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Guovtti ilmmi gaskkas. Balancing between two contested worlds.

**The challenges and benefits of being an indigenous
museum professional**

Abstract In this paper, I will discuss the encounters of being an indigenous museum professional and the challenges and benefits I have faced when balancing between two contested worlds. The idea of museum bases on European worldview and outlook. For indigenous peoples, this means the role of the other. As a part of the colonial system, museums had a role in suppressing and assimilating indigenous cultures. Museums still manage indigenous heritage and represent indigenous people's culture as passive and inferior in exhibitions and publications. Still, the indigenous communities see museums as a possibility to present their story to themselves and the others. The role reserved for the Sámi people in museums has been a study object or a resource for knowledge and research material. The discussion what would be the Sámi way to work in a museum has just started.

Being an indigenous museum professional working with your own culture has many advantages. Communication with your own people is easy; you share a common language and cultural background. You also have the authority and the knowledge to evaluate the knowledge shared with you. This provides you with a special insight but is also the greatest challenge. As a Sámi you always represent a certain family, which strongly effect on how people interact with you. Indigenous professionals can help to build understanding and collaboration. I see my work as a mediator in the process of indigenizing museums so that our museums would exist for our indigenous community. Museums could give new experiences to the indigenous community, be a benefit and even heal traumas caused by colonization.

Keywords indigenous peoples, indigenous museum, the Sámi, fourth world, kinships

Introduction

In this paper, I have taken the Sámi understanding of the world, that there are parallel worlds and you can move between them, as my epistemological starting point. I transfer this understanding from its original spiritual context to museum context. I will discuss the encounters and collisions I have encountered being an indigenous museum professional and the challenges and benefits I have faced when balancing between two contested worlds, the indigenous Sámi world and the western world of museums.

The title of my paper is *Guovtti ilmmi gaskkas. Balancing between two contested worlds. The challenges and benefits of being an indigenous museum professional*. The first words are in Northern Sámi¹, as in all my titles. Northern Sámi is a small indigenous language, one of the ten Sámi languages, and my mother tongue. Translated to English the words would be ‘between two worlds’ or ‘between two realities’². In traditional Sámi context, the phrase is most often used figuratively; describe reality³ or somebody losing sense of reality⁴, to describe person’s state of mind⁵ and even religious trance⁶.

The phrase ‘to be between two worlds’ also describes the position of the indigenous in the world today, that is dominated by non-indigenous culture. For the indigenous peoples it is a fact that two or even more worlds exist, both literally and metaphorically. One set of these parallel realities consists of the dominant world of the non-indigenous and the indigenous world. The differences across these two worlds are vast, encompassing differences in language, worldview, values, ways to interact and behave, only to mention some. It is not possible to walk in both worlds without balancing. We indigenous individuals, as well as indigenous communities, must choose, prioritize and make compromises to keep our culture alive. Because of their dominant position of

1 Sámi is also spelled Saami and Sami in English. In this paper, I follow the Northern Sámi spelling of the word. The Sami have historically been known in English as the Lapps or the Laplanders, but these terms are perceived as derogatory.

2 To be part of two worlds is a phenome known throughout indigenous world and phrases to describe this state are known among many indigenous peoples. A frequently used metaphor in English is ‘walk in two worlds’ (see Henze and Vanett 1993).

3 *dán ilmmis* (in this world/reality)

4 *guovtti ilmmi gaskii saddat* (lose sense of reality)

5 As in sentence *eadni lea guovtti ilmmi gaskkas* (mother is not herself or mother is not totally awake)

6 *duon ilmmis* (in spirit world)

western majority culture, the non-indigenous have the possibility to live only in one world and ignore other worlds. For the non-indigenous majority, the indigenous world is often invisible. This option is open for indigenous individuals only by abandoning indigenous heritage. For the indigenous peoples the status of the majority culture, the forced assimilation and adaptation to the majority culture means that the indigenous individuals have no choice but to walk in at least two worlds if they want to keep their indigenous heritage.

