

REPORT:

Dáiddáriid Vásáhusat, the lived experiences of Sami artists

**What does reconciliation mean
from a Sami artistic perspective?**



Compiled by Tomas Bokstad at Giron Sami Teáhter, June 2025



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1. SUMMARY

This report highlights Sami artists' lived experiences, insights and needs at the intersection of art, culture and politics. In the ongoing work on truth and reconciliation in Sweden, Norway and Finland, there are or will be proposals for concrete measures that directly relate to Sami art and culture.

Therefore, this report examines, among other things, what reconciliation means from a Sami perspective, how Sami artists themselves formulate their conditions and needs, and what support structures and institutional changes are required for them to be able to develop on their own terms.

The report is based on in-depth interviews, survey responses and talks with artists from all over Sápmi (Sápmi is a land area spanning four nations – Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia – with nine official languages) and from many different artistic disciplines. It shows that art is not only a means of expression, but also a tool for healing, resistance and identity creation.

The work on the report includes the work on *Dáiddáriid Vásáhusat* (same name), which is an artistic presentation based on the same material from Sami artists. After the presentation at Kultur Sápmi in Kautokeino, a general meeting (*dievasčoahkkin*) was held, which is an important part of the report's content.

The insights that follow are based on Sami artists' own testimonies. Through interviews, survey material and the general meeting held in Kautokeino, a coherent picture of structural obstacles, untapped potential and a deep need for a shift in power emerges. It is in these stories, where personal experiences meet collective patterns, that the report's conclusions take shape. They show what it takes for reconciliation to become more than symbols and instead lead to real change.

Key conclusions are that:

- **Reconciliation must be action**, not just words. It's about shifting power and institutional recognition.
- **Artistic knowledge is fundamental knowledge**. It is just as important as research reports and legal analyses in the reconciliation process.
- **The conditions are unequal and unsustainable**. Today's economic and institutional framework means that Sami artists are often forced to choose between their art and their livelihood.
- **Reconciliation must be material**. Recognition without resources and influence is not reconciliation, but risks becoming another form of symbolic politics.
- **Empowerment and cultural infrastructure** – uch as Sami stages, institutions, residencies and networks – are essential for Sami art and culture to grow in their own, unique conditions and ways.

The recommendations (grouped) include among other things:

Economic reforms

A Sami artistic council with a mandate of self-determination that can, among other things, distribute long-term grants (3-5 years) for artists in all disciplines, to avoid the activities being fragmented by short project grants.

Significantly increased support to the Sami Parliament's cultural budget. From today's SEK 18 million to SEK 50 million in a first step. This would provide the opportunity to begin building a basic infrastructure for Sami culture in all areas.

Institutional infrastructure

Establish Giron Sami Teáhter as a Sami national stage with an annual budget of approximately SEK 25 million.

Strongly strengthen existing Sami cultural institutions; economic conditions and provide parallel space for new initiatives.

Build Sami residences and meeting places in different parts of Sápmi, with a focus on language revitalization and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Knowledge and education

Introduce training on Sápmi, indigenous rights, and colonial history for all cultural policymakers and decision-makers in the cultural sector in Sweden.

Introduce Sami mentorship programs where older and younger artists can work together, both to preserve traditions and develop new forms of expression.

International exchanges with other indigenous peoples, focusing on artistic cooperation and joint advocacy.

Rights issues

The protection of land and water is a fundamental condition for artistic freedom, especially for Sami artists, where a holistic view of art as part of nature and the vitality of the land is central. For many Sami artists, their work is deeply rooted in their relationship to the surrounding nature. Environmental destruction and exploitation threaten not only the landscape, but also the very basis of their artistic expression and cultural identity.



2. INTRODUCTION / PURPOSE

Sweden has initiated a process of truth and reconciliation with the Sami people. A Truth Commission has been appointed to deliver its mission on 1 October, 2026. In addition to a historical review of the policy pursued against the Sami people, the Commission should also “submit proposals for measures to contribute to the restoration and promotion of reconciliation and a viable Sami society¹”. In parallel, truth and reconciliation processes are underway in Norway and Finland.

In Sweden, there is extensive work on the collection of historical testimonies and analyses, but the central question remains: **What does reconciliation mean in practice?**

This report is a contribution to these processes from the **Giron Sami Teáhter**. The reason for the theatre’s involvement is its long-term development work to be recognized as a Sami national stage in the Swedish part of Sápmi. That goal requires resources of approximately SEK 25 million per year – which far exceeds the Sami Parliament’s entire cultural budget of approximately SEK 18 million. Therefore, Giron Sami Teáhter has decided from the beginning of its work that the work to become a national scene must be combined with a cultural policy work that strengthens the entire Sami cultural sector.

The report is based entirely on voices from Sami artists all over Sápmi – from storytellers and joikers to performing artists, visual artists, writers, musicians and filmmakers. It is an attempt to let the artists’ own voices define what reconciliation can and should mean.

The aim is to:

- Make Sami artists’ experiences and working conditions visible.
- Contribute to an understanding of reconciliation as more than a recognition – as concrete action.
- Emphasize artistic and traditional knowledge as the basis for cultural empowerment.
- Formulate concrete proposals for reforms, structures and collaborations that benefit the whole of Sápmi.

¹ <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/kommittedirektiv/2021/11/dir.-2021103/>

3. ABOUT THE REPORT

This report has emerged as part of a larger effort to highlight Sami artists' experiences, needs and suggestions in relation to ongoing truth and reconciliation processes. It is not an external analysis written from a distance, but a document that carries the artists' own words, concepts, criticisms and visions.

The material was collected during the winter and spring of 2024–2025 and consists of

- In-depth interviews with twelve artists from all over Sápmi, in duodji, performing arts, visual arts, music, literature and film..
- A survey sent to 126 Sami artists (31 responses, response rate about 25%)
- Dievasčoahkkin/general meeting during Kultur Sápmi in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, with about 70 participants.
- Written documentation regarding terms and conditions for Sami art and culture from, among others, the Sami Parliament in Sweden, the Sami Council, Viermie K and relevant Swedish actors such as the Swedish Arts Council, the four northernmost regions in Sweden and others.

