

# Kildin Sámi Teaching Practices in Lovozero, Murmansk Region

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# Outline

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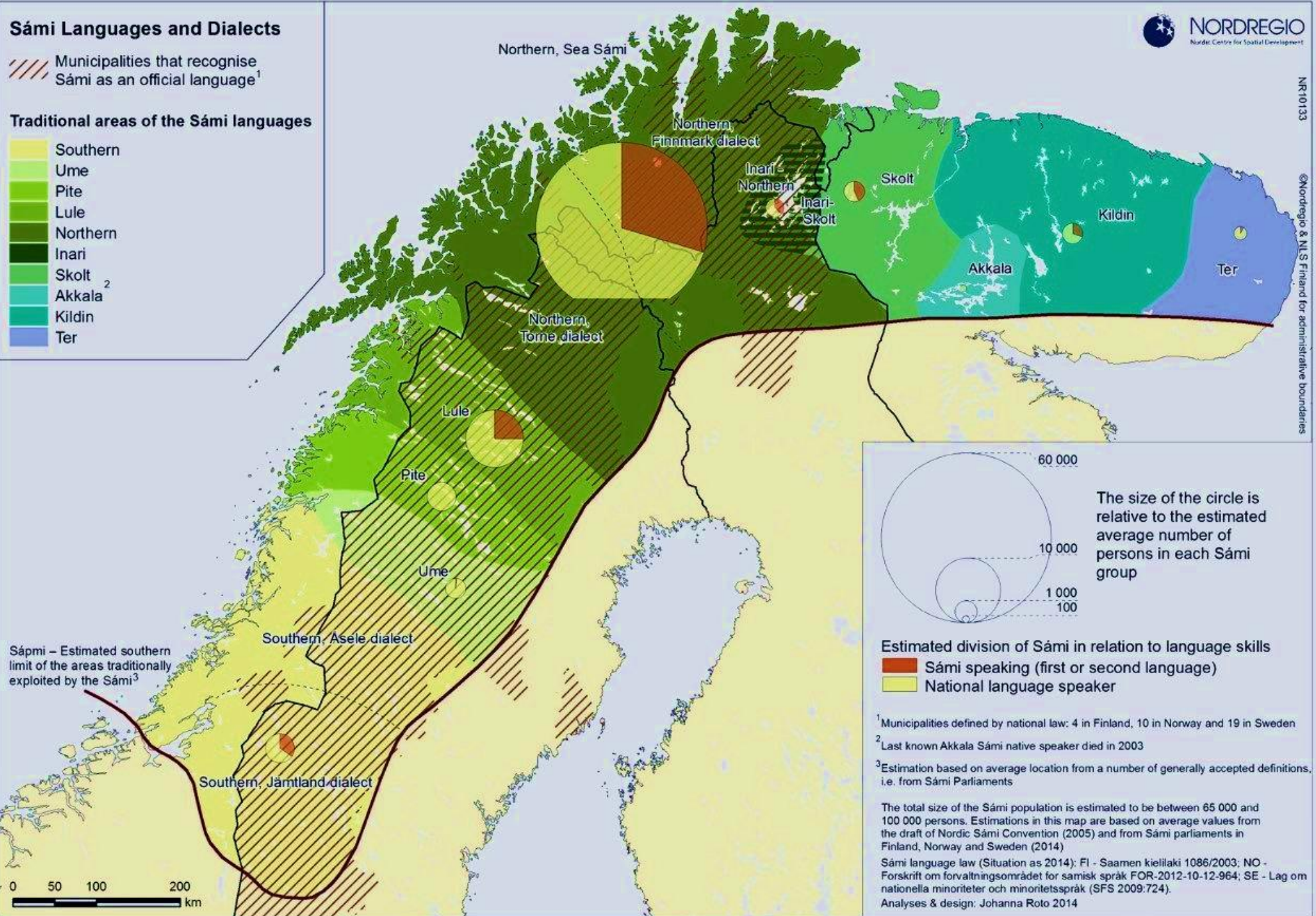


## Sámi Languages and Dialects

/// Municipalities that recognise Sámi as an official language<sup>1</sup>

### Traditional areas of the Sámi languages

Southern  
 Ume  
 Pite  
 Lule  
 Northern  
 Inari  
 Skolt<sup>2</sup>  
 Akkala  
 Kildin  
 Ter