Museum is based on western understanding and built for the non-indigenous world. Its methodologies, practices and values are western, and they may conflict in many ways with their indigenous counterparts. Does this mean, that to be able to work in museum, to live in the world of museum, the indigenous museum professionals must abandon their own heritage or compromise their indigenous values in for example concerning ancestral remains or open access of knowledge?

I will start my paper by describing shortly who are the Sámi and what is the situation of the Sámi in Finland. Secondly, I will discuss what is a museum or rather what is the museum institution seen from the indigenous Sámi perspective and what is an indigenous museum. Thirdly, I will present two examples, the understanding of cultural environment and the position of museum professional in indigenous context, where I have experienced and observed indigenous and museum world colliding, conflicting understandings that might affect work in museum. With my examples my aim is to highlight the indigenous understanding and demonstrate how invisible indigenous world may be for the non-indigenous. For most of the non-indigenous indigenous world is unknown and unseen, the conflicts and collisions that can affect to the collaboration with indigenous communities can be unnoticed.

Sápmi and the Sámis

The Sámi are the indigenous population to Sápmi, land of the Sámi. Today Sápmi is divided with borders between Finland, Norway and Sweden and the Russian Federation. The Sámi are the only indigenous people⁷ in the European Union. The total Sámi population is estimated to be 75,000 to 100,000, with the majority living in Norway. In Finland there are about 10,000 Sámi. In Finland the Sámi have cultural self-determination, ergo the right to maintain and develop their own language, culture and traditional livelihoods. The indigenous status of the Sámi was written into the Finnish constitution in 1995.

Altogether, there are ten Sámi languages and three of them, Northern Sámi, Inari Sámi and Skolt Sámi, are spoken in Finland. All the Sámi languages are severely or critically endangered with substantial number of speakers but practically no children among them (UNESCO 2011). In Finland approximately 2,000 Sámi have Northern Sámi as their mother tongue and the two other Sámi languages have approximately 300 speakers each. Because of the assimilation policies many Sámi have lost their ability to speak their language and most of the Sámi do not know their mother tongue.

Museum and the indigenous peoples

The Europeans created the idea of museum in Europe and it is based on European worldview and outlook. As most of the European institutions, also museum is part of the colonial structure. Museums had a role when European national states built their national identity and in museums the colonial powers exhibited the treasures claimed from the colonies. Museum is involved in the colonial oppression, assimilation and cultural genocide of the indigenous peoples. In addition, museum collections, exhibitions and the research done in the museum produces and strengthens the colonial, stereotypical imagery of indigenous cultures and transmits the colonial worldview further to next generations. The colonial knowledge produced in museum about indigenous peoples is used to validate European colonialism and hegemony over the indigenous peoples as natural, inevitable and legitimate. As Norwegian scholar Silje Opdahl Mathisen (2017, 60) recapitalizes: “European museums contributed to a stereotypical view of other cultures, including the Sámi, where conceptions of race, mentality and culture were essentialized and this ultimately served to legitimize Western hegemony.”

In an institution that is based on European worldview and colonial interests in such a way as museum, the role for indigenous peoples is the role of the other, something that is different from the Europeans. In museum exhibitions and publications indigenous peoples are presented passive and inferior

7 Peoples in independent countries are regarded as indigenous if they are descended from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and if they identify themselves as indigenous and retain, irrespective of their legal status, some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions (www.samedigi.fi/sami-info/?lang=en).

to western cultures, even as a presentation what Europeans used to be in the past, in the earlier stage of cultural evolution. Indigenous peoples do not represent themselves in museum, but they are used as a comparison to European culture, what Europeans are not. As Ivan Karp (1991, 15) writes:

Exhibitions represent identity, either directly, through assertion, or indirectly, by implication. When cultural “others” are implicated, exhibitions tell us who we are and, perhaps most significant, who we are not. Exhibitions are privileged arenas for presenting images of self and “other”.

