

Inari Saami people (*anarâšah*) and Inari Saami language (*anarâškielâ*)

- Inari Saami has always been spoken only in the area of Inari (*Aanaar*), surroundings of the Lake Inari (*Aanaarjävri*) and along some rivers in the lake basin.
- Inari Saami has always been a small language; it is estimated, that the amount of it's speakers has never been higher than 1000 people (Olthuis 2003: 568). At present the number of speakers is about 350.
- Inari has not been an isolated periphery, but a crossroads of languages and cultures; speakers of Inari Saami have traditionally had connections to different groups and have learnt several languages (e.g. Finnish, Northern Saami, Skolt Saami, Norwegian).
- Main forms of livelihood among the Inari Saami have been fishing, reindeer herding, small scale agriculture and cattle breeding, etc. At present, the economic patterns by Inari Saami are mainly similar to those of the majority people, but fishing and reindeer herding are still important.

Some important stages in history of Inari Saami people and their language

- 17th-18th century Inari Saami people get christianised by Lutheran church.
- 19th century Finnish peasants and Northern Saami reindeer herders begin to settle in wider scale to Inari.
- 1859 First book in Inari Saami: parson **E. W. Borg**'s abc-book *Anar sämi kielâ aapis kirje*.
- 1902 First primary school is founded, but circulating catechist school still functions alongside.
- 1919-1921 10 % of municipality's inhabitants dies in 1918 flu pandemic.
- 1930s Majority of Inari's children attend boarding schools in which only Finnish is used.
- 1939.45The Second World war; inhabitants of Inari are evacuated to Central Ostrobothnia, predominantly Finnish-speaking province in Central Finland; the infrastructure of Lapland is destroyed by retreating Germans; Lapland is rebuilt; more and more Finns move to the area; assimilation of the Inari Saami to Finns is accelerating.
- 1949 Skolt Saami people whose homeland is seized to Russia, are resettled to eastern parts of Inari (villages of Sevettijärvi, Nellim and Keväjärvi).
- 1954 System of circulating catechist schools is closed down.
- 1950s Speaking Inari Saami as home language dramatically diminishes.
- 1976 Inari Saami becomes a subject in primary school.

- 1982 Inari Saami broadcasts begin in **Sámi Radio**.
- 1986 **Anarâškielâ servi** 'Inari Saami language association' is founded.
- 1987 The journal **Anarâš** (published 4 times a year) is founded.
- 1992 Saami Language Act; Inari Saami, as well as other Saami languages, becomes an official language in the Saami homeland.
- 1996 First novel in Inari Saami is published: autobiographical *Čovčjäävrist Kaamâsân – Syysjärveltä Kaamaseen* by **Ilmari Mattus**.
- 1997 Two Inari Saami language nests are founded, one in Inari and another in Ivalo. At this point there are only four people under the age of 30 speaking Inari Saami as a mother tongue.
- 1998 It becomes possible to pass an exam of Inari Saami as a mother tongue or a foreign language in matriculation examination.
- 1999 Five month language courses of Inari Saami are organised, targeted especially to the parents of the children attending the language nest.
- 2000 Inari Saami becomes a language of tuition in almost all the subjects of the first 6 classes of primary school of Inari.
- 2001 Language nest in Ivalo is closed down due to lack of financing.
Inari Saami studies are introduced at a university level (**University of Oulu** together with **Sámi education center** in Inari).
- 2004 Renewed and extended Saami Language Act.
- 2005 Inari Saami rap artist **Amoc** becomes very popular in Inari and all the Saamiland and breaks through in Finnish media.
- 2007 Weekly internet-journal **Kierâš** is founded.
First doctoral dissertation concentrated in Inari Saami (**Marja-Liisa Olthuis**: *Inarinsaamen lajinnimet. Lintujen ja sienten kansannimitysten historiaa ja oppitekoisten uudisnimien muodostuksen metodiikkaa* – “Names of species in Inari Saami. The history of popular denominations of birds and mushrooms and methodology of creating neologisms in Inari Saami”).
- 2008 Inari Saami revitalization program is introduced by Marja-Liisa Olthuis.
- 2009 There are altogether (Inari+Ivalo) about 50 children (from 0 to 18 years) that have been or are at present raised up and bilingualized in language nests.
- 2009-2010 In Inari there is organised complementary education of Inari Saami language to teachers and related professionals vital for transmission of the language (organised

by University of Oulu, Inari Saami language association and Sámi education center together).

During all these years activists like **Matti Morottaja, Ilmari Mattus, Aune Kuuva, Iisakki Mattus, Marja-Liisa Olthuis, Anja Kaarret, Ritva Kangasniemi, Miina Seurujärvi, Petra Kuuva, Petter Morottaja** offer much their time and effort to revive Inari Saami language.