



- SKOLT SAAMI CRAFTS AND DRESSES -

Skolt Saami crafts and dresses are powered by nature

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SÄI'MM – SKOLT SAAMI NETWORK 2021

The Skolts' traditional dress and handicrafts are inspired by the nature of the North. These skillful displays of artistry used to be created with only natural materials: reindeer sinew for sewing thread, reindeer bones to make tools, and spruce roots to weave containers or rope. The collection at Ä'vv Saa'mi mu'zei in Neiden, Norway presents both the history of the Skolts and their handicraft tradition, which is still going strong. One of the most beautiful and impressive masterpieces of Skolt handicraft is the headcovering worn by married Skolt women, the šaamšik. The headcoverings, belts, and accessories decorated with glass beads are one of the most distinguishing parts of Skolt dress.

SÄÄ'MPIHTTÂZ, WEARING THE SKOLT SAAMI IDENTITY



Saami clothing means a great deal to the person wearing it and is thus treated with great respect. These garments embody the Saami identity. They are very personal pieces of clothing, yet at the same time, they are part of each family's tradition. The significance and value of the clothing is difficult to put into words, but then again, the Saami do not necessarily need to do so.

Saami clothing is a visible part of the culture of the indigenous Saami and it plays an important role in Saami communities. Moreover, the tradition of wearing these clothes has continued unbroken throughout history, even though there have been some quieter periods too.

The umbrella term for Skolt Saami clothing is **sää'mpihttâz**. While many people might have seen it called **gákti**, this is a Northern Saami word. The Inari Saami call their own clothing **sämimááccuh**.



Saami clothing has changed from being used every day to being worn mainly on special occasions. When the Saami want to respect their own culture and the event they are participating in, Saami clothing is a natural choice. Dressed in Saami clothing, the Saami primarily represent their family, region, and their people. The individualism of the West does not recognize cultures where community is more important and instead shines the spotlight on the individual. The Saami worldview with its unbroken chain of generations is very different from that of Western societies.

With the rise of Saami culture, the appreciation for Saami clothing has also risen. The interest that young Saami have shown in their own roots is a source of hope that these traditions will flourish once again.



The traditional clothing of Skolt Saami women

The clothing of the Skolt Saami women consists of two separate pieces: a skirt or **sää'mkáhtt** in Skolt Saami and a blouse or **kuurta** in Skolt Saami. Their broadcloth coat is called **sää'm-määccaĥ** in Skolt Saami.

The headcoverings of Skolt Saami women have been passed on from one generation to the next largely unchanged. They also indicate whether or not the woman wearing them has not yet

been married, is married, or is a widow.

The **pee'rvesĥ**, which is worn by unmarried Skolt Saami girls, is given to girls around the age of 15. She will wear



her pee'rvėsķ until she marries. At traditional Skolt Saami wedding ceremonies, the bride's godmother and her closest female relatives will exchange the bride's pee'rvėsķ for a **šaamšīķ** and fasten it on her head the way it is supposed to be worn. The šaamšīķ is like a crown with its beautiful and skilled beadwork.

During the last stages of her life, a Skolt Saami woman may start to wear the undecorated, modest headdress called **po'vdneķ**. This signals to the community that she no longer wishes to get remarried.



According to tradition, the headcoverings of Skolt Saami women must be covered with a scarf when they are outside of the house.

Traditionally, bangs are tucked under the headcovering and the rest of the hair is braided into one or two plaits behind the head, depending on which headcovering is being worn.

In the 21st century, Skolt Saami women have more relaxed rules for how they should dress and can wear their pee'rvėsķ or šaamšīķ without a scarf and even leave their hair loose.