Museum’s cooperation with the indigenous communities has mostly been collecting information from the community and about the culture through individual indigenous informants. The starting point for the collaboration is most often the needs and the interests of the museum or the museum worker and in the end of the collaboration the ownership to the material collected is transferred to the museum. The indigenous peoples serve as a source and resource for knowledge and research material for the non-indigenous institution. Further, the interpretation and representation of the indigenous cultures is done in museum without indigenous involvement, highlighting the role of the indigenous communities and individual as research material instead of equal collaborators.

Examples of this practice can be found in all the museums and in their collections, catalogues, exhibitions and publications, where the name and the role of the collector, museum professional or researcher is emphasized, and the identities of the indigenous informants are faded out if recorded at all. This practice is often defended as a necessity to protect the privacy of the informants, but it can be also interpreted as conscious or unconscious disdain of the indigenous understanding and ownership of indigenous intangible cultural heritage. In addition, the original research material produced in indigenous language is most often translated, interpreted and published in a language and form that is not understood by the indigenous informants. Hereby, the indigenous are blocked from their own heritage collected in museum, as well as they are blocked from revising the information about them and their heritage in museum and misunderstandings and wrong interpretations done by the outsiders might live on in museum undisturbed. As museum is regarded as guardian as facts, these misunderstandings can be hard or even impossible for the indigenous to correct. All in all, the indigenous peoples are not involved throughout the process of information provided in museum or for

example how their culture is exhibited in museum exhibitions. The misinterpretations of indigenous cultures or their heritage may have harmful implications for attitudes towards the indigenous or for the position and rights of the indigenous living today.

All things considered, the ultimate dilemma is, that in the non-indigenous museum the interests of the indigenous peoples are not equally regarded, and the languages and cultural practices of the indigenous communities are not taken in consideration even-handedly if at all. The excluding of indigenous knowledge, language and methodology, as described by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), is part of the colonial structure in museum and the underlying issue to untangle when building a more equal relationship, collaboration and future between the indigenous and non-indigenous museum. Decolonization in indigenous context is to analyse and map colonialism, to discover its different forms and implications, but also to break free from colonial structures, governance, practices and discourses that sustain the colonial power. The inclusion of the indigenous in museum is the precondition for the decolonization as well as the first step in the indigenization of museum. To indigenize is to transform for example an institution to suit the culture, worldview and values of the indigenous. Indigenization of museum (Phillips 2011) is about incorporating indigenous worldviews, knowledge and perspectives into the museum and respect them as equal to other views. To accomplish this task, we need museum professionals with sufficient language skills in indigenous languages, as language is the key to interpret the culture concerned, as well as museum professional, that are experienced to work in multicultural contexts. To involve indigenous museum professional in this process, seems to be liable solution.

The implications of the dishonest museum practices of the past, as plundering of ancestral remains, the wrongful purchases of tangible heritage or for example to collect information with help of serving alcohol, are still present in indigenous life and they still have an impact on the relationship and collaboration between museums and indigenous communities. The remains of our ancestors are still stored in museums. Our tangible and intangible heritage is still defined and governed by the laws of national states and the protection of our sacred sites depends on whether they are seen sacred enough by outside experts. The protection of indigenous heritage depends on how well it fits the western description of heritage and western understanding what is valuable and culturally significant enough to be protected.

The common denominator for these unsolved collisions between indigenous and non-indigenous is the unequal position of indigenous understandings,

knowledge and methodologies compared to non-indigenous practices and philosophies. The Sámi scholar, Professor Rauna Kuokkanen (2007, 253) states: “Indigenous peoples and their worldviews, values, histories and conceptions of knowledge have been systematically excluded from western epistemologies and intellectual inquiries.” The excluding of indigenous knowledge is part of the colonial structure in museum and the underlying issue to untangle when building a more equal relationship, collaboration and future between the indigenous and non-indigenous museum worlds.

Indigenous museum and Sámi museums

Despite the dark history of museum, indigenous peoples worldwide have decided to start their own museums. Indigenous communities have adopted the established museum concept and use it to present their own story to themselves and to the others. The idea of indigenous museum, based on values, worldviews and needs of the indigenous communities, is a new addition to the museum concept and is a still ongoing process.