Citat och reflektioner är insamlade i samråd med deltagarna och anonymiserade i denna text.

The work is also linked to the performative presentation *Dáiddáriid Vásáhusat* ("The Lived Experiences of Sami Artists"), which mixes interview responses with music, film and joik. The presentation has been conducted with Sami performing artists during *Ubmejen biejevieh* (Samiska veckan i Umeå (The Sami Week in Umeå)) and *Kultur Sápmi* in Kautokeino under the direction of Stein Bjørn. In the latter case, the presentation was followed by a *dievasčoahkkin*/general meeting where priorities for Sami culture were discussed and collected.

The report has been compiled by Tomas Bokstad and should also be understood in light of Bokstad's experience of having worked with Sami art and cultural issues for a decade. The analysis is based on this knowledge and not least the colleagues at Giron Sami Teáhter who have assisted with experiences, insights and analyses.

The report's analysis rests on three basic assumptions

- 1. Artistic work carries unique knowledge** – it is not just a form of expression, but a form of knowledge that can provide perspective on history, the present and the future.
- 2. Culture is a fundamental part of identity and survival** – without living language, stories, rituals and creative expressions, a people risks losing both context and faith in the future.
- 3. Sami art carries a spiritual and existential dimension** which is often invisible in the majority society's cultural policy.

A key characteristic is that this report should be regarded as ongoing work. It is important to understand that this is not the end-product – this is the beginning of the conversation.



4. FRAMEWORK

The material collected clearly shows that the experiences of Sami artists cannot be understood without also seeing the structures that shape their conditions. To interpret the artists' voices, a framework is therefore required that makes visible both the rights that exist and the political reality that affects how these rights are actually applied. It is only in the meeting between their stories and the legal and institutional framework that it is possible to see the gap between promises and reality. Therefore, a review of the structures that shape the prerequisites for Sami art and culture today follow below.

4.1 Legal and policy framework

Since 2011, the Sami are recognized in Sweden's constitution as an indigenous people. This means that the Sami have the right to preserve and develop their language and culture. This recognition is central – but as several artists have pointed out, it is a recognition that has not yet had full impact in practice. The Language Act (2009:600) also states that the national minority languages, where the Sami languages are included, are protected and that public authorities have a special responsibility to protect and promote them. But protection requires living arenas where the language is being used – and here art and culture play a crucial role.

The Swedish Act (2009:724) on National Minorities and Minority Languages – often called the Minorities Act – is another central legal framework for Sami cultural rights. The law establishes that the Sami are both an indigenous people and a national minority, which means a stronger protection than for other minorities.



It obliges government authorities, regions and municipalities to protect and promote Sami language and culture, and to give the Sami people real influence on issues that affect them. In theory, this means that Sami artists and cultural institutions should be able to operate within a system that actively supports the preservation and development of their culture, on their own terms.

The Minorities Act relates to international commitments, such as the Council of Europe's Minority Language Convention and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, as well as to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). These documents emphasize not only the right to preserve culture, but also the right to define and develop it independently.

Although the Minorities Rights Act is formally a step forward, its implementation has been uneven and often inadequate. Several reports – including from the Sami Parliament² och DO³ – show that the lack of knowledge, resources and long-term commitment among responsible authorities means that, in practice, the law does not always provide the support that Sami cultural practitioners need. Thus, the Minorities Act becomes both a legal protection and a reminder of the gap between rights on paper and reality.

The consultation scheme – introduced in 2022 and expanded in 2024 – aims to ensure that the Sami Parliament and other Sami representatives have influence on matters that are of particular importance to the Sami. It also covers cultural issues: for example, decisions on Sami cultural heritage, cultural environments or art forms such as music and theatre.

A practical example is when cultural environments of significance to the Sami are to be managed – such as changes within the museum sector or the preservation of Sami heritage sites. According to the law, these cases require consultation with Sami representatives to ensure the Sami's cultural rights and participation in the decision-making process.

At the international level, ILO Convention 169 (which Sweden has not yet ratified) also applies, which, like UNDRIP, establishes the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination and control over their cultural institutions. As one artist puts it:

"Sami art and culture should be given a larger space and cease to be exoticized in many respects. Today I go to exhibitions where great artistic names share rooms with stolen objects lined up in glass stands and thus consciously/unconsciously give a feeling of something that "has been" and is not. Therefore, this requires more Sami working in establishments and institutions where this is no longer given breathing space."

In the reconciliation process, therefore, these rights become not only a matter of law, but of creating the practical and cultural tools that allow the Sami themselves to shape the future of their language, culture and stories.

² Sametinget & Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län (2024). Nationella minoriteter och minoritetsspråk – Minoritetspolitikens utveckling år 2023. Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län, december 2024. (The Sami Parliament & County Administrative Board in Stockholm County (2024). National minorities and minority languages – The development of minority policy in 2023. Stockholm County Administrative Board, December 2024.)

³ Diskrimineringsombudsmannen (2008). Diskriminering av samer – samers rättigheter ur ett diskrimineringsperspektiv. DO-rapport 2008:1 (The Equality Ombudsman) (2008). (Discrimination against the Sami – Sami rights from a discrimination perspective. DO Report 2008:1)

4.2 The role of art in international reconciliation processes

Art has played a central role in the truth and reconciliation processes of other countries:

- **South Africa:** After apartheid, theatre, music and visual arts were used in community projects that created meeting places where both victims and perpetrators could talk, listen and process their trauma.
- **Canada:** In the process of managing the legacy of the Indigenous boarding schools, artistic projects became an important part of the healing process. Festivals, art exhibitions and storytelling projects served both as documentation and as collective healing.

What these examples have in common is that art was not regarded as “decor” to the political work, but as a knowledge carrier and a method to enable what formal processes often miss: emotional understanding, collective grief and the creation of new images of the future.

Som en konstnär beskriver sin praktik:

“Through my art, I am an activist.”

Another one lifts the existential dimension:

“Through my art, I am an activist.”

In addition to these broader examples of the role of art in reconciliation, there are also concrete institutional reforms that show how cultural policy can be put into practice..

Canada Council for the Arts – “Creating, Knowing and Sharing”

Canada Council for the Arts launched the program Creating, Knowing and Sharing: The Arts and Cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples⁴, with the aim of strengthening indigenous autonomy by supporting the creation, knowledge transfer and dissemination of art – all based on indigenous values and with indigenous-led decision-making processes.

The need in Sápmi today is formulated as follows by one of the artists:

“That the majority does not decide who gets funding or not, or who got TV time or who is being curated for major exhibitions or is allowed to publish books. That it is us the Sami ourselves who to a greater extent can decide what is important for us to tell/show.

Australien – Pathways & Protocols: a filmmaker’s guide

In Australia, Screen Australia in 2009 published Pathways & Protocols: a filmmaker’s guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts⁵, developed by lawyer Terri Janke. The guide is a practical tool for filmmakers working with the indigenous theme, guiding them through ethical, legal and cultural issues concerning the use of indigenous cultural material.

Through the interviews, it can be inferred that these two international examples could serve as an inspiration for corresponding initiatives in Sápmi (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia).

⁴ <https://canadacouncil.ca/funding/grants/creating-knowing-sharing>

⁵ <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/about-us/doing-business-with-us/indigenous-content/indigenous-protocols>

Observations

- Art has played a substantial role in the processes of truth and reconciliation globally.
- Examples from Canada and Australia show that political action in the form of resources, structures and guidance is crucial.
- In Canada, Creating, Knowing and Sharing represents a concrete institutional commitment to indigenous art and culture.
- In Australia, Pathways & Protocols offers concrete practical guidelines that integrate respect, rights and collaborative approaches into artistic practice.



5. PROBLEM STATEMENT

he question posed by this report is:

What does reconciliation mean from a Sami artistic perspective?

Many artists describe how Sami culture is still marginalized, misunderstood or reduced to exotic elements in the context of the majority society. Reconciliation is therefore not just about visibility – it is about empowerment: the right to define one’s own expressions, working conditions and institutions.

One artist puts it this way:

“Dál fertte beare dolaid čáskadit. Dál šaddat njuikut ovttá prošeavttas nubbái. Livččen hálidan ráfis ođđasit cegget sámi vuonŋalašvuođa. Dárbbášit bargoráfi go álot leat suoládeame eatnamiid ja luonttu riggodagaid. Mii fertet ilá ollu čalmmustahttit kolonisašuvnna, ja álot bargat vuostildeamiin.”

(Translation: Now all we have to do is putting out fires all the time. Now we have to jump from one project to the other. I would have wanted to re-establish our spirituality, in peace. We need peace of mind from stealing our lands and riches. All too often, we need to make the ongoing colonization visible, and we are constantly working to resist it.)

This statement shows that the creation itself is often forced into a political framework, even when the artist is actually looking for a free space for their work. Reconciliation here is closely linked to the question of being able to choose – not always to be in opposition, but to be allowed to create on one’s own terms.

Another artist tells us:

“Mii leat dušše ‘maskot’, ja bovdejuvvot mielde vai besset lohkat ahte eamiálbmogat leat mielde.”

(Translation: We’re just mascots. We are invited so that they can claim indigenous participation.)

Here, a duality emerges: the sense of community provides strength, but the constant struggle against structural marginalization also drains the artists of energy. Reconciliation in this perspective means a relief – not having to stand alone against a dominant power, and instead having institutions and structures that protect and strengthen.

A third artist says:

“In dieđe jus áigi dasa lea láddan vai jus dat lea šaddan eanet bivnnut.”

(Translation: It took me a long time before I got assignments in the majority society. I don’t know whether it’s because they are now ready for Sámi perspectives, or whether it has simply become more popular.)

This points to one of the most central problems: the price of compromise. In the meeting with the majority society, many artists are forced to adapt the expressions to suit grant systems, cultural institutions or expectations from the audience. The consequence is that artists risk diluting their forms of expression – or choose to remain outside the system altogether.

Another artist describes the situation as follows:

“It’s like we constantly have to prove that we exist, that our art is real art. That joik isn’t just curiosity, that duodji isn’t just souvenirs.”

Several participants also return to the importance of access to resources and institutions that operate on Sami terms. One artist points out:

“Ferte čeahppi leahkit čállit ohcamušaid, ja maid ovdánbuktit iežas bargguid.”

(Translation: One must be skilled at writing applications and presenting one’s work.)

This shows that for many, reconciliation cannot be reduced to symbolic acts or acknowledgements. It is about transferring the power over the stories, expressions and terms back to the Sami society – and that the state takes responsibility for the structures that have long weakened the Sami culture.

From a Sami artistic perspective, reconciliation can be said to consist of three parts:

- 1.** The right to own stories and expressions
– without being reduced or exoticized.
- 2.** The right to resources and institutions
– that are Sami-governed and funded long-term
- 3.** The right to create without constant compromise or resistance
– that art can be art, not always a political rebuttal.

To understand what reconciliation must mean, we cannot begin in political action, but in the very conditions of life of those affected. The artists’ testimonies show that the problems are not abstract, they take shape in everyday life, in the relationship to the place, the language, the tradition and the demands of the outside world. Therefore, the analysis first needs to be deepened into what a Sami life is and what experiences characterize it today. It is on this foundation that the reasoning of reconciliation must rest.