# Russian terms we will use in our talk

English term	Terms we use	Old Soviet terms
Skolt Sámi	колтта-саамский	нотозерский диалект саамского языка
Akkala Sámi	аккала-саамский	бабинский диалект саамского языка
Kildin Sámi	кильдинский саамский	кильдинский диалект саамского языка
Ter Sámi	терский саамский	иоканьгский диалект саамского языка

# Census data

Year	Total Sámi populace in Russia/USSR	Mother tongue (%)			Second language (%)		
		Sámi	Russian	other	Sámi	Russian	other
1926	1717	97,3	1,0	1,6			
1959	1792	69,9	28,6	1,5			
1970	1836	56,3	43,6	0,1	8,8	53,5	0,2
1979	1888	53,0	46,2	0,7	7,1	49,7	2,8
1989	1835	42,0	56,8	1,2	7,0	40,8	2,2
2002	1991*						
2010	1771	16,7	82,8	0,5			
2020	1550	15,9	83,4	0,7			

\*99,8% claimed to be Russian speakers.

# Methods

Our talk will present the results of a preliminary study conducted in the village of Lovozero in August 2022. The main goal of the study was to collect and analyze data about Kildin Sámi teaching practices in Murmansk region since the 1980s. The main research method of the study was semi-structured sociolinguistic interview.

We interviewed experts, language activists, Kildin Sámi speakers, their children and grandchildren (23 interviewees in total). We will also draw upon the findings of our previous field research, which was conducted in 2019-2021.



# Loss of intergenerational transmission of Kildin

There's a breakdown in the intergeneration transmission of Kildin starting from 1990s.

Practically all Kildin Sámi speakers we worked with are over 60 years old.

A lot of interviewees younger than 45 claim they understood Kildin Sámi in childhood when speaking with their relatives, but could not or did not try to speak Kildin Sámi in response.





# Loss of intergenerational transmission of Kildin

*«Как многие из молодёжи. Как та собака: "понимать понимаю, а сказать не могу". Боятся неправильно произнести, кто что скажет»*

*«От случая к случаю, потому что как-то не получается у меня организовать регулярно [занятия], по разным причинам. Где-то бывает какой-то стих с ним выучим, какие-нибудь слова почитаем или просто какому-нибудь выражению я его научу, но опять же, из-за того, что допустим я сегодня научила, а завтра уже не вспомнила, что надо с ним повторить, поэтому у него теряется. Ну что-то он всё равно знает, по крайней мере где-то у него на слуху бывают саамские слова»*

# Kildin in kindergarten

- Starting from 1996 there was a Sámi group in the one of Lovozero's kindergartens, МБДОУ "Детский сад №2", but the language of instruction was Russian.
- By 2007 г. one of the caretakers in the Sámi group spoke Kildin Sámi, but did not teach it to children. However, several times a week a Kildin Sámi teacher visited the group, played with them and taught the children some Kildin Sámi words, helped them learn Kildin Sámi poems by heart.
- This Sámi kindergarten group was discontinued in 2014.



# Kildin in kindergarten

*«Вот садились кушать, всегда напоминали что мы едим: "это каша". Ну вот они там покушали: "спасибо", "идём мыть руки", -- тоже на саамском. Дети уже сами иногда вот эти старшие "кидэт пайса! кидэт пайса!" — бегут мыть руки»*



# Kildin in kindergarten

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# Elective on Kildin in primary school

There's a breakdown in the intergeneration transmission of Kildin starting from 1990s. The primary school curriculum for Kildin developed at that time was based on the assumption that Kildin was the language children learned from their parents at home, which was already not the case. Another big problem with Kildin Sámi textbooks is the linguistic quarrel between Sámi intelligentsia who developed those textbooks regarding Kildin Sámi orthography which emerged in 1980s and hasn't been resolved ever since.

Primary school curriculae included 135-140 sessions a year. The pupils finishing primary school were expected to know some basic Kildin Sámi grammar and vocabulary, but that was insufficient for communicating in Kildin Sámi. Kildin was removed from the mandatory curriculum in 2004 and became an elective class.

# Elective on Kildin in primary school

Nowadays, there're elective Kildin lessons in Lovozero's school, once a week, however it focuses on Sámi culture and language, as opposed to being a language class. See [Zmyvalova, Outakoski 2019] for details. Each year there's a survey for pupils' parents conducted by the school faculty where the parents can enroll their children in this class.

*«Я пришла, вот они после всех этих уроков, естественно они все пообедали и умчались все домой. Кто ко мне придёт в четыре часа или в пять заниматься? Они в сторону школы и смотреть-то не хотят. А уроки когда им на следующий день делать? Ночью?»*

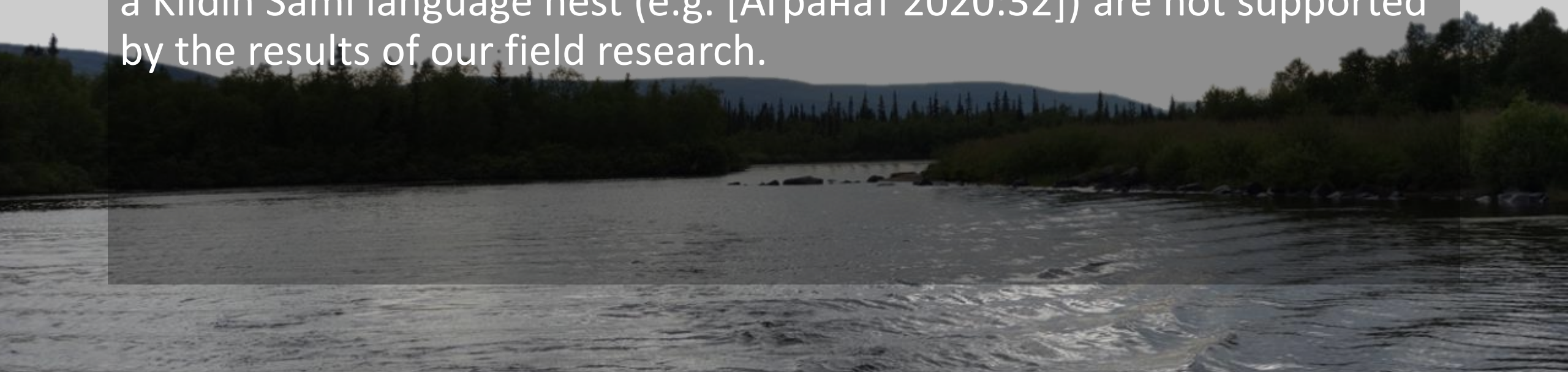
Pupil numbers, 2020-21 study year

1 <sup>st</sup> year	12
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	11
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	10
4 <sup>th</sup> year	9



# After-school circle by Domna Khomyuk

Domna Khomyuk conducted an after-school Kildin Sámi circle for children ages 6-12 before March 2020. She created a Kildin Sámi language environment which children could immerse in. However, we cannot consider this to be a language nest because of the children's age. Therefore claims made in the literature regarding the existence of a Kildin Sámi language nest (e.g. [Арханат 2020:32]) are not supported by the results of our field research.