Anthropologist Patricia Erikson has pondered the question why the indigenous peoples are interested to establish their own museums, even though museum is part of the colonial structure. According to Erikson, museums offer an opportunity for indigenous peoples to represent themselves and use these self-representations to disrupt stereotypes through a media that is globally respected as a knowledge making institution. Erikson argues, that because in western societies museums are given the authority to establish truth, beauty and history, museums are ideal places for these disruptions to take place and for critical consciousness to emerge (Erikson 2002, 17; 27).

As other indigenous peoples, also the Sámi have established own cultural institutions, among them Sámi museums. Norway has the largest Sámi population and also the largest number of Sámi museums, altogether thirteen⁸. The Sámi museums are spread to cover most of the Sápmi in Norway, from South Sámi museum in *Snåase* (Snåse) to Ävv Skolt Sámi museum in *Njaud-dâm* (Neiden) close to the Russian border in Northern Norway. In Sweden the Sámi museum activity has been centralized to one Sámi museum, to Ájtte Duottar- ja sámemusea in *Jåhkâmåhkke* (Jokkmokk).

The Sámi Museum Siida is the only Sámi museum in Finland. The main premises of Sámi Museum Siida and the collections, administration and exhibitions are located at the Siida-building in Anár (Inari). When founded by

the Sámi association *Sámii Litto* (Sámi Union) in 1958, the Sámi Museum Siida (at the time called *Inarin Saamelaismuseo*, the Inari Sámi Museum) was the first Sámi governed museum in the world. The first decades the Sámi Museum Siida served as open-air museum and the museum had no storage rooms, but the collections were on display year-round in the unheated open-air museum buildings. The example for the Sámi open-air museum were the Nordic national open-air museums *Skansen* (founded in 1891) in Stockholm and *Seurasaari* (founded in 1909) in Helsinki to exhibit the national culture of the country. In 1998, the modern museum building Siida was opened to public and refined the Sámi open-air museum to a modern, professional museum. The Sámi Museum Siida is owned by a private foundation (*Sámemuseavuodđudus*, the Sámi Museum Foundation) and most of the financing comes from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture.

In last 20 years, Sámi Museum Siida has stabilized its position as acknowledged part in the Sámi society and has become a respected operator in the Finnish museum field. Today Sámi Museum Siida is the National Museum of the Finnish Sámi and one of the 16 National Special Museums in Finland, with responsibility to acquire, conserve, research, communicate and exhibit the tangible and intangible heritage of the Sámi in Finland. Furthermore, Sámi Museum Siida is one of the most important Sámi organizations in Finland realizing Sámi self-government as prescribed in the Finnish constitution among *Sámediggi* (Sámi Parliament), *Sámi Oahpabusguovddáš* (Sámi Educational Centre) and *Yle Sápmi* (Sámi Radio).

The right to self-representation has been an important part of the Sámi ethno-political struggle and cultural awakening. According to the Sámi scholars, Professor Veli-Pekka Lehtola and the Senior Lecturer Anni-Siiri Länsman state that the Sámi started a Sámi ethno-political movement after Second World War to fight for Sámi rights. In the movement the Sámi built a shared, collective Sámi identity and a new Sámi representation, that were used in Sámi politics but also in general in the struggle for Sámi rights. This ethno-political Sámi nation building process created a Sámi self-reflection to oppose the Sámi representations that had positioned the Sámi people in a subjugated and marginalized position. These representations were made by non-indigenous majority and presented for example in museums (Lehtola and Länsman 2012,

8 In alphabetical order: Árran, Davi álbmogiid dáláziid musea, Deanu Musea, Gállogieddi, Guovdageainnu gilišillju, Jáhkovuona mearrasámi musea, Porsánggu musea, Saviomusea, Sæmjen Sijte, Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat, Várdobaiki, Várjjat Sámi Musea, Ávv Saa'mi Mu'zei

13; 16). Part of the process for self-representations was to found Sámi institutions. In the struggle to keep their culture alive, the Sámi established museums to preserve the Sámi heritage, to make Sámi culture more visible and to strengthen Sámi identity. The Sámi used museum and museum exhibitions to make the new Sámi based concepts visible and known.

