, provide students with 3 x A3-sized sheets of paper. At the centre of each sheet get students to write the following key concepts: indigenous culture; discrimination; human rights & freedom. In small groups, students use mind mapping techniques to brainstorm everything they know about each key concept. Encourage them to record not only what they know and all the real-world examples they can think of but also their own questions and wonderings.

### D. World Map - Locating the Site

- Provide students with a map of Northern Europe. Get them to locate the northern regions of Sweden, Finland, Norway and Russia's Kola Peninsula and then highlight this area and label it as Saapmi, the homelands belonging to the Indigenous Saami tribes. Ask students to locate the different Saami tribal areas and cultural/language groups.

DON'T KNOW THE WORD OR PHRASE AT ALL	HAVE SEEN OR HEARD THE WORD OR PHRASE BUT DON'T KNOW THE MEANING	I THINK I KNOW THE MEANING	I KNOW THE MEANING

# Viewing Activities

- Students watch the documentary taking notes under the following broad headings:

CHARACTERISTICS OF SAAMI CULTURE

SWEDISH VIEWS OF SAAMI CULTURE

INGHILDA'S PERSONAL VIEWS

ONGOING STRUGGLES





## Post-viewing Activities

### Issues of culture & society

*Reindeer in My Saami Heart* explores the theme of discrimination toward minority, Indigenous groups and the perceived 'Other'. In this case, the 'self' represents Western values and beliefs which previously defined Indigenous cultures as uncivilised, inferior and sub-human because they did not conform to Western definitions of culture and society.

- At one point of the documentary, the Saami people are viewed as sub-human. Get students to research Social Darwinism and eugenics, taking notes on the central beliefs underpinning these ideologies. Then have students share their research notes with the class, adding to their understanding of the topic. What can they find out about the history of the Swedish state-institute of Racebiology in Uppsala?
- Ask students to reflect individually on the morality of Social Darwinism and why it is so problematic.
- Social Darwinism influenced the policies of many Western countries throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Some of these policies are mentioned in *Reindeer in My Saami Heart*, in particular the policy of cultural assimilation, which involves removing children



from their homes and placing them in foster care or boarding schools. The overriding purpose of this policy is to dislocate the younger generation's ties with their first culture and 'mother tongue', which is viewed as inferior, and begin the process of 'assimilation' and learning the ways of the dominant culture.

- Re-watch the scenes where Inghilda explains her experience in the nomad boarding school run by the Swedish government, taking notes on the many new and different things that Inghilda had to learn and adjust to. After watching the key scene, discuss it with the person next to you. Now write a detailed paragraph explaining why the Swedish government established the nomad boarding schools and the new routines and customs Inghilda was expected to learn and follow at her school.
- Re-watch the scene in which Inghilda describes her childhood with her parents and her Saami tribe (9 mins). Consider the following questions: How was daily life with the Saami tribe different from daily life at the boarding school? How much freer were the children in the Saami tribe (use examples from the documentary to support your answer)? How did Inghilda feel about being inculcated with Swedish language, Christian beliefs and daily customs? How successful was the Swedish government in its attempts to override the Saami culture? Did these attempts undermine or further strengthen cultural ties? Did government policy decimate the Indigenous culture or only succeed in traumatising children? How would you feel about being removed from your cultural way of life and forced to follow new rules and expectations? Is this morally wrong? Have there been positive outcomes for Inghilda as a result of her University education?



INGHILDA TAPIO WITH FILMMAKER JANET MEREWETHER

## The spread of Christianity

Inghilda describes how a priest named Laestadius sought to spread Christianity among the Saami people and wipe out Saami traditions by denouncing them as sinful.

- In pairs, get students to consider the following questions: Is it possible to defend priest Laestadius' attempts to spread Christianity among the Saamis? Would this be acceptable today? Why, why not? Were the rights of Saami people violated by priest Laestadius, who was himself part Saami? Could his efforts at minimising the negative effects of alcohol abuse be considered justifiable today? Students then share their views with the rest of the class.

## Sustainable Land Practices: Geography

Re-watch the section which looks at the present-day challenges facing the Saami people (42 mins). The exploitation of natural resources through mining, man-made dams, and hydro-electric technology has had a negative impact on traditional Saami herding practices and landuse. These factors also threaten the reindeer's ancient migratory routes. The Swedish government did not always consult the traditional owners before making these changes to land and water use.

The Saami people value the land in vastly different ways from Western European countries. Indigenous, ancient cultures traditionally live in harmony with the land whereas modern nation-states extract what they require from the natural landscape in order to feed modern industrial needs, commonly leading to negative impacts on the environment.

- Get students to complete a PNI chart for each of the two opposing environmental world views (Indigenous

cultures' and modern nation states'). What is Positive, Negative and Interesting about each?

Saami tribes, in Inghilda's words, "give back to nature". Their view of the land is earth-centred whereas modern nation states are human-centred.