# After-school circle by Domna Khomyuk



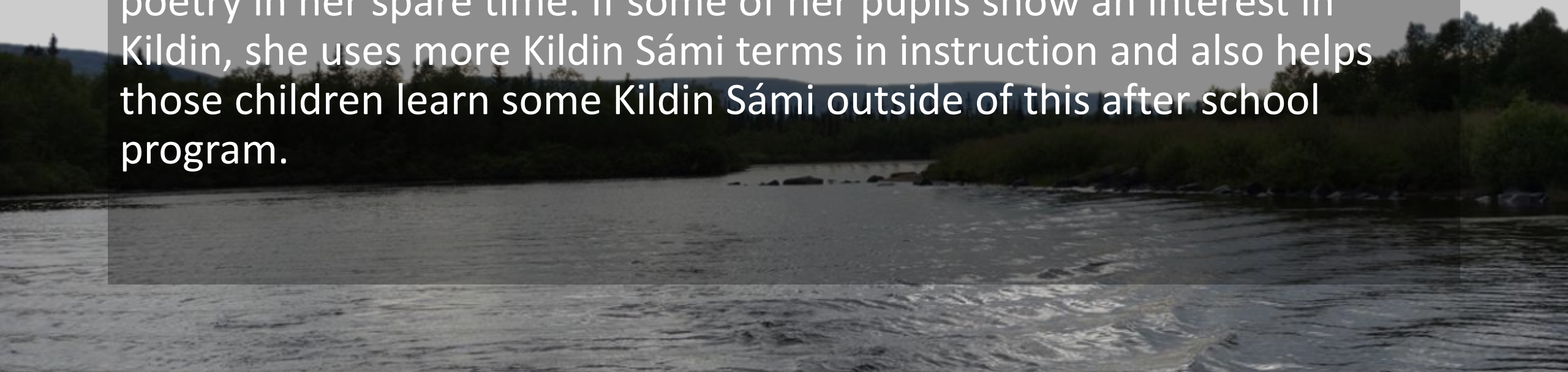
"—А что происходит, если кто-то из детей начинает говорить по-русски?

— Мунн эйй оантэш [клд. я не понимаю]. Развожу руками: мунн эйй оантэш. Допускаю, что если вы какие-то слова на саамском не знаете, можете их говорить на русском, но если мы что-то уже проходили — будьте любезны, говорите по-саамски."



# After school programs «Роанняяс» and «Национальные изделия»

There are also after school programs teaching Sámi handicrafts in Lovozero, led by a native Kildin Sámi speaker, where the instructor teaches Lovozero children (both Sámi and non-Sámi children) some Sámi handicrafts, using Kildin Sámi terms in instruction, but the language of instruction is Russian. This person also writes Kildin Sámi poetry in her spare time. If some of her pupils show an interest in Kildin, she uses more Kildin Sámi terms in instruction and also helps those children learn some Kildin Sámi outside of this after school program.



# Children's folk music circle «Чаххкля»

Some studies claim that Sámi children can participate in various folk music collectives, e.g. «Елле» in [Иванищева 2016: 47]. Our data disprove that claim («Елле» is an adult folk music collective). As far as we know, the only place where Sámi children and adolescents can engage in Sámi folk music in Lovozero is children's folk circle «Чаххкля».



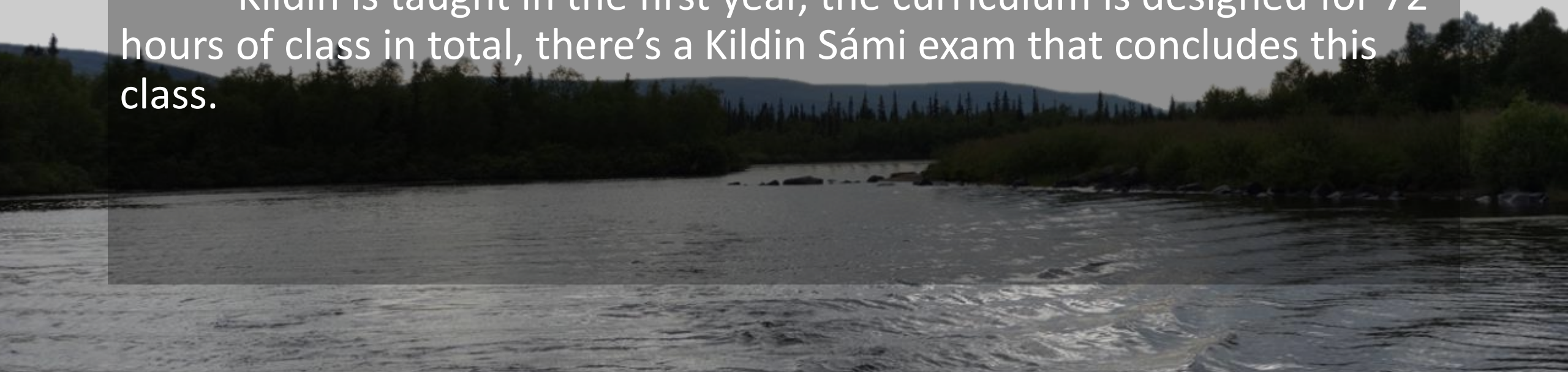


# Kildin classes in Lovozero's vocational school

Lovozero's vocational school is the only school in Lovozero where Kildin is a mandatory part of the curriculum.