The opportunity for the Sámi to reach any higher education has opened first in the latter half of the 20th century and the history of academic Sámi museum professionals is even younger than the Sámi museum. Even today there is only a handful of Sámi and/or Sámi speaking academic museum professionals in Finland and the situation is only slightly better in Norway and Sweden. I have worked in the Sámi Museum Siida since 2005, first in collections and since 2016 as curator for exhibitions. As well as I was the first Sámi and Sámi speaking museum professional in the Sámi Museum Siida and in Finland. The situation is slowly improving and in 2017, Sámi Museum Siida employs four academic museum professionals, where of three are Sámi.

As indigenous museum, also indigenous museum work is a young idea and the number of indigenous museum professionals is small. To have Sámi museum professionals opens the possibility to introduce to the museum world the Sámi culture, practices, worldview and language in a new scale. The Sámi museum as institution in Finland today is quite stable and there are resources, time, educated personal and competence to start implement Sáminess to the colonial institution museum. We, the Sámi, are still in the beginning of the discussion of decolonization and indigenization as well as what is a Sámi museum and how to leave behind museum's colonial legacy and museum practices that have undervalued Sámi knowledge, values and perspectives. Earlier, in most of the cases, non-indigenous museum methodologies and policies have been transferred to Sámi museum context directly, as that has been the only known way to work in a museum. For example, collection catalogues in the Sámi Museum Siida are in Finnish instead of Sámi language and intangible and tangible heritage, for example handicraft objects and handicraft skills or cultural environments and Sámi traditional music connected to a certain area, are seen disconnected and segregated to different institutions against the Sámi holistic understanding of cultural heritage.

First now there is time and resources start to evaluate what is the Sámi way to do museum work. I state, that in collaboration with the Sámi community, the Sámi museums must combine the museum institution and the Sámi practices, needs and values, to regenerate museum to work for the Sámi and to fulfil the needs of the Sámi. We must ponder what we can keep from

the European museum tradition, what can we learn from the museums and museum policies of the other indigenous peoples and what we must create by ourselves, based on Sámi culture.

Defining cultural environment, collision between indigenous and non-indigenous understandings

A good example of collisions of indigenous and non-indigenous understandings is the definition of cultural environment. Cultural environment is a term that describes the various forms of culture born out of interaction between humans and the natural environment and the phases it has gone through during the ages (Magga 2013, 246). The concept of a Sámi cultural environment was first introduced by Sámi archaeologist Audhild Schanche (2002). According to Schanche, the Sámi cultural environment is the Sámi way to see and experience landscape and environment. Sámi cultural environment is connected to Sámi worldview, customs, livelihoods and traditions and it is in between the two western concepts cultural environment and natural environment (*ibid.*, 157–159). Later, the Sámi researcher Päivi Magga has studied the concept Sámi cultural landscape. According to her a central value in the Sámi culture and worldview is to leave as few traces to the environment as possible. Therefore, for an outsider who emphasizes a cultural landscape as something modified by humans, the land of the Sámi may seem like a desolated natural view, a wilderness, without visible signs of human activity (Magga 2013, 246). According to Magga (*ibid.*) the Sámi cultural environment is a comprehensive entity,

including the landscape itself, the people and their trades and social networks, as well as the language used to talk about it, and to distribute information, experiences and feelings. Even the senses are present: the landscape smells, sounds, and feels different according to what time of year it is. To the Sámi, the world is a history book which speaks continuously of the events of the past. Holiness and divinity are also present in the world.

The Sámi cultural environment Magga describes has several layers. The first layer consists of the archaeological remains, the remains of the lives of our ancestors, for example dwelling sites dating to prehistoric to historic times. The second layer consists of built environments, the remains of the generations before us, as buildings, roads or for example reindeer round up corrals.

