Sámi views on suicide and what to do about it

Jon Petter Stoor, psychologist/ researcher
Sámi Norwegian National Advisory Board on Mental Health and Substance Abuse
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Sápmi (land of the Sámi)  
Northern Scandinavia/Kola peninsula
The cultural meaning(s) of suicide among Sámi

Suicide among Sámi is perceived by other Sámi to be:

- Affecting young reindeer herding men in particular
- Related to herdsmen being forced to quit life as a herder, but instead choosing to quit life itself.
- something “understandable” as opposed to something “only mad people would do”

Reindeer herding life is threatened by conflicts with majority society relating to, for example:

- predators on the land
- societal infrastructure (roads, railroads etc)
- Industry. For example: Mining activities, wind- and hydro power plants, forestry, tourism.
The cultural meaning(s) of suicide among Sámi

- Conflict areas are very much related to political priorities
- Sámi (in Sweden) lack political influence and power in regard to these processes
- Consequently, suicide among Sámi is regarded as a political question. Sámi youth, organizations and rights activists wonder:
  - *if problems are political, why shouldn´t answers be?*
Sofia Jannok – Áhpi (wide as oceans)
"Sáminess" in public

Last week, on the Norwegian reality show "Paradise hotel", a participant rated her fellow participants from "top:
"Sáminess" in public to "bottom":

[Image: A group of people dressed in traditional Sámi clothing standing in front of a tepee, representing the Sámi community.]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woEcdqqbEVg
Enormous response and support from Sámi society

Embodying Sámi values through refusing to adapt to Swedish norms

- Live as reindeer herder
- Proud and strong, yet not trying to “show off”
- Using the traditional joik as medium
- Surpressing / expression emotions

A rolemodel for Sámi youth
Winner of Sweden’s got talent 2014!
“The talent show was going to be the last thing I did”
Jon Henrik Fjällgren – Manne leam frijje ("I am free")

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ij9R2mxigWY
Jon Henrik finished as runner-up, receiving a fifth of all votes!