6. WHAT IS A SAMI LIFE?

To talk about a Sami life is to talk about something that is both deeply personal and collective, both contemporary and historical. Sami life accommodates everyday life – language, nature, family, place – but also the struggle to be able to maintain a Sami way of life in a society that has long denied or obstructed this right. In the interviews, the artists return to several themes: everyday life in Sápmi, the role of art as an expression of maintaining a Sami way of life, the relationship with the majority society and what is needed for Sami life to flourish.

6.1 Maintaining a Sami way of life

Many artists describe that a Sami life cannot be reduced to work or leisure – it is a way of being in the world. One artist tells us:

“Olbmot inspirerejit mu. Geahčan sin lihkastagaid. Giđđahájat, giđđabarggut. Gárdebarggut. Renskötsellivet.”

(Translation: People inspire me. I can see their movements. The scents of spring, spring work, work in the fences. Life within reindeer husbandry.)

It is also about the fact that the relationship with nature is not just recreation, but a fundamental dimension of existence. Several artists highlight that the reindeer, the land and the water are not only resources – they are relatives, carriers of life and knowledge. For many, it is precisely this relationship that the majority society does not understand, which means that Sami experiences are often misinterpreted or marginalized.

At the same time, there are other voices that emphasize the great diversity within Sápmi.

“That we become as important and respected in the art field as Norwegian/Swedish/Finnish artists. That we are not a state of emergency, but a permanent pillar of the field. That Sami artists are studied at art schools, as they can also serve as role models for those who do not have Sami affiliation. In addition, it is very important to me that not the only Sami image we send out is the way of life and culture of the reindeer herding Sami. But that there is and is shown to exist, a diversity in what we Sami are. We are Sami living in coastal regions, along rivers, in the forest, each with their own cultural expressions and way of life.”

6.2 Working within a Sami context – conditions of artistry

For the artists who participated in this report, creation itself is part of Sami life. But working within a Sámi context also involves a dual effort: both to preserve and to renew.

One artist puts it like this:

“Lean iežan dáidaga čađa áktivista.”

(Translation: Through my art, I am an activist.)

Many describe that their art inevitably becomes political, because the very existence as a Sami artist means questioning the norm of the majority society. Some talk about the fatigue of always having to educate the audience, the institutions, the funders – instead of just getting to create:

"It's like we constantly have to prove that we exist, that our art is real art. That joik isn't just curiosity, that duodji isn't just souvenirs."

The conditions described by the artists not only affect their ability to work, but they also shape the expressions themselves. The pressure to adapt, explain themselves or defend their perspectives penetrates the artistic space and affects the relationship between tradition and renewal. Therefore, the question becomes not only what Sami artists do, but how they are forced to navigate between heritage and contemporary demands in an environment where their expression is constantly judged based on norms they themselves have not defined.

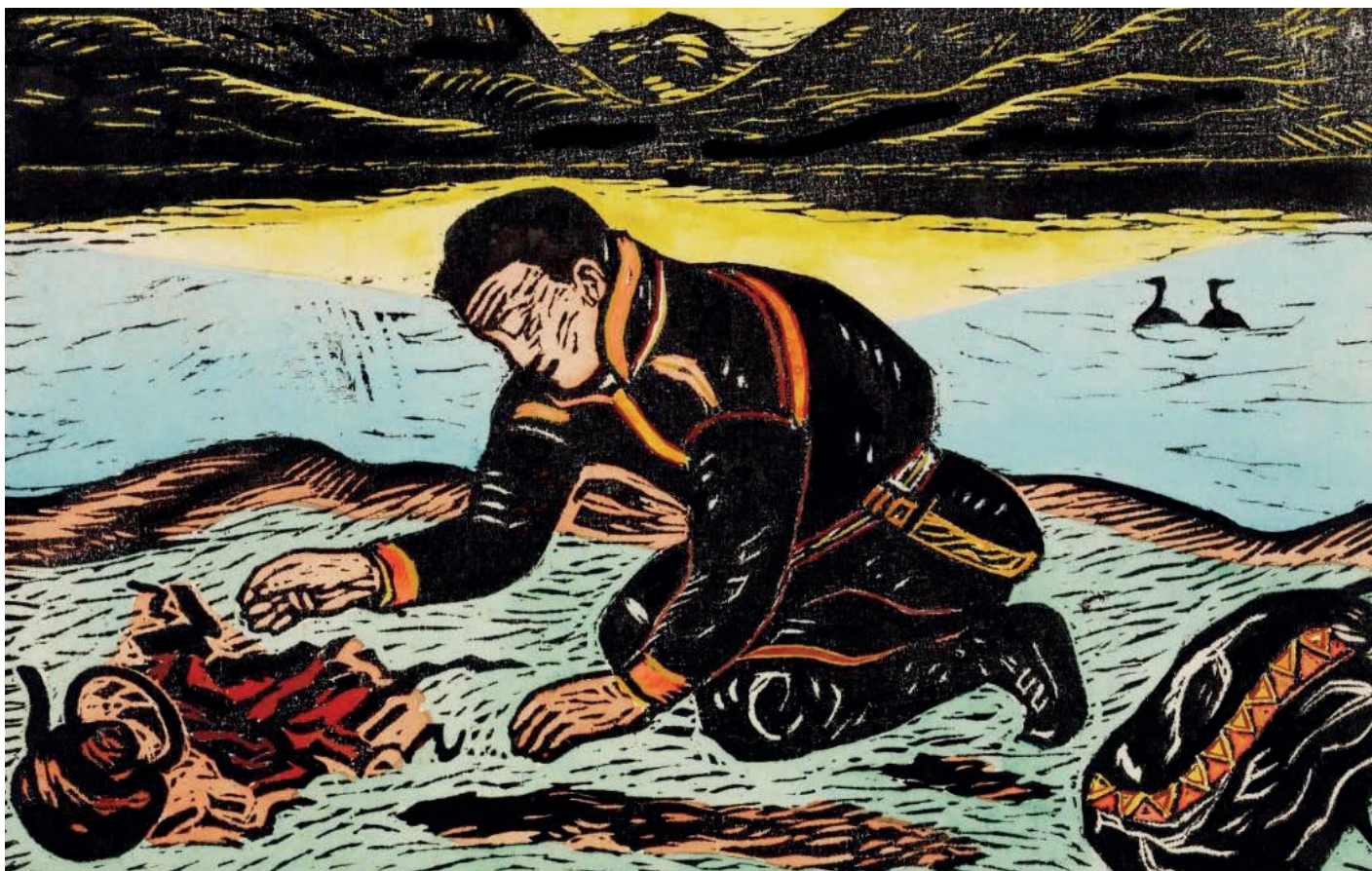
6.3 Between tradition and renewal

A recurring theme is how Sami artists relate to tradition. For some, duodji, joik, or storytelling is an extension of ancestral knowledge. For others, it's about creating new expressions, which still carry traces of tradition. One artist describes this as follows:

"Sámi nissonolbmot... leat oahpahan ahte galgá luohhtidit iežas nala, ahte galgá bargguid doaimmahit. Sin barggut leat čuohcán ollu mu govaide."

(Translation: Sami women have taught me that you must trust yourself, that you have to finish your work. Their work has influenced many of my images.)

The tradition becomes a source of inspiration – a legacy to carry on into new expressions.



6.4 The relationship with the majority society

Sami life is still characterized by an asymmetrical relationship with the majority society. The artists talk about exoticization, ignorance and structural obstacles:

"I've grown sick and tired of explaining and representing. I prefer to create uncompromising cultural expressions. But many times, I have had to adapt what I do so that it becomes easier to secure funding and acceptance from those who grant funding."

This creates a double burden: the artists must both defend their right to be Sami and at the same time live up to expectations from institutions that often do not understand Sami expressions.

6.5 Prerequisites for a Sami life

This creates a double burden: the artists must both defend their right to be Sami and at the same time live up to expectations from institutions that often do not understand Sami expressions.

1. The language.

That Sami languages must have a space in art, education and everyday life.

"Sávan ahte mu mánát sáhttet hállat sámegeiela uhccáŋge, ja luohttit iežaset identitehtaide."

(Translation: I want my children to be able to speak Sami without being ashamed, and to be secure in their identity.)

2. Cultural infrastructure.

Access to Sami-controlled scenes, galleries, institutions including

3. Rights to land and resources.

A Sami life cannot be separated from the struggle for land and water.

Maintaining a Sami life is also to defend the right to be part of the landscape.

4. Trygghet och egenmakt.

Not having to ask for permission, not having to justify your existence, not having to compromise your culture to survive. One artist sums it up like this:

"Juohkehaš ferte gávdnat iežas geainnu, it sáhte vuordit ahte nuppit galget láhčit dutnje saji. Dat lea garra rahčamus. Ferte luohttit iežas nala."

(Translation: Everyone has to find their own way; you can't wait for others to create a place for you. It's hard work. You must believe in yourself.)



7. WHAT IS RECONCILIATION?

Reconciliation is a word that is easily filled with symbolism but emptied of substance. Often, the term is used in solemn speeches and official documents, but without being followed by real changes. In this report, reconciliation instead emerges as something much more concrete and actionable. Sami artists describe three intertwined dimensions:

- **Recognition** – of historical and ongoing abuses, and of the role the state has played.
- **Resources and power** – to move decision-making mandates and resources to Sami actors.
- **Healing and building the future** – restoring language, land, cultural infrastructure and self-esteem.

Recognition – seeing reality as it is

For several artists, recognition is fundamental. That the state and the majority society take responsibility for history and the ongoing consequences. One artist puts it this way:

“Mii fertet ilá ollu čalmmustahttit kolonisašuvnna, ja álot bargat vuostildeamiin.”

(Translation: We must all too often make visible the ongoing colonization, and we are always working to resist it.)

Recognition is thus more than a symbolic gesture – it is a prerequisite for the dialogue to be credible. Without recognition, the concept of reconciliation risks becoming an empty phrase.

Resources and power – being able to decide for yourself

The second dimension is about resources and power. Several artists describe how the current system is based on dependence, where Sami artists and cultural actors must constantly adapt to the norms of the majority society to receive support. One artist says:

“Ferte čeahppi leahkit čállit ohcamušaid, ja maid ovdánbuktit iežas bargguid.”

(Translation: One must be skilled at writing applications and presenting one's work.)
Another artist is even more explicit:

“Dál ferte beare dolaid čáskadit. Dál šaddat njuikut ovttá prošeavttas nubbái. Livččen hálidan ráfis ođđasit cegget sámi vuonjalašvuoda.”

(Translation: Now all we have to do is putting out fires all the time. Now we have to jump from one project to the other. I would have wanted to re-establish our spirituality, in peace.)

Here it becomes obvious that reconciliation must involve a redistribution of resources and decision-making power. It is not enough with project money or symbolic investments – it is about long-term institutional structures, such as a Sami national stage, Sami-governed funds and a strengthened cultural budget within the Sami Parliament.

Healing and building the future – restoring what has been lost

The third dimension is about healing and building the future. Several artists link reconciliation to the restoration of language, land and cultural context. One artist puts it this way:

“Jáhkán ahte ovdána vuoiŋgalašvuođa ja kultuvrra ektui.”

(Translation: I think it will develop more towards the spiritual and towards the cultural.)

Another participant elaborates:

“Jáhkán ahte ovdána vuoiŋgalašvuođa ja kultuvrra ektui.”

(Translation: I wish for my art to be useful in the future.)

Reconciliation is thus not an end point but a process that extends forward in time. It is not just a retrospective recognition of history, but an active measure to create new conditions for future generations.

Reconciliation as action – not symbol

The overall impression from the interviews is that reconciliation cannot be reduced to symbolic politics or isolated ceremonial gestures. Reconciliation must be expressed in actions that change the conditions of the Sami cultural life in depth.

