



# “SÁMI 'TRAIL OF TEARS' WALKING TRAIL”

The project “Sámi 'Trail of Tears' Walking Trail” aims to investigate how a walking trail that geographically follows the forced relocations of Sámi families during the first half of the 20th Century, could be imagined as a trail of reconciliation.

*More information  
about the project*



## **Background**

When Norway became independent in 1905 and closed the border to Sweden, the Swedish state decided to force hundreds of Sámi families to move from the very north of Sweden to a location further south (to about the middle of Sweden but still north of Stockholm).

The forced relocation of Sámi families is a relatively unknown chapter of Swedish history that needs to be further acknowledged. Now is the time to do so, particularly as the Swedish state has initiated a truth commission on the state's historical crimes towards the Sámi nation.

A realized touristic walking trail as suggested above could offer the Sámi nation an opportunity to tell their story and experiences of this historic event. However, a realized tourist trail could offer more advantages, including:

- Raise awareness of the rich cultural and social diversity of the Sámi nation.
- Introduce the (more sustainable) Sámi approach to nature and give new understandings of what nature has to offer.
- Create employment in the Sámi tourism sector, primarily among small-scale entrepreneurs.
- Diversify employment in northern Sweden, now very much based on mining industry and forestry.
- Offer a variant of slow tourism with emphasis on contemplative nature-based experiences with a therapeutic effect, akin to pilgrimage tourism.

## **Aim**

The project's aim is to investigate and imagine how such a walking trail could be shaped and organized. A crucial part is to contemplate ethical issues in relation to postcolonial issues and topics. To help with this aspect, the project will study existing tourism development projects in other parts of the world, to see how others have handled the ethical issues mentioned above. The project has thus much to learn from “best practices” around the world, but perhaps particularly Australia, that has grappled with these kinds of issues for decades.

## The project team



### **Richard Ek**

Professor in Human Geography at Karlstad University (project leader). He is leading and coordinate the project, and is as well responsible for the scholarly output of the project. He can be reached at [richard.ek@kau.se](mailto:richard.ek@kau.se)



### **Stuart Reid**

Post-doc and guest researcher at Karlstad University. He is responsible for the external connections and the establishment of contacts with international stakeholders of interest for the project. He is also responsible for the scholarly output of the project that concerns entrepreneurship and tourism. He can be reached at [stuart.reid@kau.se](mailto:stuart.reid@kau.se)



### **Åsa Andersson**

Homoeopath coach and Shamanista, working in Kiruna. The project idea stands in the memories of Åsa's mother, who witnessed forceful dislocations during the 1930's. She can be reached at [homiatriker\\_asa@hotmail.com](mailto:homiatriker_asa@hotmail.com)



### **Janne Sirniö**

Imagination and creativity consultant for the cultural activities, stationed in Kiruna. He can be reached at [janne@sirnioconsulting.com](mailto:janne@sirnioconsulting.com)

Åsa Andersson and Janne Sirniö are doing the ground work on site in northern Sweden where they are based. As entrepreneurs and well-familiar with the political, cultural and historical situation in Sápmi (the territory of the Sámi people) they are the operative part of the team.

## International outlook

A crucial part of the project's success is the knowledge and experiences that can be gained from international examples of ethnically sound tourist development projects on indigenous territories. The issue of indigenous control over land and other examples of postcolonial topics is not particularly well-addressed in Sweden or Scandinavia. Therefore, there is much to learn from projects abroad and thus it is vital to get in touch with stakeholders with the knowledge and experience of indigenous tourism development projects in Australia.