- Get students to discuss in pairs what these phrases ('earth-centred' and 'human-centred') might mean. Then share with the class, using examples from the film to support their views. Discuss with reference to the Saami's nomadic way of life versus modern society's non-nomadic existence.
- The Saami tradition of *yoiking* is a very unique way of singing. As Inghilda explains "If you're yoiking wind then you *are* like that wind. If you're yoiking a stream then you *are* that stream". Get students to reflect in pairs on how *yoiking* is further evidence of Saami people's harmonious relationship with their natural environment. Then share their thoughts with rest of the class.

As Inghilda states in the documentary, the Swedish government and multi-national companies did not always consult the traditional owners of the land when they were planning to build dams, mines and hydro-electric towers on traditional Saami land.

- In small groups, have students discuss the following focus questions: Is it fair that the Swedish government used traditional Saami land without their permission? Why, why not? What would have been a fairer or better approach? List the steps that could have been. What are the current threats from international mining companies? Is it possible for two competing world views to co-exist? Is negotiation necessary on both sides?



### Cultural rituals and traditions

Saami people pass on their cultural heritage by involving their children in important cultural traditions from a very young age. An example is their cultural knowledge of reindeer herding. The year is broken up into key stages in a reindeer's life: ear-marking in Summer; slaughtering in September; sorting and counting in November; females giving birth to calves in the mountains in April. By the time the children are young adults they know how to handle all kinds of knives and equipment and perform a variety of jobs required of reindeer herding.

- In small groups, reflect on the relationship between adult and child in Saami culture. What cultural knowledge is passed on to children in Western countries? Is disconnection between adults and children greater with families that live in the city rather than regional, farming areas? Why, why not?

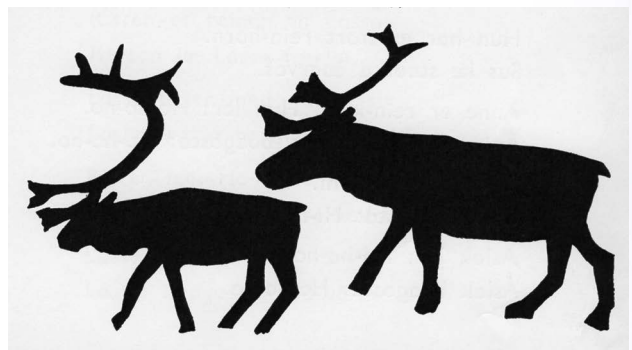
### The power of poetry

Inghilda uses poetry to express her deep dismay at the destruction of Saami natural landscape for industrial purposes. Here is an example:

*Long, long ago  
there were small lakes here,  
rapids... small rivers  
now, all is under water  
Long, long ago  
there were cloudberry bogs here,  
Saami tents by the lake  
now, all is under water  
Long, long ago  
this was a peaceful place  
with fawning reindeer calves  
now, all is under water*

View this section of the documentary (50 mins) paying close attention to the soundtrack and the images as Inghilda reads her poem.

- In small groups, discuss the tone this poem evokes as well as the tone evoked by the filmmaker's stylistic choices. Discuss also how Inghilda's poem shows a connection to the land. List the different aspects of the environment in her poem. What relationship to the land does the poem evoke?





## Identity and Belonging

Inghilda's sense of self is tied critically to her Saami cultural heritage. As an adult, she is wounded by the experience of forced removal from her parents and Saami tribe at large when she was 7 years old. She laments how her life would be different: "I know what I am now but I don't know how I should have been, like a grown-up, if I could have stayed with my parents".

In the 1960s, when she became a mother, Inghilda's political consciousness sharpened as she realised how important it was to pass on the Saami language to her children. In a way, the language had become like a political weapon. Any use of the Saami language was forbidden at the Swedish-run nomad boarding schools where the children were inculcated with the Swedish language. Inghilda realised in her later years that the loss of the language would ultimately lead to the gradual erosion of Saami culture. She became like a warrior fighting for the preservation of the language, passing it on to her children and grandchildren, writing her poetry in Saami, running Saami language and culture workshops in Swedish schools

- In small groups, students discuss the following statement using examples from the film to support their views. *Denying a cultural minority group the ability to use their language robs them of their cultural identity.* Each group shares their views.

Inghilda claims her voice and her knowledge of Saami language as a political tool and voice of resistance. Her poems express the horror and injustice of cultural assimilation as well as the richness and beauty of her native culture. She states "I know now the best way of saying something political is to write". One of her poems, *Snowflakes*, reads:

*Soft snow flakes descend  
covering all the old tracks.  
Tomorrow a new day begins  
that will arrive with new tracks.  
I want to persuade the snow  
don't cover all tracks.  
Some I wish to keep.*

- In pairs, students discuss how *Snowflakes* could be interpreted as political. What might the "old tracks"

represent? What might "snow" represent? What are some of the "old tracks" that Inghilda wants to keep?