«Sámi language» is mandatory for majors «Хозяйка усадьбы» and «Оленевод-механизатор». Each major has 15 students.

Kildin is taught in the first year, the curriculum is designed for 72 hours of class in total, there's a Kildin Sámi exam that concludes this class.

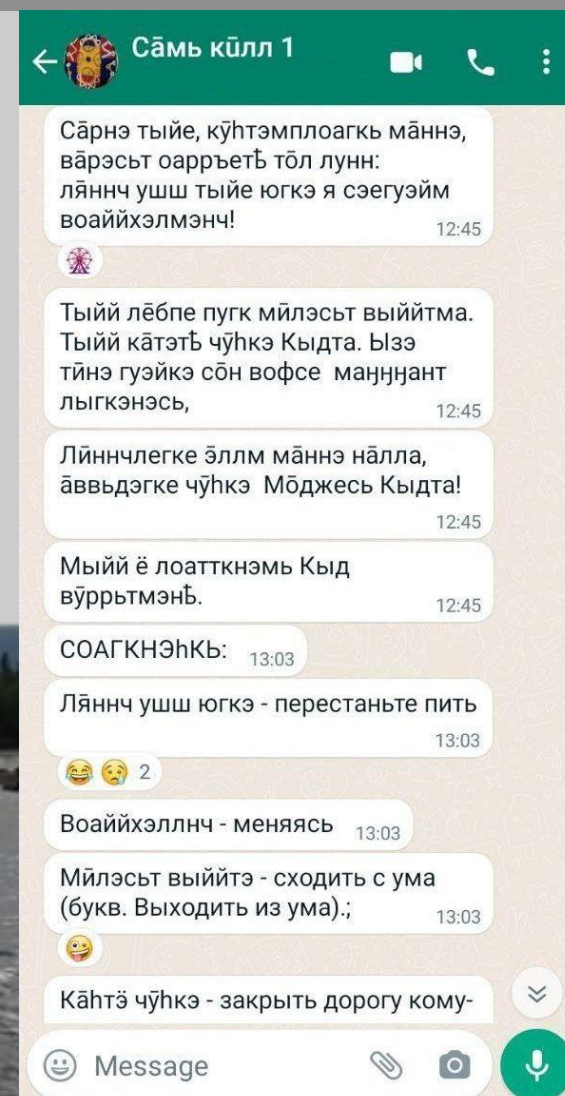
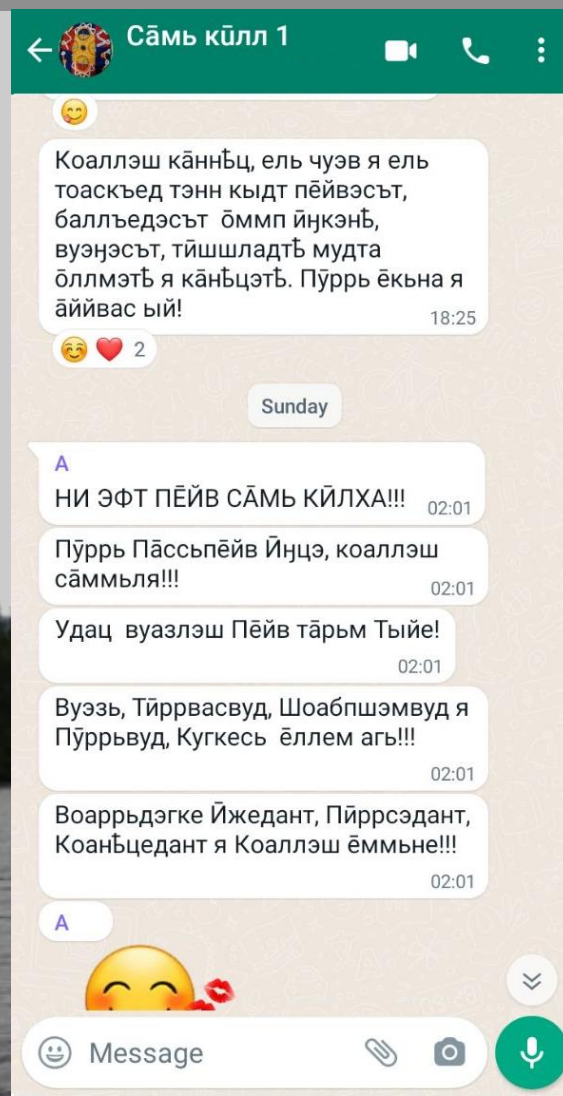