This chapter thus shows that reconciliation, seen from a Sami artistic perspective, is both an existential concept and a practical agenda. It is about emotional restoration, but just as much about creating long-term structures for the survival and development of the culture.



8. HOW?

The question of how reconciliation should be done is perhaps the most crucial and at the same time the most difficult one. In the interviews, one clear point recurs: reconciliation cannot be reduced to a symbolic act, a document or a solemn ceremony. It must materialize in actions that change the conditions here and now.

8.1 From words to action

Many artists express a deep frustration that words about reconciliation often become more important than real changes in their working conditions. Politicians and institutions like to talk about reconciliation in solemn terms, but in everyday life, the artists feel that the situation remains the same: lack of resources, short-term projects, uncertain working conditions and structural ignorance of Sami culture and history.

"I think existence is one big constant crisis management in some way. For my part, I find it difficult to think about what the ideal actually is. I struggle so deeply and fervently with these everyday matters that it becomes difficult to really think in terms of strategies. The strategy will just be to manage the choices somehow..."

It is therefore a question of moving from consultations to concrete obligations. Talking about reconciliation without following up with action creates cynicism and distrust, not trust. Several artists emphasize the need for clear goals, measurable progress and long-term commitments that make power shift and resource allocation visible. For them, words only make sense when accompanied by action, and action becomes meaningful when it strengthens the artists' empowerment.

8.2 Infrastructure and resources

Cultural infrastructure and financial resources are fundamental for artists to be able to work on equal terms as the artists of the majority society. Several interviewed artists describe that they are often forced to create under inadequate conditions: low fees, short project periods, lack of premises, stages and professional technical support.

"I think that much of the discussion about working conditions is too materialistically oriented - it is almost exclusively about finances and resources - but artistic activities also have a spiritual dimension. Art is not only about what we can create physically, but also about what gives ripple effects in the spiritual world. But that said, we need good workspaces, solid funding schemes, and better support for Sami artists' organizations that work for us Sami artists."

A recurring proposal is therefore to create and strengthen Sami institutions – from stages and galleries to production houses and educations. Crucial for a truly Sami-governed operation to function is that there is a Sami ownership.

Giron Sami Teáhter is mentioned as an example of how a strong institution can act as a catalyst for the whole cultural sector, but a holistic approach is called for that includes Sami institutions, education, meeting places, production resources and networks for both young and established artists. Simply put an investment in the Sami cultural infrastructure.

In addition, the artists emphasize that long-term funding is crucial. Short-term projects and unstable grants create uncertainty that inhibits creativity and development. Reconciliation is thus also a matter of building stable structures that give artists the security to plan and develop their work over time.

The financial development of the Sami Parliament's cultural budget serves as an example of how Sami culture has never been made a priority. A comparison with the development of the Swedish national cultural budget between 1999 and 2020 shows that things are moving backwards.

The Swedish budget has increased by **240%** over that period (from SEK 7.5 billion to SEK 17.8 billion).

The Sami budget has increased by **24%** over that period (from SEK 14.5 million to 18 million). At the same time, there are enormous differences between the countries within Sápmi. For example, the Norwegian Sami Parliament's cultural budget for 2024 was just over NOK 200 million.

8.3 Language and knowledge transfer

Reconciliation is also about language. Languages are not just about communication, but a fundamental part of knowledge systems and worldviews. Several artists describe the feeling that reconciliation cannot take place until Sami languages are given the status, resources and space corresponding to the languages of the majority communities.

"I want my children to be able to speak Sami without being ashamed, singing joik in school without it being regarded as something strange."

The artists highlight artistic expression as a powerful tool for language revitalization – film, music, theatre and literature become not only forms of cultural production, but also a means of passing on the language. Mentorship programs between older and younger artists, as well as international exchanges with other indigenous peoples can also serve as concrete methods to ensure the transfer of knowledge and strengthen cultural continuity.

8.4 Healing and fellowship

Reconciliation is not only politics; it is also deeply human. Artists emphasize the importance of creating spaces for community, grief, memory, and healing. These rooms are not always physical – they can be a performance, a joik, a work of art or a story that shapes emotions that are otherwise difficult to express.

"The Sami community with, for example, gathering places where we Sami meet, where we can see Sami art and crafts. I am inspired by events where duodji/crafts are showcased. Inspiration for me can also be a reindeer sorting corral, it does not always have to be organized events."

The artistic process becomes a collective healing process, where individuals and communities can process historical trauma while building the future. Many describe how artistic practice helps them reconnect with their roots, re-establish relationships with language, land and kinship, and create emotional meeting places between generations.

8.5 Transferring power

A central conclusion in the interviews is that reconciliation cannot be about the approval of the state. Real change only takes place when Sami actors themselves gain control over resources, institutions and decisions. Power is about self-determination – being able to shape institutions, determine repertoires and allocate resources without having to wait for the majority society's approval.

The artists argue that the shift in power is not only a matter of money, but also of representation, decision-making power and the ability to influence policies that affect their work. Reconciliation only becomes meaningful when Sami institutions and artists gain real influence and thus can create a cultural life that reflects their values, needs and dreams.