In addition to these tangible layers of cultural landscape there is also layer of immaterial and intangible heritage, what Magga calls spiritual landscape. This spiritual landscape consists of stories, memories, myths, toponyms and yoicks related to the places as well as traditional knowledge as the knowledge where to pick berries and where to cut hay for your shoes (Magga 2013, 11–13). It is the oral traditions, traditional knowledge and lore connected to the landscape, that give the Sámi cultural environment its meaning.

Sámi cultural environment may be invisible even for an expert of cultural environments or museum professional working with Sámi heritage, if the person does not know the Sámi language. Therefore, the Sámi cultural environments are often not recognized or acknowledged as cultural environments as understood in non-Sámi definition. How we define what is cultural heritage and what is nature, as well what is the relation between tangible and intangible cultural heritage affects our possibilities to preserve, collect and study indigenous heritage equally to non-indigenous heritage. Thus, a significant part of Sámi cultural heritage is unequally mapped and too often left without protection and the Sámi heritage becomes underrepresented in museum, as well in collections as in exhibitions and research.

Conflicting understandings, the kinship in the Sámi community

“Go sápmelaš muitala iežas birra, de dábálaččat dállan dadjá man sobkii gullá ovdalgo muitala namas ja makkár virgi lea. Norgalaš muitala namas ja makkár virgi lea.” (When presenting her/himself, a Sámi usually tells first to which families (s)he belongs to, the name or occupation. A Norwegian tells her/his name and work position)⁹ (Solbakk and Solbakk 2005, 43). By his slightly generalized example, the Sámi scholar and cultural expert Aage Solbakk describes in the fundamental difference between indigenous and non-indigenous understanding of family and its importance to one’s position. For the Sámi the family connection is most important, it positions a person to the network of kinships the Sámi society is built on. Sámi affiliations, the relationships, families and kinships inside Sámi community, are an example how indigenous and non-indigenous worlds and worldviews can differ. Connections, relationships and the underlying networks of an indigenous society can be hard to notice for an outsider and even invisible for a non-Sámi.

9 Translation from Northern Sámi by the author

My Sámi name is Luobbal-Sámmol-Aimo Áile. It is a patronym consisting of my father's and grandfather's names and of the name of the place my family comes from *Mierašluoppal*. In addition to my professional identity as a museum curator in a Sámi museum, I am a Sámi woman, doctoral student, mother of three daughters, spouse of a reindeer herder and a *duojár*, traditional Sámi hand crafter. By my grandmother's side, I am part of the family *Helander* from the river valley *Deatnu* (Teno/Tana) and by my grandfather I am a *Vulleš*, member of one of the biggest Sámi families from the river valley *Ohcejohka* (Utsjoki). My mother is Finnish and non-indigenous and almost half of my life I have lived outside Sápmi, in Finnish majority society. Because of my spouse and children, I am connected to the big reindeer herding Sámi families. Northern Sámi is my mother tongue, but I speak a different dialect than my family, because I grew up in *Guovdageaidnu* (Kautokeino), Norway. My multi-ethnic background and the fact that I am river valley Sámi from *Ohcejohka* married to a reindeer herding family in Anár (Inari) forces me to understand that there is always at least two ways to say, understand and value things.

I have worked in the Sámi Museum Siida as curator since 2005, first in collections and since 2016 I have been responsible for exhibitions and museum education. A great share of my daily work consists of collaboration or developing collaboration structures with the Sámi communities, Sámi individuals or with other Sámi organizations. As I interact within the Sámi community, my family and other connections and kinships are the challenges and advantages I must face. They define my position, who I am and where I belong, even whether others are willing to co-operate and collaborate with me and the museum I represent.