- In pairs, students discuss the statement using examples from the film: *Language is a political tool that enables empowerment.* (Hint: Inghilda likens her poetry to *yoik*, improvised singing used by her Saami ancestors before it was outlawed by the Christian church)

## The power of Empathy

When Inghilda returns to the mountains she is instantly transported to her childhood and overwhelmed with feelings of wonder and joy. Notions of 'place' are very important in people's identity. Inghilda has a strong connection to the mountains of Saapmi and the Arctic Circle where she reconnects with her ancestors and cultural heritage. *Reindeer in My Saami Heart* is as much about Saami culture as it is about the power of belonging. In this context, empathy and respect are vital skills when learning about different cultures and especially minority cultures that have been targets of oppression and discrimination.

- Students write their own poem exploring a significant childhood memory, focusing on place as well as their feelings and emotions. Get students to share their poem with another person who shows empathy when reading the poem by asking at least two probing questions.





## Sound and Image

The filmmaker has approached the subject matter in a highly stylised, creative way. A variety of images are interwoven - interview footage, panning shots of mountainous, forest-covered landscape, shadows on a teepee tent, historical photographs, vibrant illustrations as well as conventional action-oriented footage of individuals going about daily life. The sound track also fuses evocative 'glitch' electronica with voice-over and rich on-location sounds. The combination of image and sound creates a dream-like quality, which suits the subjective nature of the material.

- Students watch key moments from the documentary where Inghilda reads her poetry. In pairs, students discuss what response the filmmaker is eliciting from the viewer, specifically focusing on what feelings and

emotions are being evoked. How has the filmmaker managed to avoid the use of obtrusive subtitles by presenting the poems in both Northern Saami and English languages?

- Students use iMovie to make a short film about their own poem (which focused on a childhood memory) incorporating various images and sounds, using mood and atmosphere to elicit a specific emotional response from the viewer.

## Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* is a human rights document that outlines the rights of the world's Indigenous peoples, who are often powerless minority groups within countries where their rights are not protected. The Declaration was adopted in June 2006. It "emphasises the rights of Indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions and to pursue their development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations". Although not legally enforceable in individual countries such as Australia, its adoption allows the actions of governments to be judged against its standards, much in the same way as their actions are judged against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- There are 46 articles in the Declaration. Assign 4-5 articles to pairs of students who must become 'experts'



on their articles. After a period of research and preparation, student pairs present information on their assigned articles whilst the rest of the class takes notes.

- After all presentations are complete, students should answer in their workbooks the following key questions: Who are Indigenous or First Nations people? What kind of rights should Indigenous people have? Are Indigenous peoples' rights the same as citizenship rights? Why do Indigenous people's rights need protection?
- In pairs explore how Inghilda's rights as an Indigenous person were not protected throughout her childhood. How were her rights violated?

### End of unit Research Projects

Students select one of the following topics and then present their findings and conclusions to the class using software such as PowerPoint to organise their information.

Before students embark on their research projects it is important to stress the need to critically assess all online resources by investigating when they were written and which organisation is responsible for the online material. Students should also be provided with models of note-taking and summarising beforehand that they can follow in their own research.

- Present-day struggles and national/international protest: Research current issues the Saami people face such as land rights and environmental damage to their traditional land. A useful website can be found here <http://www.unric.org/en/indigenous-people/27307-the-sami-of-northern-europe--one-people-four-countries>
- Rights of Indigenous People: Using this comprehensive, in-depth and detailed website (<http://www.globalissues.org/article/693/rights-of-indigenous-people#MajorCountriesOpposedtoVariousRightsforIndigenousPeoples>)



nous Peoples) explore a particular aspect of the broad issue of Indigenous People

- Compare the Saami Indigenous culture with Australia's Indigenous culture. Research by taking notes under the following headings: customs & traditions; relationship to the land; tribal life; discrimination & oppression; present-day struggles. End by drawing conclusions about the two Indigenous cultures, explaining the similarities and differences.
- Research and explore shamanistic system of beliefs, explaining how they are different from Christianity.
- Compare the representation of cultural struggle in the documentary with fictionalised versions, such as in the drama series *Midnight Sun*. Inghilda's grandson Paavva Pittja appears in *Reindeer in my Saami Heart* as well as an actor in the television series, playing the role of the midwife's brother. What are some of the stylistic characteristics, similarities and differences between drama and documentary? From whose perspective are the stories told and in which languages?

## References

- United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)
- Rights of Indigenous People <http://www.globalissues.org/article/693/rights-of-indigenous-people#MajorCountriesOpposedtoVariousRightsforIndigenousPeoples>
- UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples: Frequently Asked Questions <https://declaration.humanrights.gov.au/resources/frequently-asked-questions>
- United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe <http://www.unric.org/en/indigenous-people/27307-the-sami-of-northern-europe--one-people-four-countries>
- Midnight Sun* (2016, Directors: Måns Mårland , Björn Stein, Sweden/France)

## Reindeer in my Saami Heart

Directed, produced, written and filmed by Janet Merewether

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<http://reindeerinmysaamiheart.com>

Additional information or filmmaker presentations in NSW schools:  
[contact@reindeerinmysaamiheart.com](mailto:contact@reindeerinmysaamiheart.com)

screen  
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**[editor@atom.org.au](mailto:editor@atom.org.au)**

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