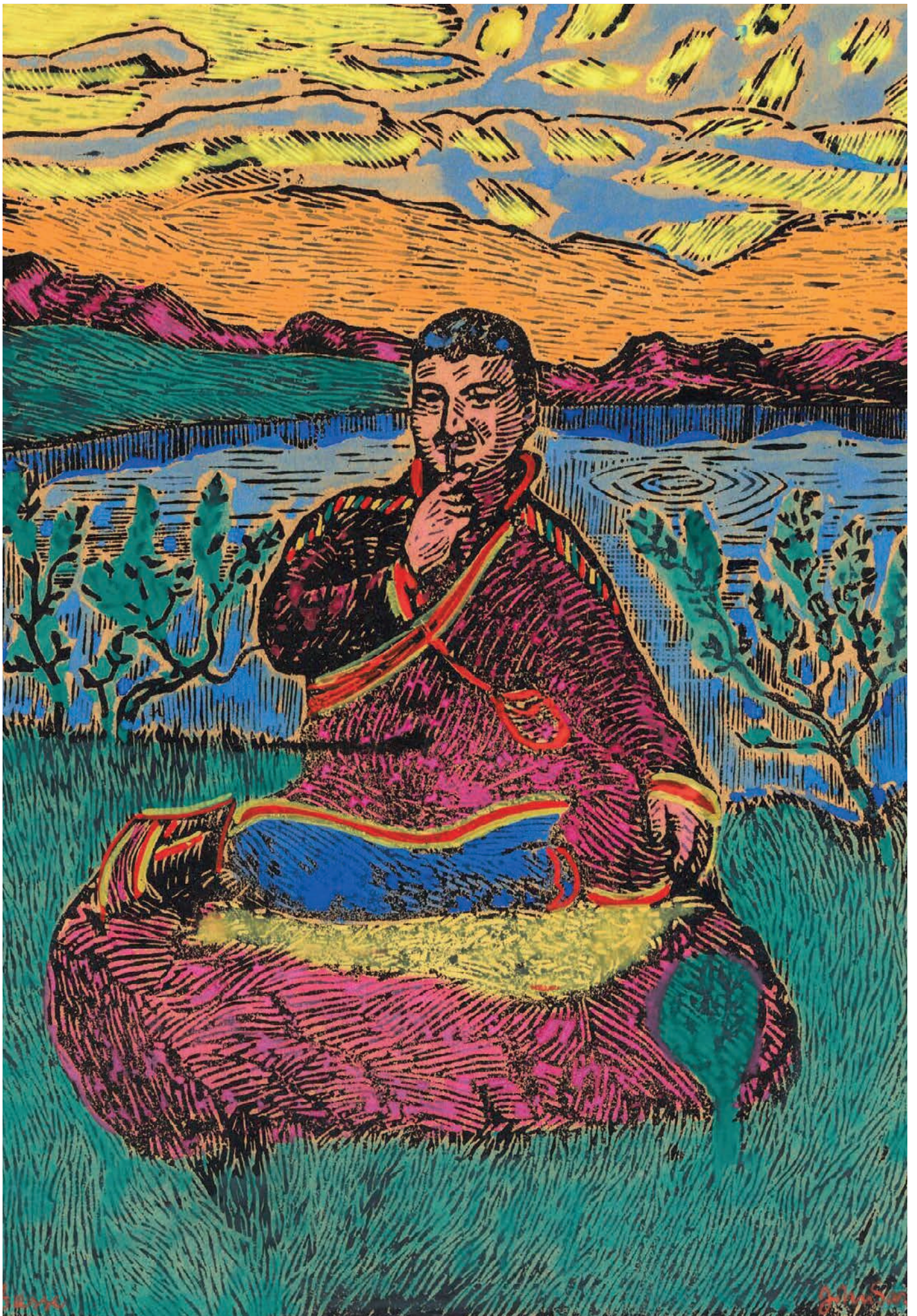
8.6 Summary – the way forward

Reconciliation must therefore be understood as a series of concrete actions:

- Building Sami cultural infrastructure with long-term funding.
- Ensuring linguistic rights in art and culture
- Creating places for healing and collective processing
- Transferring power and decision-making to Sami institutions and artists.

The artists' testimony shows that these are not "wish lists" but the very basis for reconciliation to be credible. As one artist succinctly put it:

"Funding for Sami cultural organizations. Introduce an artist's salary for certain periods, so we don't have to risk our lives in the mine."



9. CONCLUSIONS

This report shows that reconciliation cannot be reduced to a symbolic act, a historical excuse or a mere formality on paper. For Sami artists, reconciliation is first and foremost a practical and concrete issue: power, resources and working conditions are the very core. Reconciliation is about creating conditions in which art can carry language, traditions, stories and visions of the future forward on its own terms – without constantly having to adapt to the templates of the majority society.

The report's interviews clearly show that the artists' practice should be regarded as a central part of the reconciliation process. Art is a tool and a language that makes it possible to express pain, joy and experiences that would otherwise be silenced. Reconciliation is therefore both a collective and an individual project – a work for justice, but also for identity, culture and future.

9.1 Art as the key to reconciliation

A central conclusion in the interviews is that reconciliation cannot be about the approval of the state. Real change only takes place when Sami actors themselves gain control over resources, institutions and decisions. Power is about self-determination – being able to shape institutions, determine repertoires and allocate resources without having to wait for the majority society's approval.

The artists argue that the shift in power is not only a matter of money, but also of representation, decision-making power and the ability to influence policies that affect their work. Reconciliation only becomes meaningful when Sami institutions and artists gain real influence and thus can create a cultural life that reflects their values, needs and dreams.

9.2 Reconciliation as action

A recurring theme in the report's material is that reconciliation cannot be limited to words. Reconciliation is something that needs to be enacted. The recognition of historical and ongoing injustices is necessary, but it is not enough.

One of the interviewed artists wishes:

"To be respected as a practitioner on equal terms, get the same space as majority Swedish practitioners, avoid prejudiced framing."

This means that reform proposals, investments in institutions and resource allocation are not side issues – they are the very heart of a real reconciliation process. Without action, reconciliation risks remaining a symbolic act, while the real needs of artists and Sami cultural communities are ignored.

9.3 Power and empowerment

At the core of reconciliation from a Sami artistic perspective is empowerment. It is about the right to define oneself, one's expressions and one's institutions without being dependent on the approval of the majority society. Power is about resources, decisions and control over your own stories. One artist summarizes his survival strategy as follows:

"Even when I was studying, I decided not to be influenced by the majority society; I did not visit their libraries to look at their books so that they could influence me, so that they would not kill the images I carry within me I have tried to avoid being influenced by the wider society, I have tried to avoid it."