For the Sámi kinship and family is base of existence and the meaning of family and kinship differs from non-indigenous patrilinear nuclear family concept. The importance on kinship can be spotted also in the Sámi languages. The Sámi have more names for different kinships than for example in Indo-European languages. For example, the word uncle can be translated in Northern Sámi to *eabki* (ego's father's older brother), *čeahci* (ego's father's younger brother), *eanu* (ego's mother's brother) or even *máhka* (a man's brother-in-law). According to Aage Solbakk this rich kinship terminology tells that the Sámi pay close attention to kinship and it has a prominent meaning to Sámi society. He continues, that the meaning of family and kinship has diminished as the influence of the Nordic welfare state has increased in Sápmi, but still knowing one's kinships and even distant relatives

is something the Sámi consider valuable and a tradition passed on to next generation (Solbakk and Solbakk 2005, 45).

To base one's identity and position to interconnections with others is not unique to the Sámi people, but typical for indigenous peoples. As for example indigenous scholars Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (Alfred and Corntassel 2005, 609) write:

Building on this notion of a dynamic and interconnected concept of Indigenous identity constituted in history, ceremony, language and land, we consider relationships (or kinship networks) to be at the core of an authentic Indigenous identity. Clearly, it is the need to maintain respectful relationships that guides all interactions and experiences with community, clans, families, individuals, homelands, plants, animals etc. in the Indigenous cultural ideal.

The understanding of family and kinship is one of the main differences that separate Sámi and non-Sámi and indigenous and non-indigenous communities.

For the Sámi kinship is the base for categorizing members of society. A Sámi primarily represents his/her family and the attributes connected to that certain family. I'll clarify this by taking my own family as an example. I'm a *Vulleš* and the other Sámis will interpret that it means that I'm slow, pensive and keen to study and read. It also tells, that I identify myself strongly to a certain area in *Obcejohka* and I might have problems to get along with some families, because of the conflicts of the past and as our ways to behave and communicate are so different. When I meet a Sámi unknown to me or who does not know me, I need to introduce myself and tell where I come from and who are my parents and grandparents. The other will bring forward the same themes and together we will try to find common nominators: how we are connected, are we related, or do we have common ancestry. All this may or may not affect how people interact with me, what knowledge they are willing to share and whether there will be any co-operation. To be part of the community provides us with a special insight, but it is also the greatest challenge. The possibilities to collaboration and the form and outcome of the collaboration are based on my position in the community. This kind of connection building is essential in Sámi context and if you don't know your family and ancestry, you will be disjointed from the community you wish to collaborate. In that case you must find other means to overcome the gap between yourself and the institution you represent and the community member you need in collaboration. In non-indigenous world – especially in professional

connections – it is even seen inappropriate to bring forward one's family connections instead of career merits or titles and it may raise suspicion of favouring relatives. This separation of positioning oneself should not be seen as an obstacle, but as an example how different worldviews can complete each other. The first step is respect and equality between indigenous and non-indigenous understandings. Collaborate on an equal basis with indigenous communities requires museum professionals to adapt behaviour, use of language and even the way they present themselves. If the relationship with the community as museum worker and member of the community is respectful, as described by Alfred and Corntassel, the probability for an outcome that is beneficial both for the museum and for the community improves.

In the museum world, and in everywhere in Western academia, a researcher and museum worker outside the community is seen neutral and objective, without affiliations to the community in question. To be an objective researcher is seen something to pursue and it is even required in some occasions. Not to be objective enough has been a handicap for indigenous professionals working with their own culture and they are not seen neutral enough. An outsider has not the downsides of belonging to some family or language group. Compared to apparent neutrality of an outsider, an insider has the cultural competence to interpret and understand the culture and cultural phenomena is seen less important and to be compensated by studying the community and the culture concerned. Looking from the indigenous viewpoint, to be an indigenous person working with your own community has many advantages, that defeat the benefits of being neutral. Within one's own people, communication is easy; the insider shares a common language and cultural background with the community. One is a known member of the community and has the authority and the capability to evaluate the reliability of the cultural knowledge that is shared in the collaboration.

