

***Idioms of Sámi Health and Healing*. Edited by Barbara Helen Miller. Volume 2, Patterns of Northern Traditional Healing, Earle Waugh, Series Editor. University of Alberta Press, 2015. 220 pp.**
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Resiliency. The chapters in this second volume of the *Patterns of Northern Traditional Healing* series illustrate the incredible strength of Sámi people against centuries of colonization and oppression: they have survived through adaptation and finding the balance point between two disparate world views—that of the traditional Sámi and Norwegian modernity. As explained by Nymo (Chapter Eight), at the intersection between old and new world views, Sámi have found a new direction. In post-colonial times, cultural suppression has never completely ended, but there has been a creation of new frames of living, following *birget*—finding ways to do/manage, or, in other words, adapt.

The chapters in this book discuss the importance of traditional practices as a means for adaptation to current, changing times: coping with climate change, resource exploration and development, and the socio-cultural and economic changes that Indigenous communities across the Circumpolar North have to face. In many cases, the articles use stories to illustrate the tensions between Sámi world views and practices, and those of modern Norwegian society—particularly with respect to health care and healing. This provides the reader with an instant connection to the information through storytelling, building a relationship with the people who share their experiences. The use of stories gives a voice to those typically unheard; for example, through the eyes of Russian Sámi Elder women, the reader learns about the heavy impacts and disruptions on everyday life, and the experiences of displacement and restrictions from harvesting berries, fish, reindeer, and other food from the land.

The Introduction sets the context of northern Scandinavia with a brief history of the Sámi and colonization. Later chapters describe how assimilation policies of Norway in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries suppressed Sámi language, culture, and religions, and how their ways to think, practise, and speak were challenged. Norwegianization put extreme pressure on Sámi world views, and any resistance through being

Sámi and practising Sámi culture, was perceived to be an attempt to stop modern development.

The book recognizes the diversity of Sámi, depending on the region, and thus the diversity of healing practices. Most chapters provide historical contexts of the different regions, and provide the reader with a picture of the uniqueness of the different areas. Chapter Seven (Kiil) discusses discrepancies in the health care system in northern Norway, particularly for Sámi-speaking patients, despite it being a public system; the chapter also looks at differences in levels of the mental health of Sámi compared to the general Norwegian population. Indigenous peoples in Canada face similar systemic issues within the public health care system, and there are discrepancies in levels of care. Kiil notes that, generally, Sámi do not face the same degree of health-related challenges as Indigenous people in Canada, United States, Russia, or Greenland, which some attribute to acculturation (though the matter is more complex, as Kiil outlines). However, as described throughout the book, Sámi face many discriminatory challenges in health care, like other Indigenous populations.

For Sámi, traditional healing and cultural identity are intimately connected. A loss of language and ethnic identity has resulted in changes in world view and a reduction in the use of traditional healing. Like most Indigenous perspectives on health, Sámi health and well-being is a complex, interconnected, and holistic context that intertwines emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental aspects, and is deeply rooted in their surrounding land and environment. Woven throughout the book is the overarching theme of the importance of understanding context for Indigenous knowledge and, in particular, Sámi healing practices. The contexts are described in each chapter, distinguishing between insider/outsider world views and perceptions of healing practices. For example, Chapter Five (Andersen et al.) uses examples to demonstrate multiple perspectives (patient, medical doctor, traditional healer) and discusses the different perceptions related to health and healing. The authors highlight the difference between modern medicine and traditional healing. In modern medicine, the one seeking healing is not involved in the healing process—a prescription is provided. With traditional medicine, the patient participates and is an integral part of the process. Healing is based on the level of engagement and participation with the healer. The users and practitioners are co-dependent, in order to keep traditional healing practices alive. The healer and user share common world views in that they believe in the use of traditional healing practices.

For Indigenous peoples in northern Canada and elsewhere, there is also a history of lack of recognition for, and fear of using, traditional medicines. This continues today with many Western medical institutions not supporting the use of traditional Indigenous healing practices. The practice of traditional medicine remains hidden in many cases and is largely secretive. In Norway, up until 2004, it was a criminal offence to use traditional healing practices in lieu of professional medicine. Today, traditional Sámi healers will ask first if the patient has seen a doctor before they treat. Myrvoll (Chapter Three) details the differences between Western (school) medicine and traditional medicine and how perceptions of illness are connected to one's world view. School medicine views illness as an isolated physiological phenomenon, while traditional medicine understands and explains illness in relation to social and cultural conditions. Today, it is common practice for Sámi to integrate both systems; school (Western) medicine for diagnosing, and traditional medicine for healing.

Mathisen (Chapter One) outlines the history and context of Sámi folk medicine and how it was established as a field of scholarly research. He discusses in depth how, whether intentioned or not, Sámi traditional healing practices were ripped from local contexts and appropriated for new ones. Researchers of Sámi folklore separated Sámi traditional healing practices into the empirical and the magical—they attempted to pull out what could be validated by Western science, separating and isolating the healing knowledge out of its context. The re-contextualization of Sámi medicine has created new meanings and intentions of the Indigenous knowledge.

The book also describes the power and sacredness of traditional healing knowledge and the belief systems connected to it. Chapter Two (Haetta) explores the secrecy norm in traditional healing and the reasons for concealment—healing knowledge is grounded in religion and belief systems. As described in Chapter Three (Myrvoll), healing powers are perceived to be passed on generationally or as Christian gifts of grace. Healing knowledge is a powerful knowledge that cannot be treated lightly. It can be lost if the holder of the knowledge is not careful, shares publically, charges for services, or uses it out of context. Healing knowledge can be used for evil as well as good, and if it is not used in a good way, there can be consequences.

With the long history of practices forbidden by Christian missionaries, the ancient traditional Sámi shamanism (*noajdde*) is now gone. The role of healer has changed from religious expert and ritual master, to healer.

The Sámi healing practices today are integrated with Christian cultural heritage, demonstrating *birget* and the Sámi finding ways to adapt. Traditional health and healing are closely connected to religion and Sámi world view. It is a holistic perspective in which healing is about the relationships between the individual and their community—a broader social, cultural, and environmental context.

Primarily written by Sámi scholars or those who have been embedded in Sámi culture, the book provides a glimpse into the complexities of Sámi health and healing, the constraints and challenges that Sámi have had to endure over centuries, and their resilient, adaptive nature to ensure that traditional healing practices and world views are not lost, but are responsive to a changing world.

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