There is a direct connection to resources here. As long as the Sami Parliament's cultural budget is a fraction of the state's total cultural resources, Sami artists cannot create on equal terms. Reconciliation thus requires an economic redistribution and new power structures where decisions are made by Sami actors themselves.

9.4 Healing and the future

Reconciliation is also about healing. Several artists describe how their artistic practice is a way to process both personal and collective trauma – from land taken from them to language lost and discrimination that is still ongoing.

"But to joik a place, for example, is important for the place to remember who it is. And so it is also from a healing perspective. A place that has been completely felled or exploited, so to speak, has been subjected to trauma. And then to have its own joik joiked in that place is like trauma processing for a place. I think that this kind of thinking is very important."

At the same time, the artists look ahead. They see reconciliation as an opportunity not only to repair what has been lost, but also to build something new. New institutions, new forms of cooperation, new stories.

9.5 Reconciliation as a joint construction

The report clearly shows that reconciliation is not something that can be imposed from above. It can only become a reality if the majority society is prepared to share power and resources – but the work must be led by the Sami society itself.

The artists do not passively wait to be "rescued". They're already on the move. They create, organize, build networks and institutions. What they are calling for is for the state to stop standing in the way and instead offer resources and legitimacy, so that the process can be long-term and sustainable.

The conclusion is clear: real reconciliation requires action, empowerment and long-term structures that strengthen Sami artists and cultural life. It is a joint construction, where art is both language, tool and a vision of the future.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

The proposals presented here come directly from the voices and experiences collected for the report. They have been reinforced and supplemented with observations from the author as well as comparisons with international examples. The goal is for these measures to contribute to real reconciliation – where words are followed by action, and where Sami artists and cultural actors obtain the power over their own conditions.

10.1 Basic principles

Many artists express a deep frustration that words about reconciliation often become more important than real changes in their working conditions. Politicians and institutions like to talk about reconciliation in solemn terms, but in everyday life, the artists feel that the situation remains the same: lack of resources, short-term projects, uncertain working conditions and structural ignorance of Sami culture and history.

1. **Empowerment** – Sami artists should have control over their stories, expressions and institutions.
2. **Long-term** – Support and funding must be stable, not dependent on short-term projects.
3. **Respect for knowledge** – Artistic and traditional knowledge is as important as the one that is academic and administrative.

10.2 Suggested actions

Key conclusions of the report are that

- **Reconciliation must be action**, not just words. It's about shifting power and institutional recognition.
- **Artistic knowledge is fundamental knowledge**. It is just as important as research reports and legal analyses in the reconciliation process.
- **The conditions are unequal and unsustainable**. Today's economic and institutional framework means that Sami artists are often forced to choose between their art and their livelihood.
- **Reconciliation must be material**. Recognition without resources and influence is not reconciliation, but risks becoming another form of symbolic politics
- **Empowerment and cultural infrastructure** – such as Sami stages, institutions, residencies and networks – are essential for Sami art and culture to grow in their own, unique conditions and ways.

With that in mind, the report provides concrete proposals for reforms.

10.2.1 Economic reforms

- A Sami artist council with a self-determining mandate that, among other things, can distribute long-term grants (three to five years) for artists in all disciplines, to avoid the activities being fragmented by short project grants.
- Significantly increased support to the Sami Parliament's cultural budget. From today's SEK 18 million to SEK 50 million as a first step. This would provide the opportunity to build a basic infrastructure for Sami culture in all areas.

10.2.2 Institutional infrastructure

- Establish Giron Sami Teáhter as a Sami national stage with an annual budget of approximately SEK 25 million.
- Strongly strengthen existing Sami cultural institutions' economic conditions and provide parallel space for new initiatives.
- Build Sami residences and meeting places in different parts of Sápmi, with a focus on language revitalization and interdisciplinary collaborations.

10.2.3 Knowledge and Education

- Introduce training on Sápmi, Indigenous rights, and colonial history for all cultural policymakers and decision-makers in the cultural sector in Sweden.
- Introduce Sami mentorship programs where older and younger artists can work together, both to preserve traditions and develop new forms of expression.
- International exchanges with other indigenous peoples, focusing on artistic cooperation and joint advocacy.

10.2.4 Rights issues

- The protection of land and water is a fundamental condition for artistic freedom, especially for Sami artists, where a holistic view of art as part of nature and the vitality of the land is central. For many Sami artists, their work is deeply rooted in the relationship with the surrounding nature. Environmental destruction and exploitation threaten not only the landscape, but also the very basis of their artistic expression and cultural identity.

10.3 The way forward – from words to action

Key conclusions of the report are that the following is required:

- **Political will and statutory commitments.**
- **A clear timeline for implementation.**
- **Collaboration between Sami actors, the state and regional actors.**
- **Follow-up and evaluation led by Sami representatives.**

11. CONCLUSION

This report is a collective voice from Sami artists, emerging from conversations, interviews, surveys and meetings. It bears traces of both anger and sadness, but also of stubbornness, hope and vision. Throughout the material, a central thought has recurred: reconciliation cannot be a word on paper – it must be action, built on justice and empowerment.

The report has been carried by the citations that run through the chapters. They are the very essence of understanding the situation. What one artist said about the future can be a concrete way of looking at the future:

"I have great faith in the future. I believe the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report is an obligation, so that it must come with funding, to raise both quantity and quality."

The reconciliation process in Sweden is still in its initial phase. There is an opportunity to do something historic – to create real balance and respect between the state and the Sami people. But that requires that the decision-makers listen and act on the voices that have already spoken so clearly.

The report ends here, but the work continues – in studios, on stages, in the joik, at kitchen tables and in meetings all over Sápmi. Reconciliation is not an item on a list, but an approach, a practice and a long-term commitment.

It is important to recall once again that this report would not have been possible without the Sami artists who have shared their experiences, insights and dreams. It is their voices that carry the report, their perspectives that make the analysis real and alive.

Thank you.



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