In the case of indigenous cultures, museum and its museum professionals are outsiders and thus in non-indigenous understanding seen to be objective, more qualified and better-informed than indigenous individuals living in the culture. What is neglected here is the role of the outsider as non-indigenous. The position of any non-indigenous in an indigenous community or collaboration is complicated by the history of all the former outsiders and by the burdened relationship between non-indigenous and the indigenous culture. Without reconciliation the outsider museum professional inevitable retain and carry on the dark legacy of earlier museum professionals and their deeds. This legacy will affect reliability of information collected

and all collaboration between the indigenous community and non-indigenous museum.

The non-indigenous knowledge and understanding of indigenous culture is one version how to understand and interpret indigenous heritage and culture. Again, indigenous insight gives possibilities to collect and share different perspective to the same heritage and culture, only seen from an indigenous viewpoint. The more knowledge we can collect together, the better and versatile the picture of a culture will be. As for so long the indigenous knowledge and understanding has been neglected in museum, the indigenoussness should be taken as a starting point for all work in an indigenous museum, as a compensation for the situation earlier. We indigenous peoples should have equal possibilities present our views of our culture in museum. As Sámi scholar Luobbal-Sámmol Sámmol concludes: “*Ii guhstege sáhtte duhtat dan govvi iežas birra, maid nuppit ráhkadit iežaset luhtte, muhto juohkehaš berre beassat duddjot iežáš oaivila iežas birra ja oažžut friijavuoda oaidnit nuppiidje iežas čalmmiiguin.*” (Nobody can be content with the picture of oneself, that others have made, but everyone should have the opportunity to form their own opinion of themselves and have the freedom to see others through their own eyes)¹⁰ (Aikio 1992, 10).

Conclusion

Like the old museum buildings with staircases are not accessible for a person using a wheelchair, museum as an institution, its structures, exhibitions and collections are not culturally accessible for indigenous peoples. As well as we need to build accessible museum buildings and renovate the old ones, we need to change the museum and its structures to be equally open for indigenous knowledge, understanding and worldviews.

In this paper I have discussed the history of Sámi museum and museum’s colonial legacy. I have presented two cases, where according to my opinion, indigenous Sámi understanding, and non-indigenous museum understanding collide. The collision of two worlds ends that the suppressed and marginalized culture, as the indigenous Sámi, and its worldview, knowledge and understandings is not taken in consideration on an equal basis. The result is, that the Sámi ways to communicate, define cultural heritage or even Sámi heritage itself

10 Translation from Northern Sámi by the author

is nor recognized and underrepresented in museum, museum collections and exhibitions. The long-term consequence may be, that Sámi heritage will be not be protected as well as majority heritage, which may even effect to the vitality and of the Sámi culture and in actualizing the Sámi rights as indigenous people.

Throughout the museum is a need to look back and admit and reconcile the unjust museum practices. At the same time museum and museum work must look on to the future and consider the role and possibilities of the museum in future. I see that in this process of making museum culturally accessible, the indigenous museum professionals are the key factor. Because of our academic museum education, we know museum from the inside, its history, its advantages and disadvantages as well as the discussions and discourses of the museum field. At the same time, we are indigenous individuals working with our own culture. We know our community, its strengths and its traumas and the needs and hopes of our people. By combining these two we can change the museum, indigenize it to an indigenous museum that has indigenous values, worldviews and needs as its foundation.

According to the ICOM statutes museum is “a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.” (ICOM 2007, article 3, section 1). Though the colonial history of museum makes the relationship between indigenous peoples and museum complex, in the very end, the museum and indigenous peoples have similar the aims and objectives. Museum is a memory institution with capability and ability to remember far longer than individuals. The purpose of museum is to conserve knowledge and again communicate it back to people. The indigenous peoples want to conserve their knowledge and keep indigenous culture alive, take care of the traditions, language, worldview and values and pass them on to next generation. Only the means and emphases differ.

I state, that indigenous museum professionals can be a bridge between indigenous communities and museum. As members of two worlds, we can create understanding and cooperation beneficial for both sides. Indigenous museum professionals can be mediators in the process of indigenizing museum but also change indigenous communities’ attitudes towards museum. And maybe in the future there will no longer be two contested worlds working with indigenous heritage, but one team working together in a more equal post-colonial world.

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