

SÁMI DREAMS

Portraits of Resilience in the Norwegian Arctic

The Sámi people of northern Europe live with the daily knowledge that most of the world has no idea who they are. For centuries they have been voiceless, confronted by discrimination, oppression and assimilation. Some know them as, "those reindeer people up north," or just as Lapps. They are, in fact, northern Europe's only indigenous people, but they call themselves Sámi, and are not just reindeer herders.

Of some 80,000 Sámi living across northern Scandinavia, Finland and Russia, half live in Norway. They lead modern lives and no longer dwell in reindeer-skin teepees and huts, but their colorful regional costumes have survived. Although Lutheranism long ago supplanted their animist belief system, the ancient chant called *joik* (pronounced yoik) still channels the personalities of people, animals and nature into song. While less than 10% are herdsman, the Sámi revere reindeer as a cultural touchstone.

In just a few decades, the Sámi have leapt from second-class status, with schools that banned their language, to become a semi-autonomous people with parliaments in Norway, Sweden and Finland. While they now teach Sámi in schools and broadcast and publish in the Northern Sámi tongue, they are grappling with new cultural threats such as mining and energy development on ancestral lands. With a front row seat to climate change, the Sámi have witnessed rapid shifts in ecosystems north of the Arctic Circle. From their perch atop Europe, the Sámi have much to say about both climate and cultural change in northern Scandinavia, yet they have only recently found their voice.

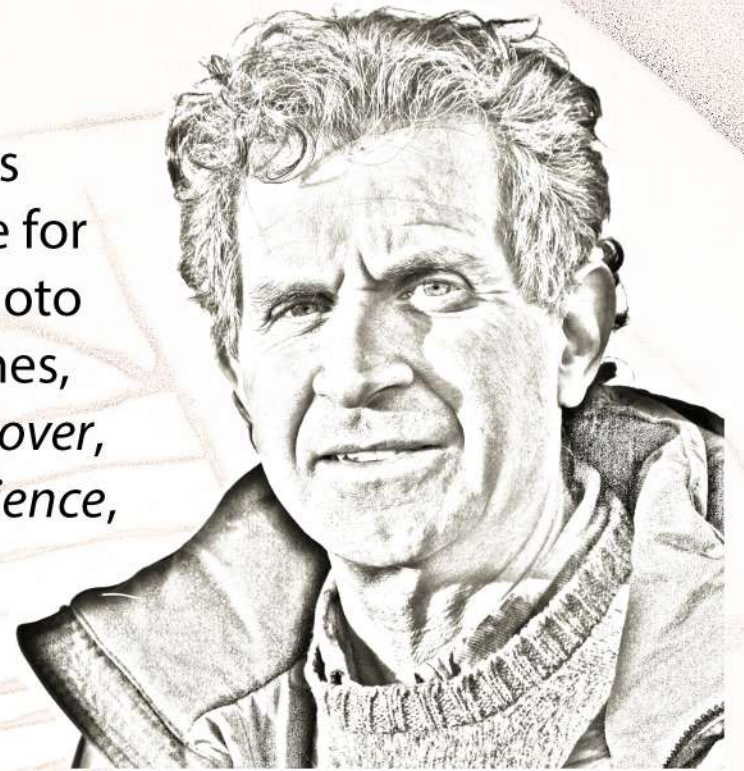
This collection of portraits and interviews, created during a month-long journey across northern Norway, is intended to give the Sámi more voice, a stage for speaking frankly and directly to Americans and Scandinavians alike, sharing their concerns about a world that is swiftly changing around them.

Welcome to Sámi Dreams, welcome to the inner realm of a resilient people who have weathered harsh adversity for many centuries and emerged with a rich culture, an intact language and a unique approach to living.



An Artist's Dream

Randall Hyman is a photographer and journalist who has covered the environment, culture and science worldwide for over 40 years, from equatorial climes to the Arctic. His photo essays and articles have appeared in a variety of magazines, including *Smithsonian*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Discover*, *American History*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Scandinavian Review*, *Science*, *British Heritage*, *The Atlantic*, *Wildlife Conservation* and *National Wildlife*. He has exhibited in galleries, museums and institutions across North America.



After graduating from Indiana University Bloomington with an interdepartmental degree in journalism, photography and natural sciences, Randall began his career in Iceland covering volcanic eruptions and geothermal energy. In the 1980s, he changed his focus to Brazil, investigating wildlife trafficking, deforestation and bloody land wars in the Amazon. After many magazine assignments in Africa, Asia, Europe and South America, he turned northward once more to explore the environmental and cultural impacts of climate change in the Arctic.

As a Fulbright Scholar in Norway, Randall spent four months in 2013 traveling across the northern coast, then exploring the fjords and glaciers of Svalbard and finally sailing within 500 miles of the North Pole in search of pack ice. As a 2015 Alicia Patterson Foundation Fellow, he was drawn to the impact of climate change on Norway's human population, especially its indigenous Sámi, whose culture and economy are inextricably linked to nature and reindeer.

Determined to tell their story, Randall spent one month traveling across Finnmark in 2018 photographing a range of Sámi individuals, from herdsman to artists to students to politicians. With a portable black background and single studio light, he meticulously lit people in their personal environments, from snowstorms on frozen lakes to the halls of the Sámi Parliament. After each portrait, he spent hours interviewing his subjects, letting them speak without interruption. Their stories were remarkably candid and intimate, from heartwarming to heartbreaking, giving the outside world a rare insight into their dreams, past, present and future.

The artist is indebted to those who believed in and supported this project from its inception: The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Washington, Innovation Norway, ReiGN (Reindeer husbandry In a Globalizing North), NordForsk and the many Sámi people who welcomed him into their homes and hearts. Norway House of Minneapolis produced this exhibit and its North American tour.



Norwegian Embassy



Getting the Picture

Sometimes seeing is believing, but for some of the improbable photos in this exhibit, eyewitnesses were rarely more than a few curious reindeer or amused weather gods.

In the middle of a photo session on a frozen lake, a winter storm suddenly descended, pelting the ice fisherman with sleet and covering the photo lights and cloth photo background with snow. On another occasion, while a member of parliament posed at the seashore, Randall's photo background suddenly transformed into a kite as stiff ocean winds yanked it free of the boulders weighing it down. Traveling around often meant hopping on a snowmobile with photo equipment stacked in a sledge amid bags of moss to feed reindeer.

Kind-hearted hosts watched with a mix of shock and fascination as Randall disassembled and rearranged their living rooms and kitchens--moving paintings, furniture, lamps and pots to set up a single light and photo background. Without the trust and goodwill of all those who welcomed him into their lives, this exhibit would have been impossible.

The tools were simple: a Canon 5D Mark III body, 24-105mm f/4 lens, a studio light head adapted for AC and DC power, an umbrella light dome, black cloth and a portable background stand. Photos were shot at ISO 100 with the smallest lens aperture possible to achieve maximum sharpness. Prints were made by Novacolor of St. Louis on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Maxima silver halide photographic paper with LightJet technology.

NovaColor
www.novacolor.com



To go into the field with Randall for 26 seconds, scan this QR code:

