

# Näätämö River Collaborative Management Efforts by the Skolt Sámi

Dedicated to the life work of Leif Rantala



In 2009, by applying self-reflection and future visioning based on Indigenous knowledge, the Sevettijärvi Skolt Sámi developed a community-based climate adaptation plan. Consensus emerged that the challenges faced by the reindeer, while significant, are manageable. Skolt Sámi identified their customary salmon fishery in the Näätämö river catchment area as a much greater concern and installed the *Näätämö River Collaborative Management Plan*. These posters describe these efforts.

The project is coordinated by the *Snowchange Cooperative* ([www.snowchange.org](http://www.snowchange.org)) and the *Saa'mi Nue'tt Cultural Organisation* and funded for the most part by the United Nations University

– Traditional Knowledge Initiative, UN Association of Finland and the Nordic Council of Ministers.



Photo: Sun above the lake Rautujärvi, Näätämö watershed. Gleb Raygorodetsky, 2012.

Photo: Lake trout from Sevettijärvi area. Chris McNeave, 2014.

Text: Tero and Kaisu Mustonen, Snowchange Cooperative, 2015.

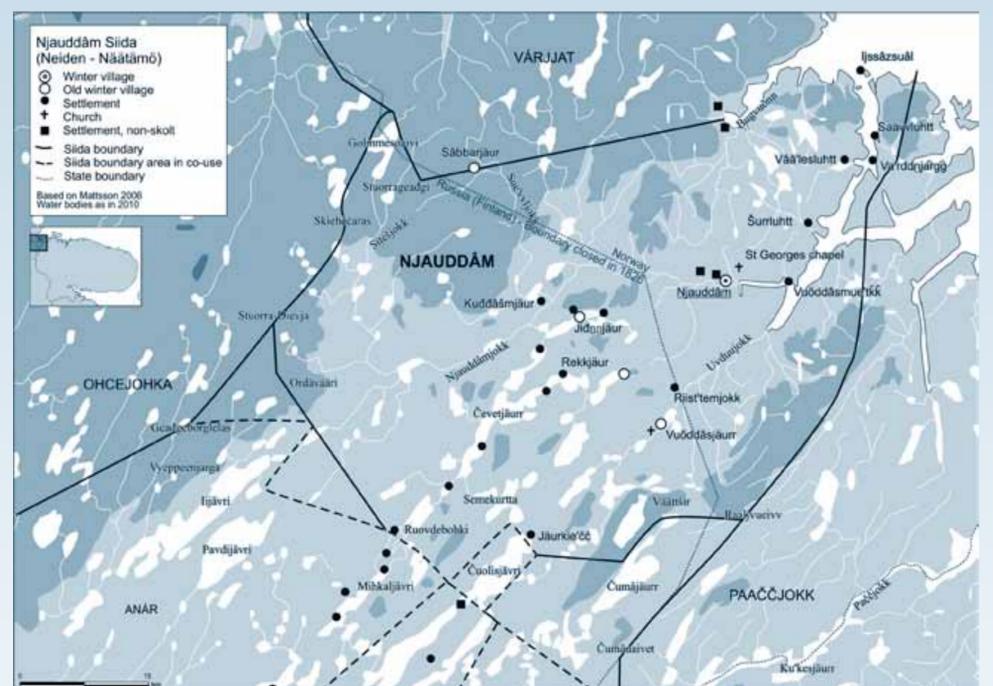
# Practical Steps to Advance Co-Management



**Näätämö River Collaborative Management Plan** is first of its kind in Finland. In the first five years of its existence, the focus has rested on a deep dialogue between Skolt Sámi Indigenous knowledge and the latest research. Collaborative, hands-on measures include for example harvests of predator fish along the deep pools of the Näätämö River to increase salmon productivity in addition to daily monitoring of habitat, fish health and traditional weather observations and forecasts.

Photo: Jouko Moshnikoff and Teijo Feodoroff at winter nets, Näätämö watershed. Gleb Raygorodetsky, 2014.

Text: Tero and Kaisu Mustonen, Snowchange Cooperative, 2015.



Historical land use territory and locations of the winter villages of the Näätämö sida. Adapted from the Eastern Sámi Atlas, 2011.

# Threats Can Be Addressed When People Work With the River, Together



**The Näätämö River**, a cross-border catchment area, is a healthy Atlantic Salmon river. It has always been a home stream of the various Skolt Sámi nations. Threats include severe climate fluctuations, which affect habitats and water levels, fish parasites, salmon farming along the coast of Norway and the releases from the close-by mining activities.



