

Annex 2: Nils-Aslak Valkeapää

Nils-Aslak Valkeapää/Áillohaš/ Áilu (1943-2001) was born on March 23, 1943, to a reindeer-herding family. His mother's family had summer pastures in Ulisuolu/ Uløya, North Troms, Norway, and his father's family came from the Gárasavvon area in Finland (Finborud & Holm, 2020). For this reason, for most of his life, he moved between the borders of Finland, Norway, and Sweden. However, he did not want to be a reindeer herder but rather a teacher, and in 1960 he decided to attend a six-years education program, where he learned to play guitar and photography and studied literature.

Valkeapää made his musical debut with the album *Joikuja* (joiks) in 1968, while in 1971 he published his first book, *Terveisiä Lapista* (Greetings from Lappland), which was translated into many languages. The book consists of short texts on Sámi culture and art, land rights, and nature protection while being critical to colonialism and capitalism.

In the 70s he took over the family house in Beattet and lived there until the 1990s, turning the house into his own artistic place, recording studio, writing cabin, and meeting space.

In 1972 he started, with his friend and collaborator Seppo "Báron" Paakkunainen, to experiment with jazz and joik. Áillohaš was open to global influences. Their first label was called Indigenous Records and released many albums mixing prog-rock with joik, jazz, Indian and Afromusic. In the 1970s, Valkeapää had his first solo exhibitions as a visual artist. Despite his success, he never wanted to sell his artworks to museums, galleries, or collectors outside Sápmi, as he would rather prefer his legacy to remain in Sápmi and for his people to "inherit ownership and definition power" (Finborud & Holm, 2020, p.32).

In 1976 Áillohaš became a cultural coordinator for the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, paving the way for his political career and unlocking a global Indigenous dimension for the Sámi people. He was central in organizing the first international festival for Indigenous culture, and among other things, for the establishment, in 1979, of the Sámi *Dáiddačehpiid Searvi* (Sámi Artists Union) and the Sámi *Girječálliid Searvi* (Sámi Writers Association). He established the publishing house DAT with Kristina Utsi, Per Ludvig Boine, and Ánde Somby, in 1984. One year later he published three collections of poetry, assembled, in 1985, into *Ruoktu Váimmus* (Trekways of the Wind), while in 1988 his work *Beaivi, áhčážan* (The Sun, my Father) came to the light, including 575 poems and historical photos of the Sámi. When he won the Nordic Council Literary Prize in 1991 for the book, he publicly protested at the prize ceremony against colonialism and the treatment of the Sámi, draping himself in a Sámi flag not yet recognized.

In 1994, Áillohaš opened the Olympic Winter Games in Lillehammer on his ski, with the self-composed *dalveleaikkat* 'The Olympic Welcome Joik', surrounded by reindeer-pulled sleds.

Áillohaš used to travel abroad and had some collaborations in different countries, including Japan. He wrote a play in the style of the *nō* theatre for the Arctic' Peoples Gathering in Hokkaidō in 1995 and collaborated with his friend Junichiro Okura from 1988 until 2001.

In the 1990s he also started to document nature through photographs and field recordings of the natural environment. These recordings resulted in the radio broadcast *Goase dušše*¹ (The Bird Symphony), in 1993, which won the Prix Italia Radio music award. At the same time, in the field of art, he started new productions with acrylics and with materials gathered from trips in nature, like driftwood, rocks, and whale skeletons (Finborud & Holm, 2020, p.35). In 1996 Áillohaš had a near-fatal car accident, which left him injured and with an even more reflective attitude towards life. However, he was able to build his new home and studio in Skibotn, Storfjord, called Lásságámme, with the help of his friend Eino Jokinen. Today the hexagonal building represents his legacy, as it is an artists' residence welcoming researchers and artists from all over the world. Lásságámme is also the foundation that takes care of and promotes his heritage and intellectual property.

In 2001, before his death, Áillohaš published the book *Eanni, eannážan* (The Earth, My Mother), the female counterpart to *Beaivi, áhčážan*. The perspective of the last book included other Indigenous Peoples in the world that were dear to him (Finborud & Holm, 2020, p.35). He passed away on November 26, 2001, in Espoo, Finland, in Junichiro Okura's house, after being back from a poetry meeting in Japan.

¹ THE BIRD SYMPHONY (GOASE DUSSE) - Nils-Aslak Valkeapää - BBC Radio 3 "Between The Ears" broadcast: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nks3MpP-NaU>