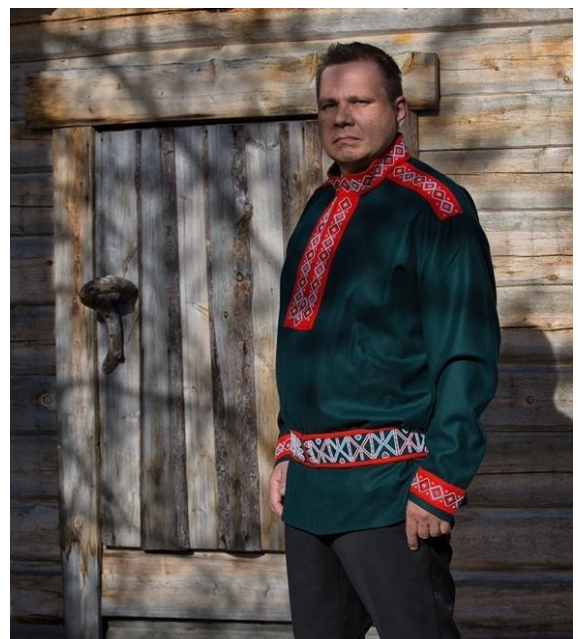


The traditional clothing of skolt men

In the past, the clothing of Skolt Saami men has largely been based on it being practical for carrying out their livelihoods, moving in nature, and staying warm.

The **piăcck**, a long overcoat made from reindeer pelts with the fur side facing out and the **kamspuus**, leg coverings made from reindeer pelts and used together with fur boots, kept Skolt men warm in the freezing cold winter weather. Reindeer herders these days, however, no longer wear these pieces of clothing when reindeer herding as modern technical outerwear has since replaced them.

The **măăccaķ** or **săă'm-măăccaķ**, men's pullover coats made of broadcloth, have in recent decades become the signature piece for Skolt Saami men. The



model has been adapted from the pullover coats of other Sámi people and is decorated with the type of beadwork the Skolt Saami's are known for.



Photos: Kalle Kallio

SAA'MIJÂNNAM AT Ä'VV SAA'MI MU'ZEI

Let's take a small tour of the Ä'vv Skolt Saami museum in Njauddâm Neiden, Taarr Norway.

Sää'mvönnâz the skolt saami boat



Sää'mvönnâz are traditional sewn boats that play a central role in the Skolt Saami way of life. They were used for travelling, fishing, and carrying cargo.

The boats are made of pine, their planks sewn together with hemp, and their nails made of wood. Before hemp was available, the Skolt Saami used roots as stitching material.

The boat on display is from the 19th century, probably used on the rivers and lakes of the Paččjokk Pasvik valley.

The Sámi Museum Siida and The Sámi Education Institute have revitalized the traditional Skolt Saami root-sewn boat together with the Skolt Saami community in Če'vetjäu'rr Sevettijärvi.

A video of a root-sewn boat being made has been recorded for the project and uploaded to YouTube, where it can be watched at <https://youtu.be/ZeZd9dNVKes>

Ķe'rres Sled



The Ķe'rres sled is from Ķeeu'ŋes in Paččjokksijdd Boris Gleb in the Pasvik valley, and it is made of pine and birch.

The celebratory harness pictured was put on top of the regular harness on special occasions like weddings and holidays.

Säi'mm Fishing net

The säi'mm fishing net is made of colored cotton thread, with sinkers and floats made from birch bark. The sinkers are small pouches of birch bark filled with stones.

The net was stored in a njölläi'tt Skolt Saami storehouse in sää'msijdd Skolt Saami Village in Njauddâm Neiden. The fishing net pictured is approximately from the post-war period.



Pie'ccuäddčuu'k̄k̄ Baskets made of pine roots



These baskets are made of pine roots. The Skolt Saami are well known for their beautiful root baskets.

The material is collected in njâälläi'ğğ, phloem time the time in early summer when it is easiest to clean the roots. Because the summer months are so busy, the roots are often rolled up into vuä'ddvipšš, root coils and stored until winter when there is time to make the containers.

ABOUT Ä'VV SAA'MI MU'ZEI

Ä'vv is a Skolt Saami museum in Njauddâm Neiden, Taarr Norway. Njauddâm Neiden is the westernmost of the seven traditional Skolt Saami sijdd districts.

Njauddâm Neiden is an old Skolt Saami summer settlement. The museum aims to strengthen the Skolt Saami culture, language, and identity, as well as to spread knowledge about the Skolt Saami past and present.

Ä'vv museum's main exhibition Saa'mijânnam The Skolt Saami land is 200m² and 300 objects are on display.