Solutions include for example restoration of spawning locations based on traditional knowledge, assessment of the role of freshwater mussels as key indicators and other innovations.

Photo: Näätämö River is the life stream of the Skolt Sámi peoples. Skolt Sámi Optic History Archives, 2014.

Photo: Paula Feodoroff holding two caught salmon, Näätämö watershed. Vladimir Feodoroff, 2012.

Text: Tero and Kaisu Mustonen, Snowchange Cooperative, 2015.

# Recognition of Traditional Sámi Uses of Lands and Waters Holds the Key to Success



**Traditional** land and water occupancy of the Skolt Sámi has informed scientists and management bodies of the ways different families still use the Näätamö watershed. The Skolts have preserved the Skolt Sámi Siida council (traditional village council) system, unbroken to contemporary times as an Indigenous decision-making body.



Photo: River Näätamö from salmon perspective. Skolt Sámi Optic History Archives, 2014.

Photo: The collaborative management efforts have benefitted from the use of archival photos to explore the cultural fisheries, such as the *käpälä*-style seining at Skolt Rapids, on the Norwegian side. Today the Finnish-speaking Kven-minority in Neiden, Norway, another essential group in the co-management efforts, practices it. National Board of Antiquities of Finland, 2014.



Photo: Traditional seasonal summer shelter of the Elder, knowledge holder, late Illep Jefremoff, Näätamö watershed. Skolt Sámi Optic History Archives, 2014.

Text: Tero and Kaisu Mustonen, Snowchange Cooperative, 2015.

# *Näätämö Is a Key to Language, Tradition, Subsistence and Culture*



**The relationship** the Skolts have with their river contains a variety of engagements including different harvested fish species, oral histories of place names, seasonal family pathways, handicrafts, songs and language. On-going salmon harvests renew the relationships with the river and simultaneously the Skolt knowledge, tradition and language. Recently, the Sámi have taken steps to limit their own cultural catch to make sure the number of salmon reaching spawning grounds increases.



Photo: Skolt Elder Vladimir Feodoroff holds up a freshly caught grayling on Näätämö river. Chris McNeave, 2014.

Photo: Late Elder Illep Jefremoff casts a traditional lure in September 2012. Gleb Raygorodetsky, 2012.

Text: Tero and Kaisu Mustonen, Snowchange Cooperative, 2015.

# Collaborative Management Has Opened International Possibilities Across the Arctic



**The Näätämö River Collaborative Management** project has received unprecedented international attention over the course of its existence. It has been covered in numerous local, national and international media including the *National Geographic*, *Our World 2.0* and *UNEP Live*. A sister project has been initiated along the Ponoï river, Murmansk, Russia. The keynote presentation of the *Arctic Observation Summit 2014* held in Helsinki, Finland focused on the Näätämö project. In September 2014 the Skolts hosted the *Festival of Northern Fishing Traditions* along Näätämö and in the village of Sevettijärvi.



Photo: Juha, Veikko and Vladimir Feodoroff, three brothers, set out to cast the seine net with Ivan Kalinin from the Khanty-Mansia region of Siberia during the Festival of Northern Fishing Traditions while local children await the catch in September 2014 in Sevettijärvi, Finland. Chris McNeave, 2014.

Photo: Siberians and Skolts pull in the seine. Chris McNeave, 2014.

Text: Tero and Kaisu Mustonen, Snowchange Cooperative, 2015.

# Festival of Fishing Traditions Celebrated First Five Years of the Work



**The Festival of Northern Fishing Traditions** included participants from the Kola, Luleå, Skolt and North Sámi, in addition to researchers and international Indigenous delegates from West Siberia (Khanty Mansia), Russia, Finland, the UK and Sweden. The United Nations

Environmental Programme has highlighted the Näätämö project in similar efforts globally as a best practice. In the five years of its existence the co-management efforts, while successfully having tackled revitalisation of habitats, governance and Indigenous culture and knowledge locally, have emerged as a shining beacon for a new style of management of natural resources in the Sámi areas and beyond in the Circumpolar and global contexts.

Photo: Participants of the Festival pull in the seine net. Chris McNeave, 2014.

Photo: Skolt Elder Vladimir Feodoroff smokes the catch together with Khanty knowledge holder Rimma Potpot from Western Siberia, Russia. Chris McNeave, 2014.

Text: Tero and Kaisu Mustonen, Snowchange Cooperative, 2015.