# Online Kildin classes (for adults)

Language activists from Lovozero and Murmansk organized online Kildin lessons for adults starting from 2020. Classes are conducted through video conference programs (e.g. Zoom) once a week for 90-120 minutes, there are two groups (Beginner and Intermediate), 10 people in each group. Around 4-6 people actually attend the online lessons. The instructor is not very good with using computers so there are some problems related to that, as well with the fact that the instructor is over 70 years old and sometimes classes get cancelled due to her health problems. She also has a very strong attitude regarding the linguistic quarrel between Sámi intelligentsia who developed those textbooks regarding Kildin Sámi orthography.



# Online Kildin classes (for adults)



# Language activism

- Youtube channel «Valentina Sovkina»  
<https://www.youtube.com/@ValentinaSovkina>



- Language courses «Children of the Arctic»  
<https://arctic-children.com/courses/saamy/>





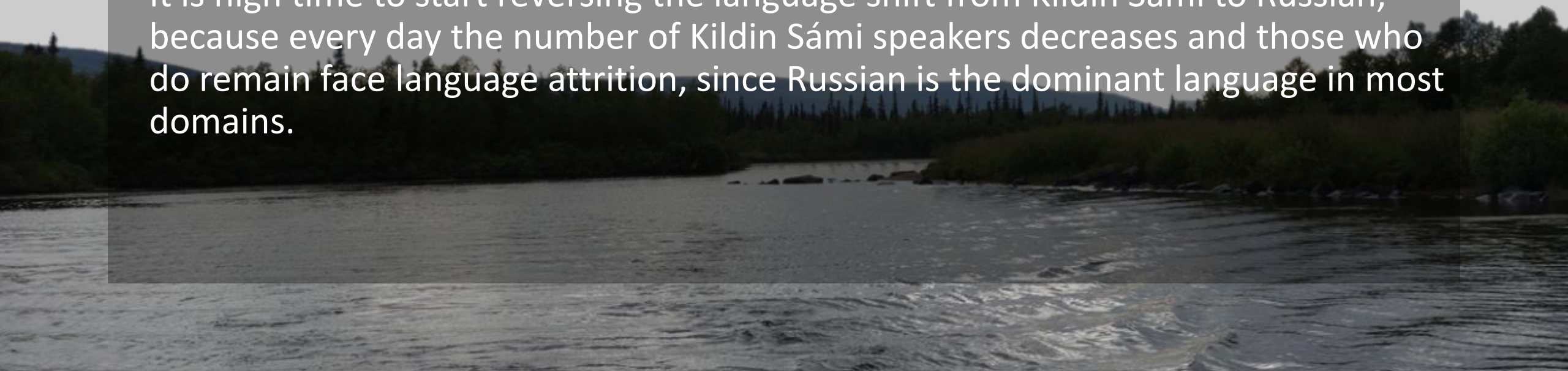
# Language activism

Roman Yakovlev's language activism deserves special mention. Roman not only writes poems in Kildin Sámi, he also makes Kildin Sámi rap music AND he is also very concerned with the problem regarding the lack of modern Kildin Sámi textbooks. He started developing some materials to fill that gap.



# Conclusions

- There is demand for Kildin Sámi teaching. Despite the lack of intergenerational transmission some parents try to find ways to help their children learn Kildin Sámi.
- The main programs regarding teaching Kildin include lack of funding, lack of studentbooks and lack of professional instructors.
- It is high time to start reversing the language shift from Kildin Sámi to Russian, because every day the number of Kildin Sámi speakers decreases and those who do remain face language attrition, since Russian is the dominant language in most domains.





# Шӯрр пāссьпэ!

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